

7/7 Cambridge St.,

Cambridge, Feb 3-1891. (92)

My dear Smith,

My harmony has played me a little  
 trick this week that almost stultifies me. To come to  
 the point I cannot remember whether I wrote you a  
 letter last Sunday or not; my impression, however, is  
 that I did not, and taking it for granted well "let  
 'er go" now for a few minutes. And I must say to  
 your credit that I have about as much business writ-  
 ing you (or anyone else) a letter now as I have paink-  
 ing my belly yellow. My midyear examination comes  
 to-morrow morning and I am just about half prepared  
 to meet it. The subject is Shakespeare (ardon my English  
 spelling of the word - I prefer it) and you cannot possibly  
 have an idea of the compounded mass that it will be.

Prof. Child is a demon for details and has an un-  
 pleasant penchant for odd usages of words - preposi-  
 tives-adverbs, etc. - and takes delight in setting a  
 bewildering row of them before the student's eye to be ex-  
 plained and illustrated by examples. This, with interposi-  
 tion of hard passages and historical points relative to  
 Shakespeare and his works, I think well constitute the  
 greater portion of the paper.

My expenses of last Monday evening and Tuesday

morning has left me wicker down to-night. You see Mr. Burdow is in Boston and I went on to see him. There was a mass of about three hours in the "Old Elm" and found two more remarkable papers and frequent notes. The man who is bloody just enough to do that kind of business the night before a mid-year in Eng. Rept. & Comp. deserves no sympathy, I suppose, but sympathy or no sympathy, I felt like a lamb being led to the slaughter the next morning. Whether I drank too much beer or whether the consciousness that I was doing unwisely rendered my nerves unsteady, I cannot tell, but for a brief time it seemed impossible for me to sit at a desk for three mortal hours in a hot room in the upper story of University Hall. I did it, though, but I cannot tell the result. It will come in about three weeks. I believe I prophesied a B or a B- in one of my letters, but I am afraid I flew too high. A "C" will be quite up to my expectations.

After Thanksgiving comes Eng 9 (Friday); then there will be a week for a week before Christmas. That week someone had work for me but I do not anticipate any great difficulty. Have about given up the idea of getting "first." You may think that my talk on that subject was all chaff, but I can assure you that it was not.

There were those hundred and seventy odd students who took  
the midyear in Eng. A. last year and out of this num-  
ber ~~most~~ ninety-five were dropped. So you see that  
a first mark is a very comfortable thing to have. Without  
intending to blow my own horn in the least, I think  
that the "B" I rec'd on the hour-exam in that course  
together with my written mark in Eng. 9, which for some  
reason seems to have been a little above the average, may  
help me out on the mid-year and make pointed amends  
for the bad head I had Tuesday morning. I hope you  
will not infer from this that I was in any way "full"  
that would injure me and hurt my character.

I rec'd your last letter reading it late Monday after-  
noon and felt thankful that I had the pleasure of  
so doing. I think you squelched me fairly in a correspond-  
ent tone. I enjoyed it more the less for that. It is a  
pleasure to receive a letter from a friend who can write  
of something the old stereotyped topics and who can de-  
pict the natural variances of human nature. I know  
I have said this half a dozen times in past letters, but  
it is a matter worthy of considerable notice. Every day  
that I live I realize more and more the existence of  
several elements or disadvantages in my make-up that,  
unless they are put down, will be of decided disadvantage

to me in the future. In the first place, I am and  
always was too much of a dreamer: I have no sym-  
pathy with the cold, matter-of-fact, contriving nature  
that has made the fortunes enjoyed by multitudes all  
around us (by fortune, I mean the possession of enough to  
make a man and his family comfortable and happy) and  
this <sup>is</sup> a dangerous state to be in. I used to think that I  
was a kind of pessimist, but I have outgrown that idea.

The world as a whole is surely growing better and better,  
but there is yet an enormous field for improvement.

Another thing that troubles me is the knowledge that I  
am lacking to a considerable extent in self-confidence: - not  
exactly that, rather, - perhaps I had better say that right of  
<sup>now</sup> <sup>awakened a feeling</sup> success, <sup>is</sup> painfully approaching me, and I am inclined too much  
to look upon its achievement as a kind of destiny. But  
I am glad to say that I think that this is leaving me grad-  
ually, and I trust I hope to have a fair chance of grow-  
ing sensible. Whether the accepted theory of life and success is  
the true one or not, it is at present the practical one, and  
biting off one's nose will not help the matter in the least.

Well, I must say good night now, and look for a second  
edition of your last letter on Tuesday next.

Sincerely,  
Robinson