TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

[Gardiner, Maine]
14 Dec.--'95 [[: is Dec.]]

My dear Smith:

I was glad to get hold of the Philistine--particularly for The Dipsy Chanty, which I think one of the best things Kipling has done. It is not so good as the "Bolivar" or "There's a Whisper down the Field' but of course a man can't always be at his best--that is, his very best.

I followed your suggestion in regard to the Chap-Book business and sent them a page of stuff about the Rosny books. I haven't the slightest thought of their printing it but I suppose there is the ghost of a chance. A "V" would come in handy just now but I am afraid that I must do without it,—at any rate from that source.

Ford spend[=spent] last Sunday with us and his coming was, as you may imagine something of a change for me. I think it did me good though he was probably a little surprised to find what a seed I have developed into. My only hope is that someday I may sprout and make some leaves. The poetry-book is getting on and will be pretty well shaken out by the first of February --sent off, I hope. When that comes back I shall be stirred up for a few days, but not for many. It isn't
worth while. And on the other hand it isn't half so easy to put such things out of one's mind as it may seem to you who have never had the experience—as far as I know. You may be a literatus "on the quiet," but I don't believe it. You have more respect for your brains.

Do you hear anything from Butler nowadays? I haven't heard a line from him since he sent me his book-plate—five or six weeks ago. And how about Jamie's piece in the Advocate? I fancy it was about the dead men outside the wall, which was a very good story indeed. I never saw his writing of it, but I imagine he did it pretty well.

I have been rebuilding that sonnet translation of Horace's ode to Leuconoë. How do you like these for the opening lines?—

"I pray you not, Leuconoë, to pore
With unpermitted eyes on what may be
Appointed by the gods for you and me,
Nor on Chaldean figures any more."

I may get the thing to partly satisfy me some day, but I rather doubt it. I have spent the last three weeks mostly in rewriting that story of mine The Night Before—you may remember it—in blank verse.
"Look you Domine, look you and listen etc." I don't know what it all amounts to, but there are some pretty good passages in it and they may lug it through. My songs are corkers—particularly Edward Alphabet:
"Look at Edward Alphabet
Going home to pray!
Drunk as he can ever get,
And on the Sabbath day! --"

and so forth. You may not think it from the first lines but the poem is an argument against the present attitude of the females. I also have a piece of deliberate degeneration called Luke Havergal, which is not at all funny. Then there is old John Evereldown who had all the women of Tilbury Town under his wing, or thought he had. The "Tavern" part of my book is not like anything I ever wrote before and I doubt much if I every[=ever] try anything like it again. The songs have been for the most part villainously hard to make.

I think I shall have to [go] out and see your father & mother this afternoon for I haven't seen them for nearly a month. Something has turned up every Sunday to stop me.

Monday morning.

I was out to your place last evening and had a good smoke with your father. He is going through my set of Marryatt and thinks them great--particularly Japhet and Midshipman Easy. If I had eyes I should read them again myself, but as it is I cannot. I am going through a school edition of Loti's Pecheur d'Islande which is very good but rather suggestive of short life. To use Bissell's[?] phrase, "it smells of mortality."

Hope to see you now in a few days.

Very truly yours

E. A. Robinson