August 12, '36. Out on the Porch.

Dear I.M.T.;

What a grand treat to get that real letter, only I feared you had taken too much time and strength to it in the kindness of your heart I have been making my early morning rounds of the garden and sich -- really early, and thinking with pleasure how you were enjoying your country. (Did you ever examine a pumpkin flower? Wonderful delicacy and complicatio n of decoration.)

Your words as to my work on the fine thing you are doing gave me acute pleasure-- but never, never feel any pressure to write in answer to the work or my screeds-- the chance would come anyhow in sending me more. That sort of lucidity we talk of has such value beside the saving a kind of hold up in reading; it gives the effect of power in the finish, of thouht in the precision-- so I love to add the attention your pressure of work forbids. Yes it is all right to demand it of the profound too, if we demand too a certain grade of intelligence in the reader. I have been feeling that it reading the Seven Pillars of Wisdom. I don't see that there has been such prose, so fine, written in English since-- the 17th century? I am not good on precisions about the like, but not for a long time, but sometimes I was not sufficiently informed and , or, had not the grasp, to follow him. I said when I read the so inferior, mutilated revolt in the Desert that he wrote like Sheakespere, and reading Sir Henry Wilson in England I was delight ed to find him saying that better-- that if Shakespere had wirtten prose hew would ha ve writ like Lawrence. Enough of this.

Dear Lady, I doubt about doing anything more of me on the lines you suggest, I would not be so cheeky as to more than say it seems to me unimpotrtant

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and ouside your story. But also this word of yours emboldens me to say something I had in mind before. There is a little story that concerns us both and has a certain place in the literary history of McClure's. Thro all these years there have been people turning up and with chorus accompnaiments telling how they discovered O. Henry. I always knew the claims could not be any of them really true, but , not being anything of a researcher I thought just maybe some where had appeared something signed O. Henry, before the first such signature in McC--

But some fifteen years ago Will Irwin brought up the point to me and said he had done adaquate reserach on his own curiosity and that the Xmas tale we published was the first time the signature had been used. This story went in one year when Mr. McC-- was in Europe and Mr P-- was ill and away and you to your great dissatisfation were holding down the manaaging editors chair . When it came to the Xmas number you put the fiction up to me, so , having a very un usual say, I put in the first thing I had ever advised the house to buy from a rather mysterious aspirant to whom I had been writing every now and then for a year or more. He showed plenty of intellect and knoledge of life, but had a very lame idea of making, shaping with the needed artificiality that belongs to all art, a story. But here was something that was publishable and I felt anxious to encourage a mind of that quality.(No one took in in the shp the real root of my mad devotion to those MS. I was and am always like a nursing mother to a touch of talent. I had a decent sense of obligation to the magazine and really wanted it good of course, but when I wept to make a bunch that never gave me the benefit of their brains buy The Gentleman from Indianna it was in trepidation for th that talent-- since I knew in general and inparticular in my own shop, with very superior people, what a devilish hard row talent had to hoe. I had seen Mr. Mc Clure send back Pigs is Pigs, and J.S.P was no more certain, the truth being of course that they, with their cares and suprior interests, had never really read the things where I violently differed from their verdict. They had given the look to see if etc. the sort of look that makes big editors turn down the young Kipling, and that I too much omitted, hould not give, but that is needed where a place lives by advertising.)

The O. H. Story made no mark anyway except that when S.S. came home he gave me the only adverse criticism I ever got from him:"That story about the tramp you put in was not good enough for a Xmas number."

"I know , Chief, it was not so awfully good, but that man is promising," W.I. says that was the first thing that ever came out under that that signature. O.H. was writing from the Ohio penitentiary and I got the MS from Pittsburg and from New Orleans sometimes. he never answered a letter of mine, but in time would come another MS showing attention to my last. After he died his wife came to me, soon after she got the World royalties and and such an income she tried to write no more, which was just as well. The World, not any magazine edtors, made O.H. They shied, but Don Seitz was the lad that going out of his way got him in the World weekly, and then the man in the street made him.There is a dove of a story about Seitz' fight. Another wonderfully demonstrating SS when again he turned down Tobins Palm, one of the best O.H. ever wrote-- he wrote a good of poor stuff in his drive to getmoney. I caame in , met him in the gangway; "wasn't that a love and grief of a story I sent you yesterday from O.Henry? "Isent that back". "Boow ho o sobs of rage; " Now ,now, we we'll get it back-- don't cry! You send an offic boy-- no send Bynner; now its going to be all right' Bynner you know O. Henry don't you? He lives on 27th street, doesn't he-- get your hat and run right zaround there and get that story I sent back yesterday".

There came out one of the Cheif's great qualities as an editor: he never coul stand analysis , talky-talk about qualities in any writing, but he would bet on effects, human emotion, aroused in such a case as this.

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J.S.P. was the first person I ever heard enunciate the principle that you must not read to guess what other people would like; also I have heard him say how when preoccupied it was natural to do that. When it comes to readigng for a middleman, syndicate, adv tiser , anyone has more sense than I-- I sim ply cannot follow there at all, because these people always deal falsely.

And there are relations where I miss out badly in book work by not going by the fashions that rule byers till they pass. All it takes tho to be a deecenter reader than talent can count on finding is a bit of catholicity and single mindedness. You can't get these with rubies, ~~[illegible]~~ -- x out something foolish unless elaborated. Of course you can get good reading with luck andw wisdom. I suppose what makes me hire a hall like this is my foaming indigna tion ~~the~~ when people talk about real talent always coming out, scorn the muete inglorious Milton idea. real artistic talent so often is selfdistrusting, ~~I~~ saw it more than once at McClure's snubbed and never try again-- for a lot of reasons working together, not always self-distrust, sometimes distrust of the fool world, along with the absence of the determination to shine . Miss Cather feels as hot as I on this , and tells joyfully of a real castigation she once heard ~~XXXXXXX~~ Y. Guilbert give Daskam Bacon on this point.

What do you suppose makes me so untimely garrulous really?

because I have a chance by imposing on the helpless to talk of one of the few things I know something about?

Anyway as my cheek seems in power now is the time for me to submit a word to your wisdom on something in an earlier part of your work. When you speak of Brownell being the best critic of his time I do really think you so damn him with faint praise that so far as complimenting him itw would be better to say nothing. It is not as if we had had any important cr it ics, unless he is important; or am I uninfomed, or blind about that humanist bunch? I have little personal use for B-, but not because he has not real ly a wealth of mentality, and who else has? Sherman looked so promisingvv--

I think Brownell as a critic for critics has his greatest importance, and that his intellectuality really is a valuable prod there. But it is not clear why I should be giving my ideas.

And Steffins is gone since you wrote!

I apologize-- if I had not felt you in the country I would not have behaved

so, With warmer good wishes than I can tell off,

Fondly,

Viola R--

N/R

The story I sent her about the Cowboy was that it is generally understood that the Indians are the people most likely to go to Heaven. And it made me so ridiculously happy.

Cheerio.

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