TO JOSEPH S. FORD

Gardiner, Maine,
Jan. 24-'94.

My dear Ford,

To-day I have learned something about Joubert. I fancy this is why I am writing to you. — What I have learned I have read in Saint-Beuve and Petit de Julleville. ¹ The result is that I am just now filled with an aching desire to read his "Pensées et Correspondance." Do you know much about him? Do you know that he said "Atala" was "passion covered with a long white veil?" Well, he did; and a man who could say that much has said other things worth knowing. These thinkers who never write much are very interesting men to me. But woe is me! the writers who never think much. The world is full of them—especially America. America seems to be afraid of thought. Our great army of short story writers to whom we must look for what is most characteristic in our literature does not fill me with great admiration. Alphonse Daudet in a little sketch of ten small pages (Le Caravanserail) can say without trying to be great, "Les mots sont toujours plus poétiques que les choses." We do not think of such things here. Here the "chooses" are everything, (everything) especially if they are green and made of a peculiar kind of paper difficult to counterfeit. Daudet means things do not come up to our
expectations. I have simply expanded it a little.

"The day is cold and dark and dreary." It rains, but the wind does not blow. I wish to heaven it did. Anything for a noise to drown a baby's yelling. That is all the sound I hear nowadays. I am sick for Cambridge—for someone to talk with; but here I am with no immediate prospect of being anywhere else. I am working in a small way and doing what reading my eyes will permit. I find much pleasure in Daudet's "Contes". He knows the relation between art and life and understands that a born broker will never cook macaroons from choice. There are a few differences in men that we Americans must learn to understand before we can be as great as we think we are. We project, Europe perfects. Most of us are satisfied, and sing glory to the American Eagle.

I have no great idea as to what I am talking about. I am in something of a groucher and am lonesome. So excuse me, and write someday if you feel like it. I had a characteristic 20 page letter from Saben this morning and a good one from Latham a little over a week ago. L. is pretty well contented now and is reading French and German with with one of the french teachers in his establishment.

Have you read any of Paul Verlaine? I can imagine him with his pale, moon-struck face but do not
think I would care for him. Read Saint-Beuve on "Cowper", and give my best regards to Mead.

Sincerely

E. A. Robinson

Box 595.