

*May 12, 1920.*—Dear old Mr. Howells is dead. I read the announcement in the *Daily Mail* and the Paris New York *Herald* a few minutes ago. He was eighty-three, full of years and honours, and all that, and yet it is sad to feel that he is no longer of this world. He was my first literary hero, and filled all the firmament of my world when I was a young man. He was very kind to me; took an interest in my writings, and encouraged me; and gave me con-

stantly the finest kind of praise in his writings. In 1902 I made a pilgrimage to Kittery to see him; it was a great moment in my life when I met him. Afterwards we corresponded, and I saw him often in New York, the last time when we were home in 1915-16. The admiration and the love I had for him increased with the years; he was so good, so kind, so right-minded, so full of humour. He was, in fiction, a pioneer, as I said in my paper before the Institute in 1915. If there was something lacking, after all, in his work, it was only that which is lacking in all American literary work; our best always falls a little short of the best English fiction or English poetry, or English essays, or English literature of any kind. I don't know why it is or why it should be—but we are somehow thinner, and we don't go down deep enough. Emotion or tradition, or experience, or atmosphere, or ripe scholarship—something, whatever it is, is lacking. I am sometimes prone to think that Howells's talent, cultivated in England, would have become a finer thing. But it was fine as it was, and beautiful, and he did a great work, and was deservedly the greatest figure in our literary world these later years. There is no one to take his place—not one. There is no literature in America any more; the waves of democracy are swamp-ing it, with all the culture and refinement of the elect. But he, with his deep human sympathies, would have been the first to say that any art that was for the elect alone was no art at all, and perhaps he was right. I shall cable John Howells my sympathy. I have lost a master and a friend! Ah me! It is the end of an epoch.

Villiers is quite mad over the extraordinary honour of having a Duke in his house. He asked Nell and Nicholson and me to attend a reception in his honour—in His Grace's honour—on Monday evening, Lady Villiers explaining at the time that they were to give a little dinner on that evening preceding the reception, and that she couldn't ask us to dinner because they had asked a Belgian official (Hymans as it transpired), and that if an Ambassador were invited, he would have second place, which would send Rutland to the third place at table. "And one couldn't simply ask a *Duke* to take third place, my dear, could one?"

However, when Monday night came, we decided not to go, preferring to stop at home since it was Nicholson's last night here. Now we are glad that we did not go, for we have learned that on Sunday night the Villiers gave a great dinner and had the de Margeries. And it hasn't been a fortnight since Villiers came to me and asked me, because of de Margerie's machinations and

French propaganda generally, and because of the feeling of the French and Belgians just then against the English, to be seen with him on several public occasions, so as to show the solidarity and good feeling between England and America! At that time he was most bitter against de Margerie, and I reminded him that I had warned him as to what de Margerie was doing months ago.