

HAWTHORN HILL
OAKWOOD
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Dear Harry:

I hope you do get down to Atchison and I wish you would tell "Ed Howe" for me that we certainly enjoyed his comments on that "disgraceful" picnic and his explanation of how such silly things keep going on. Now I see in the Star which came this morning that he stepped on the toes of the Women's Democratic Club, which makes it all the more evident that he hit the nail right on the head. (My figure got a little mixed!) I read that extract, from the Star, to Orv the other night and we both just howled over it. We have quit grinding other people's axes for them and I imagine we are considered "queer".

I do enjoy his paper awfully much. I can't honestly say as much for your "Literary Guide" but I always read every word of the "Weekly". I don't always agree with what it says but, as a matter of fact, I usually do. And it is never dull. "I ask you now, as a personal friend" (in the language of a silly song we like!) what is the reason, "if any", that the rationalists are so vehement and so vulgar, often, in their opposition to other people's views, when they make such a point of being liberal?

I don't mind discussing anything that is of interest, even if it is on a subject that used to be taboo, but I can't imagine why they keep up so much discussion on things that are only a side issue in life, anyway, if they are supposed to be trying to argue ignorant people out of their superstitious beliefs, on religious matters. I am irritated to pieces with the tone of that McCabe and of the magazine in general. I can't see that their cutting away from the narrowing influence of Christianity has done MUCH toward adding to their general cultivation, either in spirit or in manners. They grow so violent and abusive over such trifles, it seems to me.

But Howe is different. I don't always have the same taste about what had better be said and what left unsaid but what is said is usually pretty true and therefore sensible. I certainly have enjoyed getting acquainted with him, through the "Weekly", and thank you for putting me in the way of it. I shall tell Isabel how much I did enjoy the "Letters of Travel". I roared over the description of the activities of the members of the "Sports Committee" on that English boat. I could imagine the whole thing and I think he told it just as it was. Also, he "said it" when he spoke of how the English are always talking about how loud the Americans are, when traveling, whereas it [is] the English themselves who are most in evidence, always. I like the English awfully well but they have about as many faults as we have and are so blissfully unaware of them.

I started to read Robert Louis Stevenson again, last night. You may remember that you gave me his "Vailima Letters" when I graduated.¹ It seems strange to realize now that

¹Stevenson's letters to Sidney Colvin, November 1890-October 1895, about his travels in Samoa (non-fiction), London: Methuen, 1895.

those letters were just published then. R.L.S. had been dead only two or three years. I lost the books in the flood but replaced them, in another binding, alas! I could not get them in the original binding, though I tried to do it. I don't often use the word, "charming". I keep it for a special use, where I think it fits. I think Stevenson was "charming". I think Stef is "charming"—SOMETIMES(!) not always. I skimmed around among R.L.S.'s Letters last night and made up my mind to take them on next for my reading after I go to bed, which I look forward to as a special treat. Since I finished Isabel's book I have read Ibsen—The Master Builder and Hedda Gabbler and am nearly through with Peer Gynt, for bed-time reading, I mean. I notice some letters to William Archer and gathered from just a glance that Stevenson was scolding Archer for his philosophy, then. I'll read them carefully when I come to them.

I don't think you could have been in a more influential position than the one you have been in, as far as the effect of your work has been but I do think you might have made more place for yourself, with people in general. It would please me immensely to see you get into a different field, not that your present one is not worth your time and effort, but because you would have more personal recognition. So I do hope you will branch out all you have energy enough for, though I don't see how you keep up with your regular work, under the circumstances. I have always smiled over your admiration of the men you see down East, imagining that you are "crude" in comparison! That's really funny and Orv thinks so, too. What a blessed relief it is, though, to find one modest person, among writers! Considering what they have to back up their pretension, I do think there is no profession so over-rated. I mean, of course, that horde of "intellectuals", self-styled.

I often think about what it is that makes some people so really superior and I have come to believe it is "capacity", rather than anything else. I suppose character enters into that—I am not sure—but it is something more than ability. Originality certainly has a big place, though many people are impressive and demand and get much recognition merely on handling other men's ideas. I have had the kind of experience that makes me have great admiration for the kind of people who ALWAYS have something back, with whom you never strike bottom. I can't understand this great capacity. It impresses me to the point of awe and lately it has had a deadly effect on me. I am so lacking in that very thing and the special friends I have had the luck to make have so much of it that I have grown self-conscious and timid, sometimes—not always! I wonder that I have the nerve to go ahead and say the stupid things I do say. I don't believe I ever acknowledged that to you before but I surely am feeling "umble" all right, all right!

I'll write the rest to Isabel in a day or two. Whatever the situation is I am GLAD she is comfortable now.

As always

Katharine