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Nice, March 3, 1904

Dear Sue,

It ought to be needless to say to you that I hurl back the imputation with scorn. No, with many exclamation points, No! I have never, since long before dear

Charley's death, set foot upon the soil of your country. If any such misfortune had, magic carpet-wise or otherwise, happened to me, my second step would have been turned Hartfordward for condolence and comfort. I should have needed both. I am still satisfied to see Cuba and Panama and the Phillipines and the St. Louis exposition and the de-constitutionalized negroes and the trust-magnates at a long distance. Here I can hear of the death of Hanna, the illness of Quay, the triumph of Tammany, the snobbish speeches of Lodge, the ignorances of Alabama Morgan — all with calm indifference. Why should n't <sup>one</sup> be happy with this back to it all?

Fronting it would be of no avail, and the stench of such a position would be suffocating to all my ardent Americanism. I should n't have any left.

For the past two years I have been trying to write and print a book - at the same time. It is a unique book, first because the first half is devoted to one theme, when suddenly you turn over a leaf and find that the latter half is occupied with a totally different one; secondly, because its sole and only reader will be its writer. A second one is a literary and physical impossibility. At last my task grew so long drawn out that I became altogether desperate. Whenever, spurred by the sarcastic enquiries of the printers, I felt that I must go on, the books, from which I was borrowing it all, were not there. Whenever the books were available, I said to myself "what's the use of taking up my pen? There it all is, within the pages of that array of volumes; I can get to work at any time." But when I got back to Florence my early in December, I at once straightened up my back and cried to all my senses "Ho!" So I got a stove, of a huge height, put in my library down town, then I introduced gas, then I set up a bed, with another, in a closet hard by, for Leone. Then I locked the door, and said "Now" all one day. Leone made my coffee and boiled my egg by gas in the morning, while slight meals were brought me from Doney's restaurant at noon and night fall by a reverent-looking old porter, who always bemoaned the paucity of nourishing food which he carried, for I had paid all the bills of all my doctors, having informed them that they would be called in only to hear the sermon and see the corpse.

Thus I camped out among my books - the first time since the good old days of the Villa Forini. And sat down at my ~~table~~ desk all the day, for my my three meals were placed upon it on a tray. My only breaks were when I drove up for a call at the distant villa of the Clemenses, or when Mark occasionally came down for a talk and an afternoon's smoke. This went on until a fortnight ago, when the few people I met began to tell me how pale and thin and book-room at me with compassionate eyes, the former especially saw gout in my upper and my lower limb, and sighed for a fair lady's maid who lives somewhere on the Riviera. He told me that Mr. White was surely growing sick for the sight of me on the Riviera, where the winter-air is so mild and so anti-gouty. Meanwhile the dawn in the far East (about <sup>where</sup> the great war is now raging) began to gleam on the last page of the first volume. So, waiting for proof sheets, I jumped, with Leone grown suddenly cheerful, into the train and came to Alessio.

I was welcomed with apparent warmth by both Andrew and Mr. Fiske (does he still dwell in your memory as you yet do in his, as he has more than once shown me?). The former is dwelling in a pretty villa - too ~~small~~ small rather for his and her ambassadorial dignity - on a high hill slope, with lovely gardens about it and around eye-delighting views of the towering mountains and the far-stretching seas. They are doubting whether they shall buy it, or go home and set up their tents in America. To that land they are at any rate going for the summer, to try whether they can

stand the strain of such a combination as St. Louis  
and a Presidential campaign, not to speak of  
the multitudinous and customary minor strains (this is  
the musical section of my communication). Deafened  
by these strains they may return in the autumn.  
Andrew told me all about his call on you of late,  
and made me quite eager to see the rooms in which  
I used to know so many unforgettable hours.

The Clemenses have taken the great Villa di Quarto,  
often inhabited by other and former royalties. But  
they are now desirous of changing it for another,  
partly because of a disagreeable locality, partly because  
it is forty-five <sup>because</sup> minutes' drive away from the city,  
partly, I think, the only rooms that can be assigned  
to Mr. Clemens are not such as they think good for  
her. She does not begin to improve yet as she ought,  
and we all feel great sympathy with her, and are  
praying that she may become speedily better. I have  
seen her but once, when we had such a good talk, but  
I have had several kind pencilled notes from her bed.  
She sees nobody but the family, the physicians thinking  
that excitement is bad for her - even the slightest. I do  
so pity her and them. If you write to her be careful to  
do it in a cheerful mood. Perhaps spring may bring her  
relief. Mark is somewhat lionized - as much as  
Florence can lionize, and I think they would all enjoy  
the town if only Mrs. C. were in better health.

I am putting gas into the villa, making some  
drains to get the slight dampness out of the cellar,  
and trying to improve matters otherwise in a small way.  
You had better run over and see how matters stand. The  
trees have grown, and the flowers are more abundant than  
ever. After receiving first prize for chrysanthemum and  
cyclamen (wherefor the King was one of my competitors), I look

autumn received the Royal Tuscan Horticultural Society's  
gold medal for chrysanthe mums, but don't wear it in  
my buttonhole.

Michele is about finishing his one year volunteership in  
the army of his King and country. He enjoys at the  
present moment the high dignity of corporal and has  
passed his sergeant's examination. Lately he has got  
away from his father sufficiently to come and cheer up  
two or three times a week, my solitary supper-table - He has  
grown, is very sturdy, and army fare and hard work have  
quite killed his dyspepsia. He was in America some  
three years ago, visiting my relative in Northern N.Y. and  
intended to come to Hartford and call on you, but he found  
that a cousin of mine, who has spent some months with  
me three years before, and who has just graduated from  
Cornell has bought his ticket for Europe, so he cut  
short his visit to a fortnight, and returned with him - They  
both joined me at Copenhagen.

Mrs. Ross is living alone at Poggio Gherrardo, her  
husband having died some months back, and Miss Suff  
Gordon that was married against her aunt's  
will - The coolness between them is, I believe, quite frigid.  
Miss Suff Gordon's husband is an artist and they are  
living in London.

Miss Burke, still youthful, and Miss French have still  
their pleasant apartment on the <sup>Vittoria</sup> Via Caracci - I have  
been there two or three times since my return (having always a  
good talk about Charley with Miss B.) and they have once or  
twice found me out in my solitude at the library.

Mr. White and I are as Japanese as  
Japanese can be, but can only hope tremblingly.  
The power and population of Russia are so enormous  
that one can hardly <sup>think</sup> of treating the end of this contest  
between Japanese civilization and Russian barbarism,  
between Japanese enlightenment and Cossack brutality -

send back -

Andrew sends lots of love as I do. Love, too, to all the Trichells. I rather think that Mark is hoping for a visit from J.H.T. this summer. Love, too, to the dear and well remembered Hilliers. Florence still continues to sigh for them. I had some very pleasant talks with the Perkinses at Copenhagen, and liked them much. My greetings to them both. Regards likewise to Mr. Clarke and any other I may know at the Courant office as well as hearty salutations to your nearest neighbor. How are they all? Does George still divide his time between N.Y. and Hartford.

I now expect to be a little time in Paris in April to meet the Thachers of Albany. I could not see them last year, but have solemnly promised to do so this one. You and Mrs. Trichell must have had a nice time with Mrs. Dean Sage recently. What a fine woman she is! I am wretched because I have long over her a letter - a letter I shall try to pay before leaving Nice. But I write very few epistles, in these latter days, when writing is so difficult and time so very scarce.

With every warm regard,

W.F.

Most warm regards to Miss Barton if she still remembers me. How are her family? I haven't heard for a long, long time.