


LETTERS OF
HARRY JAMES SMITH

10-

BM

LETTERS OF
HARRY JAMES SMITH



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

LETTERS OF HARRY JAMES SMITH

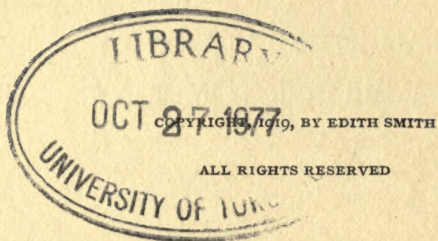
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JULIET WILBOR TOMPKINS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

1919



PS
2537
M57Z5
1919

*He was an open window for us all!
Through him we gazed upon a different world,
And felt the quickening winds of Heaven.
There birds sang, and sweet scents of spring
Stole in. From that high casement wide
We faced the sunrise, and upon the darkest night
Saw stars. There Truth looked lovely
And we saw the Soul of Man;
Smiled at it, scorned its meanness, loved it still,
And with its Maker saw that it was good.*

*Without a sound the window is shut fast,
The curtain drawn. How small and cramped our world!
But where you went, Dear Lover of your kind,
Did you not leave for us an open door?*

F. S. R.

HARRY JAMES SMITH

HARRY JAMES SMITH was born in New Britain, Connecticut, May 24, 1880, seventh of the nine children of John B. and Lucy F. Smith.

After finishing his High School course in 1897, he taught for several months in the District School at Cornwall Hollow, Connecticut. He entered Williams College, in the fall of 1898. There he was an honor student; and during his senior year was editor of the Williams "Literary Monthly" and a member of Gargoyle.

The next year (1902-03) he was Assistant in the Biological Laboratory, preparing himself for the work by a summer's study at Woods Hole.

The summer of 1903 was happily spent in a wheel trip through France with Karl Weston.

The next year (1903-04) he studied English at Harvard, receiving his Master's degree; and in 1904-05 taught in the English Department at Oberlin College. In the autumn of 1905 he began his independent literary work, to which, except for a year on the editorial staff of the "Atlantic Monthly" (1906-07), he gave all his time until our entry into the war.

Until 1909 he lived in New York and did various sorts of hack work in addition to a goodly number of short stories, poems, and his first novel, "Amédée's Son" (1908). But in 1909, after a severe attack of appendicitis, with a protracted convalescence, he came to his home in Berlin, Connecticut, giving all his time to creative work.

His second novel, "Enchanted Ground," was published in 1910, and it was in the autumn of the same year that

"Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh" was given its trial production in Chicago. It was produced in New York in April, 1911, and revived in 1914.

"Blackbirds" was produced in 1913, running only two weeks in New York; and "Suki" and "Oh! Imogen" were tried out in 1916.

In 1917 "A Tailor-Made Man" was produced, and in 1918 "The Little Teacher" followed. Both these plays are still running at the time of writing (December, 1918), the former with two companies.

During these seven years he wrote many other plays: "The Countess and Patrick," rewritten into "Effie's Soul"; "Mathilda Comes Back" (in collaboration with Miss Eloise Steele); "Big Jerry"; "Game"; "Ladybird," and "Northward Ho!"

His Arichat summers began in boyhood on account of ill health, and in 1912 he bought and remodelled his house, "Willowfield," on the hillside fronting the harbor.

It was here in 1917, after study with the Canadian pioneer and expert, Dr. John Bonsall Porter, that he began his own work with sphagnum moss. During the summer his collecting and preparing of the moss was done under the auspices of the National Surgical Dressings Committee of New York; but in December, 1917, he received his brevet from the American Red Cross, and late in February he went to Seattle to investigate the supply of moss in the Northwest and to help in organizing the work. After two busy and successful weeks, he went to British Columbia to arrange for a shipment of moss for the Canadian Red Cross, and it was there, on March 16, 1918, near Murrayville, that he was killed in a train and automobile collision.

INTRODUCTION

BY JULIET WILBOR TOMPKINS

I HAVE been reading Harry James Smith's letters, written over a period of twenty years to family and friends, and now brought together by his death. They roughly outline his life, or such portion of it as he would consent to show: college days and a hint of spiritual struggle, an early impulse toward the ministry; then teaching, with the outward success that a vivid, eager intellect commands and the inner distress of the creative spirit forbidden to create; next, the firmer emergence of the artist, the demand to create even at the cost of a "starveling bank account"; a brief essay at editing and respectability, but presently off again for Grub Street; stories and a couple of novels, and at last the breathless landing on his true plane, the comedy stage. A clear, "And so he lived happily ever after" ought to have followed the success of "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh," as played by Mrs. Fiske; but he had to serve seven years for the second and third successes, "A Tailor-Made Man" and "The Little Teacher," crowded into the last year of his life. He had learned, however, what he was for; after that he had only to prove it. And last in the record comes war, and the further thing that he was emerges in the passion to serve. He met a tragic death in Red Cross work on the 16th of March, 1918.

The letters have remade for me the perennial discovery that one does not know one's friends so very well. So it is only from one aspect that I can write about

Harry — an indoor aspect. We were always sitting down when we were together — at little tables, where Harry would let half of his dinner go uneaten because he was so much more interested in talking, and never could learn to combine the two; or before my fire — for it was usually winter when he came. His exultant love of action, of rough seas and November woods, and the rugged coast of his Arichat summers, were in the background of his talk, but he always brought a headful of human and ethical and literary ideas to try out, so that the outdoors side of him was only a flavor. And his declared hatred of conventionality amounted in my experience to little more than a refusal of parties. He would never come when any one else was coming, unless bullied into it, but, though he had acquired impressive secondary reasons for this, I think the primary reason was his fragile health, and an outfit of nerves that would have wrecked a person less simply wise. He had to eliminate, right and left, if he was to survive. He did it with a cheerful carelessness that took away any savor of invalidism — it was an uninteresting necessity, like washing the hands, that required no emphasis.

The making of stories and plays was, of course, our prevailing theme. He was a wonderful critic, constructive and stimulating. If a plot straggled and blundered, he could bring it up into smart shapeliness with twenty minutes of concentrated listening. How he could listen! I can see him — his hair boyishly rough on his forehead over clear blue eyes, his head dropped forward, sitting very quietly with tranquil hands, saying nothing at all until he had found what he wanted; and then bringing out his suggestion with a delicacy gauged for any degree of

author's sensitiveness. I had been brought up on a somewhat robust order of criticism, and sometimes rewarded his literary confidences with hard knocks, but he took them with unflinching sweetness. When he had written something good, some bit of dialogue that was incandescent with satiric humor, he loved it without shame, and came running with it as though it had miraculously befallen him, and so could be shown with no hampering thought of himself as the creator. He could be lyric in his appreciation of a scene just finished, describe it with adjectives that the vain would never dare utter aloud, no matter how glowingly they could whisper them in secret. And he could condemn, throw overboard, with the same liberality. His spirit was as sensitive as his body; but his work was quite deliberately lifted up out of the reach of all minor storms, and he cared about its integrity more than he cared about anything on earth — before the war came. He put it above, in front of, himself, as a parent might put a beloved child, wanting the applause for it, not for him. I remember, after the *première* of "The Little Teacher," I reproached him for not having made the customary author's bow in response to the prolonged demand from the audience. His explanation was so like him: "Well, the average person who does n't know writers has a sort of glorified idea of them; there's a touch of fairy prince about it so long as he stays a mystery. Suppose I had come out there before the footlights, with no paint on, looking like an ass — don't you see how disillusioning it would have been?" Whether audiences really cherish these romantic ideas of their hidden purveyors of entertainment, I am not so sure; but Harry always imputed to people in

general high ideals, lively fancy, and loving hearts, no matter how often he bumped against contradictory instances.

No doubt it was this willingness to leave his personal self out of it that kept him unspoiled when at last, after dire years of mishap, he reached that playwrights' Elysium — two plays running on Broadway. The public recognized the substance under the laughter, the serious comment on life from which all sound comedy must spring, and gave him a lavish response. And he loved it, and worked harder than ever, and was very happy, but kept his humorous serenity intact. The success in the box office was necessary and very pleasant, but he was a little bored if any one dwelt on that aspect. Money instantly became what he did with it, with no intermediate period of gloating, and a good half of all he received, that last year, was spent on the war work that was more and more absorbing his time and thoughts.

The winter of 1917-18 was a deepening one for all Americans. I remember his coming in in the autumn full of an encounter with death, and demanding that we should live in closer and simpler relation to it. A country neighbor having died, friends had gone in and "helped," with all that that implies, opening to Harry exalted possibilities of human brotherhood. He declared hotly that our repugnance to the vital facts was an artificial and unworthy thing, bred of cities, where the painful rites are done for us, and that such stark experiences left one closer and kinder to all mankind. Well, it is what men and women who once sheltered their sensibilities have been daily discovering over in France.

How Harry would have loved to go! His bodily in-

firmities made it unthinkable, but if his spirit could have gone, it would have done great things. The buoyancy that could say, "Just to live, some days, is to be drunk!" — the affectionate kindness that made "dear" a natural word from him to any friend, the passionate recognition of the greatness of the cause, would have made of him a torch for dark ways. He had missionary blood in his veins, a strong idealistic impulse, but he belonged to his times, and a good scent for realities kept him firmly on earth.

Our entrance into the war was a call instantly answered. He drilled with the home company in Connecticut, he tried to get into the wireless service, and finally, after study with Dr. John Bonsall Porter, of the Canadian Red Cross, undertook to introduce into the American Red Cross the use of sphagnum moss for surgical dressings. This bog growth, lighter, cheaper, and more absorbent than cotton, has long been known to the British medical service. Harry employed helpers, found and prepared the moss, arranged hospital demonstrations, raced to Washington at every chance of a hearing, and finally won out.

Thirty-seven, with a good appetite for life, and success, at last, soundly his; years of happy work were opening before him. It is good to turn back to something he wrote a friend, years before, after a devastating illness: "One thing I discovered from my hospital experiences, and that is, how easy it is to die. . . . Of course I have never seemed to have any dread of death, such as oppresses many people: I always contemplate it with equanimity: but I have supposed somehow that the actual experience would be hard; that in last hours one

would have a panicky clinging to life. I feel as if I had been through it actually, and had found out that it is only a happy — or rather, dispassionate — relinquishment." I hope that in that brief, last minute, as he renewed his discovery, he realized that he died in the service of his country.

LETTERS OF
HARRY JAMES SMITH

LETTERS OF HARRY JAMES SMITH

I

To HIS FAMILY

Cornwall Hollow

3 January, 1898

DEAR PEOPLE:

This long-dreaded first day of school teaching is finally over and you can bet your life I'm glad. I would not live it over again for twice a week's salary. Not that disaster has arrived, but still there *is* reasons.

This morning, after a breakfast of veal and pancakes, I got my load together (I could just get that blessed shawl-strap around it) and started off for the school. It is not very far; but it takes longer to get there when you have to plod through a foot or so of snow. I cannot say that one's first view of the schoolhouse prejudices him in its favor. The location, however, is charming. Just below there is a little pond and brook, at the left is a picturesque old sawmill, and at the right there is quite a stretch of field and hill. The building itself is in a grove. It was once painted whitish. The entrance is mostly worn out; there are remains of several old locks, knobs, and bolts on the door, and there are remains of innumerable kickings and knockings from the height of three feet down. . . .

Cold is no word for the air in the schoolroom when I

4 LETTERS OF HARRY JAMES SMITH

went in this morning. Booh! I tried to feel gay, and after I had worked for fifteen minutes trying to start the fire and then had it go out, I looked back to that time with pleasure. I then made a trip to the sawmill after "kindlers," and ten minutes after made another, and finally about twenty minutes of nine a feeble flame rewarded my protracted efforts. The wood is *green*. Two children had already come. You can imagine how carefully I nourished that flame! It finally decided to burn and by nine o'clock the stove was warm. The schoolroom does not need to be described except by Whittier. Only I think it is rather worse than the "ragged-beggar," even. . . .

In some way I lived through the day, though I was distracted to find something to busy the two little ones with. They spent a large share of the time doing nothing. Edith, what *can* I do for them? They cannot either write or read, and do not like to look at pictures. . . .

II

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Arichat, Cape Breton

18 August, 1899

MY DEAR MISS BASCOM:

This is a disagreeable rainy day and for the first time in several weeks it is fun to be indoors. I have a great liking for rainy days myself — you have a chance to do so many things that seem somewhat out of place if it's very fine weather, especially during vacation time. Now, to begin with, we all stayed in bed this morning until half-past nine, which is worse even than Sunday mornings at college. Our family is small just at present,

as four of us, father and mother and Edith and Roy, have gone up to Sydney through the Bras d'Or Lakes for a two or three days' trip; that leaves only five of us to keep up the reputation of "Sleepy Hollow," as the girls insist on calling our house.

They have been here about four weeks now and expect to leave a week from next Tuesday. I am sure they have all had a splendid time, and most of us are brown as can be. Only my small sister is somewhat afflicted, for she has n't browned nicely, but merely freckled, and that so violently that perhaps her face, too, might have a sort of general tanned appearance before she goes home.

Our principal excitements are rowing (pronounced rō-ing, though sometimes the other might suit) and playing golf. We have taken that up by ourselves and are all hugely interested. There is a great waste of land stretching back from the town inland for several miles, and we managed to find a place smooth enough to set out some links on, so now there are two or more of us up there most of the time. I think it is a fine game, only awfully hard, and I am positively the worst player in existence, but I am beginning to improve a little now and hardly ever miss striking the ball more than five times out of *six*.

It is very agreeable of you to take an interest in the geography and topography of this region — I generally find descriptions of that character decidedly dull, and so rarely undertake to write them, but since you ask me I shall be delighted to enlarge. Isle Madame is n't very big — just about seven by nine miles, I guess, with a very irregular coast-line; lots of little coves and harbors, you know, and long, rough capes, with now and then a

6 LETTERS OF HARRY JAMES SMITH

good sand beach. Arichat itself runs along one of the loveliest little land-locked bays you can imagine. There are moderately high hills all around it which have n't any trees on them at all, but are covered with beautiful turf and large bare rocks. I never get tired of admiring these hills — the greens are so lovely, and then there is just the little strip of houses along the water. When we want to go bathing we walk to a beach about two miles away which is quite exposed to the ocean, at a village called Barrassois. As you might fancy, the water is not very tepid; but such hardy people as I am enjoy it hugely. There are ever so many beautiful drives around, along the shore through small French settlements of such interesting names as Petit de Grat, Cap au Guet, D'Escousse, Poulamond, etc., and one keeps finding such quaint, foreign-looking little bits of scenery — sometimes two or three isolated, weather-beaten fisher-huts with a few old peasant women to set it off, and then always the sea behind. A good many of the old women wear a queer headdress which they call (if my spelling is correct) "Mouchoir à la petune." I wonder where it came from, and of what descent these people are anyway; but none of them can tell you, except that some had ancestors "dans la patrie." Their French is really not at all bad, though it varies very much in different localities. Here in Arichat there is a large convent school, where they have imported nuns, and I presume that that has kept up the quality a great deal. You would have no trouble in understanding a girl who has been educated at the convent, I am sure, and when a person gets used to it he can generally follow what the real "paysans" talk about.

I must tell you (before finishing my sixteen pages, which I have decided is a pretty good length for a letter) about a funeral I attended last week. There was a young French girl who lived two houses from us who was ill all the spring with some sort of consumption. She was n't any one whom I knew at all, but I have heard that she was a very nice girl, and a very pious girl, too. She died rather suddenly last week and we heard the next morning that the funeral was coming in two days. That day we were all off sailing, but when I came back toward night I found a black-bordered note waiting for me in which I was "respectfully requested to attend the funeral of Josephine Hortense L'Andry as mourner." You can imagine my surprise as well as my reluctance to accept, but since I was asked I thought I ought to. So I borrowed my brother's black trousers and some other suitable clothes and went over to the house at half-past seven the next morning. There were a large number of people about the door, but I walked in and took a little look into the room where the casket was. The room was almost dark, and the six tapers around the casket gave a strange appearance to the people in the room. There were four girls all in white (with veils) kneeling before the tapers; every one else was in black. The women were all praying and I felt strangely out of place, so I went on into a little back room where a large white band of muslin was tied around my left arm. There was quite a little delay before the procession was ready to start, but finally the Enfants de Marie — the women's society — came out, all with white ribbons diagonally over their shoulders, and took their place ahead of the wagon. Then the pall-bearers put in the casket and laid on the

8 LETTERS OF HARRY JAMES SMITH

pall — a real pall, mind you, of silver and black velvet — and the procession began to move. The four girls in white walked beside, and just behind was one decrepit old sea captain — the only chief mourner. Then came the other mourners, and behind walked the crowd which increased at every house. You can't imagine how strange and primitive it seemed, especially when the people we met on the street kneeled until we passed; and then the high requiem mass at the "chapel," and the services at the grave — it's too long to describe, and pretty hard, too, to make it sound picturesque, but I trust you have the idea. . . .

III

To HIS SISTER

Williamstown, Mass.

13 November, 1899

. . . This is a dark, gray afternoon. The mountains have lost almost all their foliage within the last few days and the whole landscape is very much changed thereby. I have a peculiar fondness for November and November scenery, though. There is a definite tone value to it, a sort of genre painting aspect, which it lacks at other times of the year, except perhaps in late winter. Things seem to go so well together and the whole has an individual character which one misses in summer, I think. Then, it is more heterogeneous — bunches of woods, and orchards, and all kinds of fields, and a different color to every tree. You get tired because it has so much variety; it's like the Boston Library with twenty different styles of decoration in as many rooms. Now everything is reduced to a few elemental features.

I think this is the reason why I love the scenery of Isle Madame so much and why I cannot imagine getting tired of it. . . .

IV

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Williamstown, Mass.

30 January, 1900

. . . In Boston, I went to see Modjeska in "Marie Antoinette." It was a question with me whether to see her or Mrs. Fiske, but as I had not read "Vanity Fair," I decided that Becky could "aller au diable," and chose Marie. And I for one shall never regret it. The acting was uniformly good, the accessories, especially one or two sceneries, were excellent, and Modjeska — well, I thought she was a queen. Even if she is a little old, she's certainly lost none of her artistic ability, and what a beautiful voice and such "air régale!" . . .

V

To HIS SISTER

Williamstown, Mass.

April, 1900

. . . I have been reading these last few days on outside history topics. Out of the list of fifteen or more I chose Henry IV of France (Henry of Navarre), and I am head over heels with interest in the subject. He was a most wonderful man — an ideal of generosity and kindness, a thorough statesman and an absolutely fearless warrior, honorable in his religion and yet twice a Catholic and twice Huguenot; most foolishly extravagant, dissolute, and fickle and selfish in his many love affairs

— certainly a unique combination of opposite qualities. With all the rest there's a naïveté and ingenuousness, a boyish simplicity about his character, that makes you love him in spite of yourself.

But this is not doing Psychology and I really must stop. . . .

VI

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Arichat, Cape Breton

17 July, 1900

. . . The trip up to Halifax was fine and calm and I was n't sick a bit. Of course, I was glad of that, in spite of the large added expense. Mon Dieu! how things cost on a steamer, and I had to take every meal but one — “two boiled eggs — 20 cts.,” and here in Arichat we are buying them for eleven cents a dozen.

From Halifax up to Hawkesbury I came by train in order to save another day of travelling by water. We started off with eleven cars and two engines and I guess every car was full. At any rate, I sat on the platform a good share of the morning very comfortably stationed on the wheel of the brake. I never saw anything like the way these Provincial trains go — crawling up a long grade as slow, almost, as a horse and cart, and then rushing down lickety-split, so that one has to hold on for dear life. It was good fun, though, and the scenery was beautiful — a fine, rural country with fields simply red with clover and large stretches of evergreen woods. And the names — how do you like these — Antigonish, Mer-igomish, Shubenacadie, and Cow Cove? . . .

VII

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Williamstown, Mass.

4 November, 1900

. . . Two weeks ago I was very busy over "Lit." work — another Acadian story. I had dreadful travail in giving birth to it and wrote and rewrote the descriptions, etc., until I loathed life, but once done I felt not a little satisfied with it. There is some typical Isle Madame in it — the road to Gros Nez which you never saw, but which resembles the road to Manche à Cochon, which you did see. Do you recall that ride of ours — the old man mending a net, the inevitable dog that barked, and the roadway finally merging into the long stony beach?

I fear I have n't given much of the true *tone* of the scenery in my descriptions, but I attempted a little genre painting and I shall be sorry if it's no good at all.

The plot is almost nil. A young fellow, an American, — let us say you, — appears at Gros Nez. You enter into converse with an old weather-beaten fisherman who talks with fond pride of his little boy (how I wish one could represent that pronunciation of old Maxime's, "dhe leetle bah-ee," without appearing too much to seek local color and pathetic mood), which latter is working in Boston, rich, rich, and well-dressed, and with an easy job at a hotel, etc. He takes you into the little house where old Lizette with ready volubility enlarges on the wealth and grandeur of Amédée's position. So often she thinks of him, poor little woman, on the dreary winter nights and says many prayers for the little boy so far, so far —

After which goo-goo you offer to call on Amédée in Boston, and bid adieu to Gros Nez.

Amédée, when unearthed, turns out a smug, ten-cent-diamond town-man, who speaks of his forbears as quaint old duffers, and wonders at the possibility of anybody's living at such a place as Gros Nez. "But of course they're used to it and I suppose they enjoy it in their way. They've never seen anything of life, you know"; and with a compassionate shrug still moving his metropolitan shoulders we shuffle Mr. Amédée Brown (no longer Le Brun) off the stage.

As for Arichat, the little place seems scarcely changed from when you and I were there together four years ago. Some differences there are — the town does not appear so decrepit as it was then, there are certainly fewer unoccupied houses, and in general the houses are thriftily kept and more than ever adorned with Washington geraniums. The willows in front of the Eyrie (as we called the house this year) have grown fast and now almost totally obscure it from the street.

Madame Galland has a piano which Evangeline, now a great, strapping girl, freckled, and coquettish beyond all hope, vigorously pounds by the hour, particularly whenever she fancies you may be listening. She can play the "Water-Lily Polka," and "Casket of Roses Waltz" without losing count more than once to a line.

As for Madame, she is undeniably older, but from no fault of hers, and when you see her of a Sunday, well tricked out with false hair and artificial blush, she is the same audaciously pert and vivacious little woman. The "old woman" is tumble-down and pretty nearly wrecked. Her teeth are all gone and her face is scarce seen for the obscuring wrinkles. She still limps about dejectedly, and often when passing the house I have caught her haggard,

lifeless face peering at me cannily. . . . Old Captain Babin prates as ever of Lafayette and the French, while Madame Babin welcomes you in with the inevitable "you must excuse." . . .

VIII

To HIS SISTER

Williamstown, Mass.

21 March, 1901

. . . I have been reading Robert Burns this week and with big fun. He keeps disappointing you — so superficial and selfish; but there's a musical and pathetic value in his poems that makes you feel them truly. I wonder how much of this is due to the Scotch and how much is real inside worth that would bear an English dress. . . .

The fellows are wanting me to take the leadership of the Senior Bible Class for next year and I am trying to decide just now what is right in the matter. I wish that I could talk it over with you, but as the election comes next Sunday I don't see how I can arrange it. I guess, though, that I shall make up my mind to do it. Rowland, who has just been elected President of the Y.M.C.A., had the same questions about accepting that place that I have in regard to this; but I don't believe one makes a mistake in taking a leading place in religious affairs if he acknowledges frankly to those who choose him that he's not very much settled in his own beliefs and could n't define where he does stand. I think, though, that I am gradually going over to what you might call extreme liberalism. Certainly I look at almost every subject differently from what I did Freshman year.

. . . The meeting for the election of the new "Lit." board comes Saturday and the meeting for the next matter in mind comes, I suppose, Wednesday, so by the time I next write you I shall either be chairman and a candidate for the Gargoyle or I shall be still plain H. J. S. '02, with plenty of pride left to keep up appearances and to make people think that he does n't much care after all. . . .

IX

To ROWLAND HAYNES

"Bonniebrae," Berlin

30 December, 1901

. . . I believe I said to you that I did n't expect to get very much out of my visit in New York. Well, I was a darn Willy to say so and never was more mistaken in my forecasting. I shall always remember the three days at the Settlement as a most valuable and helpful period. The best of it was that I was n't preached to at all, but seemed to be expected to take a hand in the work as I had leisure to do so; and when I had a long, thoughtful talk with Mr. White, the head-worker, — who, by the way, is a corker, — he seemed to know just my difficulties and how to help me. So I had an afternoon in the Penny Provident Bank sticking on stamps and taking in pennies and dimes from small dirty fists — "Please sir, me sister sent tin cints for hern, and me brudder ain't goin' to put in none this week, an' I've got seven," etc. — and that evening I helped (in an insignificant way) at a Neighborhood Ball in the Assembly Room. A couple of mornings I went round calling with my sister on some very poor and

dirty families where I gained a somewhat new idea of what real charity and brotherliness are.

. . . You will be glad to hear that I have got the "Lit." off to press minus a story which I shall send in to-morrow. I never realized what a moral strain it would be to do any work of that kind at home. I went at it desperately, savagely, profanely, Christmas afternoon and got it done — all except my own part thereof. Yesterday I closeted myself in the third story with a pad, pen, and some frog-in-my-throats, and swore I should produce something before another sun set. Then I began looking out of the window and thinking how lovely Mother Earth appeared in her blanket of fog. Then I wondered what the little seeds were doing under the ground, and then lastly I began to think of you — which, of course, was "nice," but not at the time helpful. Well, anyway, eventually I really did get down to work, and now several yellow sheets of closely written "drule" are waiting to be shipped off. I really feel sort of ashamed to use what I have done, for it is not very good, but, really, I could n't let our January issue have only two stories and one of them worse than mediocre.

I concluded last evening that there was no use in my delaying my decision as to the future any longer, for I saw no reason to doubt my own sincerity and, I believe, my real desire to put myself where I can serve Jesus Christ best in the world. And so I very prosaically concluded to train myself with a view to entering the ministry, feeling that in this field there is the greatest need of workers and that wherever it may seem best for me eventually to work I shall somewhere find opportunities for fullest self-expression and largest usefulness. I truly

believe that I have decided this matter right. You know that I have tried to hard enough, and if wrongly, why, some day perhaps I'll find it out. . . .

X

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Williamstown, Mass.

30 January, 1902

. . . The winter up here has been glorious of late. I often go out to walk alone on the hills and I hardly know anything I enjoy more, unless it be walking with some one else, like you, to whom I can speak at once and without preamble the things that are closest to me or to whom there is no need to speak at all if the silence seems pleasanter. But I am often surprised and a little ashamed of myself that, when out alone during the glorious dimming of a winter day, I persist in thinking about such trivial things. I do not want to, nor is the impression of the experience afterward a thing of trivialities, but momentarily there seems to be nothing worth while in my mind at all. I very rarely think beautiful things except when definitely trying to express them in one way or another and I mourn to admit it. I am curious to know whether it is so with you or not.

. . . I have been most hugely interested in reading Stevenson of late. Just now I am engaged upon his letters and have lost my heart completely. Have you read them? They have the most refreshingly personal flavor, are often shockingly informal and outspoken, and they give you a comprehension of the man that I am sure nothing else, saving personal intimacy, could possibly do. . . . His literary style m'a tout à fait ravi le cœur, I

know not where in English one may find greater charm and gracefulness of form, sometimes possibly a least bit *recherché*, but not often. . . .

. . . I have just been reading a book or two of the "Faëry Queen" over again. What a poem that is! Where else shall you find such pure music — liquid, fluent, gorgeous! I am now going to begin on "Paradise Lost" and see how five or six years have changed my attitude toward that. . . .

XI

To ROWLAND HAYNES

Williamstown, Mass.

14 October, 1902

. . . I find the work here in the Biological Laboratory much pleasanter than I feared. I am going to enjoy the most of it I know, and I feel very glad to be able to say that with so much of certainty. I need not detail my affection for Dr. Kellogg. Ça va sans dire, because I've often said it before. He is treating me white. Most of my work so far has been collecting frogs, hydras, etc., and reading up on protozoa, etc. This is not exceptionally easy, but on the whole not uncongenial, and I have found time to "read around" more or less and definitize my notions in regard to the work I want to do for my Master's degree. I have already registered: yet the details of my major work are not all settled. It will include the modern theories of heredity (Darwin, Galton, Brooks, Weissmann), work in Huxley, Andrews, and A. R. Wallace, and possibly some more Darwin. That is a good set of men to know.

For my minor I have "The Psychological Basis of

Religion." There are three books to read, I believe, Everett, William James, and some one else — not Starbuck. I doubt whether this will do me any good, but it may prove interesting. What I mean by "doing me good" is, of course, helping me to settle any religious doubts. I am getting pessimistic in that regard and am beginning to think that probably I had better not plan to enter religious work as a life business. The book that has just brought home to me the logical results of my attitude toward the Gospel question — I mean the attitude of frank criticism and the rejection of what appears unreasonable or inconsistent — is Huxley's "Science and Christian Tradition." Have you read it? . . .

XII

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Williamstown, Mass.

24 November, 1902

. . . My minor subject is "The Psychological Basis of Religion," and it is on that that I am now expending the whole of my spare time. The best of it is that I do believe that I am beginning to get some definite and sensible help from this study. It opens up a field of thought which is, in the main, quite new to me, and which seems to reach out to a vague and but half-graspable beyond, in which Mystery and Ultimate Truth seem to unite into one, and that one an inclusive and an interpretative basis of the highest understanding of the All. This is a dark saying and you will soon be accusing me of arrant mysticism if I indulge in many more after its kind. I cannot now more clearly definitize my view, it only means a new conviction in me of a meaning in

things and a divine in things and in us, a "divine" not passive and only subjectively construed; but active and offering us an attainable converse or communion with it. This may not be a permanent conviction with me. I do not yet feel sure of myself to such an extent that I can assert any "thus and thus" of my future states, but if it does stay, and bear critical investigation as well as the inevitable dark hours, it will mean more than I can express in written characters. . . .

XIII

To HIS FATHER

Williamstown, Mass.

17 May, 1903

. . . But now that I no longer contemplate the ministry, the estimation which I give to credendo is once more with me where I think it ought to be; in other words, not a matter which I consider vital. I am willing that any man should believe what he wants to so long as his heart is right; so long as brotherly love, and service and charity, duty and kindness are to him the best things in the world: so long as he is willing to follow the clear shining of the ideal — his ideal — wherever it may lead him. . . .

XIV

To HIS FAMILY

S.S. Rotterdam, 25 June, 1903

DEAR PEOPLE:

Eight days at sea and fifty hours still ahead! Myself, fat, glistening, and happy, and quite dedicated (privately) to the life of a sea-rover or a pirate. Really

this is too good to be true. I always knew it would be glorious if you could only be sure of sea-legs and a good nautical appetite; and that's exactly what I've had every minute of this trip. Never a touch of sea-sickness from the start until now, and as for eating — my palmiest days in Arichat would not bear comparison with my record on the Rotterdam. The weather has been pretty good all the way — I should have said "very good" if the report posted in the corridor did not have three days labelled "rough" and another "high-swell," and if our passage had not been slower than usual owing to strong head winds. Every day goes by almost the same as every other, consequently I presume that a day's programme will be able to give you an idea of my present existence as well as anything else. After which I will add modifying phrases and comments.

Our stateroom is delightfully well ventilated. I have one of the top berths, and the wind stirs in my hair all night long. The consequence is that despite there being four souls (with bodies attached) in the space whose dimensions in the rough I have already given you, I sleep like a nut all night long, dreaming of home (of course) and the dear faces gathered about the Sunday dinner.

. . . There is the queerest of queer composites in this second cabin. The bulk of the crowd is German — regular Rhineland Sauerkrauters, who talk in high, unmusical voices with sharp intonations and make an indescribable hubbub during meal-time. A number of little fry add to the din with squalls and shouts.

Another element in the cabin is fifteen or twenty students, mostly Americans. We like some of them very much. Hollanders and Austrians there are, and others

whom it is impossible to classify. On the whole, it is a very good-natured and jolly crowd, and in my judgment far more interesting sociologically than anything the first cabin has to offer. . . .

And now I must tell you of two acquaintances we have made. A Mademoiselle Meyer, and a Mademoiselle de la Tour, both Swiss girls who teach French in Pittsburgh — refined and witty and good to look at, and thoroughly French, with the most charming accent; it is a treat to know them and talk with them. Also it is very fortunate for our own welfare (my own especially), as it means the opportunity of brushing up conversational French. These last days we have spent a good deal of our time with them and the time has gone very pleasantly indeed. We sit clear up on the top deck (the boat deck) where the second-classers are also allowed a little space, and there in the wind and the sun, with the slow, easy roll of the ship under you, one can be as happy as mortal man can wish to be. I want nothing better and, if it were not that I am in a tremendous hurry, now that the end is near, to get really ashore and to be doing something, I could wish it should continue indefinitely. My steamer rug is the greatest thing for comfort that ever was, and wrapped up in it and a raincoat and a sweater, one can be happy for a short piece of eternity.

I have read one two-volume novel, Dumas's "Queen Margot," which is the best thing for lazy days I ever got hold of, and Stevenson's "Master of Ballantrae," which ends up with fine gore and carnage, and Sir Thomas Browne's "Religio Medici." . . .

I want to thank Alice and Faith for their good letters which I received about ten minutes after mailing the

note from the wharf. The gum is all chewed, and Faith's loving hopes and picturesque imaginations in regard to my seamanship all miscarried.

Pity now poor sister Faith,
Faded to a tenuous wraith,
All the hopes she hoped for Harry
Fated sadly to miscarry;
For upon the deck sits he
Stomach-full and bright of blee.

It was more fun than I ever imagined it would be to find a nice bunch of steamer letters at the boat. Bess and Wilhemena both wrote me, and several others besides, not to speak of those from my own hearthstone which I have already mentioned. . . .

XV

To HIS SISTER

Huelgoāt, France

11 July, 1903

. . . We have been most fortunate in finding nice, clean places to stay, good beds, delicious things to eat, and economical charges. This French cooking — ah! it is easier to live the life of the spirit after one of these fat dinners.

Next to food in position, but only in that, in everything the most magnificent sights I have ever seen, are these great, soaring, poetic cathedrals, full of mystery and grace and fervor and ambition, full of the grotesque and fantastic, full of shadows and glittering, colored glass like a great setting of jewels — oh! how they take you right close to the hearts of those old, unwritten

centuries, when men built their flesh and spirit into vocal stone! And each one — save some of the tawdry things at Rouen — has its own glorious individuality: some are benign and gracious; others are austere and warlike; others, like that stupendous and uncompleted pile at Beauvais, speak of towering ambition, as futile as that of the builders of Babel. Just imagine that sheer spring of the columns, over a hundred and sixty feet, straight from the floor, with windows fifty-five feet high under the vaulting, every line, every mass, aspiring upward right toward the sky — the effect is overpowering. One readily forgives them for having tried to do beyond their power; their failure is n't a failure after all, but a successful embodiment of those overreaching ideals of the children of men, which ordinarily are still-born, or never born at all. Yet from a worldly-wise point of view it's as big a failure as you can imagine, needing attention and expenditure, the stone lacework crumbling and breaking, the little pinnacles set at dizzy heights on the flying buttresses and towers, literally washing away; from the outside and close to, the whole mass gives you a feeling half of terror, it's so dizzily high and so boldly poised on its massive piers. I wonder that Beauvais is not better known: in its way I never want to see anything better.

This is enough of rhapsody for once. It makes me feel indescribably small and childish to babble on without any tempering of language; but when you really feel things, you know, why, you have to say what you think if you say anything at all! I hate these people so filled with scientific precision and self-conscious criticism that they can't enjoy a thing with a real enthusiasm. I tell

24 LETTERS OF HARRY JAMES SMITH

H—— that he's running great danger of killing his own imagination through his passion for accurate thought and his introspective self-repression. Emotion may be only feeling, and may not be the straightest guide for conduct; but in it, at any rate, lie the *springs* of conduct and the sense of values in life, and I am of the opinion that reason can hardly claim a genuine priority, much as we insist upon making for it a factitious one and in imagining that we act by it. . . .

XVI

To MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

Tours, Indre et Loire, France,

23 July, 1903

. . . K. W. makes the best sort of a chap to knock about the world with, almost always in the finest good-humor and as generous and thoughtful as any one can be. And then we both of us like the same sort of things, and it is n't necessary to be making sacrifices for each other all the time, which may be very lovely, but is n't much fun in vacation. I am not sure whether you would keep me longer for a friend if you could see some of the little holes we have put up at on the way, or some of the weird people we have made the acquaintance of. But really, it's delicious — all the hotels that are mentioned in our Baedeker's we cross off at once as being ineligible on account of expense; besides, we are sure to find English people at them almost everywhere, and that's a species of animal we wish most extremely to avoid. Then we rummage about the city until we find some nice-sounding name hung out over an unpretentious or dilapidated

front, such as, "The Golden Hen," or, "At the Gilt Angel," or "The Three Grocers," and then Karl goes in and in his prettiest French makes inquiries about prices — from without, where I guard the wheels, I hear him trying the same jocosities and imagine the same smiles — and then we put our machines in the parlor or the hen-roost or — possibly, if there is one — the barn, and we toil up to our room and scrub our faces and feel like a pair of gilt-edged Jacks. As a rule we have found the very best sort of things to eat and I need not tell you that we have made the most of our opportunities. And in spite of our forty or fifty miles a day, I am growing stoutish, not to mention fat. How do I know it? Because I can't fasten my belt where I used to. Sure proof. . . .

We spent that night at the little town of Barbizon; a great resort for landscape artists. The hotel was full, but the landlady gave us a room in the house of an old peasant dame. We got to talking with her and found that she had been intimately connected with the Millet family, that is to say, she had nursed his nine children. She told us all sorts of interesting anecdotes about the artist and his poverty, and we were more than reconciled to the odors of stale boiled cabbage that colored the house. Besides, my bed was very clean and comfortable and I slept well.

XVII

To ROWLAND HAYNES

Amiens, France

3 September, 1903

. . . Really this summer over here has been the experience of my life. I do not say that I have "grown"

or "broadened" perceptibly — but there's always a zest in enjoying the fruit of one's labors, and that honest taste I've had in my mouth with every mouthful of France. But that's not all: these tremendous old cathedrals are the greatest things I ever dreamed of and to have been for a brief time in their presence is worth a very great deal.

. . . And then just the fun of it. Bowling along lovely, well-kept roads for weeks with always something new and interesting just ahead and always something pleasant to remember just behind, — yes, that's a good sort of vacation and I shall hereafter recommend it to thin and overworked intellects. Some day I hope I may see you again and then I shall have many things to tell you and also an inconceivable number of postal cards to exhibit. . . .

XVIII

To THE SAME

Cambridge, Mass.

29 November, 1903

. . . The two weeks I was at Marblehead Neck with Alice were the happiest of my year — long, sunny, autumn days spent on the rocks beside the break of the waves. We read and talked and sung and indulged in occasional quarrels for variety, and the freedom from responsibility or from definite occupation was most refreshing. And best of all was the fact that little Harry was well not only in soul, but in body. Think what it means to me, after sixteen years! I rejoice and be glad over it all the days of my life. Was it Europe? or was it pills? or was it mere preordination? Ça ne me regarde

pas — I am *well*. “One thing I know, that whereas once . . .”

I came up here the first of October, and have not been beyond Boston, except twice to Beverly and over to the Dartmouth-Williams game. But my life has not lacked variety. I have spent a good deal of time in Boston at the theatres, at lectures, and museums, and upon the crowded streets rubbing shoulders with the sons of men. My work here is not easy, but, for the most part, thoroughly enjoyable.

. . . As regards the drama I am becoming exceedingly enthusiastic. The instructor is not only a student, but also a practical actor, thoroughly acquainted with stage technique and with all the tricks of dramatic presentation; he *makes* you enthusiastic; you feel as if you should like to devote your life to so noble an art, to face the obloquy and persecution of the proper world and to see what you could do in the development of a worthy national drama. Don't you think that is my mission? I am going to all the good plays I can afford (“rush seats” do for me) and am observing the field intently. I am anxious to see considerable *melodrama*, for I believe that that is to be the source of any dramatic renaissance that may come: but as I can get no one to go with me I have as yet confined my study in that direction to “Sky Farm” and “Old Kentucky.”

. . . We are very well situated here. Eliot and I have two upper chambers, comfortable enough for a working life, though hardly comparable to my Jerusalem Chambers of last year. Stuart and Homer are right near by, and as our work is exactly the same, we are together a great deal, studying and criticizing each others' themes

and discussing ultimate significances with such zeal as would delight dear G——'s soul.

XIX

To THE SAME

63 Gorham Street, Cambridge

16 April, 1904

. . . I do not know, I am sure, how you would like Harvard. I know nothing about the spirit in the graduate school, as I admit to having lived with no catholicity of interests this year, and am hardly acquainted with a dozen men in Cambridge outside of my eating-table crowd. There are things which I dislike very much, indeed, as, for example, the "beer nights" of all college organizations.

But the English department is, from my point of view, *everything* that one could ask, and I do not see, for myself, how I could have been more suitably and happily situated than I have been here. I find more satisfaction in my work than I ever expected I should be able to find, and I believe that I shall always remember this year as the happiest so far in my life. This has been bought with a price; but I can look myself squarely in the face and reiterate that I do not think I have shunned the other part for the worse. Do you understand what I mean when I say deliberately that I do not think the knowledge of truth is the greatest thing in the world? What I *mean* by that sentence fairly well differentiates my present spiritual state from that of my senior year in Williams, and we may put the chiefest shifting point in the centring of my ideal interests, at Christmas to Easter of 1903. The goggles through which I now see life are really different. . . .

XX

*To HIS SISTER**Oberlin, Ohio**31 October, 1904*

... Yesterday every minute evaporated into vanity, and to-day — theme-correctors have to be interviewed, castigated, investigated, inspired, one after another through the morning. All the rest of the time, save an hour of golf, has gone to getting ready a lecture to my freshmen. I have two more to get together, but they will not be so hard as some, since the class is just beginning on the early drama in England and I can talk a good deal out of my head. Last week, two lectures on Spenser nearly put an end to me. I thank "whatever gods may be" that Spenser lasts not ever, that I need raise him never — but Una, Archimago, Duessa, Sansjoy, Sansloy, and the Dragon may all go to bed and to sleep. My crowning work in Spenser was a comparison of him and Bunyan; and I think I hit fairly square on this, too; — why Spenser is poet, and poet first and last, the begetter of an ideal world peopled with substanceless, dreamlike personages, moved never with a wave of passion or real dramatic emotion.

... This Freshman work, although it does bring visible returns, simply destarches one, leaves one limp and flaccid. Everything depends on the instructor; he has to shoulder the weight of an uninterested class and carry them away bodily; if you get their attention it is by sleight of hand, chameleon changes of plan, attitude, humor. I cuddle now, now I exhort, now rage leoninely — and the circus-game keeps them tolerantly entertained.

To THE SAME

Oberlin, Ohio

29 January, 1905

. . . Thank you for your very sweet note which said just what I hoped you would feel able to say about my somewhat fantastic plans. I feel sure that I am following after my star: if it proves a will-o'-the-wisp, worse luck to me; but I shall have done my best without fear or reproach and I don't think that is ever mean or wrong conduct. And after all, what difference does it make whether most people understand and approve: it's *my* life, and I had better invest it where the promises of ultimate joy seem the greatest.

The Freshmen like me — which is a comfort, but I find — miserable one that I am — that it is n't enough to make me contented. I feel that I am really almost throwing away the year — just work, work, work, and never a chance to think or to cultivate my soul or to write a line of verse or prose. At the end of the year I shall be just where I was at the beginning, only older and skinnier and more disagreeable and less enthusiastic. And what shall I do *then*? I think that when my fates gave me the opening last summer I was a fool not to take it. In other words, it is by pretending not to care and by attempting to think about something else that I manage to grin and be jolly. My vitals are all wrong. You probably knew this already. Anyway, it is rather superfluous for me to say it. Only now and then it's a satisfaction to stop bluffing.

I am just lecturing now on the English Drama — my own sweet specialty — and I think sometimes the class

sweep along with me, genuinely delighted. I keep them down to earth, however, with weekly twenty-minute tests, which make them gnash their teeth. And we are now reading "Othello," and next week I give them a lecture of my own on Middleton's plays, about which I think I can talk pretty well.

XXII

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Oberlin, Ohio

6 February, 1905

DEAR OLIVER:

I can't tell you how very welcome your letter was to me, coming as it did in the midst of renewed trouble with my eyes, and bringing a kind of spiritual enthusiasm that I was momentarily in great need of. Your work as you describe it sounds interesting: it must be splendid practice, if nothing else, to be at work on bodying forth ideas in concrete expressions. I suppose that until fortune gives us the chance to work out our ideals along our own lines, we must follow somebody else's line, and, making a species of compromise, attempt to content ourselves therewith. It is not a nice-sounding doctrine; but I believe that in the corrupted currents of this world, it is inevitable, if we would live; and what is inevitable is right. Next year I shall probably learn this bitterly: for I am going in search of the Golden Fleece to the end of the world. I think it is the only wise thing for me to do; until I have tested my literary ability I can't estimate it; and in this eternal teaching work, in itself interesting and helpful, there is no chance at all, nor do I see any prospect of there being one, to think

and work and branch out into extraneous production. Accordingly I have concluded to throw over my prospects of pedagogical advancement and to hunt for employment in New York. Even if it's sweeping out restaurants I shall still have some hours for writing and thinking. I venture to believe that I am more or less foolish; but that is part of the attraction, the fatal attraction, of the scheme. . . . Either because I have dabbled in the fatal pool, or because I do genuinely hear the call to the work — it is hard to say which — I cannot down in myself an insistent and commanding desire or passion to create something beautiful. I could die at the foot of a masterpiece and be happy in dying, if that masterpiece were my own — my own final contribution and message to the world. It attracts me far more than any dreams of heaven-bliss ever did; the impulse is so strong in me to set to work that I can hardly wait for the laggard months to crawl by. . . .

XXIII

To THE SAME

Oberlin, Ohio

6 March, 1905

. . . I must say, rather shamefacedly, that I never could make myself read much of Charles Wagner. I suppose it is because I am a little bit too tumultuous myself, that I love the rush and vivid realities of life too intensely; all its dramatic, flame-colored moments make me tingle; Coleridge puts my head in a whirl, and Wordsworth I read when I have to. (Shame, thrice shame!) "L'Ami" makes me irritated, instead of calm. I have more liking for Zola's "L'Assommoir" than for

Emerson's essays. All of which is self-revelation rather than self-defence. Here, I say, I am, with forty or fifty years ahead — and then a blank. Let me then make absolutely the most out of these years, let me know life, let me make each day add to my sum of experience, let me tingle to the finger tips — *c'est ça en peu de mots les idées qui m'attirent sans relâche. . . .*

. . . By the way, do you know Shelley? In some respects he has recently become my favorite poet. He is a man who will never be popular, and a man whose work is almost always marred by faults, but there is an inextinguishable aspiration, a flaming devotion to the idea, in him, that kindles one's blood. I have just been taking one of my classes through "Prometheus Unbound." They could not, of course, understand it; but it was a kind of elixir to me. And "Adonais" seems to me both in language and sentiment far ahead of "Lycidas." My class panted and died when they came to "Adonais"; it was more than I could do to make them study it. One really needs a background of years of poetic training before one can reach up with pleasure into the lambent atmosphere of such work. . . .

XXIV

TO MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

Oberlin, Ohio

11 March, 1905

. . . The time is going by with a rush and I am glad of it. I am in such a hurry to have the year end, and to go chasing will-o'-the-wisps, that I rejoice as I pull off each laggard sheet from my calendar.

But when these first spring days come, with blue-and-white sky and robins hopping about the sidewalks, oh, but I wish I were in Williamstown! I dreamed about it last night — up on Northwest Hill, above the place where we met Mr. Tibbets — looking off against the western range — it was glorious. This tame, flat, muddy country has its good points, I suppose. There is a walk out the railroad I take almost every day — just sky, and sunset, and long, open stretches of dark fields; it has a kind of expansiveness that is impressive — but when one thinks of Berkshire, all this becomes insipid and commonplace. . . .

XXV

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Oberlin, Ohio

12 March, 1905

DEAR OLIVER:

Your letter came most opportunely at a time when it counted for all it was worth, when I was feeling a little hungry to have some one say, "I think I understand what you want to do; if that's the case, then go ahead, and with 'brief thanksgiving thank whatever gods may be' that you have dreams and half-caught visions. Follow after them and let the world wag." I have not regretted my decision a single day, but sometimes, when I am tired, I feel the "impudence" of it more than at other times. Most of the time I rejoice at the rapidity with which the days skip by — each one brings me nearer the kind of freedom I need. Here my thoughts and daily energies are inevitably wrapped up in my work; it is only in my hastily taken leisures — when I

lie down for twenty minutes to rest my eyes, or when I go out to walk by myself and follow, as I almost invariably do, a long, solitary line of railroad track that runs through a desolate open land straight up against the sunset — it is at such times that I feel very keenly that I am shackled by this eternal effort of the classroom. I do like the work; it is splendid to feel that, even in a feeble and clumsy way, you are helping somebody, perhaps many people, to enjoy what is best worthy of enjoyment, and to recognize the value of a life for ideals; yet all the time you feel that you must think and live and write out your own message. I am beginning to feel that I have one. I may be incompetent to express it — that's where the big risks lie — but I can only judge myself after I have given myself a fair test, and that's what I never can achieve so long as my days and nights are given to teaching and the like. . . .

XXVI

To HIS MOTHER¹

Oberlin, Ohio

1 August, 1905

. . . I think it is particularly hard for our family to say to each other what they really feel, especially when they feel very deeply. There are lots of things I should like to tell you if I only could, but they won't quite go down on paper. . . .

For your sake I wish that we came nearer to realizing father's and your ideals for us. I hope that the every-day proofs of our love for you that we can give will in some degree take the place of the more complete and perfect

¹ Written after the death of his father.

sympathy that we all long for, but seem unable quite to reach.

. . . My faith is not of the same kind as his or yours, and I know that it must always seem to you of a lower order, but for all that it *is* faith, and a faith by which I live, and which I hope some day will have been proved to bring forth effectual fruit.

I have only said these — perhaps untimely things — because I could n't bear to let you think that I did n't realize the added loneliness that may come to you because of these — possibly less fundamental than we think — differences between us. It certainly makes it somewhat harder all around; but in everything is n't it necessary to be willing to trust each other where we can? . . .

XXVII

TO MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

3 South Elliott Place
Brooklyn, 1 December, 1905

DEAR COMRADE:

I cannot break news gently, I blurt it out in the first mouthful. I've had a story accepted by the "Atlantic," and that's absolutely the first bit of good luck I've had yet. It *is* good luck, though, isn't it? and I feel prodigiously clever to have landed a thing there of all places for a beginner.

I tell you this is real living down here — almost an excess of it. I've done a lot of work, and I'm not ashamed of it either; but it does n't seem to be any go; and I have been brought to see that I can't ever learn to do the kind of work the "popular" magazines want. That's quite a

disappointment; for I had rather counted on doing pot-boilers for them. I can see myself, though, that the things I have written for that purpose don't deserve to succeed — even with "Everybody's."

The other things — the good things — I believe will find a place some day, even if they have to be brought out posthumously by loyal relatives; and I am more or less resigned to the obvious truth that it does n't pay to be in too much of a hurry.

For the last few weeks — being in a desperate way financially — I have been hunting for a job: but as yet unsuccessfully. Armed with letters of introduction I first made the round of the magazines and publishing-houses. When that was over I resolved to follow the counsel of friends and make a plunge into newspaper-reporting — for the sake, as they said, of the practice and experience. Thus resolved I went the merry-go-round of all the dailies and emerged — ready for burial. Since then for the last week or two I have been at work on Sunday specials and the like — without success.

However, that's all a part of the game, and in the midst of all my woe, I've been glad every day that I was alive. It may be a bit disappointing, but at the same time it's keenly interesting — there's so much variety and vividness in the thing.

I want to tell you all about the rest of my career, which has been full of adventures and discoveries; but I have n't any business to take the time now, in view of the fact that I am at work on a "special" — a masterpiece which I am sure ought to break the editor's heart.

It will be the greatest fun in the world to see you again, and you need n't have a moment's question about my "having time" to be social. It is understood, of course, that you prefer threadbare suits on the backs of your men friends.

I've been living a life of sweet obscurity for once in my life; not a soul to care whether I go or come, an irresponsible and unknown atom. I should n't choose it, I guess, forever, but for a while I like the sensation. I don't believe a dozen people know my address. . . .

XXVIII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

3 *South Elliott Place*

Brooklyn, 2 April, 1906

DEAR JEAN:

It was good of you to let me know of your gratification over my promotion to a "legitimate" position [on the "Atlantic Monthly"], even if your feelings had some qualification of disappointment in them that it was outside of Manhattan. For myself, I confess that I hate to leave this ugly but glorious city, for which I have a quite unreasoning affection. Aside from Paris, which is beautiful as well as glorious, I don't believe I could ever like any city so much — its superb energy, its startling contrasts, its infinite variety, they all keep one's perceptions alert and vivid. However, the comfort remains that New York will still be here for me to return to when the time comes. . . .

It is also a little late to discuss further the Oberlin decision, except that you will see my virtual agreement with your judgment in the matter. What you probably

can hardly feel as I do is my consuming desire to do efficient and contributive work, and to do nothing of which I cannot feel justly proud. I have a horror of being ineffectual, and an equal horror of being second-best among those with whom I am working. I know so well my unusual faculty for teaching-work that the assured reputation and authority I should soon win in that field appeal to me tremendously. But of that no more. My decision is made. And if I am to enroll myself among the second-best in another line — why, that's now in God's hands.

I had a delightful evening at the Belasco. Mr. Dean, the manager, was most agreeable and showed me all the mechanism of the stage; and after making the rounds with me, told me to pass the remainder of the evening wandering around as I chose. I spent most of my time on a lofty perch behind the proscenium arch, where I could see the front-stage and the audience through a little hole in the prop, and at the same time see all the bustle and contrasted activity behind the scenes — the wind-machines at work, the bagsful of white paper-clippings thrown behind the windows for snow, the firing of revolvers under carpeting for distant shots, etc. I will tell you a great deal more of this if you care to listen when I see you next. . . .

XXIX

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Boston, Mass.

8 May, 1906

. . . As it turned out, I did not leave New York until Monday, April 30, after all, sacrificing every ves-

tige of a home trip on the altar of reputation. I came through by boat — had a wonderful night under sailing moon and a thousand stars — and reached Boston in time for a decent appearance Tuesday morning. Every one at the office is marvellously agreeable so far, and I have found the effort of adjustment and acclimatization almost nugatory. My little private workroom looks out cornerwise across the ancient gravestones and fresh green turf of the Tremont Street burial-ground.

I spent the first three nights rather happily in Cambridge, but found myself at the end of that time quite ready to move into my newly adopted quarters in a beautiful, old-fashioned house just off Mount Vernon Street — three crooked flights up — a large front room with three windows, two of which look toward the river — look toward but do not quite see, because of a new-fangled apartment house recently set on the next street to profane the landscape.

. . . Louisburg Square — this whole hill with its beautiful old brick houses is a perennial source of joy to me; the sense of surprise after New York is not yet gone — and the silence of a Boston night seems almost guilty. . . .

XXX

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Boston, Mass.

24 May, 1906

. . . Yet *if* my opportunity is here, please God I have the willingness to take it with pious joy. And there are many compensations. To wit: the gardens, which are more beautiful than any I have ever seen elsewhere — just now a bewildering glory of pansies, azaleas, and

gilly-flowers — with locusts and wistaria making the air heavy with sweetness. Then there is an undeniable picturesqueness about “old” Beacon Hill — now, as you know, falling into a yellow decay — steep streets of ancient brick houses, with iron balconies and chimney-pots.

. . . Have you seen W. A. White’s new book “In Our Town” — a collection of Kansas sketches? It is a masterpiece of its kind, and its “manners” are done deliciously. I should like to do work which is as keen and at the same time as kindly, but my humor seems to run into the satirical a little too easily.

On my twenty-sixth birthday I incline to be serious, and to wonder, somewhat pensively, what the future conceals. I begin to see, though, that the satisfactions of life are not in having attained, but in the struggle and expectancy of attaining: and in that I can certainly find a great present joy. I have felt more this past year than ever before the real delight of adventure in life, the zest of playing hard and for high stakes. I realize, too, as I come back to Cambridge and mix once more with the men I used to know so intimately, that I have lived a great deal in the last two years. Beside them I feel like a prophet in Israel. . . .

XXXI

To HIS SISTER

Boston, Mass.

29 June, 1906

. . . I am sending you a little book of poems — “The Shropshire Lad” — of which I think I have spoken more than once. I am sure you’ll like some of the verses,

and I am almost sure that others of them you won't quite like: but, anyway, they all have the merit, if I'm not mistaken, of being interesting. And to my ear they sound refreshingly unaffected and sincere. . . .

XXXII

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Boston, Mass.

21 July, 1906

. . . These warm days I find so enervating that I am not attempting any original writing of my own. Furthermore, my eyes are doing well enough so that I make considerable time for reading of evenings. A play or two of Beaumont and Fletcher (how I enjoy these courtly rascals — and what poetry they do sometimes get off!); Pierre Loti's "Vers Ispahan," a volume of Persian travels and very delightful — like all Loti full of the senses — light and heat and desert reflections; and George Meredith's "The Egoist," which seems to me the finest piece of contemporary high-comedy I have ever read, delicate, keen as a scalpel, and urbane, — human, too, — more so than Flaubert by far, though without the latter's "composition" and concision. . . .

XXXIII

To THE SAME

Boston, Mass.

2 October, 1906

. . . My vacation in Cape Breton was good for me. I was out of doors almost all the time, picking fox-berries on Kavanaugh's Head, wandering out alone across the barrens (do you remember that tall, rocky

hill over the marshes toward Barrassois? — I sat on it all one afternoon) — or driving in the Jeans' jumpseat to Petit de Grat. The wonder and beauty — the poetry of that land! I think the spell of it for me will never lessen. More remote and unmodern than Brittany, and possessed of an undefined largeness and sweep which belong to the territories of the North — vague, extensive, mysterious. And the shift and marvel of the sea! If you could have seen it, brimming flush up to the sky on all sides, a glimpse here and a whole quarter there between Gros Nez and Cap le Rond — indigo, cærulean, opalescent, with a hint of all the spectrum flashing through its glittering and eternal metamorphosis: never the same, yet always itself — itself only through change. I never felt the life and strength of it so deeply — and the diminution, almost to the vanishing point of my own petty personality — or, rather, to be more accurate, the disappearance of any mere myself in the sense, overwhelming and effacing, of the whole — as if the me and the not me had lost their demarcations. The perspective in which I then envisaged my last five years was, as you may conceive, a new and illuminating one, such as to throw into prominence incidents, decisions, moments of apprehension which at the time had seemed insignificant enough.

. . . Sometimes it seems to me that I shall go mad here, my life is so without accomplishment of the kind I crave and have made sacrifices for. Week after week goes by, and still there is nothing to mark their passage save office work passably well done and, I hope, a gradually increasing accumulation of data and a truer vision in regard to life and its interpretation. Sometimes I think that I will throw over my job at the first oppor-

tunity, and once more give myself completely to my own chosen work: I would do better at that than before; yet I dread it and question the wisdom of it. . . .

I spent another Sunday, tramping over quiet and reposeful hills with my friend B——. He is to me an exceedingly interesting man, a sort of Olympian, with a vigorous, very masculine, and somewhat moody mind, which chafes so at compromises that it verges on atrabiliousness: a man who insults his friends without meaning to, and who is forgiven as a matter of course. He never talks unless he feels like it, and that sets me at ease with him: we can walk fifteen minutes without exchanging a word. After all, the man who really insults friendship is not the man who speaks without regard, but the man who speaks incessantly, as if all his feeblest and most trivial thoughts demanded your attention. . . .

XXXIV

TO MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

Boston, Mass.

1 December, 1906

. . . A few things have kept me straight: a cold bath every morning, a music lesson every week and the necessity of a certain time of diligent practice, and last, occasional evenings of (refined) gayety which I have indulged in not as much because I felt gay as because I needed a tonic. I have found a lovely little Italian restaurant, the Napoli, where we will dine when next you honor us with your presence. There have been a few nice shows, too, notably "Madame Butterfly" — Puccini's new opera — which I saw wonderfully well given. The music is full of unexpected and indescribable charm, and

in parts seems to me as marvellous as any opera-score I ever listened to — so full of atmosphere and color, the magic and fragrance of the East. The story is common and vulgar enough, but the setting was perfect — Fujiyama, and the Sea, and the Wedding Festival with scattered cherry blossoms, etc. . . .

Did you know that I turned down a chance to go back to Oberlin as associate professor? At the time the offer came I was feeling terribly disconsolate, and almost decided to throw up the game and go back; but something kept me from doing it. Perhaps my bad angel.

The whole episode, however, made me feel so clearly that I *had* made a sacrifice, and that that sacrifice was not for commercial success or for position, but for the chance I wanted to give myself of doing creative work, that I shall not be at all surprised if, before very long, now, I should give up this present work at H. M. & Co. and go back to free-lancing. I've *got* to get more time no matter what it may cost. I am not giving myself a fair chance: it's impossible for me to do my best when I spend seven hours a day in the office and can only do my own work when I'm tired and out of sorts. . . .

XXXV

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Boston, Mass.

7 December, 1906

. . . I begin to make the cowardly admission to myself that my friends must take me for what I am: and that, being dedicated to a consuming and relentless ambition, many of the most amenable and desirable things of life must be treated with less recognition than

they for their own sakes deserve. If I were only a little stronger, or my eyes a little more reliable, or if I did n't have to earn a living by the beads upon my brow — but, alas, compromise and concession seem the only *modus vivendi* — and even then my soul starves.

That story you wrote so pleasantly of, — “I hope it is now completed and well-marketed,” you said, — it was not even revised when your letter came; I could not possibly get it done until Thanksgiving week, labor with what zeal I might (and God knows I was almost sick of it!). The fortunate aspect of the matter, however, was that I sold it, the next day, to the “Atlantic,” and thus made enough to pay ten weeks' board bill and to go home over the holiday and to get a new suit of clothes. It's really a very pretty little story, I think: though I can't agree with Greenslet that it's the best I've done: it's too frankly frivolous, *trop pour rire*, to strike a very high number on the scale. “Thomas and his Isobel,” I christened it, finally — Thomas being the sentimental, pensive, and confidential little “tonorial artist” developed out of a mere sketch in an unsuccessful story I wrote you of last year, and Isobel, his unwilling and refractory sweetheart, being the graduate of a Commercial College, and possessed of many modern ideas. At the end they kiss and hug each other, which is eternally pleasant (I mean in a story).

. . . I suppose you are justified in thinking me a little thrifless: I hate to admit it, though. Actually I am bewildered by the constant demands upon my scanty hoardings — so much greater than when I lived frankly in Bohemia and had no state to maintain, no conventions to live up to. Now I have to dress, to live in a good

room, to eat at a respectable table, to make calls, to accept dinner invitations — and the fact that I loathe the whole ruck of it makes no difference. Add to this occasional liberalities in the way of entertaining real friends, or of remembering members of my family who are more or less in want (did you know that my two African sisters had been burnt out, and lost *all* their personal property — clothes, books, linen, etc.?), and, still further, the necessary expenditures that my immortal soul may not be extinguished, such as little dinners at hotels, and occasional evenings at the theatre; and — I wonder that I manage to get along at all. Of course, it's extravagant and reprehensible — *mais on m'a fait comme ça*, and I am reconciled to always being poor in this world's goods. I don't complain: it is more fun to be generous than to be parsimonious, and youth is a fugitive and golden thing. . . .

XXXVI

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Boston, Mass.

6 March, 1907

. . . I expect to begin work in New York about the third week in April. For many reasons I am eager to get back, though as yet my physical being is n't quite keyed up to the stress of metropolitan life; and the demure sobriety and well-established, self-contained beauty of this *jolie petite ville de Boston* appeals to me as never before. The sweet view from my window across steep-sloping roofs — the glimpses as I descend Mount Vernon Street of the broad, wind-swept river with its low centipedal bridge — the spaciousness of the Common

— all these I find myself especially sensitive to, now that I am so soon to leave them. I dread the world as much as I love it. The ingle-blaze and the security of ancient things is very dear to me, and it is only when my vitality is high that the spirit of adventure takes precedence over that of reclusion. . . .

XXXVII

To FERRIS GREENSLET

New York City

20 May, 1907

. . . I'm not writing but ten words, because it would give you the impression that I'm a man of leisure, whereas, Dieu le sait, assiduity in business is my present motto.

But industrious or idle, it's a golden thing to be alive in New York. Saturday afternoon I went to a Claude Monet Exhibition; dined at Murray's, and talked an evening of Mother Eddy et al. Yesterday I went to the Paulists, lunched at Schoeffel's, travelled on top of the "coach" up Fifth Avenue to the Park (not the Menagerie), dined at the Students'; and went to the Metropolitan to hear Sembrich in the evening. Naturally I'm poor; but that's chronic and inevitable.

To-day and henceforth for a week, it's work like Hell. . . .

XXXVIII

To MRS. MATHEWS-RICHARDSON

Arichat, Cape Breton

25 August, 1907

. . . I am glad you saw things that were worth while in that book review. I spent an unconscionable

amount of time on it, and tried to do a little thinking on my own account, since I had so slight a literary background to rely upon. Perhaps my thoughts are growing up a little, as you suggest. Sometimes I feel terribly old. A good deal of my experience, of course, has been vicarious; but I suppose a man of a certain impressionability of mind can learn a good deal in that second-hand way. I shall be interested to know what you think of a story I sold not long ago to "Harper's" — about a rather mudgish young man who met a dryad one day in the woods: and had the chance to stay there always as her playmate, but finally decided to go back to the ribbon counter. . . .

XXXIX

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

New York City

16 September, 1907

. . . When I consider all that I want to do, at once, without impediment or delay, I am overcome. My novel! My comedy! Reviewing for the "Tribune" and the "Nation." Another story. A poem. A travel essay for "Harper's." And I shall do so little of all this, and so slowly and laboriously.

Fortunately I am in excellent health. My quiet, not too busy summer was good for me. I am *tan* clear to the marrow. I have been almost daily in the salt water, capering with wild wind and wave.

. . . It seems rather good to be here in the city once more, though my mind turns with pensive longing to all the freedom I have left. It is a dull moment of the year in town, when things waver between summer indolences

and frivolities and the nervous ambition of autumn and winter. But my little Twelfth-Street room is as engaging as ever: the trees are green outside, and to-day the rain drips rustlingly, gleamingly from the slender branches.

. . . I am sorry if I seemed to speak not too approvingly of your de Maupassant studies. I certainly felt nothing but approbation. I think Maupassant has been rather overrated of late: I am tired of the eminence upon which all textbooks and the ordinary dabbler in things literary set him; blinded by his technical superiority into undiscernment of his curious and morbid limitations. I should like to see some one work out on paper the thesis that no kind of plot is so easy to work out or possesses so high a degree of inherent consecutiveness, as the pessimistically bent one. Great ills from slight mistakes, etc.; an evil twist in fate, etc.; one could go on endlessly — that is the ever ready-to-hand material.

I have just finished the reading of Balzac's "Ménage de Garçon." It is a good story, though singularly uneven in workmanship — some portions of it being no better than farce, and all the latter end of it seeming perfunctory and artificial; but some scenes of the story are in Balzac's best vein — and that is high praise — at least from me, who am coming to feel that Balzac is *the* master from whom we may expect, and get, the most "alive" setting-forth of life. "Illusions Perdues" impresses me, as, on the whole, the finest novel I have ever read. During the winter Oliver and I have read much aloud: almost the first occasion since our Dumas séances when I have had the delight of listening to French "lecture" habitually.

. . . You will be entertained at learning that I have

purchased (or am purchasing, and shall be, for some time to come) a piano: a very lovely thing, a Knabe upright, which is bringing great joy to my lonely heart. I have undertaken the transaction partly as a moral discipline (for it will *force* economy) and partly for much nobler reasons — the soothing, for example, of my savage breast. . . .

XL

To FERRIS GREENSLET

New York City

3 November, 1907

. . . Mr. M—— sent me some (poor) novels last week. Perhaps you will pass a friendly glance over my somewhat desperate endeavors to combine justice and mercy.

I spent a wicked amount of time on the damned things; but I think it stimulated my growth in things of spirit.

I had a most agreeable short call on Mr. C—— not long since. He was cordial to a degree, and said that a little later in the fall he should want to send me some books for “entertaining, sprightly, not too profound comment.” We parted on a promising handshake.

Since my return to this metropolitan campaign I have been far too busy for content. Some Gulick articles for the “Outlook” have swallowed and englutted me. And now that three of them are done, here’s the “World’s Work” rampant, paws in the air, canines exposed, and I’ve promised them a tardy something by Wednesday. That’s why I knock off for a while and send voice of greeting to you from the deep. . . .

XLI

*To THE SAME**New York City**1 December, 1907*

. . . These last two weeks I have jumped into my story for all there was in me. I think I can get it done by the first week in February, and I find myself more confident than a while ago of its merit — and interest, too. I am glad to feel so (even if it's a delusion) because it makes me work with more relish — after Christmas I've got to work three weeks to earn some money (damn these crass necessities); then I mean to cut out everything for as long as need be (living on pulse and water) in order to reach a conclusion. This is the happy privilege of unentangled youth.

. . . I believe that — à partir de chap. XI ou alentours — the action will take up its bed and walk; never run, perhaps, but go at a decent, satisfactory gait. We will see that it does, by visiting the Pool of Bethesda ourselves.

. . . I am going to do your bidding in the matter of prayerful contemplation of the ending, but 't is only fair to say that the abandonment of my earlier firm intention seemed forced upon me — quite *contra voluntatem* — by the nature of the tale. I don't feel that there is any more inconclusiveness here than the nature of things compels. Michel's love is certain and will hold him — bring him back. Does n't the reader feel that? Our knowledge of Amédée makes us foresee the temptations to which the boy will be subjected; and I should feel (myself) an unhappy repetitiousness in presenting them anew. And as Amédée came out of them, so his son will. . . .

. . . There is one very practical difficulty — named, my own ignorance of the technicology of sea-life. I would hate to fake anything. I don't think I have, as yet, faked anything. I know plenty of sailors, to be sure, but I don't know the sea save in its pictorial and imaginative aspects; and it would be necessary, I think, to have the real sea bulk rather largely in Michel's experiences from henceforth. . . .

XLII

To THE SAME

149 *West Twelfth Street*

New York City

1 *April, 1908*

DEAR FERRIS:

That last word of your note was well added, and is helping to keep me from futile discouragement during some very dark days. I had little idea when I last saw you that a succession of most exciting and distracting events was on its way over the horizon; they began hitting me about two days later. I thought that the suspense over the fate of Amédée's son would be as much as I could readily carry, but I find that there is no limit: you can carry everything that comes; father confessorship to a couple of psychasthenics in emotional whirlwinds, bedside counsels to the mortally sick; and chief sympathizer and adviser in the professional crisis of a dear friend, which has been an affair of life-and-death moment to him. Added to this, a financial stringency such as I have never known before, and an unsuccessful attempt at prying open several closed doors, which I had hoped might lead to a little *de quoi vivre*. . . .

XLIII

To OLIVER M. WIARD

New York City

13 May, 1908

DEAR OLIVER:

A midsummer afternoon of May. The solid tufts of shiny, red-green foliage on the ailanthus trees are rapidly opening, spreading their plumes, thrusting out their tender green spikes, vibrating and rustling in the warm breeze. Down the block the linden tree is shimmering in its full summer habiliment. Across the yards some wistarias are hanging in prime bloom, and a butterfly is hovering over the lilac bush across the fence. On the neighboring step lies Smith, in an attitude of dejection, too hot even to bark. As I write these words he awakens and bursts into a spasm of aboyement; now quiets down again, while a large fly settles on his hair-veiled nose. . . .

Your little disquisition on Amiens (too temperate and discriminating to be called a rhapsody) revived all my old wonder and admiration for that miraculous edifice, which I seem to know better than any other in the world, though for so brief a time in its presence. But it was my first, and it was my last; two moments of great impressionability; and I have only to shut my eyes and it springs into substantial being before me.

Our days pass quietly enough here. A fortnight ago I was at home for half a week, in an ecstasy over the lovely season just then beginning its bloom and veiling greenness. But more than half my time was self-imprisonment. I cut myself away from all allurements, and sternly compelled my reluctant hands to hew out that

dreadful last chapter of "Amédée's Son." In the end, the thing came out as well as could be wished, I think, though for a time I was desperate about it. But it's quite passionate in a lyrical, young-love way — and says a few things better than I have ever said them before.

A while ago I began a series of stories imagined as told by La Rose to Michel, and wrote out three of them. "La Rose Witnesseth" — "Of La Belle-Mélanie, who encountered that Death-Fire on the barrens, but escaped from it alive, by telling all the truth."

"Of Old Siméon Leblanc, who drove his son from home in anger, and later the son came back again, grown rich, from Boston, or somewhere."

"Of those Bucherons, who defrauded a poor widow, and how they were tormented for that in many ways."

It was great fun to write them, and if I succeed in selling them, I hope to do some more in the same vein. . . .

XLIV

To THE SAME

149 *West Twelfth Street*

New York City

5 *June, 1908*

. . . This is not to be a letter; I am tired, listless and incapacitated and there's no news, or next to none. Everything is green and lovely outside: our yards are a bower of waving, murmurous seduction. I sit at my desk through the day gazing through the open door, and wonder if ever there was a lovelier, more desirable spot. This week has been almost without interruptions, too, affording that peace and cultivatibility of mood which is necessary with me for good work; and I have been writ-

ing an excellent story. I think it will be the last of this spring's fictional labors, which for that matter I have greatly enjoyed. I feel the growth of my ability; I know that my work is remarkable: alive, poetic, and full of power. It has n't received a welcome; but that's an incident against which my soul doth not rebel. . . .

XLV

TO PROFESSOR CARROLL L. MAXCY

149 *West Twelfth Street*

New York City

29 *September, 1908*

DEAR CARROLL:

Your letter made me very happy. I like to think that your commendation of "Amédée" is not tinged by friendly partiality — but for that matter, even if it were, 't were a lovable fault in you. One works so long in secret, and without any sure justification for the effort, on a thing of that sort, that when the reward of hearty praise comes, it is divinely welcome. I agree with you thoroughly that the story betters as it advances. I like to think that a part of this increasing appeal is due to the quietly developed feeling of veracity and of a many-sided, well-familiarized community life which comes out of the earlier chapters, bare as they are of dramatic interest on their own account. My own favorite chapters, as you might surmise, are the two that present Amédée's letters and the scene on the barrens at night with La Rose; and also the next to the final chapter — the lovers in the cimetière. My first great pleasure in writing was in descriptive work, as you may recall: then

came, gradually, a dominating interest in characters, especially as developed by dialogue. The actual business of telling a story is a sort of acquired faculty with me: and I still have much to learn. But I think that when I try again, and take a metropolitan milieu (as I shall) instead of a remote parish, the dramatic gift, in so far as I possess it, will come to the fore. You do not say anything of my humor, for which I, personally, have no end of relish, and which I rank among my best possessions. I am not absolutely certain that I did right to let it intrude into the climax scene — where La Rose tells so seriously of the girl who “had all her hair cut off in secret”: yet I was utterly powerless to resist the impulse to insert that illustration, once the idea of it had popped into my head: and of this at least I am convinced, La Rose would have used it; and that gives it a kind of appropriateness, whether or not it is emotionally in key. And I incline to believe that it makes the scene secure from any charge of slushiness.

For myself, after a discouraging vacation and a sharp, severe attack of my old skin trouble, I am rapidly regaining all lost ground, and shall soon feel glad to be at work. The autumn is not brilliant in its prospects or financial peripeteias (I know I mis-spell, but I’m too indolent to look up the word); but I shall plug along somehow, with my reviewing and my tutoring, and a story or two to help out if I have the inspiration.

I hope great things from my play, “Joyous Julian”; but am prepared to possess my soul indefinitely in patience. Transactions on the Rialto are wondrous leisurely.

Always loyally yours,

HARRY JAMES SMITH

XLVI

To OLIVER M. WIARD

149 *West Twelfth Street*

New York City

13 *November, 1908*

DEAR BOY:

Your last letter with its blue Italian stamp has lain on my desk, collecting dust longer than would be excusable under most circumstances. Of late it has seemed to me that there was no help for it but I must deliberately resign the blessed ties of friendly intercourse and take advantage of all the opportunities which the fall is offering for establishing myself money-wise. I am never quite sure that a man is justified in setting any kind of temporal advantage above human relations, even for a however brief space of time: yet I seem to be built on a plan which almost precludes a combination of the two interests; and while absorbed in the worship of Mammon I cannot find the humor for congenial intercourse. There is no sense of leisure; no time for the induction of the spirit; whatever one may bring forth is presented in the hard, unfavorable light of common day, with none of the warm, transforming radiance that a real letter needs for its very life. Well, to-day I've a little time. At eleven this morning I finished typewriting a lengthy review for the "Tribune," and at once carried it down to the office. Now it is a little after twelve; I have glanced through the paper, re-read my day's mail, played a few times, and am in the most amiable mood for a week. This afternoon I have two English themes to correct and send off, and this evening we are to dine at Corchini's and then to hear "Samson and Delilah"

at the Manhattan — our first opera. That lovely Ger-ville-Réache, whom you probably recall as the white-haired queen in "Pélléas," has the Delilah rôle. I wish they would put Renaud down as Samson, but Dalmores is to sing it.

Once having recovered my health, I have remained unusually energetic and happy. Now and then a sulky day comes (yesterday was one) when I cannot work. Like Johnny McPhee, I "must sit there helpless before it in an agony, but unable to raise a finger." The fact distresses me, and I sincerely wish I could get the better of it. It seems to be the curse of an independently guided career, at least with me. The compulsion must for the most part come from within; and when the tide ebbs, there's no way of holding yourself to the grind — most of all if you are, like me, afflicted with a subtle and casuistically bent conscience, prolific in excuses for self-indulgence. "Really you need a rest," says conscience, refusing to concede your abundant sense of well-being. "You are not very strong; now and then you must let up a little. Besides, yesterday you earned fifteen dollars." Thus goes the logomachy of a bad day, and night comes, and I am tired and ashamed and restless and remorseful, and full of good resolutions for the future. . . .

XLVII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Berlin, Conn.

22 May, 1909

. . . One thing I discovered from my hospital experiences, and that is, how easy it is to die. I think I told you they watched for my extinction at any mo-

ment during two days. I was half out of my head, in a raging fever, but only dully, wearily in pain, and the thought of annihilation — of cessation — became most appealing. Of course I have never seemed to have any dread of death, such as oppresses many people: I always contemplate it with equanimity: but I have supposed somehow that the actual experience would be hard; that in last hours one would have a panicky clinging to life. I feel as if I had been through it actually, and had found out that it is only a happy — or rather, dispassionate — relinquishment of a thing no longer desired. . . .

XLVIII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Revonah Hill, Liberty, N.Y.

17 June, 1909

Really those convalescent weeks were hell. There was about every new effort or old hope that horrible sense of futility; and the new burden of working and living and paying debts — my God! such debts — was more than I could bring myself to assume. Fortunately there was a flower garden, and no gardener at hand but myself. As soon as I was able to hold a trowel I began digging; and with the daily increasing efficacy of that purely physical labor and with the healthy, thought-drugging fatigue that resulted nightly from it, I secured the key to mental restoration. It was most interesting to me to watch the change in myself; and by the time I had left home I had taken the grim resolution (at first very grim, with set teeth) to see the fight through, and to show 'em I could win out even with a tombstone tied round my neck.

I spent a few awful days in New York — scene of wrecked hopes and happy past — and then came on to this little shack in the mountains — the “hinter-Katskills” — where a sister, a Zulu girl, and myself constitute an amusing but happy household — Zuleika dealing much with pots and pans, and in her leisure moments reading “Esmond” aloud to my sister: myself tramping, riding, gardening (like Céleste, j’adore un jardin potager), woodcutting; lastly, beginning a little writing. I don’t do much of that at once, but it keeps me contented; and before many more weeks are past I hope to be up to schedule time.

I’m just finishing my first story: it’s extremely light — as much so as my “Lorelei,” but more worth-while, and rather more genial: a little satire on the irresponsibility of love in May — when you must be in love whether or no with some one, not much matter whom.

. . . I am going to be here probably until the last of September, and then at home in the country for the winter, abandoning Grub Street and trying to do something big. . . .

XLIX

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Liberty, N.Y.

21 September, 1909

. . . Aside from galling disappointments health-wise, there has been much in the summer that should stay happily in memory: long nights under stars, wonderful brilliant wind-swept days, with uncounted leagues of green earth spread out below: the congenial society of my favorite sister: occasional visits from friends —

Faith has just left us for her last year in Oberlin; and when I have been able, lovely walks through upland woods. . . .

L

To THE SAME

Berlin, Conn.

6 November, 1909

. . . Since October my record is much, much more presentable. I had an invigorating sojourn by the sea in my doctor's snug little bungalow, warmed — when the winds blew chilly — by a pretty grate fire, and cheered every evening by the company of one of the best fellows in the world. I shall long remember our long, desultory, stimulatingly *masculine* talks before the fire, pipes and bottle within hand-reach. MacD—— resembles in certain respects the hero of my story in the "American" — have you happened to see it? — but he is much more complex, more responsive: infinitely companionable, deliciously profane: full of good stories — not anecdotes — out of his own irregular and dramatic history: approaching every subject of thought or discussion with a fine pristine freshness of view. It always does me good to be with him. I was alone through the daytime: finished revising my play (I hear encouraging things of its prospects), and did what work I was able on my novel. Even now I can't begin to work at my old best: but I see a steady gain in efficiency. The gain was most perceptible during those weeks. In the afternoon I always took my market-basket into Quincy — two miles or more distant by trolley — and did my family marketing; and by the time Jack came home, at seven,

I would have a kingly dinner prepared for him. We would dawdle unconscionably over our meal, with smokes and Bénédictine, each dreading the moment when the other would say, "How about the dishes? Shall we do 'em or not?"

I have been home now for about a week. I have a large sunny southwest room, which holds my piano, a desk, a couch, and other necessities of the literary life: and here I spend most of my time, devoting myself to "Enchanted Ground." I must get the thing done, they tell me, by January 1st, if I want spring publication. I do immensely want just that; and I am sacrificing *everything* to this undertaking, with the chances much against me, I must admit, for succeeding. My furtive hope is that they'll concede me more time if I verge on completion by January. . . .

LI

To THE SAME

Berlin, Conn.

23 February, 1910

. . . During a brief happy flight in Boston I saw Maude Adams at last in "What Every Woman Knows," and was rather bored: I saw "Shore Acres," for the first time, at the Castle Square, and marvelled to see how all its rusty, dilapidated machinery of laughs and tears could still be so effective with a second-class audience. And in New York — this latest trip — I saw Fitch's "City," which is, I think, next to the "Kreutzer Sonata" (Bertha Kalich's slum-life play of some years since), the most hideous thing in my experience — hideous, without a mitigating touch of poetry or true tragic

insight. Add an operetta, "Fra Diavolo," and a comic opera, "The Midnight Sons," and you have my mid-winter's record. . . .

You will infer that I have decided adversely in regard to the "Nation" offer. My answer was sent last week. I am resolved not to retreat from my present stand, even if it means worse than penury for some time to come. It does mean that. "Enchanted Ground" is not to be published until September. It was considered by several of the Boston folk extremely offensive and immoral, and so great was the hue and cry that three weeks were consumed in wrangling discussions before the cause of Truth won. Greenslet was my stanch advocate, believing the story a masterpiece. But the lengthy fracas put spring publication out of the question. Having accepted the book, the company have since then done everything to make me reconciled: promising "sumptuous" manufacture, diplomatic preparation, and handsome royalties. At present I am putteringly getting started on a new play — a comedy, from which something may sometime be hoped. This being only my second day of serious thought on the plot, I do not feel greatly sanguine — but that's inevitable with me at the start. . . .

LII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Berlin, Conn.

3 June, 1910

. . . And now I am agonizing with the commencement of a new novel, rather a fluffy thing, that has a kernel of promise in it: but, oh, it looks ROTTEN so far — I mean, as far as the middle of Chapter I. I'm

stuck there, blasphemously; and God knows whether I shall write a decent word until the end of the month, when I hope to be down in Cape Breton, with nothing to do but be happy and create masterpieces. . . .

Have you read "Chantecler"? You must. It's intellectual intoxication, and full of the real rainbow things.

LIII

To OLIVER M. WIARD

The Marlborough, Halifax

25 June, 1910

. . . I wish you were here, to revel with me in this adorable city, and to go on with me, Tuesday, to Isle Madame. Your letter recalls most vividly to mind the almost perfect, incomparable days we had three years since in Cape Breton. I hate to think that they will not repeat themselves. It seems wrong for me to be going thither without you. But I shall try to see, sometimes, with your eyes, as well as with my own, that landscape so dear to both of us.

As for Halifax, I never imagined it could so deeply appeal to me. I love the hilly streets, the green mount that tops all; the narrow, far-outreaching harbor; the fine late Georgian and early Victorian public buildings, banks, and mansions; and even the commoner architecture — rows of shingle-front houses with flat roofs, or with sloping roofs and dormers, and always high chimneys and chimney-pots; so many charming enclosed stoops, with curving steps directly to the sidewalk, so many flowers in the windows, and such an air of dignity without pretension — oh, I do love it all, and I long to be here more. The Gardens are a dream of late

spring luxuriance now. My house is close by, and often I spend a morning hour on a bench in some quiet nook, before which tall poppies, goblets of lambent fire, shiver in the gold sunlight.

My friends the Craigs have outdone reason in their anxiety to make my stay pleasurable. I have a guest's ticket to the Waegwoltic Club, on the Northwest Arm, a mile from town, where the scenery is like a picture, almost *too* picturesque, with the narrow, tortuous sea-inlet, precipitously banked, draped with verdure, embossed with gray-rock, a stretch of some three miles, and beyond that the outer harbor and the sea. . . .

LIV

To MRS. MATHEWS-RICHARDSON

Arichat, Cape Breton

10 July, 1910

. . . Edith and I have been here now some two weeks. We are beautifully situated, close to the water: the climate is inspiring, the very simple, quiet life most congenial to me. This is truly, "seen" aright, the country of Michel: so you must know how close it comes to my heart.

. . . You have the memory of lifelong devotion — almost consecration — to your father's happiness: to me this was always very beautiful; and his delight in it, his reliance and dependence on you always profoundly impressed me. To have preserved so intimate a relation perfect, unembittered, to the end, is a lovely achievement, and beyond the scope of most. . . .

LV

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Arichat, Cape Breton

22 August, 1910

... What you say about "Enchanted Ground" pleases me very very much. I agree with you that P—— is a little too good to be true. I think, though, that for a man who would think it necessary to tell his sweetheart that he had been once false to her, and the manner of it, there would be no escaping the necessity of practising the morality he preached — a slender thread of necessity, but a strong one; for integrity was, after all, the thing he deeply cherished.

... Would Philip ultimately have broken, anyway? He was discontented always, and had the consciousness of wrongdoing. I do not know, I am sure, what he would have done. Yet a man of his type *inevitably* attracts those in need to him: Philip took into his life what would have been mere casual meetings in the case of a less responsive man: and if he had not adopted Barry and Queenie, he would certainly have adopted others equally evocative of honorable treatment.

I do not agree with the "Record-Herald" that the "lesson" is *service*: or rather, it is that, but secondarily. "Response to need" is primary in my thought, not desire to "serve" in any abstract sense.

I am glad you liked Chapter VI when it finally came to you. It was not very easy to do — especially, 't was not easy to know *how much* to do. I was terribly anxious to do a scène de boudoir, but I knew that the publishers would not stand for it. And, on the whole, I rather like

the little figure at the end about "Ashes and Darkness." For a "trick" (technically a trick) I think it's quite effective. . . .

LVI

To MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

The Birchdale, Halifax

11 September, 1910

DEAR COMRADE:

When, where, what did I write you last? I think a card from Arichat, telling of my sudden call to Minnesota. I set out on the 21st; arrived at St. Paul the 24th; worked like a dynamo for four days and nights with Mr. Fiske; and on Tuesday the 29th in Milwaukee attended the first rehearsal of "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh" — a comedy by Harry James Smith. Rehearsals through the week; and then a little interval, during which I was graciously permitted (and provided with the means) to take a respite. I came flying eastward, via the Lakes, the St. Lawrence, Montreal, and adorable, marvellous, stunning Quebec (I have lost my heart to the city), and caught up with sister Edith here. We are installed in a quiet, delightful hotel just on the edge of Halifax, close to the forest-rimmed harbor, and our plan is to stay until the 24th of the month. Then the ordeal recommences for me — next time in Chicago. Two or three weeks of rehearsals, and then the première, at the very thought of which I shudder.

But it's all very good fun, and I love the game. Every one seems to be immensely enthusiastic about the play. Mrs. Fiske declares she never had a rôle that agreed with her better. It's sport to watch her in rehearsal:

she's so vivacious, so quick to invent business, so sure of herself. And both she and Mr. Fiske are delightful critics, friendly, deferential, invariably courteous. *If* we succeed in Chicago (which, by grace of God, we will) we'll bring "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh" to New York for the winter season. In which case you will have to throw off your Berkshire seclusion and come to town, tricked out in all your furbelows, to clap Harry's performance.

But this is all a dream. I refuse, as yet, to go ahead of the next step: which is two (2) weeks of, oh, such welcome quiet! Really, these mad dashes to the West — I don't like 'em, and I don't like the West; and I'm sick of hotels with silver-mounted bathtubs and \$8.50 table d'hôtes, and I'm sick of upper berths and cab fares and crowds and rain and — well, 'most everything 'cept keeping still.

Where are you now, and what's the news? *Please* write.

H.

LVII

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Halifax, N.S.

18 September, 1910

CHÉRI:

... About "Enchanted Ground" — the "Nation" gave the book one of the most cordial reviews I have ever read in that stern-tempered sheet, insisting particularly upon the virility, restraint, and "distinction" of the style, the "splendid manliness" of the treatment throughout. "Restrained" the style surely is not, judged by Flaubert or de Maupassant: but with Loti or J. E. Allen or Hichens — or even Hawthorne —

in mind, it seems to me pretty strongly controlled. Picking up the "Scarlet Letter" last March in Poughkeepsie I was fairly startled to see how many "elevated" passages the author (whom we all revere) allowed himself. The test, it seems to me, is whether the style seems *evoked* by the subject, or seems rather an embellishment applied. I tried to avoid the latter, but I dare not say with uniform success. As a protest against realism, I am glad I did it. It took courage to give myself the rein, for I feared just such criticisms as yours — yet I can't help suspecting that it is just in the rich yet thoughtful expression of an emotional situation that I find my *special* literary gift: certainly not in bare narration, which is entirely alien to me; nor in analysis, which I cannot do. For *me*, the "art" of fiction is in the rightly ordered presentment of the emotional life. The Chicago "Record-Herald" spoke of Mr. Smith's "fine reserve," as contrasted with the "hysterics" of Meredith in "Feverel." I do not take the compliment without much salt; but if you recall the "Mrs. Mount" scenes in the novel mentioned, you will see where a curb was very vigorously used by H. J. S. . . .

LVIII

To MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

Chicago, 16 October, 1910

I'm so very very glad that both you and Carroll liked my new book. I should n't have thought any the less of you (I don't say of *him*) if you had n't; because I think it's very decidedly a man's book, not only in its point of view, but as well in the dash and concentration

of the narrative — a sort of athletic spareness which impresses many feminine minds as crude. Do you know what I mean? Besides, a man is *sure* to like Katrinka: that's the fatality of his sex. Just the other day an English professor in Arizona University wrote me: "Your Katrinka is the great, gorgeous, unique creation of the book." For myself I love Georgia fully as well. I do not agree with you that she is a conventional woman. Her breeding, her pride, her isolation, and her experiences all seem to set her apart: to my mind an *almost* tragic creation. Not quite. I could do better with her had she been the *centre* of the story instead of a satellite, compelled by the plot to revolve in a certain orbit. Nevertheless, I do love her. And the Barry-Philip situation is, as you probably surmised, the one that above all appeals to me. I'm glad you liked that. . . .

LIX

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Chicago, 16 October, 1910

. . . Frankly (coming now to business) I think it would be very good fun to take up the English work again; but I can't help doubting my own ability to be of genuine service to you. I think I've *tached* you all I know about technique and that sort of thing; quite honestly I think you understand the mechanics of story-writing fully as well as I. Furthermore, in story-work you are much more versatile than I, and can go a long way beyond me before you are done. What you lack is conviction, devotion, unflinching dare or die ambition. I can't give you that. I don't even maintain that for you

the game is necessarily worth the candle. *If* you think it is, why, you'll go ahead and put it through, spite of everything. If you don't know, then I am sure you had better drop it right now. This work is for people who can't help doing it. Others keep out. I hate dilettantism, dabbling, and all that, like poison. I don't mean that as a dabbler you might not do a lot of very clever things: but you need n't expect me to admire you for that; other people would give you all the admiration you needed. I can't find an apt union between writing and bridge parties and church "sociables." And unless I *feel* a deep, buoyant earnestness in another man's work, I can't (at this stage of the game) be bothered with criticizing it. Where I do feel that, I'm ready to give a whole lot of what is best in me to the fellow worker. . . .

LX

To MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

Grand Pacific Hotel, Chicago

21 October, 1910

. . . At present, I must say, the outlook for the play is most auspicious. (RAP ON WOOD, PLEASE.) The improvement in rehearsals during this past week almost amazes me. Everybody is working like a dray-horse to do his best. And the situations and lines still remain so amusing to us, despite our deep-furrowed familiarity with them, that over and over again the rehearsal is held up while we all shake with mirth. Mrs. Fiske's sense of humor is delicious. She is a taskmistress if there ever was one; but even when most exacting, you are only too glad to serve her. Her genius is so indubitable, so com-

elling, that you sweat blood, and thank her for the privilege.

But I am counting the days till my release, for it's true I'm terrifically tired. I hope to "skin out" November 3d, making straight for Connecticut — fresh, open, windy country, CLEAN! (Good Lord, what a joy not to have soot-smudge all over one's nose!) And I expect to have a new saddle horse: and with that, and my half-completed novel, and a new play, I shall be snug and contented for the winter. Mrs. Fiske does n't reach New York till March, so that I ought to be free of outside responsibilities until the last fortnight or so of February, when rehearsals with the specially selected company will begin.

Well, it's a great game; and I do *love* it. I'm just doing what I want to do, and I know I can do it well, though I've a big lot to learn yet. But I'm learning fast. These hard weeks here have been incalculably valuable to me. And the sympathy and confidence of the fine people I've been associated with is immensely stimulating to new effort. . . .

LXI

To MISS JEAN BASCOM . . .

Berlin, Conn.

8 December, 1910

. . . My trip into the Litchfields was immensely delightful. After much searching I discovered exactly the horse I had dreamed of — young, coal-black, full of ginger, speedy as a bird. I spent all my poor royalties to acquire her, spent them gladly; and I had three memorable days of homeward-faring across November hills.

The weather, as you feared, was not auspicious; but I was too happy to mind; and the snow squalls and rain flurries lent, too, a variety to the landscape not without picturesque phases. Our Litchfields are much like the lower Berkshires, only wilder, with less sweep of upland field and pasture. They are preëminently my own heart's country; and I value having made their acquaintance at this maturer age.

Since resuming routine life at home, "Zulu" has been my joy and crown, exorcizing my seven devils by means of her own. She may kill me yet; n'importe, ce serait une mort bienheureuse.

My soul being deeply refreshed by the adventures of the fortnight subsequent to my quitting Chicago, I felt able to attack my new comedy with enthusiasm. The first ten days or so of work were murderously hard and thankless, as was sure to be the case; but when I finally got my idea — the idea which among all the assortment gathered of tentative ideas showed the power of germination, of sprouting — I took heart of grace. And since then the work has fascinated me; I no longer force myself into it; it holds me. . . .

LXII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Berlin, Conn.

3 March, 1911

. . . All the family here 've been sick, serially, and then "synchronously and at the same time." . . . Meanwhile, I wish you could have seen your pedagogue caper the culinary rounds! (Oh, yes, Lotschka has been sick, too.) Brown bread, roasts, steamed puddings, cas-

serole trifles. — The whole gay repertory! I love my art, but just what my art is I'm at the present moment in doubt. I think it's chiefly what they call "general" — general housework, of course.

As to "Bumpstead" — it's to go on at the end of March or first of April. My odd minutes go to the last polishing of the third act. It's a job that can last forever — or could, if the rehearsals were n't to begin in a fortnight. . . .

LXIII

To MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

New York City

3 April, 1911

DEAR OLD COMRADE:

Here we are actually at the very climactic day of days! Dress rehearsal lasted from 1 P.M. till midnight yesterday, and to-day one sits about with a strange, listless, half-awake air, vaguely wondering when 8.30 P.M. will arrive, and what story it will tell. I've been in town for something over a fortnight, and we have had daily rehearsals, of a rather exacting character; but I enjoy all that sort of thing, and though I'm positively tired out, I feel that the work has been none of it in vain. At all events, it's been a splendid schooling for me in the playmaker's craft.

I confess to expecting great things of "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh" — and if I'm to be disappointed, the disappointment will strike deep. The cast is superb, I could scarce wish an improvement beyond the radical inadequacy of one single important rôle, that of Peter Swallow, Esq., of Indiana. Mr. D——, who has the

part, is a comedian of distinction, but his memory is most treacherous, and I do not much fancy his improvising gift. For all that, the chances are that he will please. Mrs. Fiske's rendition has improved since Chicago; and she gives what I call a supremely brilliant performance: no actress in the world, so far as I know, could equal her in this rôle. . . .

LXIV

To HIS SISTER

New York City

4 April, 1911

DEAR:

It seems I've made a go of it! Are n't we all glad! Three or four papers are "thumbs down" — but the rest quite the reverse; and the "public" seems to be heartily with us.

Thanks so much for your dear little letters. I'll probably get home Thursday. We're still rehearsing weak spots. Am keeping in good form.

H.

LXV

To HIS MOTHER

Percé, Gaspé County, Quebec

24 June, 1911

. . . These last days have been full of novel and pleasant experiences. The trip down the St. Lawrence occupied Tuesday P.M. to Thursday noon — that is, Thursday noon we had rounded the Gaspé peninsula and passed up the twenty-mile narrow bay on which Gaspé itself is situated. At the little St. Lawrence vil-

lages, which lie under high rugged hills, there are never any wharves: the steamer anchors, and long-boats put out to her. The transfer of freight and passengers is often difficult, and always entertaining to observe; and the Provincial passengers were delightful. At one place, "Ste. Anne des Monts," six little girls in black got aboard, all on their way home from convent school, and their shy, surprised, nervous, giggling interest in everything, coupled with a most conscientious effort to be "well-bred," was captivating. Two of them wore silver medals "pour excellence." There was a lovely, white-haired priest on board who might have been the Abbé Constantin; there were two English Church clergymen; a Jersey "corporation-magnate" who wore his badge of honor on Coronation Day (as everybody was informed) "by special order of the King"; there were some very haughty English persons from Montreal, who ate immensely, and looked with amused pity at us common folk. My special acquaintance was a young French mechanic, on his way to Gaspé to take a position on the new railroad line.

I stayed only a night at Gaspé, and the idea came to me there of taking the next stage of my journey by horse and carriage. I got a man to drive me twenty-five miles yesterday, along the coast and through back woods, across rivers in scow-ferries that were poled by two ferrymen; and at a pretty town named "Corner of the Beach," I took a relay and was brought over the Percé Mountains to Percé. This last lap of the journey, not more than eight miles or so, was the most startling drive of my life. The mountains are terribly steep, with precipice tops, and wild gorges, and the road — "Well,

sir, it *was* a road!" And the way we tore along it! It made my hair stand on end! At many places only wide enough for one vehicle, and shooting off on the downward side over a cliff of fifty or two hundred feet, with not even a fence between, and the horse at pell-mell speed, especially on every down grade — well, I had my fill for once of thrills. I'm glad I did it, though, and I want to do it again before the summer is over. . . .

LXVI

To KARL G. HILL

"*Les Trois Fontaines*"

Percé, 3 August, 1911

. . . What I really did crave, above all, last week, was excitement — excitement of the town sort, tinged with disreputability. Here the best substitute available was a climb, all by myself, one afternoon, up the rock face of Mt. Ste. Anne. The inhabitants assured me the mountain could n't be climbed on that face; I was sure it could; and I had a superbly thrilling time doing it — up and down. At the base of the cliff, eight peasants, three men, four women, and a child awaited me with sprouting eyes.

. . . There are many times when one must have something big, engrossing — *absolutely* engrossing, primitive, physical; and I fancy that if a man chose he could almost keep from naughtiness by choosing adventure of the dangerous sort. . . .

LXVII

To GRISWOLD TYNG

Percé, Gaspé County, P.Q.

5 August, 1911

. . . The Percé Rock, with its great round hole, through which the sea washes, struck me at first as merely curious; but as I see it day by day, fronting the weather, resplendent in sunlight, veiled in fog, whitened by moon, I am coming to regard it with a kind of superstitious awe.

. . . Having been more or less unhappily impressed (as I fear you were) by my lack of thrift during my first days of liberty, you would be startled to see the extreme simplicity and economy and regularity of my present life. Simple living is certainly the natural, characteristic thing for me, and indeed necessary when I am hard at work; yet I should hate to surrender occasional periods of living at a higher tempo; I think most of us need both. . . .

LXVIII

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Percé, Quebec

6 August, 1911

CHÉRI:

My play is done, for the third and — I think — the last time. I've spent five weeks of the best work of my life on it: and I am all but satisfied with the result. It has been great fun — this final reconstruction, with the materials — *si connus* — in hand, and the goal always in view.

. . . We are most happy here in Percé. We have an

ancient and somewhat ruinous house for habitation, full of strange noises at night, and redolent of memories. A wild old garden, overgrown with sweet musk, now at prime bloom, and shaded by poplars, lies under our windows on one side, and behind the house rises a steep green hill, topped with fir. We nestle in a sort of corner of Mt. Ste. Anne, viewing, through our steep slopes, a wonderful reach of sea, and in this sea, close offshore, rises the strange mammoth of Siluric ages: the Roche Percée — three hundred feet high, half a mile long, sheer cliff all 'round, tinted like a palette, and circled and garlanded all day with millions of sea-birds.

The landscape effects here are eternally diversified, and all stunning and wondrous. You should see the frowning cliff that dominates our valley on the farther side — Mt. Ste. Anne, eighteen hundred feet, sheerly upward for at least the topmost third of its height. We are a mile from town, and live most quietly, seeing but few people, and desirous of nothing beyond the day's blessings. It has been a superb place for working.

How often I have wished you might be here! I cannot tell whether you would find anything sketchable in our region, but no impressionable soul could fail to be inspired, in the best sense, by the display we have of Nature's wild strength and patience. . . .

LXIX

To MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

Percé, Quebec

9 August, 1911

. . . I like being lost in Percé. It's a complete little world in itself. The landscape is the most superb I

have ever seen. And we have so much of it at our doorstep. Our house is old and dilapidated, but comfortable, and our servant is efficient. Edith is in much better health than last summer, and Percé delights her. We have had one guest, a dear friend, newly in mourning, from Arichat, who came a three days' journey by sea to be with sister.

"Bumpstead" has done splendidly out West, and I feel years and years younger now that the wolf has withdrawn from my door. I *ought* to accomplish fine things in the next few years; if I don't, it will be because I have n't it in me to, for I certainly have the desire. . . .

LXX

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Percé, Quebec

13 August, 1911

. . . I just discovered yesterday what the purpose of my work in the world is. I had never phrased it before: never been able to, though knowing there was somehow, somewhere, a motive and a goal. It is Revelation. Not teaching, not influencing, not doing, but showing. I may find I cherish a fallacy, but at the moment of discovery I felt startled and satisfied. Also, I have a philosophy — a philosophy in a word: the nuggetery form — not nugatory, please. It is *whistle*. (Literally I can't whistle which lends point to the legend.)

That reminds me, I wish you could hear me perform on my new clarinet. Our kitty is rendered quite ill by it — at first in the corner, but now we put her out of doors before beginning. . . .

LXXI

*To THE SAME**Hotel Albert, New York**7 October, 1911*

. . . Only a brief hour ago I put — as I think — the very last final finishing touches to “The Countess and Patrick.” I’ve been here for a week, working hard on the incorporation of a new idea; and, oh, I do think I’ve been successful, and the comedy just looks to me (at this moment — which of course won’t endure long) the sweetest, truest, most humorous thing I’ve ever done. I’m simply in love with it.

To-morrow I turn my face homeward, after an absence of four months less four days. Edith is there, and mother, and autumn, and (in a few days more) my mare, beloved Zulu, returning from boarding-school where she has been learning the single-foot and waltz, and, for all I know, several modern languages, at the tuition fee of \$4.50 a week. Mais, si je serai content de la revoir, cette fille qui revient toute décorée — tendue de medailles, et de rubans. La belle aventure, là, là!

Of course your letter should have been answered earlier: but travel, pleasure, work, and woe have been allowed to prevent. “Woe!” you ask, stunned for the moment. Alas! — Perhaps Edith told you of my painful accident? A badly sprained knee, just before we left — I mean, were to leave — Percé. August 26th was the date; and I’m still hobbling pathetically about on two sticks. I’ve been very brave and cheerful about it, but inside (c’est entre nous, ma chère, absolument entre

nous) I've *suffered!* Besides, it costs so much, taking taxicabs instead of street-cars! "Home is best." . . .

LXXII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Berlin, Conn.

16 November, 1911

. . . Oliver Wiard, my old chum, was down last night from New Britain; and to-morrow afternoon we are planning a fifteen-mile jaunt into the country; I on Zulu, he part-way by train and part-way afoot, to a little old secluded town called Durham where we will spend the night at a farmhouse. I'll take, in a saddle-bag, my newest book, Rodin's "L'Art," and we will read it aloud during the evening. I have read it once already and am fascinated. What else have I read? The first volume of "The Newcomes" (for the first time). I find Thackeray just now entirely to my taste; I wonder why — perhaps his light, keen, yet so humane comedy touch. Long-winded and desultory — yes; but somehow I don't mind that in a certain type of novel. Or rather, I don't dislike it when it's so well done. I loathed the chattiness and "sogginess" of "Queed," for instance, though quite fancying some passages of the book. Two or three books on lumber camps (including one by the prolific E. S. White), a volume on Wyoming (the scene of Act I of my Tim Murphy play); and two more plays of Molière. "Tartuffe" is henceforth my ideal Gallic comedy; I had *no* idea it was so racy, so lively, so amusing. I do hope to do a little more reading this winter than last. . . .

. . . The Brieux plays you speak of I have not read,

but read much of: and I should like to know them. It seems to me that most of the more serious French drama of the day is very *stagey*. I felt this most vividly in witnessing, last week, Madame Simone's performance, at Daly's, of Bernstein's "La Rafale" — the Whirlwind. The play was absorbing with certain moments of thrilling force; but a little thought (afterwards) undermined its whole structure. Madame herself was interesting, refined, and *artful* in good and doubtful senses of the word.

. . . I wonder what kind of comedy Thackeray could have done. The points that disturb you in his manner would be largely eliminated. But I question whether he could write impersonally enough for the stage. Don't you think you incline to overestimate the amount of "stage manager" talk he allows himself? It seems to me there is very little comment on the *mechanics* of his stories, outside the too famous preface to "Vanity Fair." He talks, to be sure, and talks; but his attitude toward his characters is that they are very real human beings, affording texts for satirical or sentimental lucubrations. I must say I *love* his satire. Whom have we so deft, so facile, so kindly, in this line? In sentiment he does certainly often over-indulge. Esmond drools interminably, I remember, about the sad extinguishing of the Altar Fires of Love! And "The Newcomes" goes it and goes it again on the innocent wild joys of young manhood: I sicken here and there both of Clive and his dear old father the Colonel. But as a whole (having read, that is to say, *one* volume) I like the book. . . .

We had one day of true Indian summer! How I hope winter is not now about to shut down on us; I want more purple hazes and soft, mellow afternoons such as the late autumn two years since was so prolific in.

I really must go to bed now, though I've not even mentioned my adorable new dog Patrick! That will occupy (probably) much of my next letter. . . .

LXXIII

To THE SAME

Berlin, Conn.

6 March, 1912

. . . Mr. Belasco — did I tell you? — gave me my contract on the basis of my idea, ere I had written a word on paper. This unusual procedure put me on my mettle to show him creditable results and my draught of the first act was the fruit of much sweat, blood, and tears. "Immense, young man — simply immense!" was his verdict; reward, indeed, to my doubtful, timid heart.

It's odd how dependent I seem to be on kind words! Bereft of the confidence of at least a few discerning persons, I think my talents would utterly rust away in a napkin. Certainly I should never do anything extraordinary; never excel myself.

I find that I cannot forgive H—— for the trivial, supercilious comments he passed on "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh." It was lack of tact, no doubt, on his part; yet fundamentally, who likes me *must* like my work, and if not my work as a whole, yet assuredly his *me* in it, so far as it appears there, and it is the part of friendship to emphasize what is congenial and worthy to be liked. To slap a friend's child in the face and expect the friend to be happy and grateful about it is what H—— virtually adopts as procedure.

. . . By the way, I draw a distinction — do you? — between *farce* and *low comedy*. Ma and Swallow belong,

if I am right, to the second. Query: are the yokels in "Midsummer Night's Dream" or in a Hardy novel *farce*? My answer is, *no*, because they are thoroughly true to character, a logical type, each. Farce exists for situation, ludicrous incident. True comedy is preoccupied with the crossplays of character. Ma is farce when the player is encouraged to throw type-truth to the winds and (in a crisis) to let her skirts creep ridiculously up to her knees. Swallow is farce when his familiar, hail-fellow manner becomes slap-stick buffoonery; everything that I value in the part is then lost. Do you see that I have an idea, though I have n't thought it out adequately? . . .

LXXIV

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

At Home, 27 March, 1912

. . . As a matter of fact, I have n't the least idea in the world what the chances are at present for a rural play; but I *think* they are always good and always hard to get.

Don't be afraid to characterize your parts: I mean to give character exaggerations of the Dickensy, "typey" type! It belongs to the genre. Wish you could see "Rebecca" or "Wiggs" before writing. Don't try for realism as you and I understand it — it won't make for the success of the play. *Homely touches* WILL: but don't be afraid of the long arm of coincidence and all that. And give plenty of bright lines to your ingénue heroine. And plenty of laughter and plenty of pathos. In plot itself *novelty* as such is no object whatever.

Any advice or other help I can give, please give me the chance. . . .

LXXV

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Berlin, Conn.

18 April, 1912

. . . I begin to think that a comedy situation invariably offers you drama if you want it. That's the question. To my mind (and I suspect most playwrights will agree with me) the comedy situation is the harder to get and the harder to write out — requires the more intense intellectual effort. To turn it into drama, you stop the dance music, let the tempo alter, and merely allow your imagination to burrow emotionally into the substance. Comedy has its deliberate *parti pris*, and exacts an almost uncanny detachment from the undercurrents of life, though if the comic writer does not somehow feel and allow for those currents his comedy misses fire — seems heartless and vain.

How do you like to hear me philosophize? It's all my news at present, for nothing has happened to me this long while outside the incidents of my work, nor will, if I have my way, until early June, when I plan to set out for the East and my little landhold in Arichat. The deed of the property is now recorded, and the alterations and repairs are to commence next week. A servant girl has been corralled. It was a question of wages, ultimately. Would we pay six dollars per month? Five is the custom of the country; but for six she would refrain from accepting another place till June. We accepted with almost suspicious alacrity. Another year she may demand six per week instead of six per month. . . .

LXXVI

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Arichat, Cape Breton

6 July, 1912

. . . Our first weeks here were prodigiously busy for Miss Steele and myself, for it turned out important to get two acts of our farce to New York before the close of this present week. We sent off the script Tuesday night: and since then have enjoyed a self-appointed vacation. 'T was fun, though; and from parallel experiences of your own (more numerous than mine) you will know how *glad* we felt when the thing was done on the day fixed. Our provision title is "Mathilda Comes Back — A Character Farce": the style is very racy and colloquial, the story a little improbable, the personages very emphatically delineated: yet it comes near to being what I wanted to do; I *like* it very much: a hearty, healthy, buoyant, infectious thing that ought to blow through the theatre like a gust of salt sea wind and tonic everybody.

. . . When I write next I will tell you more of our "terre"; suffice it to say here, it is a lovely spot. The big living-room, panelled green, with six windows, is the most *livable* place you can imagine. The alterations worked out better than we had any right to expect. The little cabin on the hill is adorable and now that the daisies are nodding and beckoning all about it, above and below, it is an ecstasy just to lie there a-swing in the hammock. I have a lovely little boat, too, commodious, light, easy to manœuvre: and I spend a good deal of my free time over near Kavanaugh's Head, beloved by both of us! In the big marsh over there — you remem-

ber?—a million blue iris are just now making a miraculous carpet, bleu de Beauvais on shining green. . . .

LXXVII

To MRS. LUCY JAMES

Arichat, Cape Breton

3 September, 1912

The summer has been one of light and shadow — perhaps more of the latter, for we have met with a terrible sorrow in the loss of the youngest and dearest member of our family circle, my sister Faith.

LXXVIII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Arichat, Cape Breton

16 August, 1912

. . . I'm beginning to get on my feet again — so to speak — after some cruelly hard weeks. To be so far from home and to be able to do *nothing* was almost intolerable. And just the downright, sheer load of grief crushed me as I had no conception it would — being prepared for the blow ere it fell. I did n't feel *resentful* about the death of my little sister: I wonder why. Is it because I've outgrown anything so futile? Or perhaps because I felt somehow in the casting-up accounts for a life lived as beautifully and truly as that, the balance was on the credit side very positively; — each day had been its own reward, so to speak. But I did feel just blindly stricken and dumbled by grief — not for her, but for myself, for *us*, for our home, from which that brightness has irrevocably gone out.

When the heart says, "She has not left us; we hold her still," the heart within the heart answers, "Yes, but how unsubstantially and coldly compared with flesh and blood." Remembered laughter is sad when you know you will never hear it again save in memory. . . .

LXXIX

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

New York City

18 October, 1912

CHÈRE AMIE:

Won't you be surprised when you hear my news? I can still hardly believe it's true. I suppose it cuts me out of a visit at Hedge Lawn next month — but under the circumstances that must not be too painfully weighed, for — "Blackbirds" is to be produced at once.

. . . By a series of bewildering permutations, it comes about that Henry Miller wants to take up the play and that Belasco has consented to release it.

. . . Miller always does things artistically and carefully; I am incredibly lucky (it seems to me now) to be "in" with so fine a man. And he wants to contract with me at once for a second play. . . .

LXXX

To THE SAME

Berlin, Conn.

23 December, 1912

DEAR JEAN:

Home again for a little rest before the last and ultimate plunge — New York! I left Washington Friday. The company plays Buffalo this week, and I shall

return to them at Atlantic City where we "do time" until our metropolitan opening, January sixth. The Lyceum not being available earlier, we had to wait. Sorry to miss New Year's week in town — but no matter, we've half the season left! And I *hope*, oh, I do hope we'll land a big success. Why should n't we! Certainly our preliminary weeks have been most promising. Washington quite lost its head over us. And no wonder. The performance is a captivating one: such extraordinarily good team play, such a superb cast! To say nothing of Mister Author's contribution — of which, however, something may be said. The play has one very weak joint, not discovered till performance: nor can this joint be strengthened — only, in so far as possible, disguised. If it does not turn our public against us (and I am almost sure it will not — cannot), then we have a sure thing! . . .

LXXXI

To THE SAME

New York City

8 January, 1913

MY DEAR JEAN:

The critics pounced on "Blackbirds" in the most wantonly ferocious, bloodthirsty manner, tearing it into shreds and laughing as the feathers flew — and this in spite of a superbly enthusiastic first night. If critics can kill, we are DEAD: but we hope to disprove them and are renewing the fight, believing that in time we can win a public. Yesterday I was sick with chagrin: but to-day I am almost myself again. Of course, I must stick by the show for the present. The public love it, and we still

expect to get a public, in spite of the birds of Calamity. Anyhow we'll die fighting.

Thanks so much for your invitation. If life were not so strenuous, I'd accept it.

HARRY

LXXXII

To HIS SISTER

Berlin, Conn.

13 *January, 1913*

. . . I'm getting a splendid rest here at home and feeling very much like myself again. In fact I am delighted to see how quickly self-confidence is renewing itself and how energetically something is urging me to jump into the game again. No doubt, more than anything else, the new inspiration comes from my so much clarified knowledge of my peculiar gifts. I seem to feel that hereafter nothing shall tempt me away from my true vocation, that of presenting the life of our day from the angle of Comedy. It seems to me a blessed work, and it has been proved to me that it is my work.

Every comedy scene — practically every comedy line — in the new play has proved altogether successful and has proved so from the first production, requiring almost no revision or reduction. Also with the comedy (and pathetic) love-scenes. I think every one (excepting certain critics) Monday night, felt that the first act was the most remarkable thing in the whole range of native comedy. All the trouble came when I stepped out of my rôle.

. . . How quickly your average audience will tell you whether you are hitting the bull's-eye or not! And if you

don't hit it, that's your fault, not theirs. The Grandma scene failed because it was a bad scene. I see it so plainly now, and all the whys and wherefores; and I wonder why none of us saw it earlier! Even Mr. Belasco, who commented on it that it ought to go big!

. . . Miller has stood by me splendidly and wants another play right away. Laura H. C. has been a perfect brick. In fact everybody has been wonderful. I would be ashamed to lose heart now. . . .

LXXXIII

TO THE SAME

At Home

19 January, 1913

MY DEAR:

Has the high tragical news reached you? "Black-birds" chirp their last to-morrow! Here endeth the Nth lesson! What has it taught? — aside from the element of luck and other uncontrollables. I think this: the end of Act II was a fatal let-down of pitch. Having broached a brilliant, dazzling comedy, we settle to what the public thought a preachment. And what follows — Act III goes for nothing because they don't like the situation. Drastic doctrine — but I begin to see that it *is* the thing that emerges from all these contradictory and blind and perverse criticisms — and I feel its justice. I go to town to-morrow to attend obsequies. With a new comedy coming well into mind, too. I am anxious to be at work on it!

H.

LXXXIV

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Berlin, Conn.

10 February, 1913

... Belasco said to me Saturday he considered the first act the finest comedy act ever seen in New York. "The play," said he, "did your reputation fully as much good as a success, for every one knows what to expect of you next time — something as good as 'The School for Scandal.'" . . .

LXXXV

To HIS SISTER

Berlin, Conn.

25 February, 1913

DEAR:

We were all worrying a good deal about Alice last night. Mother stayed downstairs — but was not needed. I think the situation is unchanged this morning. I am not *deeply* troubled about things myself: the only thing I seem to feel much is a wish that the end may come quietly and soon, for the sake of the two we most wish relief for. Relief: release.

I hope you will be able to keep yourself from brooding and from fear — just now peculiarly vain proceedings. We can't do anything but watch — I can't, *even* here at home. Don't wish you were home: nothing would be gained by it, and much lost. Life is measured out to us in certain ways. For myself, I will not go through another Black Valley, like last summer. Perhaps it had to be done once: but once was enough. For one thing my feet are more surely grounded on experi-

ence. And life and activity have primary claims. Continued depression is death feeding on us prematurely. It relieves me to think that all this is not a solitary and unique ordeal, separating us from main currents of life, and crushing us with unexampled burdens: it and we are all a fleck in the universal tide — and the responsibility is not ours — it is the Universe's. . . .

LXXXVI

TO MRS. MATHEWS-RICHARDSON

Berlin, Conn.

Sunday, 2 March, 1913

MY DEAR FRIEND BESSIE:

I know you will be grieved to learn of Alice's death, which occurred this morning, and yet you will be happy with us, for her, and *with* her — that the end of her long term of suffering has been reached. Her illness developed very serious complications about three weeks ago, and for seven or eight days we have known that the end was very near, indeed. She was in great pain until Thursday night, when, about one A.M., she awoke from a brief nap and exclaimed in a little joyous whisper "The pain is all gone and I want to see everybody!" We came down to her bedside — mother and Laura, Dwight and myself — and for an hour and a half we were with her. She did not seem like a mortal being. All signs of her sickness were gone from her radiant, smiling countenance; the night wind blew through the room through open windows, and while the nurse kept bits of ice between her lips, she talked with us all, gently, serenely, almost gayly, with ever so many

little funny observations scattered through — a death-bed surely such as was never seen before, utterly without ceremonious solemnity, yet heartbreakingly sweet — a natural thing in the truest sense, where death was waited for with a welcome.

If ever there was a triumphant close to an aspiring life, surely this was one. "I am so glad to go," she said. "So glad: and none of you must feel anything but gladness!" She had messages and greetings for everybody, really! And after a while sleep came again. And yesterday there was another waking, almost as wonderful (the fifth day without nourishment of any kind), and she looked quietly, happily out of the window over the brown, windy hill, and again listened to music. Then she slept again, and this morning left us, in sleep. . . .

LXXXVII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Berlin, Conn.

30 March, 1913

. . . What *could* be said in five lines, for instance, about the International Exhibition? The questions you ask — "What does it mean? — What will it lead to? — Surely so and so and so and so are essential to a work of art?" — can be extended indefinitely and an answer attempted, and yet one is only skirting the discussion.

. . . At best I could only look at it as a fantastic experiment, a grasp at the ungraspable: not in any degree momentous — but piquant: with all its futility infinitely preferable to the average pretty gallery picture of cows in a brook or Landseer dogs. Of course, in so far as my own work exemplifies a tendency in art, it is the op-

posite of all this: i.e., positively back toward the known and familiar. I do not care for novelty and sensation, but for strength, construction, logic. My originality is the kind that infuses trite materials with a new life. I did not start that way: it took me years to learn myself, to get oriented. . . .

LXXXVIII

To THE SAME

Berlin, Conn.

27 April, 1913

. . . While in town I saw "Divorçons," which is amusing, but only moderately well acted in this revival (by Grace George), and an absurd play called "The Master Mind," to which I was conveyed willy-nilly by a friend of the producer's. Aside from that, my time was spent in the society of mes intimes — a tea, a studio lunch, a long evening drive in a hansom cab (a delicious form of dissipation) through Park byways, and a dinner at the Claremont. It all seems a long way off now, my days at home have been so en règle and invariably busy. The flower garden consumes all my spare time, aside from what goes to Zulu and to the piano. You have never seen me dig and scratch and plant and fertilize. A winsome sight! And from the joy of me you would think me purely rustic in my inclinations. Well, it *is* fun. And I love to see things grow!

For reading I have been delving into de Maupassant (your present having revived my interest in him), completing my perusal of Molière (I've finished him now, except for the pastorals and masques), reading Rostand's "Les Romanesques" and "La Princesse Loutaine"

aloud with my friend Oliver Wiard; and (dipping into the thing casually) have become engrossed with the Galsworthy serial in "Scribner's." It is quite wonderful, I think, so far. . . .

LXXXIX

To THE SAME

Arichat, Cape Breton

8 August, 1913

MY DEAR JEAN:

This morning at 11.50 o'clock I wrote "Curtain" to the first draught of my Act II, heaved a mighty sigh, and resolved that the remainder of the day should be dedicated to pleasure. Therefore I napped for an hour in my inviting hammock, that swings up here in the Look-out above my house, sheltered from the sun and too strong breezes, but airy, and with a truly wonderful view, as one idly swings, over the green fields that drop away below to the harbor — the blue, glittering sheet of the harbor, and beyond, brown-green hills, the Cape and the big Bay. Thus spent I the hour till dinner, and directly after that pleasant meal (assisted at by sister, self, dog Patrick, and our two little black kittens, Nanda and Branda) I set out afoot for my beach, two miles away, by an old road across the barrens, at Bar-rassois. You will judge, rightly, that I can walk much better than a year ago. I had a little dip in the ocean, particularly enjoyable because the southeast wind that is blowing was bringing in a pretty surf; I loafed awhile on the sand while Pat explored amongst the seaweed for unnameable but quite edible odds and ends of mortification; then we capered home together, and now, at

a little after four, I'm in my Lookout again, all the weather doors closed but one (for the wind is freshening), thinking that a rambling, not too exacting, letter to you is a most enjoyable occupation.

. . . I've almost come to a standstill with "Monte Cristo." Volume III is awful, and of a childishness! Ça ne me va pas, mon Dieu. Besides, I've been at other more worth while and enjoyable reading. Oscar Wilde's comedies — do you know them? — so brilliant, worldly, fruitless, yet stimulating. Henry James's "Awkward Age" — to me an irritating but fascinating volume; the "Roman du Théâtre" you have, and the Molière, which sister and I are keeping at with solid satisfaction and frequent hilarity. What divine laughter! So sane and sanifying. . . .

XC

TO THE SAME

Berlin, Conn.

7 December, 1913

MY DEAR:

Just back from New York where I have been attending to contracts and stuffing myself on polar literature, to repletion, and the upshot of it all is that I've contracted to deliver the completed play by the 1st of February. "Only think, Hedda."

Mr. Miller will begin rehearsals directly thereafter, we conjecture, and will produce in March.

Wheeee-oo!

Everything else is off. No Northampton carnival — no nothing: I'm to be buried, dead, unheard of, obliterated for seven weeks, while like a sturdy, quiet mole I burrow.

Good-bye! — Think not to see me more!

Of course, I'll thank you for the lovely and so appropriate Christmas present, when it comes, — and drop you lines now and then as to my burrowing.

This is, of course, a *terrifically* big chance for me.

In this business all — *All* — is gamble. Hence I count on nothing — but jump at the chance and am happy.

Fortunately my health is *quite* restored — save that I tire quicker than I like. But regular life, much sleep, and prosperity will all benefit me. . . .

XCI

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Berlin, Conn.

20 March, 1914

. . . Those broken arches of yours worry me. I began to feel queer little pains almost instantly in my Right Foot, but just before I went to a surgeon about it the trouble disappeared. Don't let them amputate, my dear, whatever they do! I can't bear to think of all the pairs of nice shoes you'd have left, useless, on your hands, — though now that I write the phrase "on your hands" I see that a use *is* suggested by it! Perhaps you *could* — yet, and the picture is attractive — learn to walk on them! . . .

XCII

To THE SAME

At Home

20 April, 1914

. . . Saturday I went to Boston to see my comedy. It looked so odd to me, after two years — so *faulty* and yet so adorably *mirthful*. Mrs. Fiske is wonderful as

ever — more so I almost think! And Malcolm Duncan makes the best Peter Swallow yet.

. . . Mrs. Fiske wants me to write her a play for year after next with my *Zoé Hopham* (you remember that queer artist from Paris in “Effie’s Soul,” with her famous picture “Intoxication from Kissing”) as the star part! — a gay, breezy satire, near burlesque. I’m *mad* about it! Are n’t you? . . .

XCHH

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Arichat, Cape Breton

6 August, 1914

. . . Karl has doubtless told you of Mrs. Fiske’s three weeks’ sojourn in Arichat. She wrote me from Yarmouth that she had never had a happier outing in her life. I think, above all, she took a fancy to the people — especially the *little* people — of the town. The good manners that obtain here she found very remarkable, insisting that she had to reform her own so as not to be found boorish. Arichat fairly adopted her. She talked to every one she met, and always was followed about by a loyal contingent of boys and girls — the former chiefly barefooted and belonging to the more disreputable families. We saw rather little of her and Miss Stevens, for I felt that they were happier left to themselves to prowl and discover. But they made several brief visits at my house, and I took them out a number of times for little boating trips. Mrs. Fiske’s inextinguishable *enthusiasm* was the trait in her that most struck me. It is adorable in a woman of her maturity and sophistication. An unreasoning energy of living, an eagerness that fairly sweeps one along with it. . . .

XCIV

*To THE SAME**Arichat, Cape Breton*

13 September, 1914

. . . As long as I have things to look forward to I can quite well bear delays. Since I received that famous installment of money, I have had none of those hatefully depressed days that blighted the month of July for me. I cannot yet look back on it without a wave of goose-flesh. Whereas August has been purely delightful! And such gorgeous, incomparable weather! Jove has showered aërial gold over us. Just to live, some days, is to be drunk. And this despite the sobering newspapers, which I devour now, paragraph by paragraph, daily. I see the "Republican," the "Evening Post," the "Evening World," and a Provincial paper from Halifax — and even so I do not get my fill. What wonderful news! What war of worlds! I think that in countless big ways the world will be the better for it. Horrible as it all is — yet in its cruel way so correcting. Asperge me sanguine, Domine, ut fortior sim! I do not think I should go to the front in a big conflict unless I had to, for I am not robust enough to do man's work there: but how I should love to be in the service — somewhere! — perhaps a dispatching office. It must be grand. . . .

XCV

*To THE SAME**At Home*

21 October, 1914

. . . On Friday I saw the "Phantom Rival." All that the paper said about Miss Crewes is true, and more

could be said, all laudatory. It is a charming, brilliant, unusual play — hardly a play! — with a note of wistfulness that tingles at one's heartstrings. It reminds one forcefully of the real part dreams play in a life — especially a woman's life — and reminds one, too, of the sadness (so to speak) of their irrealizability. Life is so prosaic in comparison with dream-life: yet the prosaic has to be accepted and lived with, while the dreams — if saved at all — are only for momentary solace. Rather a tenuous idea for dramatic treatment, but Crewes "got it over" splendidly: and *every one* loved and — I think — understood the little wife she embodied.

. . . To go back to the "Spy" — the "technical perfection" you mention seemed to me in too high a degree a matter of carpentry: — the perfection of "Mrs. Dane's Defence," for instance, which at the present moment leaves audiences cold instead of hot. The critical term for this type of play (as doubtless you know) is "pasteboard drama" — and a highly sophisticated audience, trained to take cues, sees the preparation of the grande scène and never gives itself obliviously to it. Mrs. Carter only this winter aroused laughter in the big scenes of "Zaza" and "Tanqueray," where our audiences used to be in hysterics of excitement. Kistermaecker wrote in an outworn genre, and perfect as the play is, the instant I saw it on the stage I felt its cardboardness. And I know you would have felt the same thing. The Pinero style is passé — for better or worse. . . .

. . . And another night I went to "L'Epervior": oh, so theatrical, so clap-trappy! The reading of it had not at all convinced me of its futility. But like "La Flambée," and so many other French "dramas," the

manner is utterly *démodé* for our stage. People watch the "big" scenes with mere good-natured tolerance, appreciating the virtuosity of this or that actor — nothing more. In this case the honors went emphatically to Dorziat, the actress who originated the woman's rôle in Paris and who was imported by Faversham to play opposite him here. She is skinny and old, but a perfectly finished artiste, without, however, I should say, "magnetism."

. . . What an obsession of *sex* the French stage suffers from. With all its art and cleverness, I am glad to be spared writing for it. Do they think of anything else? It ends by getting on one's nerves. . . .

XCVI

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

14 November, 1914

. . . New York is full of interesting plays: I do not remember a season when there have been so many at one time. Mrs. Campbell is rare and lovely, too, in "Pygmalion"; and personally I liked the play, but the public don't seem to think so well of it as of "Fanny's First Play." I think perhaps it's a little blinder, to them; and by no means so smarty. Marie Tempest is delicious and incomparably sparkling in a rather soggy comedy, by Henry Arthur Jones, of English provincial social jealousies, "Mary Goes First." The big production of "David Copperfield," which I did n't see, has proved a failure; but great things, I hear, are expected of the "Garden of Paradise" which must be opening just about now. When I see it, I'll tell you about our Em'ly Stevens! I hope she will land a hit, don't you!

There are several very bright American farces on, especially, "It Pays to Advertise"; and a whole slew of melodramas, none of which has as yet had the benefit of my presence. . . .

XCVII

To MRS. LUCY JAMES

Berlin, Conn.

3 December, 1914

MY VERY DEAR LADY OF PERCÉ:

You would certainly be surprised to know how very frequently I think of you and enviously picture you in your eyrie, perched above the sea, blown by all the winds of heaven, stared at by the wonderful rock and the cliffs and the mountain. I suppose in certain moods and seasons these cannot be accounted always as of friendly disposition: but at least they are grand, primitive foes, challenging one to wrestle with them! How I should love to behold one of your real winter storms, with assaults of snow and surge! It must be thrilling beyond words! Had I been a little less impecunious last summer, you would have seen me pop in on you one fine afternoon. I was quite resolved upon revisiting Percé, if but for a pair of days. But then of a sudden broke the war. All my prospects for the theatrical year to come were incontinently *smashé*. I had a big play ready for production, with the dangers of Arctic exploration its main theme. Who now cares to have his sympathies enlisted by the hardy Norseman? Just now all that seems infinitely far away and "academic" and unreal. My producers "called off" the undertaking — and I think quite wisely. I have sold another play (started

during the summer) since then; but we shall not offer it on Broadway this season. There are a few — a *very* few — successes on the boards: but the chances are slim for a new play, even when the critics praise it unstintedly, for the public is staying away from the theatre. Consequently most of us authors are experiencing a “lean” year, indeed — praying as devoutly for the cessation of war as ever Belgian could! . . .

I suppose you, like us here, are talking, reading, thinking nothing but the war; and of course you are all as bitterly anti-German as we are. “*Ces monstres, ces traîtres, ces diables!*” as a French friend of mine gently puts it! . . .

XCVIII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Berlin, Conn.

22 December, 1914

. . . What a way you have of keeping us all suspended and on the jump, one leg in the air, with anxiety! The instant we begin to lower the leg and say, “now surely the worst is over, now we can resume our normal posture, now we can repose from this unnatural exertion,” voilà — news arrives of another relapse, a new complication. Up goes the leg again! This may be sport for you (as the fabulous frogs exclaimed to the fabulous boy); but it is killing *us*. Understand, dear Evelyn, that I know *what* sport you are having, and that I realize ’t is a temptation to keep at it: but please remember that for our part we do long for a few days of uninterrupted good news! . . .

XCIX

*To MISS JEAN BASCOM**Berlin, Conn.**30 December, 1914*

. . . It is most enjoyable for me to have Oliver's evening companionship. Our occupations are principally two: piquet, which we have been learning out of Hoyle; and Virgil. We are spending about an hour a day renewing our acquaintance with the *Æneid*, using Latin texts and a literal translation. I have longed for years to know, with more mature powers of enjoyment, the Virgilian line, and this occasion is bringing me much memorable pleasure. The sonority, the dignity, the thoughtfulness of the verse, its beauties so remote from the ephemeral, and its underlying sadness were all quite outside my grasp at the time of first reading. In addition to these mellow occupations Oliver is reading aloud to me — frequently *en famille* — Borrow's "Bible in Spain," which is surely the most delightful round-about book ever written, zestful, various, full of the unexpected, and redolent of humor. . . .

C

*To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR**Berlin, Conn.**18 February, 1915*

Last week I ran up to Williamstown to see the performance of "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh" given by the college boys. It was great fun. Pure, unadulterated farce, of course; but keen, well studied, a most awfully clever performance. Every one seemed to love it. Being house-

party week, the audience swarmed with youth and beauty and high spirits. The fellow that played Mrs. Leigh was a handsome creature in his Paris clothes. A good actor, too, — though utterly without elocutionary skill. . . .

CI

To MRS. LUCY JAMES

At Home

12 March, 1915

. . . This present year has been disastrous, as you know, to almost all in my adventurous and bad profession! The fact is, as Mrs. Fiske said to me the other day, the theatre in this country is in a *very bad way*, and no one knows what is ahead. Under the circumstances it takes some resolution to stand by the ship, which *may* be sinking. The Moving Pictures have bewitched the public, giving them so *much* (such as it is!) for their money: and for so long now the poor public has been made the prey of theatrical ruffians (no other name is good enough for them!), who plunder their dollars and give nothing but noise and feathers in return, that the public is to be forgiven if now it turns from them in disgust and follows after the new gods. You see I wax eloquent on this theme! But as my bread and butter grows here, I have the right, methinks, to care.

Mrs. Fiske expects to do a new comedy of mine next season — “Suki at Parnassus,” a very mirthful bit of satire and burlesque which I know you would love, and I hope you can come to see it. Then, too, I have contracts for three other productions. *Something* should materialize out of all this! If not, I shall shift my alle-

giance from the stage back to my earlier love, the novel. But I do so much *prefer* the stage, I hate to think of deserting it. . . .

CII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

"Bonniebrae," 10 May, 1915

. . . The situation with my play, "Imogen," is desperate. The judgment upon it is that it is delightful, brilliant, etc., but high-brow; and no manager in New York will risk a production prejudged to be high-brow. The labors before L—— and me are to prove that the play is not high-brow, but of great popular appeal: that Mary Jane and Simeon Levinsky will co-mutually and severally laugh themselves into fits over it. How to prove this? We may decide after all on a stock try-out — but the disadvantages are obvious: stock productions are so crude! . . .

Evidently I'll not be buying sapphires for some time to come. Pray content yourself with the assurance that the Future holds one for you. (In Heaven one of the twelve Gates is a sapphire. *Vide* Revelation xx.) . . .

CIII

To HIS SISTER

At Home, 15 May, 1915

. . . Mrs. Fiske is in trouble over "Suki." Her fear now is that it is too light for her — no dramatic grip in the story. I think she may be right. It's true that everything is airy and unrealistic from the outset, and I can see quite well how she feels, facing the terrific problem she does. Of course the play can't be altered

fundamentally now. I would n't do that for anything. Mrs. Fiske still promises to produce the piece, but probably not next. She asks if I would like to submit it to Miss Tempest. Mrs. Fiske wrote *very* beautifully to me about the play, which she loves. "Don't, don't be discouraged, my *dear boy!* I know this is fiendish—FIENDISH!"

I'm buying that land to the west of Willowfield. Had to be done. A man from Rocky Bay with six (6) children was just acquiring it. Forrest wrote me, renewing his old offer, and Tupper answered me it was all *bona fide*, so there was no other course open. Now we own waterfront and barren too! Let us take pride therein even if we can't afford to live on our acres just now. Like so many gentry: land-poor! . . .

CIV

To MRS. MINNIE MADDERN FISKE

Litchfield, Conn.

4 June, 1915

Such a wonderful horseback ride of thirty-five miles as I had this morning, reaching this beautiful old town (how you would adore it!) at seven A.M. I leave my mare here for the summer.

A thousand greetings from the hills of spring.

H. J. S.

CV

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Berlin, Conn., 10 June, 1915

. . . While in Boston I called on Ferris Greenslet, who has recently returned from five weeks in England. He is greatly oppressed by the awful magnitude of the

conflict now waging. He seems to feel that we shall have to get into it ourselves ere much longer. I *almost* hope so myself, I am feeling so strongly nowadays that all civilization, all that we hold precious, is at stake: that it is really Our war, and that we are merely leaving to others the fighting of it. My mind is not made up yet. I am not ready to preach this doctrine, but I may be within another month or two. . . .

CVI

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Standish Arms, Brooklyn, N.Y.

15 June, 1915

. . . It has really been a memorable sojourn for me, up here in my cave of the winds, so high above the harbor. My seven windows give me all lower Manhattan within hand-reach; all the bridges; the East River wharves, with ships from across the world right under my nose, loading and unloading, docking and casting loose: such a constant procession and mêlée of sea-craft of all kinds as fills this wonderful waterway you cannot imagine; and by night it is simply beyond description wonderful. . . .

CVII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Aboard Freight-boat J. J. H. Brown

Lake Superior

30 July, 1915

JEAN DEAR:

The trip has been indescribably delightful so far and we are now speeding eastward, having disgorged at

Duluth and taken on a new cargo at Ashland, Wisconsin. This afternoon the distant shores of the Ste. Marie River are coming in sight, and beginning to give the impression of the narrowing lake: we shall soon be sailing down the river toward the Sault Ste. Marie, then pass through the great locks (quite thrilling it was, when we came, to *feel* the boat rising bodily under you, as the water flooded the lock and raised us to the level of the northern lake) — after the locks, the lower river for many miles, with flat green shores, and idle, pleasant landscape. Sequitur the broad, deep waters of Huron. On the westward course I loved Huron best. The day we crossed it was perfect, flawless: cool, yet hot; bracing, and at the same time disposing to languor. I almost dread to recross it. Partly because perfect things ne se répètent pas, mais surtout parce que chaque lieue me portera plus proche du fin du voyage et cela me désolé. What a dream of idle pleasure the whole outing has been! It *seems* to me that I have led this lotus life for *months*: I literally cannot believe, save as I face the calendar, that I have been only ten days absent from home. All ties have been so completely dissevered, all responsibilities so utterly cast off — just days of wind and golden sunshine, long, sweet twilights, ravishing noons; hours indoors of placid reading or card-games; long nights of sleep; meals savory and consumed with monstrous relish — I cannot tell you what I have done, because these days have no history, or if they have, 't is writ in water. . . .

Two or three of us can always withdraw to a corner of the deck, or to the lofty Bridge (whither the amiable captain allows us to mount at any moment of the day, or night), and if one prefers one's thoughts to all other

company, nothing is said or thought of one's solitude that makes it seem ill-timed or discourteous. Thus I have spent many, many hours quite alone. I cannot exactly say "with my thoughts," for I have no thoughts. My mind has ceased to operate. It is in a sort of beatific stupor. . . .

Meals are served in the after-house; the captain sits at the table-head, but he is the only member of the *officielle* with whom the guests have any contact. He is a jolly, kind, unpretentious, fat little fellow, keen-eyed, and well versed in ship-lore; and he and I have become fast friends.

. . . I am glad I do not live at Duluth. It is the Western City at its most typical: smoky, expensive, showy, raw, ugly. There are wonderful things about it, too. Its harbor is prodigious: and the great elevators, ore-docks, coal-docks, and lumber-docks have a grim, forceful picturesqueness, very American and very splendid. We docked there two days, and as we were *miles* from the city proper, we all went to "Duluth's grandest Hostelry" for the interim. I avoided most of the usual "sight-seeing," which fatigues me, but prowled about in a blundering, happy way by myself a good deal, and feel that I know the "personality" of the city pretty well. . . .

CVIII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Berlin, Conn.

6 August, 1915

. . . I cannot say that my New York visit brought me much happiness, since most of it was spent in re-

covering from the ill news L—— had for me in regard to "Imogen." It seems she has practically canvassed all the managerial possibilities for the play; and the verdict is unanimous against it; nay, more than that; it is positively hostile. They hate the play. They think Imogen is the most awful thing ever created. One manager, who invited her to read the manuscript, got up and stamped and swore halfway through the first act, and refused to listen to another word. Similar scenes were enacted elsewhere. There's absolutely no chance whatever for the piece at the present time. Furthermore, her personal friends equally are arrayed against it: not one of them, beyond the individuals of whom I have told you, has a good word to say for it; and most of them have implored her, as she values her reputation, not to touch the part. . . .

We had a scene together which would have been funny if it were n't so awfully heartbreaking. She was prostrated by the whole thing. She showed me documents, official verdicts, letters, everything. The case was not only conclusive; it was overwhelming.

Of course there's some big, significant reason behind such an unbroken array of adverse judgment; and I suppose that at last I see what it is. . . .

So there I am! This very quality in the part is, I have no doubt, what Greenslet felt in his reading of the play, and the same thing that you felt, but did not know quite how to phrase in the presence of my own enthusiasm. Well, my enthusiasm has ebbed, I can tell you. I am actually convinced, and deeply convinced, too, that the play, in spite of everything I have put into it of the best that is in me, is no good. Here endeth the labor of seven

months in dust and ashes. No tears, however. After one awful night, when it seemed to me I simply could n't bear it, I floated up serenely, almost with a grim joy, on the current of adversity; and now I have almost forgotten that there was such a thing as "Imogen." I am sure that the reason I could get over this thing so quickly was the splendid mental and physical condition I was in as a result of the trip. For I have never known myself to make such a quick recovery after a knock-down.

. . . I simply will not be a derelict, a has-been, or a heap of bones and feathers. If I can't do this sort of thing successfully, I will do another sort of thing successfully. . . .

CIX

To OLIVER M. WIARD

Arichat, Cape Breton

25 August, 1915

. . . Late August on Isle Madame! You know how lovely it is. They have got most of the hay in, and the fields are so brightly, unbelievably green, while the fields still uncut are dark-waving bronze and blue. Skies are wild with drifting cloud-masses, and the gray sea is flecked with white. The air is still summery, but has a keen tang of autumn. How you would love it here to-day, and how I would love your company to-day! In many respects I do not much mind being alone, as you know; but in the presence of any unspeakable beauty, natural or of art, I hunger and thirst for the sympathetically responsive soul. I realize, however, that for your own sake I should be willing to defer your physical presence till next summer, when larger means of re-

galing you with pleasures will, I hope, be at my disposal. I have in mind chiefly the motorboat which this season lies silent and dismantled in the melancholy coffin-shed of "J. & W. Jean." I have been in once or twice to look at her; and on good days, like to-day, deep calleth unto deep, in my bosom, that she should be cleaving the green wave: but I know that this must not be. Patience, eager heart!

. . . My resolution is to write one more play and then to quit the campaign *unless* in the meantime some Star in the East shall have shined upon me. Perhaps it's this very resolution that makes the commencement of such a crucial labor difficult. Whatever the reason, I am willing to begin slowly. I think I have a good idea and I want to try to express it. If I can't, I shall conclude that either I don't fit the stage or the stage does n't fit me. I don't covet for myself a career which consists exclusively in battering my head resolutely against a jagged stone wall. . . .

CX

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Arichat, Cape Breton

28 August, 1915

DEAR EVELYN:

Does the enclosed sprig of bay make you think, with a sniff of longing, of Arichat barrens, wind and sun-swept, and ringed-about with the blue sea, or does it evoke sordid memories of barber-shops which, perhaps, you have never entered, but must often have smelled, while passing down Clarion's Main Street? If the former, pray picture yourself my spirit companion

on a nice long stroll — I might better say scramble — from which I have just returned, for I was thinking of you and of your stories, and of last summer and of the trip on the Lakes and of next winter and of Life and Death and Eternity and my bank account and the unwritten play, and all sorts of things jumbled together. The barrens are very wet indeed now, and it takes dexterity of foot to skip over them without getting badly be-bogged; but they are certainly a great place for having thoughts; and if I was a poet I think I could have poems there.

. . . I thank you more than I can say for your letter. I did not want you to care about "Imogen." I tried to tell her story as brazenly and heartlessly as I could; but it did help me to feel better about her that you should have felt sorry, too, over that disappointment. I have pretty successfully banished that play from mind for the present. I don't want to think about it; and fortunately I don't have to. Perhaps in a year's time I shall root it out again and read it with new eyes; and perhaps I'll see some way of giving her another chance in the world. . . .

CXI

To HIS SISTER

"Willowfield," Arichat

15 September, 1915

. . . Yesterday the weather was not quite so bleak, and Boucher took me for a long drive — Rocky Bay, Cap le Rond, D'Escousse, Poulamond, Grandique. We reached home just before dark in a downpour, and it blew and rained all night, and to-day is blowing and

raining still. Oh, how wildly lovely the harbor is! I have been sitting here quietly near the stove for an hour, in your Consecrated Chariot, finishing "Iphigenia in the Taurians," the Murray translation you know, which is certainly superior to any translation I ever read of classical poetry. How those Choruses do sing and soar! I never *felt* the force and the rapture of them in the Greek, though I recognized it mentally: but the labor of disentangling their intricate, abstruse utterance so diminished the sense of movement. Not that I am not glad I knew them first in Greek. The thing you get in Greek is the essential Greekness of it all. This translation seems as English as the English Bible: belonging to *us* fully as much as to an alien race. Next to the climax of recognition, which I thought supremely fine, I was struck by the scene between Iphigenia and Thoas, when the former appears bearing the sacred image aloft. She seemed to me a very majestic figure. The scene is not exciting, in a certain sense, since the ruse is so facile in execution, but magnificently *pictorial* (methought). . . .

CXII

To OLIVER M. WIARD

The Kitchen, "Willowfield"

20 September, 1915

. . . The cold is almost freezing: the harbor tosses and flies, all white and black, under a sky "couleur d'étain," as our Loti would say, or "aux nuances éternes d'étain." I am a little sorry to be shut up so long; yet certainly the sensation of *smugness* is one in which I revel: a crackling fire, a whistling wind, rain on the pane! comfort and friendliness and shelter! the

things that make life *livable* in the homely sense. Sometimes my thoughts turn Westward with longing, yet I think I shall hang on here till the middle of the month, anyhow. I have no fixed plan as yet. I have submitted two acts of the new play, and await a verdict. But I hardly expect a favorable decision in view of my own deep dissatisfaction with the work. . . . It was the best I could do under the circumstances, that's all I can say in my own defense: that, and my increasing confidence that I have hold of a highly promising theme: but I can hardly expect another to see what *I* see — fore-see! — there; and if the work does not prove acceptable I shall have no blame for the persons concerned; and my plan is to carry the work no farther in play-form, but to begin a novel on the same theme as soon as I can.

. . . The amount of life-blood I have vainly shed these last years cries to me from the stones to forbear while yet there is time and hope and courage and strength. If the time for a revision of programme had to come, I am glad it came when it did. I have not yet gone too far to turn aside; and in turning aside I do not feel humiliated or beaten down. On the contrary, I feel that the diverse stressful experiences of these past years have deepened and made much richer my knowledge and love of human life. I am better equipped for the struggle, whatever the struggle is, and I do not know how better I could have *invested* my years. The chief danger to be feared from the apparently unavailing effort is that the spirit will be embittered. That is what I am most solicitous to avoid in myself and one main reason why I think the present is *the* moment for me to deflect — for the present.

Odd to be writing you so garrulously and eagerly of these peculiarly intimate problems. Please take it as the sincerest tribute I can pay to your tried and trusted affection: I know you care.

I've just finished "Pendennis." Do you know it? It leaves me with mingled, contradictory feelings, though uppermost is profound admiration for its sincerity, perspicacity, and strength. Irritation at occasional mawkishness is more acute *just because* the sentiment is usually, it seems to me, so true and wholesome. I find myself asking: Did he say to himself: "Now for a sentimental flourish" — *were* these passages written, as it were, to order — or are they, in some manner I do not yet fathom, the spontaneous expression of the same mind that seems, but for them, so sound and so just, according to my own standards? Are my own standards wrong? The book challenges one in many points. I think it will remain one of my favorite big books. . . .

CXIII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Arichat, Cape Breton

1 October, 1915

. . . Enough of this! These are days of sweet recess. My mind is free to soar and sing, and it is doing so. These are the first really happy minutes I have had since the afternoon we came up Buffalo Creek into the Mosquito Belt. The horrible weight of heavy-heartedness has really lifted and taken wings — I don't know how — and whatever turns up next I know I can take it *like myself*; and if I turn away for the present from play-

writing it will be with joy, not with bitterness. I hate bitterness and it does me so much harm, physically and morally.

There's so much seasonal beauty here of a type quite new to me: no bright banners of trees, but wonderful purple and yellow and flame-stained stretches of barrens. All the bogs are like cups of fire.

We are having a fit just now of bitter cold weather, and the wind sings and whistles, never resting till sunset, and then up again at night. All the harbor is a foaming, spumy millrace, and, oh, how dark and forbidding and desolate are the hills that stretch off seaward where the surf booms! I love it wildly. I certainly was a sea-bird in some earlier existence, shrieking down the wind for sheer mad exhilaration. Don't press the thought too far. I don't think I ever was fond of raw fish or the other things sea-gulls relish. I was more, methinks, like the Holy Spirit, with dove wings, and feeding on celestial fire. Nothing more carnal, surely. . . .

. . . In the meantime I've been writing a couple of Provincial short stories, and I've one more in my head which I hope to do my first days at home. I never had very good luck selling stories about Arichat life, but these ideas appealed to me so, I really felt it my duty to put them on paper; and it was great fun. I *did* enjoy the writing; and in contrast to my abortive attempt of a year ago, it went as easy as could be. Some time, if you like, I'll send you the manuscript. A good many amusing incidents have been happening hereabouts this summer, more than usual, or else I've been closer to them than usual — or else I'm in a more "seeing" mood than usual. I'll have lots of things to tell you when we meet.

CXIV

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Berlin, Conn.

3 November, 1915

DEAR JEAN:

I am waiting now for the word from New York that will settle my year's programme; but I shall probably have to wait a week or two. In patience, however, and confidence, for I have been emphatically assured, verbally, that everything will "go through" all right.

The offer was from George C. Tyler, the manager, and pleased me especially as coming from him, the man I admire most at present in the field and whom I have longed for years to be associated with — without much hope of any such consummation. He is interested in a Hungarian comedy, gave me a literal translation of it, and asked whether I would care to write an American play based on the story. I thought it over very carefully. The essential idea appealed to me greatly and so seemed perfectly practicable; but almost the whole fabric of the existing play would have to be discarded, as it consists of adulteries, fornications, and blackmails. At first I could not see any means of getting an American story out of the "Dénouement"; but finally I seemed to see a way; and when I talked it over with Tyler he was very enthusiastic. "Set that down on paper," said he, "and we'll make it the basis of a contract right away." I was n't quite clear enough in my ideas to put them *immediately* in writing, and then I lost two or three days through an unexpected ill turn: but finally, yesterday, I got off my document. . . .

CXV

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

New York, N.Y.

8 November, 1915

. . . Rejoice with me! Sing for joy! Clap your hands, oh, ye daughters of Zion!

The contract is being drawn (the terms are settled) and I am to sign it Saturday. Then I withdraw to my burrow for six weeks. Not to hibernate, however. They plan a late-winter production if the script is ready in time. I mean it shall be ready. This is One Grand Chance! Zip!

They are highly pleased with my Scenario No. 2, and I don't see why I should n't be able to develop it pretty fast, now, the foundation being so thoroughly laid.

Last night we celebrated and went to see Grace George in "The Liars" — one of the best comedies ever I heard, and she (whom I never really cared for before) was *adorable*. How I wish you could have been with us! . . .

CXVI

To THE SAME

"Bonniebrae," Berlin, Conn.

17 November, 1915

. . . The days seem very quiet and aloof here in the silent country. Indian summer lingers beautifully. I dread the coming of the snow — the loss of these violet, russet landscapes, with the magical haze.

I am reading at "Jean Christophe" again (vol. VII now) and I like it better and better, although the story

has completely disappeared, and character-sketches and criticism have monopolized the author's pen. But such firm, fearless, challenging criticism! It does one good. . . .

CXVII

To HIS SISTER

"Bonniebrae," Berlin

20 November, 1915

. . . On Tuesday Harriet and I went to see the "Carmen" pictures with Geraldine Farrar. They were marvellously good. Her acting was quite incomparable. Very unconventional and realistic, yet so studiously *posed* that the usual flickers of movement were almost eliminated. The photography was superb. Many effects almost like silhouettes — just *impressions* of things happening: then brilliant, clear pictures, full of animation. I wonder at the great indulgence shown by the censor-board toward certain love-scenes which were quite — well, my dear! — but I concluded that the death of Carmen (the wages of Sin being Death) probably rendered these scenes matter for edification. . . .

CXVIII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Berlin, Conn. '

1 December, 1915

. . . I saw Ethel Barrymore in "Mrs. McChesney" and liked her better than ever. Her voice is delicious, her beauty dazzling, and her acting maturely good. Too individual to serve as model for another, and transgressing many sound rules, still *effective*. The play is trashily built, but entertaining, and a *bit* — the first she has had for years and years.

I saw Grace George in "The New York Idea," which I had missed, years ago, with Mrs. Fiske. The comedy rendered by an unmagnetic "light" woman showed up all its flaws. Tinselly, clever, not really brilliant, as I expected it to be. It needs tremendous *spirit* to carry it off, and this is altogether lacking in Miss George; and Emily Stevens I saw in a vicious, unpleasant, sordid play, "The Unchastened Woman," in which she 'gives a dazzlingly convincing portrayal of a passionless siren, an intellectual home-wrecker. A real triumph of acting — but oh, in such an ignoble vehicle. . . .

CXIX

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Berlin, Conn.

22 December, 1915

EVELYN DEAR:

I started a long letter to you last week . . . to prepare you for the reception of a very remarkable Christmas present which I had purchased for you the previous Saturday in New York at the Lafayette Fund Exhibition and Sale of the work of wounded French soldiers; and which was to be sent to me, here, first, in order that I might show it to my sister. But then came the STORM!

. . . Coming from New York at the same time with your present was a wedding present for a Berlin girl who is being married to-morrow; and as yet not one word has been heard from the wandering parcels!

. . . At the present moment I am very pessimistic about your ever getting your present, for I put it this way: if wedding presents can't come through how can

one even hope that Christmas presents will have a chance! I regret most cruelly now that I did n't bring the thing home under my arm; but how was I to know that only thirty hours later the most fearful storm since 1888 was to descend upon us, sending all to pot! And not knowing this, I should have felt a little absurd and self-conscious with my arms so burstingly full as (*a*) suit-case, (*b*) walking-stick, (*c*) wedding present, and (*d*) Christmas present for Evelyn would have caused them to be. . . . And the cost, my dear, would appall you: I mean, the mere crude money cost! Being a sale for the benefit of the sick and wounded, you see! Of course, money means very little to me nowadays; I need hardly remind you of that. It oozes from my fingers and toes like sap from a maple tree in sugar-time. All I ask is: "Do I sincerely want this article?" — and if the answer is, "Yes, I do want this article!" I take the article, without inquiry as to the price. It's a very exquisite sensation; and can be enjoyed for several days without let or hindrance. I was in New York two days. I do not think it will happen again for quite a long while; but for those two days, 't was fairly rejuvenating!! . . .

The most heartrending articles offered at the sale were a lot of little leather sewed balls, for children's playthings. These were made by the sickest and most helpless of the soldiers, and the shapes were far from perfectly round, and the stitching was irregular and very awkward; and everybody who saw the balls and knew their story immediately felt a lump come in his throat and wanted to buy a dozen or so; and the whole batch of a couple of hundred was sold in less than an hour. . . .

.. Yesterday I finished the ninth volume of "Jean Chris-

tophe" and began the tenth and last. I am very, very glad that I've read this big book for it is a big book, packed full of challenging, critical, awakening thoughts; and there are very many extraordinary character-sketches and episodes. The story as such is almost negligible; and it's undeniable that miles and miles of the narrative are boring. You pay for what you get; but you do get it; and I don't know where else that particular thing can be got: inspiration to firm, true, courageous action: contempt for anæmic indifference, for critical casuistics, for easy-going content, and for spiritual fatigue. The book seems to be singing all the time: Live! Live at all costs! Affirm! Do! Strive and suffer! Fear not! This is the central significance of Christophe's own personality; and always, wherever he goes, whomever he touches, the author represents him as conveying a breath of new life: a sort of awakening of the dead; a sort of opening of dull, blind eyes to the majesty of life; not to its beauty alone, or to its goodness, for Christophe knows its depths and frequent horribleness; but to its entrancing vitalness. He is a sort of torrent of unappeasable, un-constrictable life himself; and the breath of him thrills and inspires others. It's a pretty big idea. . . .

CXX

To MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

Boston, Mass.

8 January, 1916

. . . Whatever happens, the work on the Hungarian play has done wonders for me morally. I was so unspeakably down on my back last summer — a

long fit of blues and ill-health such as I have n't known for seven years: it's really quite dreadful to think of, even now; and it was this occasion, flatteringly thrust upon me, along with a snug check, that set me on my feet. My imagination, too, was fagged, and I should have found it very hard to broach a purely original venture. In this, I had the backing, the push, of another man's thought, to get me a-going, and once I got under way, of course I could keep it up of myself. I'm not looking into the future at all. While this job lasts, I'm content to live in it; and if nothing "turns up" spontaneously, when this is done, time enough then (say I) to think.

Another bit of luck that cheered me was the selling to a Movie concern of my biggest dramatic piece, "Northward Ho!" which had been rendered unproduceable on account of the war. It had represented practically a year's work on my part, and I had taken its quash very hard. Of course the sale of it for picture purposes does not comfort me, as a writer, but merely as the possessor of a starveling bank account. *That* did get a boost; and I had the consolation of feeling that at least the play had earned me the "respectable clerk's salary" to which Stevenson says an author has a perfect right to aspire. . . .

I've done some interesting reading these last months: four volumes of Fabre's insect-life-and-habit "Souvenirs," uniquely engaging, whimsical, yet veracious, as scientific researches — I quite loved them and expect to go further; Willa Cather's novel "The Song of the Lark," which seems to me very distinguished and in a new vein of American fiction; now Darwin's "Letters,"

which are delightful in a quiet, unobstreperous, sincere fashion: a most lovely personality in its simplicity and modesty and humanness.

. . . I've been able to do a little on behalf of the sufferers over there, and it certainly does give one a sense of serving a big cause, which is good for one. What I have done personally is through a fine French woman friend here in Boston, who sends direct to relatives in Rouen, who, in turn, distribute to refugees and to destitute soldier-families. The French are the admiration of the world, nowadays. It has sometimes taken will power to believe in them in years past, but now I think we are all on our knees before their supreme, serene idealism and devotion. But, oh, if this horror would only end! End, I mean, with light triumphant, not extinguished! . . .

CXXI

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

"Bonniebrae"

25 January, 1916

DAILY BULLETIN NUMBER 999633 — THURSDAY —

Edith got into me something awful when she found out what I'd written you about your story, the "Family Davenport-Bed." She thought the story was a great deal more interesting than I would allow; and she was quite sure it would be an easy thing to fix all the difficulties up, and the result would be a real Fascinator. She said the mother and mother-love was the whole trouble. You had not succeeded in making the mother interesting. I quite realize the force of her point. Of course, if our curiosity were piqued in regard to the

mother, we'd have a lot to live for! You don't touch that in the slightest degree. Now it's true such mothers don't openly give themselves away; but we've got to feel — at least, to suspect — that *they* feel, suffer, long, underneath; and that's what you completely leave out. Now Henry James could do it. You remember those people in the "Portrait of a Lady"? They were the kind that never under any circumstances gave themselves away; but just once Isabel caught a look exchanged between them when they didn't imagine she saw — just once! — but once was enough! and she brooded over it day and night, and it changed the whole course of her life. Now you could certainly get in a hint that would count for millions. Your young thing just thought once she saw something — what was it? — a gesture — a closing door — a frou-frou of a stately skirt whisked aside! — you know what I mean, — and she knew, from that moment, there was something! What! What!! Or she heard a groan, one night: just a breathed "Oh, God!!!" — but when she opened the door, Mrs. What-do-you-call-her was looking up at her with the same old baffling smile! Yet that cry in the night! Was it illusion? What did it mean!!

As I write these lines I begin to have all sorts of little fascinating goose-fleshy thrills, from spine to toes! I am sure you could get quite a bully suspense, and a lot of human interest. And I know that, as usual, you'll not take the words of my suggestion literally: but the spirit sketched behind the words. . . .

CXXII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Berlin, Conn.

30 January, 1916

. . . Meanwhile my own life goes on with so much color and variegation! I do certainly rejoice in a *happy* year, after the black disappointments and depression of last spring and summer. I have *adored* this new play, loved every day's work on it, and think its future *most* bright.

I cannot tell you all the projects that are astir for other plays. I think your wish will be fulfilled as to "Suki." The Frohman people wish to produce it, as a vehicle for their youngest star, and we are considering the alterations involved. Of course, as the play has never been *finished*, I am not in the least dismayed at the prospect of certain shiftings and some eliminations: and I *fully* believe the play will come out quite dashingly. You perhaps recall my earliest "gamine" conception of the heroine, carried out in a first act which Mrs. Fiske admired, but felt the impracticability of for herself. Of course I am returning to *that*, and so pleased and relieved to do so. If the plan materializes and a contract is accorded me, I shall be tickled to death, and certainly all signs now favor. There is a germination of new possibilities for "Imogen" too (my particular *darling* child), but first I have *ever* so much rewriting to do, as I am resolved to set the date of the play back to 1880 again. So, you see, whatever happens, I have busy, busy months ahead. . . .

To Miss EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Berlin, Conn.

30 January, 1916

EVELYN DEAR:

I do not think you need to feel at all suspicious about that stone. I suppose what has led you to feel that way is the realization that I had not, at the present moment, the money to spend for a genuine gem, no matter for whom. But I will tell you just exactly how it was. I got the ring at a very remarkable bargain. On account of the war, the price of most gems has mounted tremendously; but it seems this particular kind of sapphire is an exception. There's only one place where you can get them, in this country; but if you know that place, there's no trouble at all. The dealers' name is Woolworth and Company; and they have a chain of specialty shops all through the country. Lovely, lovely things! The girl who sold me the ring (I told her it was for my grandmother; but there, do you think she'd believe me? She looked so knowing!) — this girl said that ever so many rings of just that pattern were being worn this winter. There is one little item I think you ought to know about. The pretty box cost extra. They do not sell the box WITH the ring. I asked the girl if they would take back the box, supposing my grandmother did not care to keep it; and she said, yes; but she would not promise that the money would be refunded. I suppose she was afraid there might be some scratch or mark on the box or that the spring would be out of order from so much opening and shutting.

. . . I saw Mrs. Fiske's play. It's a wretched thing,

dramaturgically speaking, but charmingly bright and refreshing and novel; and I'm happy to say is a pronounced hit. Her own part is delectable, so full of breeze. . . .

CXXIV

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Standish Arms
Columbia Heights, Brooklyn
 15 February, 1916

. . . How I wish you were here this afternoon. I am alone in my eyrie ten floors above the street, with my outlook surveying all the harbor — the busy wharves, the countless tugs and ferries actively crossing and recrossing, now and then the hulk of a ship slowly steaming in or out: beyond, the gray, mist-bounded harbor, and the suggestion in that of the four corners of the earth, very far off, across many leagues of dangerous sea. . . .

CXXV

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Standish Arms
Columbia Heights, Brooklyn
 27 February, 1916

. . . I was death-droppingly tired when I came down to town last Thursday, but since arriving I've rested splendidly. . . . I've had no opportunity even for work, so I've just run around and enjoyed myself with my friends, spent ten or twelve hours at a stretch in bed, and revelled — literally *caroused* — in this intoxicating view from my tenth-floor, harbor-sweeping win-

dow. I've told you all about it, so I'll not repeat. Only in winter crispness and under the blast of winter winds there's a difference in splendor. But any way at all it's supreme. I will tell you why it does me more good than any other view in the world save the views at Arichat — it came to me the other day: the title of Romain Rolland's new book on the war, written from his retreat in Switzerland, "Audessus de la Mêlée." . . .

CXXVI

To THE SAME

Berlin, Conn.

23 May, 1916

EVELYN DEAR:

Your sympathy was not at all too late to be timely, for after the grippe state of physique followed the grippe state of mind, which is even harder to cure, but considerably alleviated by kind words and thoughts. Usually I like to have more or less the same maladies you do — only, of course, not so ferociously: but when it comes to neuritis, you overstepped your prerogatives, and that peeves me. Don't you know that neuritis is the special property of *my* family? We don't allow other people to have neuritis except as a mark of particular favor. I think it was presuming for you to go and have it, and I hope, just to serve you right, you did n't have it *bad at all*, but just a sloppy, bourgeois imitation of Our Malady. And now you ask solicitously after my health? Well, not to keep you in hope and dread any longer, I'll say that I'm really almost my usual self again. The main drawback is this cursed feeling of feebleness in my members (*viz*: arms and legs) so that the least little

spurt of outdoor work uses me up. But this last infirmity is being eliminated. I take a pretty yellow tonic, the name of which I don't know, but I wish I did, because I'd urge it on you, for I'm sure 't would help pseudo-neuritis. . . . In the meantime it seems pleasant to be idle, watch the rain quietly dripping through fresh leafage, and ponder on the vanity of human wishes. . . .

CXXVII

To MRS. LUCY JAMES

Cape Breton

"Willowfield," Arichat

5 July, 1916

MY DEAR LADY OF THE ROCK:

You are one of the people whom it's fun to "sit down and write to"—just as it's fun to sit down and read one of your delightful letters, like yourself overflowing with interest in the two worlds we live in, Nature and Humanity.

I had a *most* exciting and tantalizing winter—ending in a miserable débâcle. A new comedy, "Suki," was put on for me, and I had the highest hopes of it. So did many others. We played three weeks out of town, and were scheduled to be on Broadway this month: announcements "up" and all! And then came one of those ignominious theatrical squabbles in the Management (Management, Star, Author, and Agent were all involved) and the play was shelved. Heartbreak! Yes, it was a knockout! Temporarily! They insist that they are going to produce the play next season. But I am beyond putting faith in *mere* promises. We'll see what happens. It's a sweet, merry, sophisticated comedy and I'm sure

you'd like it: and if it does come on, you must make a little run down to the city and go to see it with me. C'est entendu? By contract, too, another comedy of mine should be produced ere the season is done. Who knows! Perhaps it *will* be! Yes, it's a disgusting business, mon amie! You put *all* your faith, and *all* your heart, and *all* your exuberance into it — and you get a slap in the face or a kick somewhere else. Oh, "I could a tale unfold!" — but I'll spare you! And the fact remains I do love the theatre and I love play-writing; and I'm not quite ready yet to sing, with old disillusionized Ben Jonson, "Farewell the loathèd Stage!"

But, as I was saying: It was more or less *on prospects* I bought my new motor: so now, to atone for that rashness, I'm living with impressive parsimony! No gay side trips to Gaspesia! No happy-go-lucky enjoyment of life's pleasures. I quite am face to face with "Realities." Yet, withal, so comfortable here, and so snugly provided for, that I feel like a shipwrecked mariner drinking hot coffee out of a Thermos bottle.

We are greatly enjoying a visit from my good mother, who will probably be with us till Edith returns home next month.

Very sincerely yours,

HARRY JAMES SMITH

CXXVIII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Arichat, Cape Breton

7 July, 1916

. . . I believe that last winter's practical experience should prove of pronounced help to me. I believe,

too, that I am *very close* to Success. So close that it would be idiotic not to pursue it ardently and arduously along this chosen course for a while longer. I feel this the more confidently because I know that all the practice and all the lessons I am getting, as comedian, will serve me also if I turn to other fields of literary activity later. This severe discipline, this persistence, and — yes — sacrifice, are all needful parts in a successful author's equipment. . . .

CXXIX

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Arichat, Cape Breton

19 July, 1916

DEAR EVELYN:

So far my life here has been rather a slum. I came down from home full of high ambitions and ran first into rather a vicious bronchitis (which is now vanishing) and into a perfect orgy of trouble over the new motor. This trouble is far harder to cure than bronchitis. I would have returned it to Detroit; but found that so many awful papers had to be awfully filled out, with oaths before a magistrate certifying to the maiden name of my great grandmother's pet cat (this is what the war has done to international red-tape) that I gave up in despair! . . . And for further troubles — that scenario I sold to the Vitagraph people — I think I told you about it? — was n't sold after all. Just think of the shock and the ignominy. The president of the company did n't like it because it was too sordid and so refused to sign the check. And I sent them one more (just as a final favor!) and they did n't like that either; so now that's the end of my fling at pictures.

. . . The work laid out for me for these next weeks is to get a new second act for "John Paul." Tyler concluded that the second act I had done was too much of the farce type. Bless you, he first of all wanted farce! Still, the criticism was a good one. The idea of the play has proved so valid and interesting, as an idea, that it seems to claim a more realistic and convincing treatment than was suggested by the original Hungarian play. You see what I mean:—could a man actually do, in American society, what John Paul did? If so, then make 'em actually believe your story. Don't treat it like farce, but as a thing which really and truly was so. In other words, make it less showy, but more true. I am pleased with the suggestion, because I too think the play's calibre will be much improved: it will take on a value and gain an interest. But it seems to be an awfully hard thing to do. I'm having my troubles rearranging that second act, which depended on a farcial incident for its climax, to wit, the blocking of the man, whose dress-suit John Paul had annexed, from telling his story to the railroad president; there was finally a scrap, you know, and some disordered garments; and all that is now thrown out and I've nothing to take its place—nothing of curtain calibre. I think, however, that I'm working toward something. I really do like the play enough and believe in it enough so that it's a pleasure to attack it again. . . .

. . . Mrs. Fiske, bless her heart, sent me word the other day that I was never for one moment to forget that I was the best comedian in America, if not on either side of the water, and that I ought to have five comedies playing in New York at the present time. But

there you are! And "Suki" languishes in cold storage; and "Imogen" is knocked about from pillar to post, finding none to receive her; and if "John Paul" fails to suit the whim of a mercurial and capricious despot, he too goes to the limbo of forgotten things. Meanwhile my white hairs increase apace. . . .

Well, so wags the foot of Time. I wish each wag were a shower of shekels — yet, most of the time I feel very cheerful; and certainly I get a lot of fun along the way. . . .

CXXX

To THE SAME

Arichat, Cape Breton

15 August, 1916

. . . Enough for now that the boat flits along like a swallow, so quiet and so sure. It's inebriating! Wait till next year and let's get drunk together!*

Since writing the sentence starred (*) thus, I've been out sailing for two hours, accompanied by the man Boucher who is my assistant. It was wildly rough round Jerseyman's Island: we shipped the tops of flying seas; the boat tore her way up and down the long waves; you had to *shout* for sheer excitement. And the little motor never once did a thing but purr.

This morning I sent off two acts of "John Paul." I feel that the work is of appreciably higher calibre than before. There is no farce in it now. I hope Tyler will agree with me. If he does I shall press on to the finish with enthusiasm. If not — but I *think* he's *going* to! He promised to send me word, quick; and till I hear, I shall (a) take some vacation, (b) write some letters, (c) per-

haps try my hand at a story. I got one in mind last winter — an Arichat comedy — which I would like to write out, and which I think would very possibly sell; and a little check would cheer me amazingly about now.

. . . The carraway crop has been large and fine this year, but the market is small. The *War*, I presume! . . .

CXXXI

To THE SAME

Arichat, Cape Breton

2 September, 1916

. . . But before I forget it: you misinterpreted my caution regarding the carraway. I wanted you to space your nibbles wisely so as to get the maximum as well as the optimum of satisfaction, and the reason I stressed the finality of the contribution was by no means stinginess on my part: no, indeed, I would gladly have culled a peck for you; but merely that the season for carraway (a very brief, precious season) had passed its zenith; only a few poor shrivelled seeds still clung to the brown stems; and even before I heard from you in reply — or shall I say, retort? — there was no more to be had. As my old Aunt Sophia used to say:

With the cutting of the hay
Comes the end of the carraway! —

and in another place:

Carraway in June
Is a month too soon.

Carraway in July
Flavors cookies, soup, and pie.

Carraway in August
Might as well be sawdust.

Carraway in September
Never do I remember.

Carraway in October, —
Are you drunk or sober?

I think there were some more couplets; but these will do to prove to you how harshly you misread my kind meaning.

I suppose you know I'm alone here now. Mother went early last week; Edith and Miss Steele followed the next day. Martha deserted me a day later. Then I moved over to the house of my best of friends. I don't know why they tolerate me as a yearly ordeal, except that I really do try to keep on best behavior there. And throw in for good measure an extra touch of buoyancy and vivacity. They are dear souls, all.

On the joys of motor-boating, I shall say nothing this once. Joys they are, all joys excelling. . . .

CXXXII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Arichat, Cape Breton

15 September, 1916

. . . It quite mellows my spirits to hear you tell of Connecticut. You almost know it better than I. At least you have traversed some sections still unknown to me. I do love that river as passionately as one can an object of sight. Its gentle curves, its placid variety, its

aspect of fruitfulness all touch me. The tobacco fields have a luscious beauty in the afternoon sunlight — so blue and so full of shadow. . . .

CXXXIII

To HIS FAMILY

Standish Arms, Sunday

8 November, 1916

DEAR PEOPLE AT HOME:

I'm having a nice quiet restful day, staying here in my room while it rains and blows outside, and very glad of a little vacation from "Oh, Imogen!" . . . There's no question of the play showing up capitally. Everybody likes it, even the stage hands; and so far as I can judge, there's not any terrifying weak spot coming into view. It all seems to hold together; and so few changes have been required, to date, that I begin to think I really have managed to learn a little bit about the technique of play-writing in the past five years. I don't know what we'd do if it were n't for Mrs. Dixey's very great gift of direction, a surprising talent in a woman. I take off my hat to her, and feel more than ever an ignoramus as I watch her getting results. Struggle as I will to master them, the most effective points of stage management still escape me; and I am only glad that I have the sense to recognize them when they are revealed by somebody else. It is an exacting art, certainly: one which requires great self-confidence and a full acquaintance with all the external means — the externalizing means — of expression. I can construct the tones, the gesture, but the illustrative business does not come to me: the telling cross, the new position, the new

stage-picture. Mrs. Dixey has the instinct for this as strongly as Mrs. Fiske. It is a good thing that we are in perfect agreement as to the spirit of the interpretation! . . .

. . . You will judge from the foregoing paragraphs that I have very little to talk about these days besides Play. Such is the case. Nevertheless, between-times, I get into a good many arguments of a political nature; and I am sorry enough that I can't cast my vote this year for Wilson, for I have been coming over to him more and more strongly as the days have gone by. I have reasons for liking him better; and my feelings about the Republican campaign have changed from indifference to a very active contempt. If THAT is all they have to say for themselves, quoth I, then we shall certainly be fools to change! . . .

CXXXIV

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Standish Arms

Columbia Heights, Brooklyn

8 November, 1916

. . . I am keeping in first-class form, myself, though my only way of doing this is to let everything else go but rehearsals and bed. I have seen almost none of my friends because sociability seems such an awful tax when I have nothing to bring to it but fatigued nerves. I see a great many plays, evenings, but always alone: then walk home, across the Bridge, over the gleaming black River, under the stars. How I do love the Bridge, and the Harbor, and this airy corner of Brooklyn, perched over the wharves! . . .

To HIS SISTER

Berlin, Conn.

12 November, 1916

SISTER DEAR:

Rehearsal of "Imogen" ended for the day yesterday at one-twenty. I had an appointment with George Tyler at one-thirty and was free again at one-forty-five. I started to walk to the Subway, my portfolio under my elbow, when suddenly it popped into my head that it would be fun to make a try for the two o'clock train home and have a night and a Sunday in the country. Imperilling my life in a mad dash across Fifth Avenue, where cross-town was being held up for up-and-down-town traffic, I managed to reach the station just in time; and I entered our home front door at half-past five. I had counted on finding a scanty but sufficient store of nighties, combs, etc., in my wardrobe, and I was not disappointed, except in the absence of a toothbrush; but this morning I found an old one downstairs which I thought, or at least, hoped — might once have been mine: I gave it an antiseptic bath and used it with a clean conscience.

. . . And these November days — though this one is just a little dark and sombre — are my pet days of the year, as you know, and cannot be at all appreciated, in their colorfulness and poetry, in the city. They are fine, livable days there; but without any appeal to the imagination and heart. . . .

I don't remember whether I told you or not that "John Paul Bart" has been made over, by me, to Cohan and Harris: I mean, with my consent, as Mr. Klaw did

not like the final version of the play at all. Tyler keeps an interest in the production; and he tells me that the new management are enthusiastic about the piece and intend to produce right away. The big surprise follows. Cohan and Harris want to feature Grant Mitchell. I almost tumbled over when I heard this. But I am sincerely pleased. Mitchell is a born comedian; he is also very, very charming and makes every part he plays an appeal to the heart. He will give a real characterization to the part, and I think this will help it; also it will be a great novelty. . . .

CXXXVI

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Brooklyn, N.Y.

27 December, 1916

. . . The rehearsals of "A Tailor-Made Man" are going delightfully well. Such a splendid, big-hearted, enthusiastic, *straight* concern as Cohan and Harris is almost unique in the business, and, oh, can you imagine what a *relief* to me! We have a first-rate cast (numbering twenty-two!), a fine director, and the production will be worthy of the play. I *really* expect big results this time. I never could *expect* that, at any moment with "Imogen." I only *hoped* that somehow or other we might compel decent treatment. But we could n't. It was hopeless. I realize it now. Yet curse as I will, I have to admit that the "try-out" of "Imogen" did me a great deal of good, taught me a lot of things about play-writing and directing. Perhaps in no other way could I have learned so much in so short a time as thus being thrown on my own resources. And my faith in

the play is brighter than ever. I *know* the thing is to be a success, in due time — and I must be willing to wait. . . .

CXXXVII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Standish Arms, Brooklyn

13 January, 1917

. . . Did they tell you that on the occasion of my one day's visit at home (January 3d) I was aghast to be greeted by a waddling, adipose, inert Patrick?

The transformation had come about in so few weeks' time!

Isn't life a mystery! Grief had kept him from romping, but *not* from eating. Result: the very thing that testified to his love made him unlovely! . . .

CXXXVIII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Standish Arms, Brooklyn

6 February, 1917

Our week in Buffalo (with "A Tailor-Made Man") was really extraordinary. We did fully twice the business expected and the whole city was talking about the play. Columbus is Grant Mitchell's home town: consequently our opening there was not a fair test of the play's appeal: it was simply a riot of enthusiasm. I was delighted, for his sake, that he had such a wonderful reception, for this is really his first *big*, outstanding part, after many years of fine, tireless effort, and I love to see such effort rewarded. The feeling is that "John Paul" will be the making of him as a star.

He is certainly adorable in the part. Mais revenons! The plan now is to reorganize the company at once and as soon as possible to send us either to Philadelphia or to Boston for a run, opening before the end of February. With that in view I have rushed back ahead of the play to do some important reconstruction in Act II. There are some hilariously funny parvenus in this act; the public love them, but I feel, and so does the management, that they hurt the play — diminish its verisimilitude — and I am going to cut them out bodily and write in some characters of a finer social mould, even at the cost of funniness. I hoped I could begin the writing to-day: but I was still too tired. I have promised it for Monday, and if to-morrow is only a good day for me, I think I can keep my promise. But, of course, the trouble is that I am nervously unstrung and exhausted. Just think: I have only had one day off since October 15th!

. . . Meanwhile it is nice to remind myself that all signs look bright for the play's future. The attitude of the management is the best sign of all — et moi, qui vous parle, *je sais*, après les doléances de "Suki" et de mon "Imogen." This firm will not betray me. . . .

CXXXIX

To HIS MOTHER

New York City

12 February, 1917

DEAR MOTHER:

Our opening in Boston is to be either the 12th of March or the 5th, depending upon the business done by the play that precedes us at the Hollis Street Theatre.

But with the date so far off in any case, they've decided to defer the beginning of our rehearsals until the 19th, and this leaves me, I *think*, with a good chance to rest and enjoy life and do some odd jobs in the days just ahead. Of course, I *may* be put on some more writing at once. It seems Mr. Cohan has a new idea for the second act and perhaps he will want to have me work it out with him immediately. In any case I shan't worry myself to death or overwork. I'd like to come home again: but I think *here* is probably the place for me, in view of what may be wanted of me any day at the office.

I did have a lovely little visit with you all, and I wish it could have lasted days and days and days.

Ever so much love,

HARRY

CXL

To HIS SISTER

Standish Arms, Brooklyn

14 February, 1917

. . . Finding that Mr. Cohan was n't ready yet to undertake the work on Act Two, I pitched in and began revising and copying "Imogen" like mad. It seemed like the divinely appointed moment, and the work has gone splendidly. I'm two thirds through copying Act II now. Very little more *new* writing to do: just straight-away revision and copying, so I hope by Friday P.M. to have it done. If *only* they'll leave me alone till then. It is rather fun, these quiet, busy days up here in my airy cliff home! And, oh! that is such a sweet, merry play: I am mad about it, in its present form. . . .

CXLI

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Standish Arms, Brooklyn

3 March, 1917

. . . I had two or three days of illness, the end of last week, due to one frightful night of grief and discouragement over some changes that had been forced into "A Tailor-Made Man." Of course I made myself sick; I knew better, and I ought to have been able to gain control of myself in time, but for once all my little recipes failed me, and I had chills and a temperature and all the rest; and most of this past week has been spent in semi-convalescence. I ran up to the country for a part of two days, and I think that helped in the restorative work, for I was in a mood to bask in the tender regard of my family. It's singular to observe how as years go on I seem to become more, rather than less, dependent on affection. Not admiration, which means relatively little to me — but just the constant awareness that people are fond of me. I wonder if this is a form of fatty degeneration. . . .

CXLII

To MRS. CARROLL L. MAXCY

Boston, Mass.

17 March, 1917

DEAR LADY LOU:

I've thought of you often and often these past ten days and wished for a chance to let you know, by a personal word, of the delightful thing that has come to pass; but my memory of these same days is a confused one: I seem chiefly to have been standing on my head,

pivoting round like a teetotem, both legs waving in the air, manuscript in both hands, a fountain pen in my teeth. Is there anything in God's world like a new "production"! I doubt it.

The special stress is just over. I expect to be here, with the play, only two or three more days: and then home, to the dear country (muddy and bleak, I know, but dear all the same), for a rest. I've only been at home two days since October — my only days of freedom from this surcharged, over-stimulating atmosphere of the theatre: and I tell you, I'll enjoy some just plain everydayness for a while. That is to say, if once I can learn how to breathe real air again. I suppose 't will seem like a vacuum for the first week or so.

Yes, the play is going enormously here. The hope is that we shall have a real "run" at the Hollis — stay on for six, eight, ten weeks. No one dares prophesy — this being *Boston* — but we have high hopes. At the least we shall remain till April 7th. I do hope you can get over to see it, for I know you would adore it as much as I do. (Can an author speak more naïvely than that?) . . .

CXLIII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

At Home

25 March, 1917

. . . The big appeal of this play is its heart appeal. Right here the critics gave us no help; for not one of them discovered this remarkable fact. They spoke of the abundance of fun in the play — but in this field it cannot bear comparison with successful farces; they

spoke of its interesting story—but of course its plot is not so gripping as the plot of a successful melodrama. Just what they failed to discern is the thing that is our unique, incontestable appeal for popular suffrage: human interest, the affection bestowed by the entire audience on John Paul from the moment he enters the play. After all, critics are a blind lot, are n't they! Clever with their ink-pots, prolific of words, makers of phrases. Blind! Ipse dixit!

I do not pretend, of course, that I am *satisfied* with the play. There are details in it still that bother me. But in an affair that is necessarily one of approximations, I think that the product is creditable to me.

In fact all but one or two things in the play that displeased me have now been eliminated, and the play comes closer to being what I want it to be than any piece of work I have yet done. The firm have treated me enormously well and I shall be grateful to them all my life. . . .

CXLIV

To MRS. LUCY JAMES

Berlin, Conn.

25 March, 1917

MY DEAR FRIEND MRS. JAMES-BY-THE-SEA:

It gives me a nice neighborly glow to sit down—even at my typewriter (which you must forgive this time)—for a bit of a chat with you, after the lapse of many moons. I love to come back to old friends: it seems to me they are the fixed stars in one's sky. So many things in life change and pass; but the blessed friendships are there; and after far-wanderings and

excitements, adventures manifold, disappointments and victories, it is like a home-coming to reach out the hand to them once more.

This has been a particularly eventful winter for me. From the very day of my return, in October, from Nova Scotia, I have been bound, hand and foot, to two new plays. One of them had a try-out in the fall. We began rehearsals the 20th of October; opened on the road the last week in November; played three weeks; and before those three weeks were over, I had to leave the show and hurry back to New York where another play was being made ready for its try-out. New rehearsals; new worries; new despairs; new hopes. What a business this of the theatre is! You live so intensely. It must be the gambler's passion; I can't make anything else out of it. You ask WHY, and there is no answer at all except that, some way or other, it *is* your life! . . .

This is really, at last, the Big thing I have been waiting for so long. I have wonderful, enthusiastic, ambitious management behind me; the production is very handsome; the cast superb; Grant Mitchell, who plays the principal rôle, is simply inimitable, the most adorable being who ever wore pants — though not at all the typical *matinée* hero, but so sturdy and straightforward and *nice* — you want to pat him on the back and say God-bless-you! — and in fact, everything that could be done for the play has been done. I feel very happy and very grateful to everybody.

I left Boston, at last, the middle of this past week. I was really all tired out. I knew it with my mind; but I was too excited and keyed-up to *feel* it, at all; and it was not until I was here, again, in the quiet, dull country,

that the fatigue came to the surface. All of a sudden it seemed as if I could scarcely drag one foot after the other, or open my mouth to converse — and you may well believe I must be tired when conversation is a hardship to me!!

I do not feel like my usual self yet; but the worst is over; and in a few days I expect to take a normal man's interest in life once more.

It seems funny not to say anything about the war; but after all, the subject is so tremendous that I'd rather not say anything than to say ten or twelve inadequate words. We feel so deeply and so passionately these days: what's the use of even trying to say anything? I am glad that soon we Americans are to be having a share in things: it is high time.

All my good wishes to you!

Edith wishes to be kindly remembered.

Give my love to the Rock! Are the birds beginning to whirl and scream about it once more? How I would adore seeing them!

Ever, with affection, yours,

HARRY JAMES SMITH

CXLV

To MISS HELEN WILLARD

Berlin, Conn., 15 April, 1917

. . . Nobody knows quite how much this success of the play means to me. You know about as well as anybody, however; because you know pretty much the mood I was in last summer and the very great importance which I attached to this venture; also you know, better than most of them, the horrors of my experience with "Imogen," which, if one had ever had any heart

left for the business, was calculated to destroy all that remained. When I found that last Saturday we were doing capacity business at both matinée and evening, I began to feel that life was really worth-while after all. At night they had to put the orchestra under the stage and fill up the space with chairs! Was n't that sweet? Only an occasional plaintive, squeaky strain from the instruments percolated as far as the audience; but, oh, that better music, those overtones that murmured, Capacity, Capacity!! . . .

CXLVI

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Berlin, Conn., 28 May, 1917

. . . Our little town is quite beautiful now; and our little house and grounds the beautifulest spot of all. My gardens are proud things. . . .

I don't feel as you do about the changed world we live in. The world is changed, of course. But not much more exciting than it has always been for me. It does make some kinds of effort seem fatuous, I know, — this terrific intensity of living and dying all about us. But, after all, not one's big efforts! Only that what was trifling and piddy-widdy before is simply unspeakable now. Lots of make-believes and imitations are exploding before our eyes. . . .

CXLVII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Berlin, Conn., 31 May, 1917

Yesterday our Berlin Home Guard marched proudly at the head of the Memorial Day procession

and listened patriotically to I don't know how many prayers and addresses, and drank countless cups of lemonade served by blooming Daughters of Veterans. As a result I had a wretched headache night, and to-day I am idling my hours away instead of toiling. The day invites to idleness, anyhow, with its whispering zephyrs and Arabian fragrances. Our wistaria drapes one whole face of the house with pendent odorous clusters of blue. More subtle in appeal to eye and nostril is the lily-of-the-valley. Ours doubtless would offer a sorry comparison with your famous banks, but we have rather more floriferousness than usual — enough to satisfy our modest demands. Thank you for your neighborly offer of some cullings from Hedge Lawn. Were we as barren as in some years past I should eagerly take advantage of it.

. . . Patrick left us this morning for a summer in South Dennis, on the Cape. He was accompanied by my little nephew, and, from Boston on, my sister Fanny was to act as additional escort. I shall miss him here: but with the coming of hot weather (if ever hot weather does come!) he will be infinitely better off on the coast, with many daily plunges and much crab-hunting. . . .

CXLVIII

To DR. JOHN A. MACDONALD

Berlin, Conn.

Thursday, 31 May, 1917

DEAR OLD JOHN:

I hope you won't hate me forever if I bother you with a question or two. Please consider it in the cause of American Theatrical Art, for which no sacrifice of time and trouble is to be considered too great.

In the first act of a new play I'm working at, I have the hero bring in an unconscious man in his arms. Hero is a lumberman of thirty-two, a "rough diamond"; and his charge is a small-sized, middle-aged Canuck.

Canuck has been knocked out in a fight; he has insulted some one and a fight has ensued and he has got punched in such a way that he's out; it's winter; and hero has brought him into the little country school-house to bring him to. My query is: What steps would be the best ones in this process?

Little heroine, who is the school teacher, is the person who rightly should take charge; and what she does should be the perfect epitome of efficiency and first-aid science: also — since this is a *play* and not real life — there should be nothing displeasing about it.

I picture hero laying down his charge on a bench. Heroine gets schoolbooks and puts under his head. She loosens his collar. Listens to his heart. Feels his ribs to discover if any are broken. I assume the man has been punched in the solar plexus. Is there anything else required to bring him to? Do you slap his face or hands?

I want about *three minutes* in all before the man opens his eyes. Then for a little while he must be a little dizzy and bewildered. Would it be suitable to have him slightly nauseated? — I mean, just enough so that he will choose to lie rather still for a while? And when he walks again (in about eight or nine minutes) he must be unsteady enough to require help from hero.

All I want, you see, is a possible case, permitting these various things (attention to the hurt man) while lumberman and school teacher get acquainted. In the ordinary course of life they would never have met: this

emergency, requiring them to coöperate in first-aid, brings them up next each other double quick, and things begin to happen which develop in the second act into a love-story — see?

If what I have briefly sketched out above is acceptable, I wish you'd just drop me a word to that effect on a post-card; and if you think of other details that ought to be there, I'd be frightfully grateful if you'd suggest them to me.

Cohan and Harris are much interested in this new play and they would like to give it a try-out production in July if I can get it ready by then. So I'm letting other plans go by the board and giving up all my time to it. I think it will turn out to be a very good little play, and with a timely "message" which is, perhaps, worth more just now than what I could give to the world along any other line.

I'm counting on coming over to Boston some day before long; and I hope we can get a good little visit. I've lots of things I want to talk over with you. I shall try and get around before the run of "A Tailor-Made Man" is over — and I think that will be in about a fortnight.

All kinds of good wishes.

HARRY

CXLIX

TO THE SAME

"Bonniebrae"

Saturday, 2 June, 1917

DEAR JACK:

Thanks with all my heart. That was just what I wanted. Now watch me eat it up! Gratefully yours,

HARRY

CL

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Boston, Mass.

26 June, 1917

. . . Three things opened as possibilities: a trial production of the new play, in July; the course in wireless at Columbia; and a work for the National Surgical Dressings Committee — namely, to go down to Canada and collect and prepare sphagnum moss for shipment to the hospitals in France. Well, the first appeared to be ruled out, by circumstances. I definitely gave up any thought of production till October, on the advice of the firm. Then the wireless was dropped, after very thorough study. The sphagnum work developed into something momentous and urgent, and I offered my time and funds to it, promising to leave on the mission by July 15th and give three months. The next day Cohan and Harris offered me a production for the new play in *July* — to begin rehearsal the 9th. I was a good deal knocked out; but I finally decided that my job was cut out for me in the Nova Scotia bogs, and I turned down the offer. Maybe I was a fool. Still, having given my word, I think I shall feel happier if I keep it. The moss is still practically unknown here, though in great demand, and the Canadian Red Cross is sending twenty-five thousand dressings per month across. I am to be taught the technique by the Secretary of the Canadian Committee in Guysboro, and then shall develop operations near Arichat, employing several workers, and shipping the prepared moss to New York. . . .

CLI

To MISS ALICE KAUSER

Arichat, Nova Scotia

3 August, 1917

DEAR MISS KAUSER:

This is to report that I have now been starting the sphagnum work here in my own domain this week, and that the outlook is as good as can be.

I spent eight days first in Guysboro, Nova Scotia, working with Dr. Porter, who turned out (as we foresaw) to be a *very* charming and kind person, and at the same time highly scientific in habits of thought and immensely capable. For my purposes, he knew everything that was to be known to a degree. We visited some perfectly inaccessible bogs, twenty miles from anywhere, were drenched in rains, lost in fogs, stalled in impassable roads; had all the adventures necessary for a normal year in the space of a few days. But I returned to my own island full of ardor and enthusiasm: and it has pleased me enormously that, after nearly a week's search I have located a very large amount of the best variety of moss. This variety (*Papillosum*) is not at all easy to come on. Sphagnum may abound, and does, in almost every bog; but the common varieties are rather stringy and harsh, with but low absorptive value. The *Papillosum*, and one or two allied species (*Palustre*, and certain *Magillanica*) are, when dried, fluffy and papery in texture, with a quite wonderful absorbency. If you will lay the dried and pressed specimens I enclose in a bit of water (either immersed or only in contact) you will observe what a peculiar genius the thing has for taking up liquid.

I have been working this week with all my might and main; for the start-off of the campaign is all-important; and at the same time that I was instructing my four girl helpers I had to be scouring the country-side for good bogs containing the right moss. The man who was to assist me was taken dangerously sick some days ago, so I have everything on my own shoulders. But I am really gratified by the good start made. The girls who are at the sorting are interested and industrious: and everybody hereabouts seems to feel a real pride in the undertaking. I was a bit afraid they would be skeptical about it and laugh up their sleeves.

So far I am alone here: but my sister is to arrive at the end of next week, and she will bring two women friends who will help about the work; and a man friend of mine is due to arrive in a few days. As soon as I can delegate some of my exacting responsibility, I shall take a fortnight "off" to finish the Mary Ryan play.

. . . So far as the future of the sphagnum enterprise is concerned, I think the best course is to push my present work as hard as I can throughout this summer. Then I shall have results to show: testimonials, criticisms, influence, and a kind of authority in the business; and with these behind me, and the backing of the Surgical Dressings Committee, I can approach the Red Cross anew, with much more likelihood of winning their interest. I suggest, therefore, that you make no move in their direction at the present moment, although I think it most generous and admirable of you to offer to go for me to headquarters with samples of moss, etc. At another date I may call on you for just that service. But I feel pretty sure that just now my only task is to

make good with the people I am already associated with: and this, I believe, will lead to greater things.

My girls wear uniforms and I believe feel just a little proud of them. Their names are Sabrina and Eveline Thibeault and Josephine and Lina-May Doyen: not a bad galaxy!

I hear the weather has been cruelly hot with you. Accept my sympathy! I am free here from all that. We are having an unusual amount of fog and rain; but the temperature is uniformly adorable and I hope for sunshine later.

All good wishes ever!

Yours devotedly,

HARRY JAMES

I enclose a copy of Dr. Porter's excellent article on the moss. You may keep it, if you like, as I have two more.

CLII

To GRANT MITCHELL

"Willowfield," Arichat

19 August, 1917

DEAR GRANT:

By the time this reaches you you will be deep *in*, once more. You can't imagine how many million miles away I feel: it takes all the grim resolution I can muster to stay on here, in my bogs, when the other half, or two thirds of my life (my double life) is coming into being, once more, over there! I have thought of you — of you personally — so often, during these past days of rehearsal, and wondered what your new problems and

vicissitudes — if there were any — might be. Your letter gave me some news of which I was mightily glad: that Miss MacKellar promised well (I was sure she would), that the women looked fresh and charming, that Sam Forrest seemed fit as a fiddle. I'm particularly glad of this last, in view of the work that's ahead, for him and me, on the Mary Ryan play. You don't speak of your own health. I hope it's too good to need any mention. Mine is "potentially" fine — but my body is lame and sore from days of constant bog-trotting. All I need is physical rest, and that I'm now going to get, several days of it, before starting my final writing on the new play.

Our sphagnum work here is now organized and running like machinery. Three friends from home are helping me in the management, and I have one man and ten girls from this vicinity, in my employ. We three men undertake to keep the workroom supplied with moss, and if you think we are kept on the jump, you think rightly.

There are plenty of bogs in this country; but the surgical moss is much harder to locate than I imagined: you can wade a dozen bogs, up to your boot-tops, and not find a patch of it. When you do locate a "culture" you proceed to "work" it, that is, pull it up, handful by handful, wringing out the water which fills the moss like a soaked sponge; then you bag your haul and carry it, on your shoulders, to the shore, where you load it aboard the motor-boat. Yesterday afternoon we brought four sacks back home which I consider very good for a half-day's work. My first shipment of dried and graded sphagnum was made two days ago, consisting of only

four packing-cases lightly filled. But this was the equivalent of about fifty bags of fresh moss, so you can imagine how the bulk and texture is changed by the drying process; and I calculate that I shipped enough moss for about ten thousand dressings — so that's a beginning, anyhow.

I babble of sphagnum just as if it were the chief concern of your life. My excuse is the very friendly interest which you took in the undertaking. It would have been great fun if you could have spent a few days here with me. The country was never so adorable, in its northern, changeful greenness, swept all about with sea and sky; and the air is the most bracing I have ever breathed — it almost puts wings to one's heels. My dear little motor-boat runs like a charm.

And I have a new dog, a little Micmac Indian dog, that hid under my shed, one eye knocked out and a leg broken, refusing to die, and insisting on being adopted. Aside from his mono-optical dissymmetry he's quite a pretty little dog, and very companionable: and we call him Dick Dead-Eye. He is slowly learning English, but some of his Micmac habits cling to him — for better or worse — such as a preference for sitting *on* rather than *under* tables.

When you have a moment's time to send me a line or two, do remember that I shall be grateful for news. Doubly so because of my distance from the centre of activities.

Edith joins me in all sorts of good wishes. If Sam Forrest is still with you, please thank him for his fine letter, and tell him I'll write very shortly. He'll be glad to be told, too, that I am actually started, once more, on my

business of playwright and that I shall continue to be a playwright. . . .

Affectionately yours,

HARRY

P.S. I have shaved off my moustache and am found to possess a most quizzical and disconcerting upper lip; and those who teased for the change, now tease for an immediate return to the status quo ante. But that, I tell them, will take time and thought.

CLIII

To MADAME G. PEPIN BUREL

Arichat, Cape Breton

21 September, 1917

. . . This is only to say that I think there is no reason why I should n't become parrain to the little René of whom you write. *Will you tell me what to do?* I will act at once, as soon as informed. . . .

CLIV

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Arichat, Cape Breton

1 October, 1917

CHÈRE AMIE:

Saturday was our last day of sphagnitis, supposedly, but a spell of bad weather prolongs the final drying and packing, which is going on to-day. Twenty-four boxes in all have been shipped, and I calculate enough moss for more than ninety thousand surgical dressings. Fourteen girls in my employ the last weeks and everything operating at high pressure. What a

relief to have it over! — And what a relief to have finished the fourth act of that damn play! I typed the final "Curtain" Saturday afternoon!

I am dead tired, but in perfectly good health, otherwise, and I think my first days in New York (where I am to arrive Friday) will be free from wearing responsibility and I expect to get rested. We leave here Wednesday, 7 A.M. Edith is in wretched form — has been far below par all summer. I am glad she will soon be under her doctor's eye again. I am to go through to New York *all rail* — two days and two nights of travel. The news of the "Tailor-Made Man" continues as good as possible. Business practically capacity. And everybody as friendly and pleased! I have a fine little letter of congratulations from Charles M. Schwab of Bethlehem Steel! Also from one of the Emergency Shipbuilding Presidents, Mr. Sutphen — both men, of course, touched by the propaganda of the play! This amuses and at the same time flatters me inordinately!

I must to my *packing*! So much of it, and so unenlivening.

Ever your

HARRY

CLV

To MADAME G. PEPIN BUREL

Standish Arms, Brooklyn

19 October, 1917

... I thank you for your news regarding the mother of my god-child René: I have written her (in my bad French!) and enclosed a draft for 200 francs, promising more when she would write me of the little boy's requirements.

. . . I have been almost dead with work since I returned to New York. My *œuvre* for the Surgical Dressings Committee is rapidly expanding, and it takes all my time and all my strength, and hardest of all, I am preparing for the production of a new play the rehearsals of which begin next month. . . .

CLVI

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Standish Arms, Brooklyn

3 November, 1917

MY DEAR JEAN:

Crowded, higglety-pigglety days! I plan so much and do so little; it's discouraging. The days seem æons ago when I had leisure mornings every now and then for quiet, expansive letter-writing. They were good days, and I wonder if they will ever come again. Will the war, having swallowed us all up, and everything we prize most, finally disgorge us all again, to take our old place again in the accustomed pattern? Doubtless it is ridiculously premature even to think of such an event; yet the spirit will devoutly crave it in spite of one's reason.

Along with other cares, I have had the newest play to look out for, in the absence of Mr. Forrest: that is, an informal rehearsal every two or three days for the children who are to play such important parts; and a lot of preliminary scout-work, such as interviewing possible actors, and revising and overseeing work on the script.

Probably you have heard reports of the way things are going with the "Tailor-Man" — that it is the acknowledged hit of the season, outdoing all other legitimate attractions in box-office receipts? This, of

course, is quite jolly for me. I do certainly enjoy the sense of freedom and power which a large (relatively large) income confers; and in these days, surtout, with the world ablaze, and the need of succor so infinitely beyond one's ability to supply, I still can feel that I am accomplishing something with my contributions. Having no one dependent on me enables me to put practically everything into war relief.

Yet I should not disguise from you the fact that I have allowed myself one conspicuous action of self-indulgence: namely, bought a new baby-grand piano. It is not here yet, in my rooms; but is promised for the middle of next week; and I quite glow at the thought of having music again available, under my fingers, at any hour of day or night. Poor musician that I am, still the thing means a great deal to me as recreation — more, in my hours of mental fatigue, than anything else means; and this is what justifies me — if anything does — in spending so much money, in these days, upon myself. My old instrument, still in very good form, I have presented to my sister-in-law, who is a real musician and has been deprived for several years of a decent piano.

It is just after eleven of a bright late-autumnal day — one of OUR days! — and I am about to pack a few articles of attire, including a sweater and a pair of hip boots, into my suit-case, and to take train for a spot in the Jersey pine-belt, near the coast, where I am told a very good quality of sphagnum is to be found, in abundance. I have been desirous of getting down to Tom's River ever since my return to New York; but there has been no chance for it. I really look forward to a day in

the open air, bog-trotting. I have been too long bereft of this strange pastime.

I have just had a telephone from Oliver Wiard saying that he would be able to join me, in my explorations, to-morrow. That will be great fun. The hardest phase of the work, for me, is its loneliness. Unfortunately he has no rubber boots available; but at least he can sit on the border of the bog and smile at me!

I have a lovely room over here on the Heights this year. I wish you could look in on me — and my view. I am on the twelfth floor, two higher than last winter; and on a corner of the building which permits a view, in addition to everything else, of the East River bridges. They are splendid beyond words at night, after the city lights are mostly dimmed: great soaring arches of beaded lights, with the ceaseless crawling movement on them of the little electric cars and the trains, to and fro.

Please tell me how you are and what's going on.

Ever devotedly your

HARRY

CLVII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Brooklyn, N.Y.

15 November, 1917

. . . Things have come along with a rush lately. The American Red Cross has to-day offered me the chairmanship of a Committee on Sphagnum, to be formed by myself. I am not contented with the proposition as outlined, because the scope of the committee is not defined; and I am at this moment waiting in an ante-room for a conference which I trust will lead me

ultimately to Davison or Gibson or one of the heads of the War Council.

. . . All my personal instincts are to leave the proposition alone. Yet I am driven grimly along by the knowledge that the Red Cross is *the* machine to handle this job *Big*. Pershing has cabled for twenty to thirty *carloads* of sphagnum dressings, at once! Conceive the confusion! What is sphagnum? Can you give us at least two carloads by next week? And the danger of the whole thing being wrecked through ignorance and private greed! The florists say, *Here* is sphagnum, and try to sell rubbish suitable, at best, for packing saucers.

. . . I'm losing my nerve about the war. Is n't it *black*, black as pot! . . .

CLVIII

To J. R. FLANNERY, *American Red Cross*

Brooklyn, N.Y.

11 December, 1917

. . . I have been staved off and sidetracked and held up in carrying my effort forward, not, I certainly believe, by any individual's ill-will, but by one bad turn of circumstances after another, until I am utterly worn out and discouraged; and this latest communication, with its indication of still further delays and red-tape before any effective action can be inaugurated, is the last straw. I would be only too glad to wash my hands of the whole thing except that I still feel that if I am wanted it is my duty to stick. But as for frittering my life away in seeking the right to serve, I'm done with it. I'm here, if they want me; but I am not going after the thing a step further. It's too heartbreaking to be so anxious to do

things — big things — and still to see nothing doing except a repetition of the same old process. . . .

CLIX

To MADAME G. PEPIN BUREL

Standish Arms, Brooklyn, N.Y.

13 December, 1917

. . . Yes, I went to see "Scapin" that very night and found it even more brilliant and captivating than you described! I loved the Cérémonie du Couronnement: I never saw anything more exquisite. I hope to go frequently in future to see the productions of this very remarkable little company. Copeau has genius, there's no doubt of it! . . .

CLX

To HIS MOTHER

Headquarters American Red Cross

Washington, D.C., December, 1917

MOTHER DEAR:

My two days here have been busy ones, you can imagine. I hope they have been profitable. I've got through a lot of correspondence, and plans for the next steps in sphagnum development are decided on. The first thing is to start an Experimental Workroom in New York and I hope we can get that under way next week. I shall return to the city as soon as we are done at Atlantic City and I don't propose to lose any more time than the inevitable red-tape demands. The trip to the Coast will come next on the schedule.

You can't imagine what Washington is like, these days. Absolutely *bursting*! I thought I would have to

sleep at the Police Station, since all the hotels in the list would have nothing to do with me, but at last a Family Hotel, to which I had a letter of recommendation, let me sleep in a dark closet once used as a linen closet. I did n't sleep much, but at least I was safe.

I expect to run up to Philadelphia to-night, where I expect something more comfortable, and I go from there, to-morrow early in the day, to Atlantic City. I hope I'll find some word from home at the theatre.

Ever so much love,

HARRY

CLXI

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

Standish Arms, Brooklyn

21 December, 1917

. . . The show really *looks* promising; there's no use trying to be skeptical about it, although skepticism is the becoming mood. Miss Ryan is measuring up to the part splendidly: she has caught the zest and buoyancy of it so well: the tension and emotion she *always* had. I believe that whatever happens to the play, she will win a personal triumph—for which I am right glad, as she is a dear, courageous girl, with a long fight behind her. . . .

CLXII

To ROY B. SMITH

Standish Arms, Brooklyn

30 January, 1918

DEAR BROTHER:

You may have heard, from some other source, that a decision was suddenly made to bring the new play into New York next week. We open at the "Play-

house" Monday matinée, the 4th of February. I believe this is a very good plan, in view of the distressing theatrical depression in Boston. And there is a timeliness about the play which I dread losing the advantage of, here. That timeliness will be of more value, I mean, here, than anywhere else; for elsewhere (in the event of success) the New York run will be more than a counterbalancing asset. I believe the chances for such a success on Broadway are favorable; though I'm not so fatuous as to believe that the thing is a certainty: in this business nothing is ever that. F—— misreported me if she said C. & H. were sure the thing would be a big hit. But they believe it's a good gamble. And we all do. The dangers of defeat are on the score of the play's simplicity and countryness: whether Broadway wants that or does not want it. Well, we shall soon know.

We have been working wickedly hard these past ten days. Mr. Cohan has given me a great deal of priceless assistance as advisory surgeon. He has an infallible touch for the sore spots. This kind of repair work is the hardest of any. I am about worn out. But why should I care, if the cause is a just one? Heroics!! . . .

CLXIII

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Brooklyn, N.Y.

6 February, 1918

CHÈRE AMIE:

. . . You'll rejoice to know that "The Little Teacher" went over with a bang yesterday: the biggest and most emphatic sort of instantaneous hit. I am greatly relieved and deeply happy about it. I have been

resting, abed, most of the day, trying to quiet my jumping nerves: for the past weeks have curiously unstrung me. The final days were the hardest of all, for there were many who prophesied disaster on Broadway. I have seen only a few papers, the "criticisms" (so called) of which are various; but they one and all admit that the play is an enormous hit. And as for the play's merits — I know those sufficiently well and can dispense with hearing them recounted by others.

No more to-day, but I'll write soon again. Mother has been alarmingly ill with pneumonia, but is better. I start the sphagnum workroom here Thursday, and shall spend Sunday at home — my first visit there since December.

Ever your loyal

HARRY

CLXIV

To DR. J. A. HARTWELL, *American Red Cross*

Brooklyn, N.Y.

13 February, 1918

MY DEAR MAJOR:

It may not have been fair for me to say YES so positively to the questions you put to me this noon as to the availability of unlimited supplies of surgical sphagnum. My answer was based on such full and careful reports as have been secured by me during the past two or three months of persistent inquiry. But reports, both you and I know, often prove fallible.

My trip to the Coast is partly to authenticate these reports and to make estimates. I cannot doubt, however, that ALL the moss we can want is to be had there: the

problems will be securing labor of collection and arranging transportation.

We shall have to meet these same problems in the East, when our bogs open. There is no conceivable doubt but that plenty of moss for all needs can be got from New Jersey, Eastern Maine, Lower Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. The practical difficulties of getting it remain to be dealt with. But why should we not expect this to be done successfully?

With this qualification, I am ready to repeat my YES. But in fairness to you, I wished to make sure that I had not given a false report to you.

Loyally yours,

HARRY JAMES SMITH

No answer required.

CLXV

TO HIS MOTHER

*Headquarters American Red Cross
Washington, D.C.*

25 February, 1918

MOTHER DEAR:

I have finished my day of work and conference here and am only waiting now for my letters of introduction, etc., to be finished, and then I shall go out and stare at the Washington Monument till time for dinner; and by the time I have finished dinner, to judge by the long dalliance of the average waiter in this town, it will be time to run for my train and start (at 8.30) out on my long journey. To-morrow at 5 P.M. I should reach Chicago and leave at 10.30 on the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul through Express (the Olympian) for Seattle,

arriving there Friday evening. Now that I am really *ready* to go, I am tremendously anxious to go, and I expect to gather in a whole lot of interesting new experiences. All has gone promisingly here to-day. My plans for the Western work are approved and the people out there are to be permitted also to make up a few thousand dressings right away. I have twenty pounds of the new wood-pulp tissue with me (it completely fills my steamer trunk!) as well as an exhibit of the new type dressings, and a series of workroom specifications drawn up in our "laboratory" last week, so I can give them a good demonstration out there — unless I forget my cunning en route.

I was so glad of your cheering little letter, Mother, and I like to know how deeply you are interested in the success of this enterprise. I do want it to go well, for now so many strong people are backing it that it has every *chance* to make good, and if it does n't fulfil expectations the fault will be either Sphagnum's or Mine! But it's going to succeed.

Dr. Porter and I discussed at length the practicability of coöperation in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland between the Canadian Red Cross and ours, and I'm delighted that the people here feel most friendly toward the project. It's going to make collection in Canada much easier for us Americans — eliminating any local jealousy or hostility — and I think as an instance of international good-will it is bound to impress people favorably. But of course, any full development of plans must wait till my return home from the West. If I do not bring back a good report from there, the whole enterprise may come to an end.

176 LETTERS OF HARRY JAMES SMITH

I hope you are continuing to gain strength, in preparation for your outing; and I hope both you and sister Fanny are going to get *lots and lots* of good out of it.

Lovingly your son,

HARRY

CLXVI

To MISS JEAN BASCOM

Somewhere in W. Minn.

27 February, 1918

CHÈRE AMIE:

Sunday night I left New York; Monday I spent in Washington at Red Cross Headquarters; yesterday I was on the B. & O. in Chicago; to-day we are putting Minneapolis behind us; to-morrow we shall be in the Rockies; and the next day — evening — I reach the first goal of my trip. Just now a thousand leagues of rich black Minnesota wheat earth stretch off and away on every side — monotonous and very dead-looking, just bared by the disappearing snow, but wonderfully stimulating to the imagination. The vision leaps forward six months and sees fields ripen into harvest, while the world waits, hungry, anxious, and great issues are in the balance.

. . . Three weeks ago the National Workroom was established in New York with a Sphagnum Department under my charge; and a dozen certified instructors were delegated to help me in making various types of experimental dressings, etc. The results were most gratifying. I have now left that work in the hands of a superior and my next task is to determine how extensive an amount of sphagnum is available.

You would laugh to see my sheaf of letters of introduction, — one to the Governor of Alaska, though I am sure not to get so far north as Sitka. My best hunting-ground I expect to be the chain of islands west of British Columbia. And the steamships have orders to put me ashore or pick me up wherever the whim demands. I look forward to an adventurous time of it — just the sort of undertaking that will refresh and tonic me after this exhausting period of overwork indoors. Already my two long nights on the train have given me a new sense of being alive. I really was on the verge of collapse last week — trembling and shaky and unable to sleep — and I am so glad to get away. I want to be in New York again the first week in April. This may not prove possible: but other sphagnum problems will be very pressing by that time and there is no one yet to attack them but me.

“The Little Teacher,” by the way, is not for the jeune fille, preëminently. You would be interested to see the make-up of the audiences, mostly hotel people, rather smart and worldly, but touched, somehow, with the desire to love a simple tale simply told. They do love it — and I love them for loving it, because I believe the play rides on the crest of contemporary motives and impulses. It is not a play I would, or could, have written myself five years ago.

The sunlight suddenly breaks, golden, over acres — miles — of corn stubble. 'T is thrilling! And now we are amid the black fallow again. En avant!

Tout à vous,

HARRY

CLXVII

To MISS EVELYN GILL KLAHR

On the train en route to Seattle

27 February, 1918

. . . If I have a claim to any distinctive place as a writer it's right here. I've no desire to imprint my peculiarities, my personal whim or taste, my separate self, on my work. I can't feel things that way. A master architect does n't spread his name all over his prize building. The bigger he is the less he cares about that. He designs the best building he can and that's his reward.

. . . An architect must depend on the coöperation of a hundred workers in different capacities — bricklayers, steamfitters, glaziers. So must a playwright. The electrician, the wardrobe woman, must pull with the play just as loyally as the star and the management if you hope to put the thing across. A success is a triumph of coöperation and the author ought to be very humble about it — proud of them, not of himself. . . .

CLXVIII

To HIS MOTHER

Seattle, Washington

6 March, 1918

MY DEAREST MOTHER:

It seems funny that I have been here almost five days and still have not written a real, personal letter to anybody. No doubt it suggests that I've been busy, and such is indeed the case. I've often worked harder in my life, but never before had so many demands on my attention all coming at the same time, and the kinds of

demands that are especially taxing because they're all from individuals and none such as you can meet quietly, on paper, alone in your room. I'd like to know how many people I've shaken hands with and talked Sphagnum to! Not to speak of my public talks! My cheeks bloom and blush just at the thought of some of the impromptu speeches I've given forth — supported only by the knowledge that if *I* knew little about my subject, my auditors knew less. This afternoon when a whole workroomful of sphagnum workers stood up and applauded me, as one woman, because I had been so condescending as to come and speak a few words to them, I felt that I had indeed entered upon a new rôle, and very silly (thought I) I must look in it.

It is all part of the very fine good-will which this country loves to show to strangers. The Chamber of Commerce is to take me for an auto ride next Monday — a "Seeing Seattle" expedition, of course — and that evening I am to dine at the President's table (the President of the University) and the next night to address the Faculty! — Help! The worst of it is (this is what I did n't foresee) that I actually don't feel privileged to refuse all this, considering that it is not offered to me as an individual, but as a representative. Oh, these next three days will be welcome! I leave to-night for a land of bogs, along the Pacific shore, near the mouth of the Columbia River. I shall be gone for four days — recuperative days, I believe! Ever since I came here I've had a headache, just from smiling so constantly — unless possibly the long train trip and the mountain altitude had something to do with causing it: but I don't think so. I think it was the smiling. And

to-morrow, on the bogs, I can be ribald if I choose to be, and as rough and boorish as I like.

The last two days of the train trip were marvellously fine — through the wild Rockies, across the desert, down the Spokane Valley, then into the Cascades, along deep gorges with towering pines and snowy mountains overhead, across bridges, coiling around cliff-sides, swinging out over wide valleys — then plunging into the forest again! I had no idea the scenic aspect of the trip would be so impressive. I am anxious to go back by the same route so as to get by daylight what was lost in the dark on the outward trip.

I have just decided not to attempt Alaska at all this time, partly because there is so much to undertake nearer at hand, but chiefly because the coastal regions, usually open at this season, are reported deep under snow, and I don't think the chance is good of finding moss so soon as next week. This may mean that I must come out again a couple of months later. So instead of that trip I am planning to cover a good section of the Oregon coast. And also I think I shall visit British Columbia in the interests of the Canadian Red Cross.

There is a surprising interest out here in sphagnum and the moss is very, very abundant. It is certain, I believe, that the bulk of the moss dressings will ultimately be produced in the Northwest Division. People glow here at the prospect of a special particular enterprise. Local patriotism is almost a fever. All the moss so far has been gathered by volunteers, and the plan is to go ahead on this basis — at least as long as possible.

Seattle is a splendid city, well built, with lovely varied water views and mountain panoramas. It has an

energy and enthusiasm which are rather infectious. You feel it growing and aspiring. Its aspirations may be predominantly material, but even so they are aspirations; and beside there is a big Red Cross activity here and much more war feeling than I expected. One thing that surprises me is the low price of food — as compared with ours in the East. Hotel fare here is fully one third cheaper, and awfully good. A wire from Edith yesterday told of her plan to join you, Mother, at the end of the week: so I hope this will find you together, and enjoying life in the spring sunshine on porch or board walk. I trust some real benefit is accruing from it, too. I enclose a check which I hope will help out for the additional week. I know you won't want to stay longer than that with the crush of visitors that always comes in late Lent. How I wish I could join you both for a couple of days! But it won't be very long now before I'm home again.

Lovingly your son

HARRY

CLXIX

To THE SAME

Seattle, 14 March, 1918

MOTHER DEAR:

It was lovely to find a letter from you, and two from Edith, waiting for me here, yesterday, when I returned from my trip of discovery, and all the news, I thought, was good news, only that I would have liked to hear of your more substantial gain. Perhaps the stay in Brooklyn will help the good work forward. And if more still remains to be done, you'll have to run to Bos-

ton and call on our doctor there. I'm sorry I have n't been able to write a daily account of my late adventures; but the job on my hands has been so near the limit of what I could cope with that I've just had to let other things slide.

My exploring journey was really exhilarating, both by reason of the prodigious supplies of moss located and because of the beautiful good-will everybody showed toward the work; all wanting to help, anxious to be told what they could do, ready to organize and get at it immediately. Mayors and school principals and doctors and lumbermen and school-children and hotel-keepers and backwoodsmen: I never anywhere met with such a universal welcome. And these Washington bogs are so different from any I have seen in the East — yet strangely alike, too. The difference is in their wildness: such a jungle of bush and briar, of fallen timber, deep ditch, and thick, high forest. The woods here are dark and almost impenetrable, with lofty hemlock and long festoons of vine and moss. You can't get through them at all except by a trail, and that you often must blaze as you go. Some good bogs are much easier to get at than this description would suggest, and the most accessible are not far from highways. The others, many of them, are accessible to Boy Scouts and lumbermen; and where the moss is abundant enough to warrant it, a party can be organized to open up a road through the forest. This would be considered a day's pastime. That is why it seemed important to visit such places even though the only present way of finding them was to scramble and climb and creep and jump and shinny for some miles, in a downpour of rain.

In this country it rains one hundred inches a year, — almost every day for part of the day. I think I'd come to like it. Certainly the air is very salubrious, and the blue, vaporous atmosphere, in sunshine, reminds me of Arichat — in fact, is exactly the same.

It was rather a relief to get back to this city again and have a hot bath and a comfortable bed. I spent all yesterday in conferences at Headquarters; and attending to correspondence; and to-day I shall be at the University supervising the new pad-making. I am also to prepare a woman lecturer for sphagnum campaigning in Alaska. In a day or two I shall make a trip north to some reported good regions near the Canadian border, and then cross over to Vancouver and try to arrange for some collecting for the Canadian Red Cross. Before the end of next week I hope to be headed East. It seems as if I had been away for MONTHS. And how much we will have to talk about when we next meet!!

So much love.

HARRY

Mother, if you are still at Standish, will you find my binoculars, which are hanging on a hook in my closet, and forward them as per enclosed clipping, to the Navy?

When such a life suddenly goes down on the sea of time, which just now is especially ravenous of our best, the shock of the news first stifles us. We think of the rare power stilled, and of all the laughter he would have found for the people which now they will never know, of those left so sorely stricken. But then the sun comes out. We think of the glorious company he is in. For he has gone on with the youth with whom in spirit he belonged. There can be no dimming of the freshness and ardor and achievement that were his. He abides in our memories fixed in the features of eternal youth, bright and glowing in the devotion of itself to the fulfilment of its own nature which, one way or another, is the saving of the world! Mindful of this the eyes of those most loyal and dearest to him shine even through their tears.

L. B. G.

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

PS	Smith, Harry James
3537	Letters of Harry James
M57Z5	Smith
1919	

