TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

[Gardiner, Maine]

12 May - 1895.

My dear Smith,

I have been reading the New Testament (Matthew and Mark, which are pretty much alike) and am just beginning to realize what the rising generation is losing by letting such reading go by. For we all know well enough that the "scriptures" are the last thing that a fellow takes up nowadays, though it comes natural for some reason, for a girl to know all about them. I have found that I can satisfy myself very well with the Big Book and I doubt if I read much else this summer save that and some French novels. The combination may point to certain paganistic tendencies on my part, but it is far better to read the Bible as mere literature that[=than] to read most of the stuff that is printed in these days for anything at all.

When I look over recent book lists and see the titles of some of the stuff put (by) out by our leading publishers it makes me tremble for humanity. But yet, I do not think it can last: I have too much faith in humanity for that.--I am waiting patiently for Mr. A. T. Quiller-Couch to have his innings. It is a mystery to me how he can be so shamefully neglected by a reading public which buys seventeen editions of a thing like
The Prisoner of Zenda; for any man or woman who cares
for a good & wholesome romance must find "Q" infinitely
superior to Anthony Hope—that is, if I am any judge of
fiction. To my mind there is nothing outside of Steven-
son that can be compared with "I(s) Saw Three Ships" and
I am told that "The Blue Pavilion" is much better than
that. "Q's" short stories are almost unapproachable in
recent literature keeping up a better average I think
than even our common idol, Kipling. "Q" never wrote
anything so good as "The Children of the Zodiac" or
anything better, perhaps, than Georgie Porgie or Pambé Serang
but I am sure that he has never written anything half
so bad as the Mutiny of the Mavericks, or so magnificently
dull as "The Bridge Builders". The last named piece
is literature of a high order and as such I can admire
it; but from any other point of view it seems to me a
total failure. I am still of the opinion that if Kipling
leaves any name to posterity it will be almost wholly
for his poems. He is the greatest poet now writing Eng-
lish and I have said so ever since the death of Tennyson;
but he has got to free himself of that habit of over load-
ing his lines—as in the proem to Many Inventions and the
dedication to Ballads & Barrack Room Ballads and even here
and there in The East & West, before we can know him for
what he really is.

The French book you procured for me I find a very
valuable companion. I do not think much of such books as a rule (but that is only because I need them) and yet I am beginning to see that [=the] good that may be got from them. They serve as one more proof that there is no royal road to the learning of the French language—or any other. As long as a man reads French or German "to get the sense of it" just so long is he prostituting his intellect to the thinnest of their pleasures. Skimming through a French novel with no imaginative sympathy whatever and with no regard for literary touches and other individualities of style is not only insulting an author but doing an injustice to one's self. It is far better to read a good translation of a book by a foreign author than to slop through it after the manner of the bright young ladies who read French a little, German a little, sing a little, play the piano a little and do nothing at all with anything like completeness. There is too much of that kind of thing going on now and if I had the bringing up of a girl I should make her do one thing well if that thing were only to take good care of her eye-brows.

The last Critic has a fairly good review of La Petite Paroisse, but [the] writer denies M. Daudet the privilege of drawing an individual. He has a poor word for Rose and Ninette and for that reason he must have [read?] that book, I think, from the same point of view. To a man
like Richard Fenigan the story in question is quite plausible. As a tract[?], the book is without value nor can I conceive of a man \textit{of} with Daudet's insight ever dreaming that it would be taken as such. Every man or woman who \textit{seems} writes for the Critic seems to be cursed with a flippancy that I am getting very tired of. If possible, it \textit{w} is worse than the patronizing ease of Wm. Morton Payne in the "Dial."

It is"blowing up" a storm now and I hope it will rain a week to give the burdocks and myrtle a good start in my raspberry bed. The grass needs it too.

Sincerely,

E. A. R.

I cannot find the Atlantic poster. No one has seen it.