

TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Gardiner Sept. 27--1890--

De Smith,--

I believe I told you that I would write you something when you left Gardiner¹ so here goes: I have read your (or rather Henry De Long's) "Kreutzer Sonata"² and I have come to the conclusion that Wannamaker³ did about right in suppressing the same. There is altogether too much low-necked truth in it to be circulated among the young idea; it would have a tendency to "teach them how to shoot" without taking a fair aim. But then, taken as a picture of humanity as a whole, I cannot help thinking that it is open to considerable criticism. We are not all rakes, and there is such a thing in the world as a good woman, excluding those angular spinsters who preach about woman suffrage and diseased ballots until they rope in honest men's wives and teach them to desert their families and husbands until the poor devils get drunk out of sheer disgust. (God never intended man and woman both to wear pants.) And yet taking the sentiment expressed in the "Sonata" as the natural outburst of the individual telling the story the book is quite another thing: the question is, did Tolstoi intend it to be applied to the whole human nest or did he simply essay to show the condition to which a man may bring himself by his ungodly actions? In this book the wife would have been a very decent sort of ^awoman if her husband <m> had not "married" so promiscuously in

his younger days and so been led to believe that they were all alike. I understand that Tolstoi has written another book in conjunction with a Russian peasant, elaborating the same ideas. That seems to me unnecessary.

For the past week I have been following Danforth, the engineer, with an axe and an armful of stakes together with a leveling rod and a corn-cob pipe. By this work I was enabled to join the River Survey gang and will go to work to-morrow morning. There will be about a month of it. I must confess that I would rather smoke the pipe under a tree in August and read Virgil, but the trouble is <that> the Roman gentleman pays such <devilish> devilish slim wages that before you know it you have no tobacco for your pipe. Dollars are convenient things to have De Smith, but this diabolical, dirty race that men are running after them disgusts me. I shall probably outgrow this idea, but until I do I shall labor quite contented under the delusion that [there] is something to life outside of "business". Business be damned. Write when you get a chance.

Yours--E. A. Robinson