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Portland, June 25 - 1890

My Dear Smith

I received your letter a few days (or rather about two weeks) ago and will now take up your literary vein and advise you to read "John Halifax" if you have not already done so. It is a novel after the old school but yet there is more of the modern realism in it than you generally find in books written forty or fifty years ago. It will show you the difference between great and small writing in a most impressive manner.

Outside of this I have not done much reading since I saw you; in fact I have read nothing save a book of Capt Harte's short stories and about half of Rudyard Kipling's "The Light that Failed". I think upon the whole the former is the greater writer, although there is a certain "queerness", as you say, about the latter's work that is rather attractive. I think Kipling's poetry is better than his prose.

Our Rosetta Johnson's series of Little Classics in the Bowdoin Library. If they are taken over the one on Exile and read Harte's "Outcasts of Poker Flat"; in some ways I think it is the best short story in the English language. This may sound a little loud, but read it yourself and write me what you think of it.

② I am still dragging along in the same old rut, and occasionally

someone says "Well now, Robinson, what do you intend to do?"
This makes me mad. I cannot tell what I shall do. I have
said that I thought I might go to Harvard in the fall for a year or two
but as I am not sure of it I do not say so when these pleasant
people question me, so you see all I have to do is to tell them
that I do not know, which is about like pulling teeth. I suppose
it does look a little queer to see me practically doing nothing at
my age, but at present there is no getting out of it. Someone must
be at home to run the place. I am not getting rich but I try
to console myself with Blackmore's lines:

"The more we have in hand to count
The less we have to hope for."

There is a good deal in that if you will stop to moralize a little;
but the devil of it is, while we are moralizing someone else gets
what we hope for. This is a sad world, Saint, where the under
dog gets his neck chucked. Sometimes I think I shall go into the
missionary business and teach the chattering Hindus how to read
the Police Gazette + Town Topics. They never would take the trouble
to trouble me, my bones are too large.

Speaking of the books I have read I owned Ches Dudley West
②'s "My Summer in a Garden." It is a good thing, and contains

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§ No longer with ~~the~~ feelings of awe,
¶ God! to the north of earth, unapproachable,
§ Not to the temple of Ebae
§ Nor consist Olympian Zeus
¶ Unless these things, hand shown,
¶ To all mortals, are in line -
¶ But O' mighty, if rightly hearing,

¶ O Zeus, King of all Beluon
¶ Let this escape thee not
¶ Nor thy ever living Nile.
§ For already thy pet aside
§ The waning Oracles Ravan
¶ which the God sends Pithia
¶ And no longer is Apollon in honor
¶ at least in the light of men,
¶ But Gods word spreads slow & wide,

much valuable information. Here is an extract from the "third
week":- "The striped bug has come, the reddest of the year.
He is a moral double ended, iron clad at that. He is unpleas-
ant in two ways. He burrows under the ground so that you cannot
find him, and he flies away, so that you cannot catch him
The best way to deal with the striped bug is to sit down by
the hills and patiently watch for him. If you are spry you can
annoy him. This however takes time. It takes all day and
part of the night. For he flits in darkness and wasteth at noonday."

I suppose I shall have another garden to make in the spring
and a general spell of "clearing up." I think after that, a
trip to Harvard ~~the~~ would be a glorious contrast.

I trust that this letter will be a warning to you never to
use a stub pen, I have used one for three or four years and
this is the effect of changing over. Perhaps you will be able to
read it and perhaps you will not. It is enough to make a
man weep. I think I shall have to go back to the stub
with my hand tipped over on one side. These writings is no great
hardship to me; but to write this way after so many months
is hell itself. Keep away from the stub, Yours &c
E. A. Robinson