The Annotated Letters of Nicholas Vachel Lindsay to Sara Trevor Teasdale

Chapter 3 (Letters 48-82)

(See Letter 50)

These letters are collected among the Vachel Lindsay Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
48) “Do I write too much or too long or too often? . . .”

Springfield Ill.
Feb. 21, 1914.¹

My Dear Sarafimm:

My visit was so short. Next time I will devise some excuse for rounding it out. How soon can I come again without appearing precipitate?

With a most innocent intention a good little friend went to stirring up last year’s ghosts tonight—and I am glad I have you to write to and forget them.

My visit to you just seems to me to have been terribly short—tonight. We were just started. Next time we will get farther. I ought to go to a boarding house and just see you for several successive evenings. I know it must be a strain to entertain a man all day.

Today I have read *Mark Twain’s* life all day, and written letters and made a call in the evening.

Sara—I want the grandest kind of a note from you Monday morning. Do I write too much or too long or too often? Tell me.

I am glad of your velvet-eyes—to save me from the Ghosts of Yesterday.

I think they are all laid—then they come at me in Armies, those Ghosts.

Let us think about Tomorrow’s friendship, and nail the door of yesterday’s passion fast and secure. Goodnight—Sarafimm.

With love

N.V.L. (over)

Sunday morning.

I am thinking that it will be nice to come to see you and report on the *Yeats* dinner. I will probably be in Chicago about the first three days in March. Then I will come home and meditate. Then—in about a week—about Wednesday the 11th say—I will arrive again? I will take the Interurban this time and get there mid-afternoon and then we can really settle down and lay plans—for small Jamborees. I pray for birds and trees pretty soon. I hope we have a sunny day at least. Anyhow a longer talk.

Note

¹This letter is misdated “Feb. 20, 1914.” See the next letter.

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49) “I don't want to be your sweetheart . . .”

Springfield Ill.
Midnight{Sunday Feb. 23, 1914.¹ between
Dearest Seraphim:

Now please write in your next letter and say mine do not come too often. Its^ just like saying my prayers by my bed. I can go to sleep so much better after a letter to you. You are a fine habit.

You needn’t answer but one letter in three—just to keep me assured I am not writing to a stone wall.

I read your book clear through again today,\(^2\) and it meant so much more to me. I could hear your divine chatter between every poem. And I could read you into so many of them, even your study in one. I marked a lot of new ones with double hearts—which means double approval.

I don’t want to be your sweetheart. I don’t want to ever love anyone again, in the Romeo sense, for years. Its^ too deadly. But I want you for the dearest kind of a faithful friend, and you can have as many of these lovers you prattle about as you please. Your one act of service and faithfulness to me is to keep a mind willing to receive and gently welcome my letters—and give me live enough answers to show me friendship has not grown weary.

I know our next visit will be more exciting and interesting to you—I am afraid I disappointed you a little, but I hope to make up for it the next time. I just had too much on my mind and spirit and couldn’t avalanche you with it all at once.

Your pictures are getting interesting to me again and I am glad I have them. But the golden Sara is a far more interesting and vivid creature than these pictures show.

With all kind thoughts

Goodnight,

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay. (over)

Monday morning:

This is my hope for you. I want you to be the proudest noblest most high-hearted clear singing *nightengale of all the nightengales in all the gardens that ever burned and bloomed.

That's^ what I was thinking this morning when I cleaned the snow off the front walk.

Notes

\(^1\)As with the previous letter, VL has lost a day in his calendar. These dates should be 22 and 23, not 23 and 24. Note VL’s punning use of “Seraphim” in this letter. In subsequent correspondence, he will change “Sarafimm” to the more accurate “Saraphimm,” with a few, characteristic exceptions.

\(^2\)ST’s *Helen of Troy and Other Poems* (1911): see Letter 3.
50) “Who are these creatures, red of hair...”

Springfield Ill.
Tuesday Eve.
Feb. 24, 1914.

My Dear Sara:

My boys were with me again tonight. I lectured them with the grandest kind of dogmatism on Comparative religion, around the grate fire. Then we went to Stuart’s confectionery and had tomato buillion, and a long conversation on China, and then *Mark Twain.

The little editors of Tucks sent me a grand box of candy today in return for my contributions.

I have been writing a deal today and there is not much write left in me tonight.

I send you my kind-friendship thoughts, my delicately tendered respect and esteem, and a poem (Turn over.)

Who are these creatures, red of hair
A chanting with the cherubims?
Just what are they, grey traveller, say?
The traveller answers right away:—
“They’re Sara, Sara Saraphims.

“They flit above the shining trees.
They perch upon the upper limbs—
Half bird half-angel—chirp and chant—
They fill the streets with ardent hymns.
Their silliest song is yet so sweet
The tear of Joy my eyesight dims.
In short—they’re what I said they were:
They're Sara Sara Saraphims.”

With esteem
Nicholas Vachel Lindsay—

Notes

1For the story of VL’s “boys,” see Letter 20.
2For the locale of “Stuart’s confectionery,” VL’s “favorite tavern,” see Letter 18.
3At Christmas, 1912, young Alice Catherine Warren, who lived just four blocks from VL’s home, was given a toy printing press. She and her high school friend, Elizabeth Stebbens Brown, decided to publish their own literary magazine: Tuck’s, A Magazine: for Animals and their Friends, named for Tuck, the Warrens’ dog. The “Late-Winter 1914” issue contains VL poems “The Lion” (Poetry of VL, p. 220) and “An Explanation of the Grasshopper” (see Letter 33), along with a note: “Mr. Nicholas Vachel Lindsay has...
consented to write a number of poems for Tuck’s. One poem will appear in the magazine each month.” At least one more VL poem was published: “Here’s to the Mice” (Spring, 1915): see “A *Song for All Strikers.” The story of Tuck’s is reported in Springfield’s Illinois State Register (April 9, 1913).

4The verse is in Carpenter, p. 177.
51) “I am bound to try to discipline you . . .”

Springfield Ill.
Feb. 25, 1914.

My Dear Sara:
Thank you indeed for the Sonnets to Duse. I read the book with the deepest pleasure. The pictures are almost as beautiful as the verses—especially the one on Page 14. And I like the general atmosphere of that sonnet as well as any.¹

I like the whole book as a gentle first flight—full of thoroughbred quality and all—but scarcely a line in it has the full throated music you have now. Yet every line is near to it.

Just about the time Badger “worked” you he was trying to “Work” me and I turned him down, smart boy!

In my first reading of your book I marked with a heart Page 14—double heart—Page 17—single heart 21, Double 42, 43, Single 44.² You will have to be a very great and very noble singer indeed—to make as great and straight forward a development the next seven years as you have the last seven. About the same general themes and mood, with the music growing steadily richer and finer—is your progress so far. But I hope for a change of theme in part.

I have been haunted all day by three of your phrases—
...Bright April..
Shakes out her rain drenched hair—
....When rain bends down the bough—³

Curiously enough I went to bed last night resolving to lend you a copy of my “*Tramps Excuse.” It is out of print and I cannot give it. Some of the first pieces, however poor verse—are as much personal confession as I ever hope to indulge in—and not what I would print today if much better written. Well I may send it—after while.

Sara I am acquiring a great indulgence for your sillier shorter pieces because on close re-reading the music in them is so rare—like “bright April.” But I do wish about every twenty of them could be melted down into a Hypatia, or Queen Thi⁴—of [or] Queen Elizabeth or other notable woman. Your affinity for these great ones is my largest hope for you—that you will not be content to forever impersonate—but some day sing the song of Today’s Women and be the great woman of today. I wish you were possessed⁵ of Inez Haynes Gilmore’s⁶ ideas—for instance. What infinitely beautiful Winged women you could make! You have all the technique and power and splendor she lacks—yet she feels the blood of her sisters in a sharper way than you do, perhaps.

Well—I do not mean to scold you. I just cannot bear for you to stand still. You have such a noble ten years immediately before you—your song power, is bound to grow—your soul must grow with it, to keep your song rich. I want you to be a great American citizen.

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Your *Smart-Set scheme is interesting—and perhaps conclusive. I am glad you care enough to put it before me. When I have thought it to the bottom I will answer. I will have to get back from Chicago first. But I am afraid—my dear, if I seriously wrote down what my heart of hearts cries out to you—it would be too stern for them—as the *Fireman’s ball was for the *Metropolitan. The only thing we are dead sure of in each other is that we are fellow artists, and I am bound to try to discipline you and pray over you and scourge you and Americanize you. I cannot help it. I am flattered to the extent to which you become slowly but surely Americanized.

Well—I wanted to close—but here I slop over.

It would take a terrific effort of the will to put the most of what

I have to say to you in verse—but after I have cleared my table—in a month or so—perhaps I may attempt it. It is perhaps futile to just pour letters at you—though I deeply enjoy it. We could perhaps make song our justification for correspondence. But I cannot approach the thing flippantly. I must needs say to you what I would before the Judgement throne—in the sight of the immensities and the Eternities.

At least a part of what I say must needs be so—however we ran behind the throne and giggled part of the time and pulled Gabriel’s feathers.

Something else.

Oh yes—the Daughter of *Lyssipus has the grippe. Too much Tango in Zero weather. Meek and sweet again. How are the haughty fallen! Time is my one great avenger—and often he is more impatient than I am—and hurries up with his little ironical reprisal. Of all the mute confessions of folly and helplessness! And scrambling back to friendship as fast as fast can be!

Here are ladies! Yes.

Saraphim—I wanted to gab about Chicago—but it grows late.

Bless your golden hair and your golden voice and your golden pen and your golden dreams, and your golden heart, and for Gods sake and my sake and Poetry’s sake say your prayers tonight and on the altar put your very noblest self and song, poured out before the God that made you, as an offering and oblation, and an incense.

Play and folly and little songs are all right to rest the soul and pass the time and gild the little days—but your life as a whole is an infinitely precious thing—resolve upon full throated song when ever the full tide of the Holy Ghost is upon you—push out into the dark of America for the Glory of God.

I kiss your hand, lady—

With love

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay.

Notes

1ST’s first book was Sonnets to Duse and Other Poems (1907), published by Richard G. Badger’s Poet Lore Company. ST paid Badger $290 for 1000 copies (Carpenter, p. 99).
The volume contains three pictures of Duse, including one on page 14 with an accompanying poem, “To a Picture of Eleonora Duse as ‘Francesca da Rimini.’” From 1892 to 1930, Badger published the quarterly Poet-Lore (1889-1953), which had accepted ST’s sonnet “Silence” early in 1907. Eleonora Duse (1859-1924), “the Duse,” was an Italian actress best remembered for her roles in the plays of Ibsen and D’Annunzio, both of whom were published in translation in Poet-Lore. See also Letter 64.

2VL marks the following poems: “A Song to Eleonora Duse in ‘Francesca da Rimini’” (p. 17), “To Japanese Incense” (p. 21), “The Heart’s House” (p. 42), “The House of Dreams” (p. 43), and “Faults” (p. 44). These last three are the final poems in the book.

3VL quotes the end of line 1 and lines 2 and 6 of ST’s “I Shall Not Care.” See Letter 39.

4Hypatia (died 415 A.D.), known for her wisdom and high character, was one of Alexandria’s most influential teachers, lecturing on philosophy, astronomy, and mechanics. She was hacked to death by a zealous Christian mob. VL probably knew of her through Charles Kingsley’s romance, Hypatia (1853), a copy of which is in VL’s own library, now part of the Barrett Library at the University of Virginia Library. Queen Thior Tii or Taia, according to George Rawlinson’s History of Ancient Egypt (1882), also in VL’s library, was the devoted and influential wife of Amenophis III.

5VL encloses a copy of his review of Inez Haynes Gillmore’s Angel Island (1913), published in the *Chicago Evening Post Friday Literary Review* (February 20, 1914) and entitled “The Adventures of Peachy, Julia and Angela.” Gillmore’s novel features the exploits of winged women named Peachy, Julia, and Angela. Among other things in his review, VL asserts that women are the only intellectuals of the age and laments that their lives are largely subservient to uncultured males. At the end of the review, VL summarizes the point that he feels Gillmore should have made in her book: “Let us talk of winged women, at the tango teas and the suffrage rallies. Let us exhort the ladies to embroider Peachy and Julia and Angela, with their blue and white wings and Olympian bodies, on the woman’s suffrage banners. And when the great woman voters’ parade rolls by, let us see in fancy, fluttering above their heads, their spirit wings of green and gold and blue and orange and scarlet and silver and white.” See especially Letters 1 and 18, and *Nightingale, Florence.*

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52) “Margery is looking well and talking fast . . .”

[The first page of this letter is authored by Margery *Dell:]*

5702 Stony Island Av.
Monday [March 2, 1914]

Sara very dear:

Here’s a whoop and a laugh from two of us—guess who we are; one is me and the other has just dined with me on peaches and chops. Where are you since our Christmas
exchange of greetings. Please oh please write and ask me how I like to be a cub reporter and why I find life such fun, and if my stove has fallen down yet, spilling red hot coals all over the floor & setting it on fire, and if the big rat under the shop gnaws and gnaws and gnaws—Ole! Please write soon.

[The rest of this letter is from VL:]

Margery is looking well and talking fast and since we talked much of you, it was only fair we should tell on ourselves. Pulsford the Unitarian and heretic is coming in, in a minute.¹ I have had a panorama of events here, one dam^ thing after another and all pleasant. I will have to go back home Thursday and get cussed by somebody. Or there is a Springfield man here in Chicago²—I think I will look him up and cool myself off. He is the one that started that letter to me.

They are buttering me to death. Its^ awful. I hope six letters wait me from you when I get back to Springfield. (Margery is not supposed to see this last sentence.)

With esteem

["With much love, Margery"]

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay

Notes

¹VL probably refers to William Hansen Pulsford, minister of Chicago’s First Unitarian Church (1901-1923). He was a Scotsman who had studied at Glasgow and Oxford Universities.

²Likely Charles Clayton Morrison (born 1874), who had served as pastor of VL’s First Christian Church, Springfield (1902-1906). Morrison had purchased the bankrupt Christian Century at a sheriff’s sale for a reported $600. Under Morrison’s editorship (1908-1947), the Chicago-based Century achieved international fame as “the most powerful voice in Protestantism,” as it is often referred to. In a letter to Harriet *Monroe, dated February 17, 1914, VL lists Morrison as one of the persons he would like to have invited to the *Yeats dinner (see Chénetier, Letters of VL, pp. 89-90).

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53) “Harriet has the grandest list of Kin and friends . . .”

Chicago—March 6, 1914.

My Dear Sarafimm:

Yes. I am unfaithful. A little SOCIETY and she hears from me no more. Just a little attention from the kind and great, and Colin forgets Bopeep. Part of the trouble is that when the social whirl is all over for the night and I sit down in my own room to remove my shirt, there is no pen and ink and good old mussy table to write to Saraphim on. Only a fancy kind of a place to brush my hair. And then having talked everybody to pieces and roared my head off I have left no articulate powers of
communication. I am confining myself strictly to *Harriet’s immediate kin and the people right next to the *Hendersons—but they are quite a bunch in themselves—believe me.

I have refused everybody else.

But I have thought of you more than once—and your only serious rival is Polly *Root—otherwise known—as Mary Louise Root—who stays with Auntie Harriet. We had a lovely evening by the fireside last night, while the logs sizzled.

I stayed two days at the Hammils¹—one night at Hopkin’s and now I am at Miss Monroe’s Brothers—somebody Monroe.²

I think Harriet has the grandest list of Kin and friends ever. They are the solidiest sort—full of character and steadiness and worthwhileness. Their sober steady ways just please me down to the ground. I will be home Monday morning. It is almost too late for your letter to get here now—so Please write to Springfield. I am only holding my breath till the buzz is over—till I can loaf and be still for months. With love

Vachel

Notes

¹Attorney Charles H. Hamill was one of the many guarantors of *Monroe’s Poetry—A Magazine of Verse; his wife Kathleen was among the first to pledge $50 a year for five years “to try out the hazardous experiment” (Monroe, A Poet’s Life, p. 243). The Hopkins are otherwise unidentified.

²VL’s “somebody Monroe” was engineer William Stanton Monroe, Harriet Monroe’s younger brother, who was married to Anna: see the next letter.

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54) “You women are so darned expensive . . .”

Chicago Ill.
Friday Evening
March 6, 1914.

My Dearest Saraphim:

MIDNIGHT

Tonight I have been to a big dinner of the Geographical society, filling the whole ball-room of the La Salle Hotel. My hosts were Mr. and Mrs. William S. Monroe¹—with whom I am staying. Polly *Root—otherwise known as Mary Louise Root was along. She is a darling adoreable² sweet. Any man who doesn’t love her is just a plain damphool. She is entitled to the general admiration of the Nation. Thats² just a general statement—not a symptom of budding Romance. Having thus cleared myself—I proceed. Mrs. Calhoun²—[brother of] sister of Miss Monroe—was there also.
This afternoon I was at the “little Room” with Harriet and it was not five minutes after I had entered before I was put on the Carpet by Mrs. Calhoun for The *Congo (to recite it—I mean). I went there in especial to show respect to Henry B. *Fuller who has my fixed admiration. There was also Mrs. Peattie the Chicago novelist who had reviewed my work in the Tribune, and to whom I had sent my thanks for the same article. And Fred Richardson—my old composition teacher for three years in the Art Institute—whom I very much respect. And Ralph Clarkson who appeared to know me well. And Margaret *Anderson who is starting “THE LITTLE REVIEW” and enthusiastic and burbling as Saraphim Teasdale on a toot. I have contributed “*Judith the Dancer” to the [*]Little Review.” A lot of us are writing for it gratis—at least I am.6

And earlier in the afternoon Harriet and I went to the Institute and saw the very same temporary exhibitions you and I saw, moved on up here and once more I thunk of you.

I’ll just bet there are 40 letters waiting for me at home—one or two golden ones from Saraphim.

You women are so darned expensive. I just wish I could send you a diamond Breastpin and a book of gold and an ostrich-plume and a pair of pink stockings and a sash and a box of candy and a little bleating pet lamb and tickets to the next big show in St. Louis—and all I have is two dollars in the whole wide world and my ticket back home for which God be truly thanked. So—dear Saraphim I can send you only my love—a kiss for your hand, a god-speed to you in your dream-pathway tomorrow, and a blessing for every beat of your heart.

Goodnight.
With esteem

N.V.L.

Notes

1For information on “Mr. and Mrs. William S. Monroe,” see Letter 53.

2Harriet Monroe’s younger sister Lucy married attorney William J. Calhoun in December 1904. Calhoun served on diplomatic missions for Presidents Theodore Roosevelt (Venezuela) and William Howard Taft (China).

3“The Little Room, named from a story by that painter, metalworker, embroiderer, storyteller and all-round artist Madeline Yale Wynne, was an informal association of workers in all the arts. We used to meet on Friday afternoons in Ralph Clarkson’s fine two-story studio to talk and drink tea around the samovar, sometimes with a dash of rum to strengthen it, and every visitor to Chicago who was anybody in any of the arts would be brought to the Little Room by some local confrere” (Monroe, A Poet’s Life, p. 197).

4Elia W[ilkinson] Peattie (1862-1935) was literary critic for the Chicago Tribune (1901-17) and a prolific writer generally associated with anachronistic romantic traditions. Her representative works include the popular-at-the-time The Story of America (1889, rev. 1892, 1896); books for young girls, such as Azalea (1912); a collection of short stories, A Mountain Woman (1896); and novels entitled The Judge (1890) and The Precipice
Peattie’s literary hoax, in the form of the realistic free verse poem “The Milliner,” was published in *Anderson’s Little Review* (July 1914) under the pseudonym “Sade Iverson”: see Kramer, *Chicago Renaissance*, pp. 251-254.

5VL was at the Chicago Art Institute from January 1901 through spring semester, 1903.

6See *Anderson, Margaret. In My Thirty Years’ War* (1930), Anderson writes: “I don’t remember ever having explained to anyone that the *Little Review* couldn’t pay for contributions. It was quite taken for granted that since there was no money there would be no talk of remuneration. No one ever asked me why I didn’t pay, no one ever urged me to pay, no one ever made me feel that I was robbing the poor artist.” She concludes that she did not consider “it good principle for the artist to remain unpaid—it’s a little better than for him to remain unprinted, that’s all” (p. 44).

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55) “The girls just make me silly . . .”

Chicago Ill.
March 6, 1914.
Saturday midnight.

Dearest Saraphim:

I have been untrue. I told the whole family tonight that any man that didn’t love Polly *Root was just a plain damphool. Polly took it without blinking. Its^ high time I went home. I swear I won’t write to her. That would be just untruthfulness doubled and twisted. And—since I must make a full report—I very tenderly kissed the hand of the sunshine-haired rosy Mrs. Mc.Reynolds\(^1\) this morning. To avoid complications I shall not go near her again. The girls just make me silly. Thats^ the long and short of the matter. Its^ time I went home and shovelled coal into the furnace.

Tonight Harriet had a nice party for me. She read State Street, and “I love my life, but not too well.” She read also “The Model”\(^2\) [at our] all these at our request, and Mrs. *Henderson repeated 3 poems and Mrs. Shaw three,\(^3\) and Sandburg three, and yours truly of course hooted to his hearts content. I never read the *Kallyope so well. One has to read it with complete joy to bring it out. This afternoon I went to Tea with Mrs. Monroe at the Hull House (met B.L.T.)\(^4\) and tomorrow afternoon Chenery\(^5\) gives a party for me and tomorrow evening I have my final party here at Mrs. Monroe’s and I am so much in everybody’s debt I do not know how to square in a million years. And I have just stuck to the people right next to Harriet, she sees every day and refused all others. I told everybody at the *Yeats dinner I was going to go next day to keep from accepting anything.

Well, dearest Saraphim—I must take my own counsel and remember that teacher who said that Pride was a fire.\(^6\)

I beg of you dear lady that you pray for our souls at the throne of grace—that we be worthy *nightengales and Poets.

With esteem and love
Nicholas Vachel Lindsay

Notes

1 Unidentified.

2 For Harriet *Monroe’s “The Model,” see Letter 36. The other two poems are “Night in State Street” and the first poem of “Love Songs,” in You and I (1914), pp. 7-14 and 61.

3 A minor Chicago poet, Frances Shaw published a group of lyrics in Harriet *Monroe’s Poetry Magazine (March 1914), the same issue that carried several ST lyrics. One Shaw lyric, “Who Loves the Rain,” according to Monroe, was in demand by anthologists (A Poet’s Life, pp. 386-387).

4 VL visits Jane Addams’ Hull House with Mrs. Anna Monroe: see Letter 53. Bert Leston Taylor (“B.L.T.”), novelist and journalist, wrote the Chicago Tribune’s “Line o’ Type or Two” column, in which he included verse and pithy comments by himself and contributors. Margaret *Anderson, whom he nicknamed “The Colonel,” was a favorite target. Harriet *Monroe asserts that Taylor was “author of the wittiest light verse of our time” (A Poet’s Life, p. 335). Taylor’s best-known novel is The Charlatans (1906), a mild satire of Chicago’s literary and artistic pretensions.

5 For information on Chenery, see Letter 26.

6 That is, Buddha: see “The *Firemen’s Ball,” Section III, and the next letter.

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56) “this letter is just dear old me again . . .”

Springfield Ill.¹
March 8, 1914.

Dearest Saraphim:

Here I am back in my quiet room again, and so glad to welcome myself home again. All is quiet—I can hear my watch tick.

Now I have that peace where I can call in your soul—you, or the imaginary creature that I call you.

I had to break away from Chicago by main force. Engagements looked like they would pile up mountain high. And I strutted and hooted around in a way to shame the Gods. I am glad it all happened—everybody was superlatively grand to me, but another week would have utterly spoiled me.

You have no idea how baffled I felt each midnight when I sat down to write to you and realized I must be in my own room beneath that big picture of *Altgeld—before I could write to you in spirit and in truth. Those people (except, of course, the closest) just loved the shell—and the noise of me, and it is my quiet self that writes to you, and finds such comfort in you.
People are crowding me with invitations. I must just refuse them all and pray to the Good God to restore to me the Holy Ghost, and help me to write with only the Divine Spirit in mind.

Yes—I want to come to see you—but I have only fifteen cents. And I cannot come till I have done a little work and satisfied my self-respect. Unless I can read you at least one new piece I have no right to come.

The externals of my life are getting ahead of me—I must go Back to God.

But child—whether you laugh or question I must say that this week in Chicago I have been in my inner heart and my literal conduct a Franciscan—whether you question or not. It seems to me this week I have refused (gently and courteously I hope) every kind of intoxicant ever brewed, including 100 year old wine.

But the glamor has made my head go round—just so many friends at once make me drunk, and I pray for a colder heart.

I read them nearly all—the *Fireman’s Ball—and I am sure not one of them knew how deeply and solemnly I meant the [Chorus] third section therof. To them it was but a bit of rhetoric and they went on smiling.

“Be cold as the dew
Would you win at the game—
With Hearts like the stars
With hearts like the stars—”

My poor old dad is just writhing with debt, yet will probably go to China—he needs the trip so—in heart and body. I do not feel I want to take one cent from him—till I have in some sense earned it—till I have thoroughly completed some worth-while piece of writing—that completely restores my self respect, that gives me the gall to ask him to stand and deliver. Yes—this letter is just dear old me again—me—me—me—writing to the Saraphim at midnight. So write me yourself in return.

We are strangely separated—strangely united—and I am deeply grateful to you for your fairy listening ear.

With all respect I kiss your hand—and bid you goodnight.

*Nightengale nightengale
Nightengale—goodnight.
With love

N.V.L.

Note

1 A substantial part of this letter is in Carpenter, p. 186.

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57) “You have no idea how I fight tward^ St. Francis . . .”
Springfield Ill.¹
March 9, 1914.

Dear Saraphim:

I mailed 25 letters this evening at 5:30 and I see here on the table before me 25 more or so to be answered. So there is another day of letter-writing. I just love it—but dear me I wish I could do it all in one bang. I am going to write to your friend *Louis—tomorrow.

Oh I am so full of thoughts! So many things happen to me and so fast! Pages of ancient history in some unexpected letters today, and tonight new thoughts and new thoughts! And I am too sleepy to put them down.

Really child—do you doubt I am a Franciscan? You have no idea how I fight toward St. Francis—through many dreams! I must be free from this smothering world—I want to do my work, and nothing else, and be an honest beggar, loaded down with no contraptions.

You have no idea how the hunger for the Good God and the desire to escape the snare of the world—lays hold on me—yet I am perpetually half ensnared—always hungry for kisses I do not take, and always drunk on praises I should ignore.

Yet through it all my heart cries to the infinite God and I desire to be cold as the stars, and live only for what my pen shall create. I want to set the world dreaming, to heal its imagination with dreams, and never be myself wounded with arrows.

I must forget all these people I have seen in Chicago—or they must remain for me only the grey souls for whom I am to sing. Their human quality must not make such an appeal—their fever and their weight and their consequence in the passing world, and their well meant flatteries.

Write to me Saraphim. Do not ignore my letters. It is your womanly duty to walk in the ways of the Spirit with me and help me back to the land of song.

We must resolve to be celestial *nightengales together. Celestial nightengales—together or apart.

Create in me a clean artistic heart Oh God and renew a right Beauty-Spirit within me.

Goodnight—Golden Sara.
Let us think upon the stars and save our hearts from every desire, but the desire of song.
I beg of you—learn to pray to the God of Israel.

It is midnight—
and I am your servant

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay

Note

¹A substantial part of this letter is in Carpenter, pp. 186-187.
58) “I will write you a letter at midnight . . .”

I will write you a letter at midnight—but mail this at once.

N.V.L.

[Enclosure: VL’s handwritten notes from Who’s Who concerning the life and work of Leonard Julian Street, apparently in answer to a ST query.]

*****

Note

1(Leonard) Julian Street (1879-1947) was a newspaperman, novelist, essayist, and author of travel sketches, such as the series he originally contributed to *Colliers’ Weekly* (1914) entitled “Abroad at Home”; see Letter 73. Other Street works include *My Enemy the Motor* (1908) and *Welcome to Our City* (1913).

*****

59) “I cannot always remain cool with you Sara . . .”

Springfield Ill. ¹
March 11, 1914.

Dear Saraphim:

I went to vaudeville tonight—and I came to one definite conclusion—I am not yet loud enough by half—to appeal to the elementary passions of humanity. (“Don’t tell *Jessie Belle!”) And I am not yet delicate and enthralling enough in my work—to appeal as I desire to the innermost imagination. I must lengthen my gauntlet both ways. Or maybe the word is gamut. More noise, more whispers and sighs between.

I was so glad to get your last letter. I was afraid you were vexed about something. I have the first proud day to report to you for many a day. I have actually cleared my table of letters, I wrote steadily all day at them and tomorrow I can begin to write. And I hope no one writes to me for a year but Seraphim^ Teasdale. As to your letter—

This old-folks question seems suddenly to infest my world. Every single soul I know and love—almost—is suddenly vexed by it. The best souls in this whole world are vexed in the same way as the most frivolous^ Old age and youth live in two Universes—I feel for you child, in your struggle. Yet it is a battle I myself have somehow strangely won these latter years—and my home now is such that I have entered into a second boyhood almost—and am as naturally in place as though only twelve years old. But many special circumstances may have brought this about. Few others work it as well.

I wrote to your friend *Untermeyer today. I didn’t write to *Wheelock. I am just a bit jealous of his place with you—and am not going to pretend. I don’t want it—but am
just mean enough to be a bit envious, and as I say—I am not going to go through any insincere motions. Tomorrow—I hope to write hard. With all the shaking up and plowing over I had in Chicago I ought to be fresh as a daisy—and keep at it for a stretch of weeks.

Sometimes I feel that after finishing one more piece of writing I ought to take to the road for good for awhile—and not have any mail forwarded—or anything. The welfare of the spirit is above all—and everything seems to smother me and keep me from the Eternal Presence—[sometimes]. I have not yet completely shaken off the flatteries of Chicago .... And your sweetness binds me—and the sweetness of other women—and sets my heart to bleeding—you are all my darling friends—the enemy. Try as I will—I cannot always remain cool with you Sara—yet I must be cold as the stars.

Well—goodnight—good lady,

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay
603 South 5th.

Note

1 A substantial part of this letter is in Carpenter, pp. 187-188.

60) “I wish we could meet on a star—clad in grey dreams . . .”

Springfield Ill.
Thursday March 12, 1914.

Dearest Saraphim:

Well—I worked a little on *Mark Twain today, and polished up the enclosed verses. Just looking over “The Proud Lady” from last year gets me more stirred up than I want to be. God deliver me from ever caring that much for any human being again. It is certainly deadly to care that much and worship that much and then be insulted. Well—I won’t dwell on it.

I have several others to this lady1—in as unpolished a state as this one—and just looking them over is a pretty deadly business. One of them called “**Darling Daughter of Babylon” I think I ought to straighten out if I can. But it is almost impossible for me to polish these things.

And so my dear—let us think on Death and the stars—and the goodness of God—and the consolation of Prayer and be as sober as we can.

Cards are as welcome as letters if you are busy. They are signs of rememberance^—and of passing thoughts—and show me my letters are not lost. They help marvellously tward^ companionship—.

I wish we could meet on a star—clad in grey dreams.

With love

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay
603 South 5th.
Enclosures: Drafts of two poems: “The Proud Lady” and “The Stubborn Mouse.”

Notes

1See *Roberts, Octavia.

2“To the Proud Lady,” with the title “Girl, You Shall Mock No Longer” was first published as part of “A Kaleidoscope.” The manuscript version here sent to ST is an early draft that she will “amend” (see Letter 63):

To the Proud Lady.

He you have mocked—still loves you,
Dreams—and his dreams are strange—
White—where the high saints wander—
Red—where the demons range.
You shall not hide forever,
My heart shall your path discern.
I have the key to Heaven
Key to the pits that burn.

Saved ones will help me: Lost ones
Spy on your secret way
Show me your flying footprints
On past the Judgement-day.

If by your pride you stumble
Down to the demon-land
I shall be there beside you,
Chained to your burning hand.
If, by your choice and pleasure
You shall ascend the sky
I too will mount those stairways
You shall not put me by,
There ’mid the holy Angels
You shall not dare to lower
Clasped in my arms that hunger,
Plucked like a violet-flower,
You shall be conquered, lady,
Knowing at last, desire,
Lifting your face for kisses,
Kisses of bitter fire—
Those that you dared refuse me
Here where I fast and pray,

Written—
1912-13.

Ah—you shall mock no longer
There at the Judgement-day.
3. “The Stubborn Mouse,” with minor variations in punctuation, is essentially the same as VL’s “The Mouse That Gnawed the Oak-Tree Down” and was first published as part of “A *Kaleidoscope.” There are two variants: “light” (l. 18) is “sun”; and “light” (l. 20) is “bright.” At the end of the manuscript, VL adds: “March 2, 1914. Written in the residence of Charles H. Hamill—Chicago” (see Letter 53).

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61) “I must kiss somebody's hand . . .”

Springfield Ill.
March 14, 1914.

My Dear Sara:

I wanted a letter by this afternoon—and none came. I wish M.K.¹ would pay up—and I would come down and see you. He is my only financial chance at present.

I am getting a lot of entirely unexpected publicity the last few days. I send you two local samples.² I hope you do not think I am vain to send you these. You and my Auntie³ in Indianapolis are about the only ones I am disposed to send clippings to.

The presentation of the book to Morgan was a real recognition. I have never recanted a single heresy—and here I have the good opinion of my mother’s own religious²² machine. The bunch that keeps her perpetually in her position has in a sense made me their poet. And I was bored at the very thought of these meetings—(confidential) and—after Chicago—had just one thought—to whip myself back to work. I had stayed away from them all.

The daughter of *Lyssipus is temporarily out of favor. Not that I am angry—but I act a little coolly—on account of one evening when she was decidedly cross—the night before Lincoln’s birthday. She can’t complain the rascal—if I pretend to be a little cool. I know well enough she is beaming herself. She never dodges the truth. And she knows that I know it.

I am glad to be without any special calling headquarters—but know it wont¹¹ last. I must kiss somebody’s hand, or I am not the least happy, long at a time. If you were near—it should be yours, as long as we both behaved, and did not fight or swear.

Goodnight—princess

N.V.L.

Notes

¹#Kennerley, Mitchell.

²The enclosures include an Illinois State Journal (March 14, 1914) account of the closing session of the “Winona Bible Conference” in Springfield. The chief speaker, Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, was presented with a copy of VL’s *General William Booth Enters into Heaven and Other Poems. At the top of the clipping, VL writes: “I was not there—
but I have been told this was a most dramatic and moving affair—the climax of the official union revival. Pardon the confidential brag. I did not know of any of this. All my friends, apparently, were there.” A second clipping is a newspaper editorial entitled “The Poet in Modern Life” (The Springfield Record, March 14, 1914) which reads, in part: “At least three of Nicholas Vachel Lindsay’s more recent compositions have so truly breathed the divine fire that there no longer is any ground for reasonable doubt that Springfield may pride itself on being the home city of a real poet—one who is destined to reach enduring fame.

“From now on, it is safe to predict, there will be less tendency to poke fun at Nicholas and, instead, there will be many rushing forward with the laurels.” At the bottom of the clipping, VL writes: “This is praise from Sir Hubert. This is the Brewery newspaper—that never forgives a man for being a dry voter. Tomorrow night I make a dry speech at the Harvard Park Baptist church” (see Letter 40). Saint Hubert (fl. 7th cent.), once a very passionate hunter, repented his past, took holy orders, and finally became a bishop. He is the patron saint of the chase.

3 Aunt Frances Frazee Hamilton: see Letter 4.

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62) “Its^ so much lovlier^ to write for you than a magazine . . .”

Springfield Ill.
March 16, 1914.

Midnight.

Well—dear Saraphim I have been so busy trying to get “*Darling Daughter of Babylon” in shape for you I am nigh asleep. It must wait till tomorrow. I will just be delighted to flood you with new miscellaneous verses—if you will honestly criticise^ and tenderly read them. If I find you perfunctory about it, I will weep great weeps. Its^ so much lovlier^ to write for you than a magazine—if you will only put all your brains into the business. The magazines bore me to death. A lot of them want my work—but they give me a pain.

Well—as to Orrick1—I extend to you my sympathy

tender inquiry

Congratulations} whichever

you prefer. I think *Jessie-Belle has the sweetest darlingest fairy-church-steeple kind of a name. You can just hear the fairies going to church. I shall write her about it. Yes—I am in the next Whose^ Who—(in America) 1914-15, when it comes out. I have filled all blanks and read the proof of my particular two inches.

I suppose I sign my name in full for the same reason that I [address all] start all my letters to my father and mother “My Dear Parents.” I don’t know why. Its^ just the way I feel, I suppose. And I understand from them that I always sign my name in full to my letters to them—though I didn't^ know it. I am surprised to find I have done the same by you. I shall change my ways.
Give me a word on how you liked Mary *Pickford. I wish the *American would print me^ poem about her.

Say your prayers—Sara—if you believe in God the tiniest bit in the world. A friend of mine has just been carried off to Gehenna—all through the lack of it. Oh it makes me sick at heart to see a human soul crumble before my very eyes—like M. Valdemar’s Body in the Poe story.\(^2\) Not that I think you are in any such danger—but in my revolt from this terrible surrender—I just want to say to every one whose religion^ may be getting dim—love God—and say your prayers. And with me at least—there cannot be a true moral intimacy—or rather spiritual understanding—without some shred of religion^ in common.

I cannot go into it tonight—it is too wide a subject and I have already written myself nigh asleep.

But I want you to love the same God I do—and confess to him every naughtiness. Every confession is a new beginning and brings a breath of bracing air from the Unseen.

Then—whatever happens—you will never reach that dreadful hour when you will say “Evil—be thou my good.”\(^3\)

We all sin—but that is worse than sin. That is apostasy. Whatever you do—prayer and confession to God will keep your heart gentle and your eyes womanly and clear. Beautiful eyes are the goal of this theology.

Vachel.

Notes

\(^1\)See *Johns, Orrick.

\(^2\)VL refers to Poe’s story, “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” (1845).

\(^3\)The words are Satan’s in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, IV, 110.

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63) “I am in no sense a stoic . . .”

Springfield Ill.
March 20, 1914.

My Dear Saraphim:

Well—I have in a way taken your advice and night after night have worked on this poem instead of writing at length to you—and every night still seeing some reason for not sealing it up. But you were always with me in the work—though that will sound like a handsomer sentiment with some other poem. It is rather idle for me to pour out barrels of ink in the form of midnight letters after an idler day. So you are right—I should put that force into my craft—though with the thought of pleasing you in it. And it really does cure me of my over-letterishness to try to have a poem ready.
To sort of make up for this poem—all too personal (underneath—) I draw a little star which is a kiss for your hand—saying we are fellow-craftsmen.

I am as tired tonight as you were two nights ago—and I am afraid my dear that you would have to furnish the shoulder.

For all I make such a hooting noise I am no towering oak. Could two grapevines sufficiently twisting do without a trellis? Or would they both get mad at each other for being grapevines, and just alike when it came to the leaning business?

Writing verse or anything else (but letters) after night is a new thing with me. I hate to think I am going to put out my eyes by Gaslight—but you are such a divil^ you haunt me most at midnight—and I am such an idiot I cannot write for the magazines no matter what the glory—I must write hoping to please or appall—or do something to you—and therefore—till I get worldly or mad at you or something, I am afraid I will be writing by night, and I’m bound it shan’t be acers^ of letters—it must be poems—work, to build up my self respect—so that when next we meet—I can rest easy for a day and chirp happily with you—having accomplished something. If I have to come to see you on my parental bounty, I must feel that in a certain moral sense I have earned it. To come to you—an idler, for a day of idle happiness—that is a shabby picnic. There is no such thing as rest—untill^ after one has worked.

I was getting so muscle-bound over *Mark Twain I had to just forget him awhile. I shall polish up a lot of little sillies and poemlets—and take him up as soon as I feel fit and fighting.

Child you tell me of your impulses and your loneliness and all—and I want to kiss you adoreably^ and all these things are rituals and sacraments to me—but I cannot steal bread and wine—and they are Oh—so hard to earn. Better one cup of water in a noble desert than an ocean of drunkenness. And I always feel myself on the edge of the ocean. I am in no sense a stoic—it is with me a kind of fate fate—and my blood boils and seethes forever. But there is that in me that says—love letters are easy to write. Good poetry is hard to write. Passion of the best—I say—or no passion at all. Better one day with your hand on her heart—after a thousand years fight—than a thousand kisses after an idle day. And so I kiss your hand. You know the kind of a letter I could write—and I am old enough to know how—Oh violet in the Conservatory!)

But because of many terrible memories of Babylon—sincerity and cold truth are sweeter to me than any protestations. A thousand years of white clear self-contained crystalline words first—before I take any of the sacraments—though I do it kneeling—with a prayer on my lips.

I am afraid this is nonsense. So here is a star for your forehead. Wear it when you pray for me—and for all the weak of the earth.

Vachel.

[Drawing of a five-point star].

[Enclosures: Manuscript copies of VL poems “On Suddenly Receiving a Curl Long Refused” and “Girl, You Shall Mock No Longer.” The former is nearly the same as
the published poem (Poetry of VL, pp. 218-219), with minor variations in punctuation and with the first stanza repeated at the end. A headnote reads: “Written to Saraphim D. Teasdale.” A marginal note reads: “Further ruthless criticism solicited.” Meanwhile, the version of “Girl, You Shall Mock No Longer” included here (compare Letter 60) is also nearly the same as the published version, with only minor variations in punctuation and with one word change: “Splendid” (l. 20) is “Rosy.” Two marginal notes read: “As amended by Sara Teasdale” and “A further ruthless criticism solicited”—this latter across from the third stanza.]

*****

64) “Well I woke up this morning in a fit to see you . . .”

Springfield Ill.
March 21, 1914.

My Dear Saraphim:

In your Summer Nights—which I find most lovely and all and Saraesque—I do nevertheless suggest that the first night is either too near or else not quite near enough to the second Knight—and that repetitions of sound—unless conscious—should be avoided. And did you intend an assonance between lightening^ and light—in the next line?

I am in no position to judge whether I am right about these suggestions. They are just my habit of mind—in going over one of my pieces. I cut out every unconscious repetition, to make sure.

Now you write me a cruel page about the Daughter of Babylon. Do you like the (occasionally) over-lengthened lines of the Daughter of Babylon? I wanted a certain unclassic [shawl] Persian shawl luxury. I feel that it will always be a second rate poem—yet couldn’t help but work hard on it. Its^ like dressing up a woman to make one forget who she is. The piece will always have the odor of too much musk no matter what I do to it. I feel when I think of it as though I had been locked up in jail and compelled to read “D Annunzio,”3 (“The Child of Pleasure,”) or however you spel^ him. It will always be a second rate piece—because it represents a second-rate attitude—and the piece will please best the women who imagine they are just that sort. It will flatter their Salomeesque vanity—if they like it at all. I can just imagine Leslie Carter4 reading it with unction. Well—too many words. I have something or other to talk about.

I am just starting to develop what is the sketch of what I hope is a bigger piece. “Listen to the Song of the Horns of the Morning.”5 All light and air and Kansas after the damned fringes and shawls and [Assyrian] Winged Bulls and Suffocating odors of Babylon. Because I have been working on it so late—this letter is properly short, and so I give you my love and goodnight.

N.V.L.
As to being—friends—it will take at least three years. If you and I do not stab each other at the end of three years—then we know we are friends. That sounds wicked. Well—I kiss your hand lady, and ask your prayers—remembering me^ sad story.

Sunday Morning—

Well I woke up this morning in a fit to see you. “The *Century” is still flirting with “The *Firemans Ball.”

I owe about 40 dollars down town that must get paid—most of it to my printer $25, to my printer—in fact—the remainder of the [““Soul of the City” bill. And then the rest to my confectioners—from setting up my boys once a week. Those are my two extravagances always. Printers and confectioners. But I am not quite pleased when I owe a cent.

Well—now, I must see you. So the next munny I get—I will pay all of these bills I can and still get to St. Louis by rail and take you to the matinee. It must be some Wednesday therefore (or Saturday?) If the show is bad—we will roast it. Any excuse to be silly together away from home. I will call you up about 1 o’clock and you tell me the best chance of a show and I will git^ the tickets, and if there is time—come and get you—if not—meet you at some properly accredited lamp-post. Then I will invite myself home to supper with you, and read you your own poetry till 11 o’clock and then take the midnight train. I have just been over that schedule in my mind so many times I feel as though I have had a real pleasant time already. I just mussn’t^ come till I have written something, or earned something or done something to prove my name is not mud. Its^ bad enough for me to ask myself to supper, even then—but I like your home-style and your parlor and your study, indeed I do.

I am happy over the prospects of the Horns of the Morning. Methinks it is going to be a real morning-song.

Your friend Joyce *Kilmer quotes Little Vachel’s “Springfield Magical” “Where is David” and the “*Altgeld” in the Digest Poetry-Column this week.8 I have a heap of pleasure out of it somehow. It means a lot more than other publicity, equally important [somehow]. The progress of the Altgeld poem goes into my heart like an arrow. It is something too romantic to be true. It is likely now to go on his Chicago monument, not yet erected. But thers^ many a slip, of course. Someday I will show you my book of press clippings about the Governor. Untill^ you have followed his life you havn’t^ the least idea how romantic the success of that poem really is. I began to collect them when he was still Governor of Illinois and I could see him out of this window where I am writing now. [Then on the day of his] At College I bought his crude but terribly purposeful book “Live Questions,” and gave an oration on him. While I was a student in Chicago he died—with his last breath making a speech for the Boer’s^, which literally killed him in an hour or two. I saw him lying in state in the Chicago Public Library Rotunda. I cut from the Chicago papers whole blankets and sheet of Eulogy from his bitterest enemies. I attended the enormous memorial meeting that jammed the auditorium. Then years afterward—about three years ago—I wrote that poem in this room. For years I had had in mind that dirge of Tennyson’s, hoping to paraphrase it:—9
The Woman’s Trade Union League has just reprinted the Altgeld Poem in “Life and Labor.” Karl *Vrooman has had me recite it at two anti-Sullivan meetings and is going to scatter it broadside in his big anti Sullivan Campaign document—using the Lorimer Poem also—and heading one: “The Statesman” and the other “The Boss” and Sullivan is going to be denounced in that same document as the Lorimer of the Illinois Democracy. And Karl Vrooman is really trying for the senatorship, and leading the anti Sullivan forces. All these things with no overt act of mine. And on top of this comes Joyce—quoting the Altgeld in the Digest. So the poem moves in still waters and in storms. Its all very lovely—don’t you think so—dear *Sappho Seraphim angel-eyed round mouthed white armed one?

N.V.L.

[P.S.] I am going to send you—loan you “The Tramps Excuse.” Don’t read it as a book of poems. It is crude autobiography.

[Enclosures: (1) An envelope containing five-pointed stars, cut out and folded up into tiny triangles. On the envelope: “Spring Beauties—In Bud. To be gathered and opened very carefully in the Sunshine, one at a time, with pretty thoughts!” “Do not show to your Mama.” (2) News-paper clipping from the Illinois State Register (Monday, March 23, 1914): “Poet Lindsay at Brentano’s” by Charles *Ridgely. VL prints on the clipping: “Show to your Mama.”]

Notes

1ST’s "Summer Nights" is unpublished; the manuscript is in VL's copy of Helen of Troy (see Letter 3):

Summer Nights

I remember now how I used to lie awake
When I was a child, and over across the street
The notes of a mandolin in the humid night
Fashioned a tinsel tune that was frail and sweet.

I was eight years old, and I wove my grave romances
About the player and called him my minstrel knight;
I remember still the white sheet lightening^ leaping
Between the opposite houses with baffled light.

It frightened me always—not even the gentle music
Could warm me wholly out of my shivering fears—
I remember now when I lie in the lonely darkness
The mandolin that is still these twenty years.

I lie awake and remember the long forgotten,
The wild little heart that had so much to learn—
I long to hold the child that was I and soothe her—
She is gone these twenty years, she will not return.

2 See “*Darling Daughter of Babylon.”

3 Gabriele D’Annunzio (1863-1938) was an Italian poet, novelist, and dramatist. His novel Il piacere (1889) was translated as The Child of Pleasure (1898). Eleonora Duse and D’Annunzio were lovers, and she acted the lead role in many of his dramas: see Letter 51. D’Annunzio tells their story, in part, in his novel Il fuoco (1900), translated as The Flame of Life (1900). VL is aware that D’Annunzio’s fame rests, partially, on his hedonism. For VL’s discussion of D’Annunzio’s film Cabiria, see The *Art of the Moving Picture (1915), pp. 55-57; reprinted in Prose of VL, pp. 236-237.

4 Mrs. Leslie Carter (1862-1937), born Caroline Louise Dudley, was one of many U.S. stage actresses made famous by producer David Belasco: see Letter 26.

5 See “*Santa-Fé Trail, Th.”


7 For “confectioners,” see Letters 18 and 50.

8 VL’s “Where Is David” is finally titled “In Which Roosevelt Is Compared to Saul.” All three poems were published in the *Literary Digest (March 21, 1914) and are in Poetry of VL, vol. 1.


10 For the Women’s Trade Union League, see Letter 26. The League published Life and Labor for about a decade (1911-1921).

11 The “Lorimer Poem” is “To the United States Senate”: see Letter 14, and Poetry of VL, pp. 135-36. Also see Letter 140.

12 See Letters 51 and 73.

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65) “I am such a poor ladies man . . .”

Springfield Ill.
March 24, 1914.

My Dear Sarafimm:—

I will come to see you Saturday April 4 unless something prevents. Do you like that date? On Wednesday I have arranged a meeting with the ladies of the second Presbyterian church to talk to them and distribute my Censer-Book.¹

All morning I was cleaning my room. Mama told me to get it ready for the house cleaner. I said it was ready. But I carried stuff down to the furnace till Eleven o’clock. By burning catalogues and stupid and useless volumes, and old clothes the place really looks crisp tonight. (Nearly) All the books are in the book-cases. And the closet really looks
clean. I kept everything that represents a real tradition or dear memory, but nothing for mere proprieties’ sake. So I didn’t let the family catch me at burning some of it. And my walls are so restful with most of the pictures down. I shall leave them down.

Saraphim—you must not expect too much of my visit. I am such a poor ladies man—and not a bit chivalrous. But I do want to see you. You are about the only lady on my horizon at present. The daughter of *Lyssipus had given me a pretty strong set-back before I came to see you—and I have done little to patch up, and have almost quit calling—though we are on good enough terms. She is full of little storms and tempers and I am just assuming to have taken the last one almost seriously. She knows well enough she said about twice as much as a man ought to stand, that night before Lincoln’s Birthday. She knows it merely amused me—but she has given me my legal excuses to retire—and I have taken them. I have just one serious charge against the lady. She is the most appallingly weak irresolute and purposeless person for her brains and resources I ever knew. It amounts almost to a spiritual disease. She is in deep despair for herself—and I can say I have given her up in the sense one would give up a friend, with a sigh, that has an opium habit. (Sara,) The way you fight your battle for your dreams—steadily forward—with the slow progress of a real little inevitable glacier—gives you a sort of a refreshing hold on me. Every little sword-blow you strike for little Sara with the poetry reading world, the critics, or the angels of inspiration, is a cheering thing to me. I like to see you fight your little battle in this funny little world, the more so because I know I will not ever strike one real blow on your behalf. I say to myself—well—she is taking care of herself, thanks be.

In a way we are both extremely artifical creatures—and I do not just know what is natural and right for us, and when we are on a sound foundation. I am glad we both began as Baptists and Campbellites. You don’t know how much it helps. No matter how far we are from it. I sort of feel it in your pulse.

But I was going to say—that my letters make so much of a bold and assertive person out of me—and when you meet me—I am not so bold, in the matter of friendship—I mean. That is—to write a letter for a lady is an easy thing to do. To be her truly gallant and self-sacrificing servant is a hard thing to do, and I do not believe I ever did a fundamental unselfish thing for a woman in my life. There is not one real thing I am ever going to do for you—I suppose, or for any other woman. Where the real man’s work begins—I always quit. I neither plough for you, sow for you, fight for you nor protect you. Many a man treats his light loves to more of his hearts blood than I spill for my highest friends.

Many a man does much for a woman he only loves lightly, and expects to forget next year. He goes out and risks his neck to bring his Bopeep a flock of lambs in exchange for an hour together. I send you nothing but words—words—and I hope I am not deceived therby, and know you are not deceived. Boil down forty letters to one labored epistle by a “Business Man” and you have their true equivalent, in a spiritual court of equity.

I want to be just, dear—I want to be fair—I cannot bear to steal honey. What kindness you give me—you must give—I cannot bear one featherweight of debt. I have been over and over a similar ground with you—but I hope it does not grow old with
you—for the story grows new with me through the increase of desire for you and the increase of beauty-curiosity if I may put it so—I want to unwind your cerements from you like the silk from the cocoon of the Butterfly, and find the white live fluttering creature. When I come to see you you must keep Baptist thoughts in your head—put Ambrosia in your hair—spice in your breast and on your mouth, and wisdom in your eyes and red stockings properly cooled by grey skirts and grey slippers on your legs, and we must be as sober friends as we can without fibbing.

I hope to bring you the new Kansas Song of the Morning—*Santa Fe trail song—as my one [right] evidence of right to lose myself a minute in your velvet eyes. I may not say or do as much, as I say and do in this letter.

Ships that pass in the night
And speak to each other in passing—²

With love

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay

Is Saturday™ the 4th perfectly convenient?

Please say if you prefer any other date.

Now you have not told me you liked those paper Spring Beauties.³ Thats™ the trouble with everything I do. Its™ just paper. Thats™ all my visit will be—paper. And all it ought to be.

[Enclosure: Undated clipping from an unidentified newspaper: “France to Expel Artist Earle and His Affinity Miss Charlotte Herman.” On the clipping, VL writes: “Isn’t Earle the man who gave the Lyric Year prize?”]⁴

Notes

¹VL refers to “The Soul of the City Receives the Gift of the Holy Spirit”: see Letter 13.

²Quoted from Longfellow’s Tales of a Wayside Inn, “The Theologian’s Tale: Elizabeth,” iv (1874).

³See the note on enclosures at the end of Letter 64.

⁴See *Kennerley, Mitchell.

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66) “I want to look my ambition in the face tonight. . . .”

Springfield Ill.
March 26, 1914.¹

Wednesday Evening.

Dear Saraphim:
Your most delightful pictures came with the starry trimmings. I will merely say thank you—lest I say too much indeed. I think the picture in the sailor suit is a perfectly gorgeous little-ray-of-sunshine jester. [Drawing of a star in the margin.] The baby-picture is more like a poet. But the laughing picture is so much more like the St. Louis you than any other, it is a perfect delight, and I am just as silly over it as I have any right to be. So there. [Drawing of a star.] No more, lest I say foolish things. [Drawing of a star.]

I have put in a reasonable amount of time today on the *Santa Fe Trail song—“Hark to the Song of the Horns of the Morning.” It looks quite promising. If I can only make the execution come up to the plan. It is sure to be loud. But I want it silk-lined.

Ambition—I want to look my ambition in the face tonight. And it is a little hard to put into words. Yet in a way—it is one—simple thing.

It is to give as complete a voice as possible in song—to the America I come from—and to put my whole life-strength to the task.

But that sounds too general. There are lots of details. *Yeats haunts me a great deal since I met him, and his championship of the delicate intimate non-rhetorical deadly-sincere sides of life. And I saw the *Irish players for the first time, here after I had come home from meeting him, and had had a week to think him over. And therefore those players made almost a revolution in my ambition in a sense, or deepened and narrowed it. I want to be that intimate, and that sincere, with as close and sensitive a hold on the passions and dreams with which I deal. Such wonderful concentration—and delicacy! I want a Sangamon County poetry—if not Drama! Yet more than that. Sangamon County is in a way more American than the total of all the counties of the land—and I want to make American song through Sangamon County.

And I want to get way way under the world—and look up—and understand it from underneath—and not be corrupted by the ease of the world or the praise of sophisticated friends. And I must not write up the dim memories of [the] my past—I must express the main presistent memories of the past—but I must know how Sangamon County and America are sweating now, when they are informal—not on dress parade. The Irish players gave me a renewed zest in my aversion to the dress-parade point of view when it sets itself up as something final.

I am so Glad George Lee and his wife are coming back to Springfield. They are such passionate and inexorable Democrats—that they keep me down to the Sangamon County people by their very gossip and scolding. They are great local political workers when here, and passionate Single-Taxers. And while I cannot accept Single Tax literally, I like the twilight-zone of Democracy which surrounds it—immensely. I will be cured of the poison I have unconsciously absorbed from the pretty and amiable snobs I have loved these years.

Saraphim—my only possible excuse for living is to sing my song well. I am not worth the mud that made me otherwise, and I must make every sacrifice to this end—and renew my vows, and forget all flatteries and set my soul to the task. I must keep singing more and more clearly the voice of my little dumb county in dumb laboring America—till I am 70 years old—in the year 1950. America has so many voices, and no clear
presistent^ song—except the Oratory of Bryan—which is a sort of chant. He is a kind of modern Homer.

Whether I do this work well or ill—it is all I am fit for—my only chance at the Judgement throne. I must put my all in it.

Goodnight good lady,

[Drawings of two stars.] Vachel.

Notes

1 It is Wednesday night, March 25: see the date on the next letter.

2 For information on ST’s “baby-picture,” see Letter 3.

3 George Lee’s wholesale grocery business, for a short time, had taken him to Benton Harbor, Michigan: see Letter 26.

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67) “I was meant to be faithful to one woman . . .”

Springfield Ill.
March 26, 1914.

My Dear Sara:

You will find my rhyme on Mary *Pickford in the April *American. Maybe I told you.

Be sure to read cross—not a-cross. Yes—I remember now. I told you.

I do not remember anything the size of a dime that ever gave me as much pleasure as that laughing picture of yours. It just gives out happiness most gallantly. And the little baby picture looks so much like a grave little poet. Really it makes me smile most soberly, as it were, it is such a very grave little poet.1

I have more self-respect tonight than for a long time. I have been over the *Santa Fe trail from end to end today—seven pages—and it makes steady progress and I have lots of hope of it. I do hope it will be one of my main pieces. And I hope it will be in fair shape to read you by Saturday Week. I must be able to prove I have not been idle or I cannot be as happy with you as I want to be. A loafer has no right to picnics—and I am the worst loafer in Christendom. My only possible virtue is that I go back to a thing—even at long intervals, till it is done, and I do not want to lose that one virtue.

So I have not forgotten *Mark Twain.

I am tired to death and sleepy as all get out. But I can’t quite shut my eyes without a small note. What difference it makes—I don’t know—except that it does, and I am so much better satisfied.

I was meant to be faithful to one woman—but no woman ever allows it—because by nature [she] WOMAN demands more in some ways and less in others than I can give.
No doubt you could do without many letters—but I must give them, if I care for you one mite. In other ways you will find me a dreadfully ungalant swain.

One more thing about your picture. I love the flying hair. I have as much obsession for the gossamer cataract of a woman’s hair as W. B. *Yeats. —² And I love to see it flying about in this laughing little picture. The day before I come you must put your hair up in papers or shampoo it or something, and make it look as much like this picture as possible—golden fleece and fuzzy-wuzzy and halo and aureole and

well—goodnight,

N.V.L.

[P.S.] Nymph, in thine orisons, be all my sins remembered.³

Notes

¹For ST’s pictures, see Letter 3.

²Several *Yeats poems reflect how “Some woman’s yellow hair / Has maddened every mother’s son” (“September 1913”). See especially The Green Helmet and Other Poems (1910).

³Compare Hamlet, III, i, 89-90. Also see Letter 218.

*****

68) “Flattery moves me so, it is dreadful . . .”

Springfield Ill.
Friday March 27, 1914.

Dear Angel-Person:

I was about as happy this noon as humans have a right to get. Anything more would have portended ill-fortune. All morning I had been going over the *Santa Fe tune—and I am reasonably certain it will be readable by next Saturday week. Not done, but readable, and this afternoon I worked on *Mark Twain quite a bit, though to promise him by Saturday would be an extravagance. But ink has begun to run from the end of my fingers at last—and I am so glad. Of course I must not be too sanguine—but the Santa Fe song promises to be simpler than the *Fireman’s ball, and loud as the *Congo—yet with more delicacy in the background. Well—we shall see. I was as happy over it, this noon, just working away as happy as poor mortals have a right to get. Not as happy as they can get—but that kind is dangerous.

Do you dance? The new dances? Or any of the old ones? If so—which do you like best—and how much do you dance?

I have started reading Henry B. *Fuller’s first book—the Chevalier of Pensier-Vani^⁸. There is something to me remarkably romantic about Henry B. Fuller. A man with such exquisite sensibilities living in Chicago most of his life and fighting a pioneer battle for art there. A son of one of the original moneyed families of the town—in no particular
circumstances now—but in his youth having a big business opening if he had followed the family path.

He is to me tradition indeed—and he and his kind have made it so much easier for fine work to be done in the West—by this generation. He trained up *Hackett—I understand—who was *Dell's predecessor on the Post, and Tiffany Blake—who is [one of the] the leading editorial man on the Tribune, and he himself works on the [Times-Herald] I believe. Record-—*Herald—do they call it now? I read his art-student stories when I was a lonely student in Chicago—"Under the Skylights." The Downfall of Abner Joyce—which writes up Ham *Garland, and Dr. Gowdy and the Squash. Dr. Gowdy being Gunsalus—the preacher—and Little O Grady and the Grindstone Bank—etc.

My week in Chicago in the wake of *Yeats—at the Little Room—and the *Cliff Dwellers etc, was somehow more intelligible to me because I had read after Fuller. He paints that bunch—only a little younger.

I just love your laughing picture—that is all there is of it, and I am very eager to see you. I doubt if I can come again for quite a while, so I want to make the most of it and be very silly. So think up a lot of silly things to say. At 10:30 P.M. precisely—I want to pluck one star from your hair.

Springfield has been in quite a stew over me in the last week. Two copies of my book have actually sold at the book store—in the midst of the excitement. When I get dizzy over the telephone calls—I look at that pile of books—still practically undiminished, and cool down.

I am yours with esteem

N.V.L.

[P.S.] Flattery moves me so, it is dreadful. I believe every word of it, and get all stewed and fluttered. Its^ a shame. Thank heaven I have parents.

Notes

1“The Downfall of Abner Joyce,” “Little O’Grady vs. The Grindstone,” and “Dr. Gowdy and the Squash” are the three stories that make up Henry Blake *Fuller's *Under the Skylights (1901). The character of Abner Joyce is supposedly based on Wisconsin-born writer Hamlin *Garland.

2See Letter 54.

3For ST’s pictures, see Letter 3.

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69) “You have been such a comfort and happiness to me . . .”

(11.P.M.) Springfield Ill.
Saturday night.
March 28, 1914.

My Dear Saraphim:

This afternoon late I cut out the peaches—and felt very happy—and now I am sad—because I have just made up my mind I must wait till after *Joy is married before I come. She is married the night before Easter—April 11th—and then there will be a lot of hulabaloo^ and guests in the house for several days. I will write you then of the time. It gives me a very empty ghastly feeling to give you up. I don’t pretend to be making desperate love to you—— but I am certainly very hungry to see you.

The family are not cross—but they are all on a strain—from sewing and getting ready and planning—Joy always is on general principles in about your fix in a house—with parents as old. And all the stir just aggravates the situation. The unusual^ excitement is about all they ought to have at present—and I really ought to be on hand doing odd jobs and harmonizing a bit and showing an interest and jollying them up. Joy is a little too young to know how to throw off the atmosphere of antiquity when it broods. If I am thinking of myself right now I musnt^ (not) show it so plainly. Papa and Mama forgot all they ever knew about doing things for young brides, and though they are perfectly willing—willingness and woodenness can’t make a wedding complete. And a wedding that lacks cheer just for lack of ginger would be sinfully silly.

I wish I could send you my friendship forever—and you could do the same. I hunger for certainty and fixedness so much in this world—and outside my family I never seem to find anything strong as the rock of Gibraltar in the way of a friend, at least—the lady friends, whose hands I kiss.

It would be a perfect picnic of course—to write you the most fire-worksy-kind of tender letters—but you have no idea how I hunger for the sober and the eternal—and how uncertain I am of it—though I am not angry with God in the least. He is too good to me in other ways. My north star never fails, for instance.

And so my dear—when I send you my love—with such wavering and uncertainty—it is love nevertheless—and I only hope it will not be my folly or selfishness that will make it less. I send you my love, gentle lady.

You have been such a comfort and happiness to me—of late so much of happiness—yet I have seen you so little—we may both be utterly deceived in each others real essence—or powers of endurance under fire.

I have not told you how much your little-girl picture pleased me—but I dearly loved it—there is no other word—it is a regular little poet—if there ever was a poet 4 years old. There is one half of you in it—and the other half in the laughing-young-girl-picture—and both have made me most light hearted and happy. They are my company on my table all the time.1

There is always some woman in my world—and the minute they find out how cold and selfish I am at a crisis—they all move on—and I suppose my dear you will do the same—and I will deserve it. But just the same—I send you my love—and say I hope to meet you—as soon as it is right—and that meeting or not—we will never take one step forward we will have to retrace—but continue gravely and steadily to the end—loyal in
fine friendship whether there be the fevers of spring between us or no. I want my life to be full of elements as eternal as the stars.

And I want to see you! Goodnight

N.V.L.

[Enclosures: Eight paper cutouts labeled “PEACH,” with a note: “(Saturday—6 P.M.) Enclosed find eight stars of the peach variety—to celebrate the fact that I have rewritten the *Santa Fe trail from end to end—eight pages today, and each page makes me feel industrious.”]

Note

1For ST’s pictures, see Letter 3.

*****

70) “Harriet was determined to make me silly about you . . .”

Sunday Night.
March 29, 1914.

My Dear Angel-faced, straw-berry-sweet, Golden-haired, brooklet-laughing, Spring-has-come Seraphim—:

   Greeting:—

   And I send you under separate cover four drawings which a certain art critic has very much approved, and which I printed off for him, doing some duplicates of which I send you a set. I took the old plates down to the Engraving house and had a few struck off on the hand-press. Pin them on your wall for one day, then keep them in your old Geography.

   As to that trade last—

Miss *Monroe protested when I said you were a “very pleasant young woman” and insisted that I rave—which I refused to do (to tease her, and feeling young and shy besides.) And she said you were a DARLING. Also that when I told her in strictest confidence about the Daughter of Babylon—whom Mrs. Hamill so much resembles—and she insisted that you were not treacherous, I told her I would have to wait and see. Well—anyway—Harriet was determined to make me silly about you. Now is that a trade last?1

   And here in Springfield the Daughter of *Lyssippus read your Scribner’s *Sappho with exquisite beauty one night—and she can read beautifully—and admired it tremendous. And the Wicked Daughter of Babylon did the same—by the way. And she has a voice like a silver bell. And she professed strong admiration.

   Now isn’t that guff enough? Its^ all so—you rascal gossip. Tell me my trade last.
I had all sorts of solemn thoughts to write to you tonight—and here I am too sleepy, and have used up my letter. I know my dear lady—that tomorrow morning there will be the loveliest^ letter telling me you are glad I am coming (—and knowing I can’t), I will have the most mixed up sad-happy feelings that ever were. I know you are going to be delighted in that letter—and I am going to read it a great deal, for that imagined delight. And then—I know that just about tomorrow at the same time maybe—you will be getting my letter saying I can’t come for awhile and I will be sad over our bafflement. You are persuading me to be greedy for happiness—and you must not do it, you naughty St. Louis. It is neither Buddhistic nor Franciscan.

And so—lest I overdo—and considering the extravagant opening of this letter—I very cautiously sign myself

With esteem

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay

To Sara Trevor Teasdale—
March 29, 1914.
Midnight—and in the study—my watch ticking.

Note

1See *Roberts, Octavia. For Mrs. Hamill, see Letter 53.

*****

71) “I am afraid I do say the same things endlessly . . .”

Springfield Ill.
March 30, 1914.

My Dear Sara-Lady:

First let me brag that I have been over the *Santa Fe Trail twice today. 6 pages now. I have the one solidest satisfaction that is seldom mine—a busy day from end to end. One cannot drive oneself^ to verse or to prose—and to feel [it] verse flowing is indeed a happiness. If this ready-writing fit holds over till I can finish *Mark Twain I will be so happy.

Please do not think you must answer more than one in three of my letters. I never found a woman who could keep up with me in letter-writing—you do better than any for ages and I am ever so grateful for it, you help me to live my natural life by tossing back the tennis ball once in a while. I am afraid my correspondence will be a bit of a burden to you unless you understand that I consider about one of your letters holds as much affection and kindness as three of mine, according to your different nature, you are less wordy. Letter writing is more natural to me than any human being. And I generally have to scramble along alone at it.
You bring me so much happiness of late, my dear. I rejoice in you—or in that shadow person that is my imagination of you. This shadow-Sara is forever exquisite and delicate and kind—and always loves nothing but the very finest of the fine things—and is finer in friendship than anything else.

If I am a little more lettery of late—please remember that you are getting those stray remnants of attention that the beautiful daughter of *Lyssippus did not care to cherish. I don’t blame her a bit either. I have no quarrel with her. The inside of the story was given to me by a mutual friend last night. I will gossip about it when we meet. In many ways I am rather pleased to have my main interest an out-of-town one at present. You in St. Louis and *Harriet’s bunch in Chicago keep me from getting too much nipped by the petty details of Springfield and help me to be a little more bouyant and independent and to go back to Springfield affairs with a fresh, unjaded eye.

I am so glad the Santa Fe trail has passed the critical point. It is coming through, sure—in two or three weeks. Here is a star for your forehead. [Drawing of star] Just to celebrate.

Your good long letter written in pencil has been read and reread. I keep your letters on the desk for a week or two and go over them in between dashes at my poems. They make great company. I certainly have had jolly times since your pictures came. The child picture most makes me weep. I didn’t think much of it at first, but the more I looked at it—the more it seemed like a little poet. Now it is just full of the Seraphicness of Sara, and it is my happiness.

Your last letter was a lovely one—. And as to “Admonishing,” I am afraid I do say the same things endlessly—but then I always forget a letter I write so soon. And you will find I have been saying the same-things for AGES, when you read the *Tramp’s Excuse. Its just me, thats all.

I send you my dearest love and hope and faith and friendship tonight—full and free and not one admonition.

I write so late at night—and I have been aware lately I have not written enough of what I thought—simply because most of my thoughts were nodding—or too long winded to start on. I think to you all day—you are an institution, and and I know you think toward me—though possibly not so much. It is always so with me—with the girl who has the principal niche, I argue everything out with her in imagination—and scold myself or praise myself or say my prayers with her imaginary presence near. And I feel so much more complete when I report to her the last thing in the evening.

But at the end of the day—all these thoughts—I think she must know them by now—shall I review them again? And so—I am apt to say one or two silly sleepy things and let it go at that. And so I send you my love dear—you Ghost that writes back happiness-bringing letters.

If friendship could always be like the delicate invisible holy cloud that floats between us!

With esteem

1 2 3
Nicholas Vachel Lindsay—

To Sara Trevor Teasdale.

Note

1For ST's pictures, see Letter 3.

*****

72) "to feel myself at work is such a self-respecting feeling . . ."

Springfield Ill.
March 31, 1914.

My Dear Fine Lady:

Your letter about the "religious^ mendicant" came this morning and I am so glad you liked it. I have just submitted to the *Century a book of 20 such sketches. Without much hope, except to make friends. If you want to find my prose masterpiece—I have no copy—but you will find it in the bound volumes of the Outlook—June 1, 1907—"The Man Under the Yoke."1

I have just dug out a copy of it. Mail it to your friend *Untermeyer with my good wishes. I shall write to him soon. I have not yet acknowledged his review—for which I am very grateful nevertheless. I am awfully flattered that the two of you should care for my prose. This is the very first piece of prose I ever wrote with that sense of definite concentration and accomplishment one has when one writes an intensely felt poem.

My boys were here tonight. Lovely lads. Five of them.2

And I am glad to be asked up to Charlevoix. One of my boys was caddy master up there last Summer. I don’t say I’m coming—but I’m^ glad to be asked. I am going to send many dreams that way—no doubt.

Well—I have been so happy all day. The *Santa Fe Trail is now 3 1/2 pages—though just as long. Written in a finer hand as always happens when polishing. I have gone over it four times to-day recopying it two of the times. I have been so happy, in the lightest hearted way. Not intoxicated or anything like that—but to feel myself at work is such a self-respecting feeling. I just feel as though it would last forever—this business fit—though I know it won’t.

No—I have not seen the Poetry Journal.3

I send you three stars and a half—for the three and a half pages of my poem—by way of celebrating. [Drawings of 3 1/2 stars] The first star for your forehead—the other two—just earrings—and the half star for your heart.

I will probably begin reading the Santa Fe Trail by Saturday—aloud to the folks. But it will stand two or three days reviewing first. This is the happy time—the polishing—when the work carries itself along and it is almost impossible to let it alone and one just polishes and polishes and polishes. It is certainly the joy of writing to me—
the period of the final piano-finish. I float along through the days like a sail ship in a light breeze.

That is a diagram of my day. Each dot represents a moment when I consulted you on this poem.

Do you know Sara—I have been looking at a lock of hair sent me by Martha Washington—and I want to tell you the very wickedest thing I ever do—when I grow very fond of a beautiful exquisite sensitive lady—full of sensibility and decorousness and I consider her very grand indeed. I pull out all her hairpins and think myself such a devil as never was. And so you must send me a hairpin as a sign that some time when you are very happy—and the chaperone is forty miles away—I may tell your curls that they are lovely and a notable aureole.

I am afraid I am getting to be such a scamp I had best quit right here.

But you have something to remind you of me now—when you tie up your rascal locks in the morning.

Did you ever try Gretchen-braids over each shoulder? I think they are grand.

But amid all this folly let us reflect that favor is deceitful and beauty is vain—but a dear lady that feareth the Lord—she shall be praised.

I kiss your hand—honorable Ghost.

N.V.L.

[Enclosure: Stanza VIII of “*Darling Daughter of Babylon,” with the following instruction: “Change title to Darling Daughter of Babylon. Paste this at the end, and send criticism.”]

Notes

1. The Man under the Yoke” is the first “adventure” in VL’s A *Handy Guide for Beggars. The “20 such sketches” VL refers to comprise what is now the rest of the Handy Guide.

2. For VL’s “boys,” see Letter 20. The “caddy master” was Franz *Rickaby.
For the *Poetry Journal*, see *Braithwaite, William Stanley.*

For “Martha Washington,” see Letter 16; for the lock of hair, see Letter 29.

Compare Letter 13. The allusion is to Proverbs 31:30. Future biographers should note that whenever mature VL dabbles with his sensuous nature, as he does in this letter, he invariably pulls away with some extenuating comment (“beauty is vain”), accompanied by suitable references to the Bible. This ambiguity remains manifest in his life until his marriage to Elizabeth Conner (May 19, 1925).

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73) “Everybody is being too good to me . . .”

Springfield Ill.

Wednesday Evening—

April 1, 1914.

[Headnote: “Your friend Julian Street¹ is going cross-country for *Colliers*—with another man—writing up the territory. Colliers asked some time ago for suggestions on places for him to visit. He is not going afoot.”]

So many things today—and I too sleepy to tell them and just want to tell them all. (This is a star [drawing of a star].)

First:—a foolish kind April-fool letter from that imaginary person Sara. For which—please accept one star. [drawing of a star]

I'm too sleepy to draw 'em. Just careless stars, they are. [Drawings of three, five-pointed stars].

Then. The *Santa Fe trail*—Went over it three times. Then at 3 P.M. speech to the 50 Ladies aids of the 2. Pres. Church. Took 100 Censer-books.² Then 4:30 to 5:30 talk to the select circle of Springfield I guess (the dramatic section of the Woman’s Club—) select owing to the quality of the chairman.³ And the daughter of *Lyssipus was there—looking like Salumbo and the Queen of Sheba and Kleopatra—and I telephoned her afterward.⁴ I forgave her everything she looked so lovely—and I am glad that little rankle is gone. (Still I shall not call much.)

Madison *Cawein the veteran* whom I much honor in my heart—sent me an elaborately inscribed copy of “The Poet the fool and the Fairies.” I am flattered to death.

I have pasted S.T.‘s little photographs in her book of poems—and they look most charming there.⁵

Called on *Susan tonight—and we] read the Santa Fe Trail through 3 times—and made about 6 corrections on every page. It needs to be a little crisper—shorter—more musical—with the climax a little more compelling. But as good as I could ask at this stage.
Susan was my high School teacher in English 40 years old when I was 17. She is now 39 and I am 34. She is my Springfield Harriet *Monroe as it were. We rejoice in the fact that George Lee is returning to town.  

He was on the whole, the man friend I valued most in this town—a fanatical Single Taxer and local reformer. Secretary of the State Initiative and Referendum League and all that. His wife the principal hostess for the radicals, and their going most broke up the radical group and threw me among the few *Smart Setty folks I care for—who tried to make me over with pin-pricks. I am delighted at the prospect of the good old days returning, when I forgot there was a conservative in town, and was myself held up as a horrible example of sluggish citizenship, by these nice radicals. I like that much better.

What else—? Little sisters Wedding announcements came. She is to marry a pleasant Cleveland young man—Ben *Blair.

Caweins^ book was a delightful surprise. Give me a word about Cawein.  

Tell me also—vain me—what new things you discovered about me not as a poet, but as a human, in the *Tramp’s excuse. I sent it to you as a human document, not to bore you with its art or lack of it. It is just one more letter to Sara—a letter on my youth. And I want a bit of an answer. I know you will delightfully discover something, and get my self-contemplation delightfully roused up.

As for my fortunes, do you know—sweet golden ghost—I am beginning to be alarmed. Everybody is being too good to me. Its^ time I started a scandal to keep people from starting one on me. If I do not put a fly in the ointment—somebody will put in a little scorpion and a little crocodile, just to fix my vanity. I don’t know whether to steal, or to kill a man. I’m too pore^ to be blackmailed. But I believe the best thing to do is to start a rumor I am going to enter the Catholic Priesthood. That’s^ the best back fire I know. Or run for mayor. That will start so many lies—none of them will count. Enough nonsense. But God save me from getting drunk on too many sweet new loyal friends.

Saraphim—dear shade—shadow—ghost illusion, imagination, mist, fog, fantasy, fairy-vision—:—impossibly good, delicate, feminine, constant and kind, to you—darling impossible shadow—I send my hearts love—and may I not soon awaken.

And I send a star. [Drawing of star]  

Goodnight.

1 2 3
Nicholas Vachel Lindsay—

to

1 2 3 4
Sara Trevanian of Tremain Teasdale.  

[Enclosure: Formal rejection slip—printed—from “The *Smart Set.” On this, Lindsay has written: “A recent exceedingly personal communication from The Smart Set—with reference to three poems. I was hoping to come to see you on those. (over.).”]
On the reverse side, VL has drawn a tiny vase nearly full of water and has added: “This little vase contains my tears.”

Notes

1 For Julian Street, see Letter 58.
3 The Illinois State Register (April 2, 1914) reports: “Nicholas Vachel Lindsey^ addressed the members of the Drama Study club yesterday afternoon at their meeting in the Y.W.C.A. parlors. He spoke of the *Irish Players, and the inspiration he had received from their performance here, and of the practicability of establishing a similar band of players in Sangamon County.” Also see Letter 66.
4 Salammbô was the fictitious daughter of Hamilcar in Flaubert’s novel Salammbô (1862), set in Carthage (240-237 B.C.).
5 For ST’s pictures, see Letter 3.
6 For George Lee, see Letter 66.
7 VL promises to loan ST a copy of The *Tramp’s Excuse in Letters 51 and 64.
8 For ST’s name, see Letter 6.

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74) “I am as happy as a June-bug full of booze . . .”

Springfield Ill.
April 2, 1914.

My Dear Adoreable^ Ghost-Wraith imaginary impossible or at least improbable Sara: Greeting.

If—dear ghost—you object to be written to every night—remember it is every night or not at all—for your sole use and charm for me is as an institution, and I must have you just where and when I want you, just like my table, my-view-from-the-window—my ink-bottle—my pen, my book-case.

Went over the *trail 4 times today—and read it to Mrs. Walter Allen, husband and son,¹ twice tonight—and made sundry notes on the margins for tomorrow’s revision. It is now three pages and one-third, and like John Paul Jones, I haven’t^ begun to fight. And I enjoy it so—darling ghost—impossible or at least improbable Sara—I send a kiss for that imagination called your hand. [Drawing of a star.]
*Joy is certainly getting married all over the place. One good practical benefit of all this moving will be an empty book-case in the next room. Of course that will not compensate for the loss but it is in a way a mitigation of the tragedy.

Joy has the next room East—where *Olive used to Room—and we howl through the door at each other to wake each other up in the morning, and borrow each other’s mucilage and ink and are on excellent terms.

Her name is going to be Joy Blair. How does that sound? No one but out-of-town-relatives at the Wedding—(Ostensibly)—and my most darling sweet cousin Frances for Bridesmaid—the angel of the whole tribe. She is sure Psyche with an Aureole.²

Well—I didn’t intend to talk wedding.

Its' the solemn truth—that if I followed my feelings I would write several more hours on the trail—but I am afraid [they] the corrections would be a mess—and I would be a wreck tomorrow.

But what between the Santa Fe trail and the Imaginary Sara—I am as happy as a June-bug full of booze.

*Current Opinion for April very kindly quotes “Eden in Winter.”³

Miss *Monroe’s April Poetry has one of my little pieces that is really pretty good—a moon poem. That is the moon is used for the basis of the third stanza.

Jinn is a rare form of the word Genie—and the title is *Aladdin and the Jinn.

The refrain is to be spoken in a thundering bass—in strong contrast to All the rest “I AM YOUR SLAVE.”

(said the Jinn.)

It is intended to be a bit humorous.

Goodnight—

Imaginary person—

And all thanks and gratitude

for the dream of you.

from

1 2 3

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay

to

1 2 3

Sara Trevor Teasdale.

Notes

¹Walter Allen was a prominent Springfield attorney living at 940 South Fifth Street, just three blocks from VL’s home (603 South Fifth).
For cousin Frances Frazee, see Letter 16. She should not be confused with Frances Frazee Hamilton, VL’s beloved “Aunt Fannie,” who was VL’s mother’s younger sister (see Letter 4). Also see Letters 79 and 124.


*****

75) “you are all I have, and more than I have earned . . .”

Midnight.
Springfield Ill.
April 4, 1914.

Dear Sara:

The *trail is done. At least for steady work. I shall read it [and] aloud and be pecking at odd words for several weeks.

I send you a star or two. [Star drawings all over the page.]

I shall work on at *Mark Twain for two days—then help at the Wedding.¹

Goodnight.
Vachel.

Dim golden ghost—
such as you are—
incredible—unbelievable
invisible—but
very dear—you
are all I have,
and more than I
have earned.

Note

¹See *Blair, Joy Lindsay.

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76) “I am coming at once . . .”

Springfield Ill.
April 6, 1914.

My Dear Saraphim:

*Harriet has just sent me $5.00 for my review in “Poetry—” which was generous of her.¹ So I am coming at once. I give you a chance to reply if
this letter is answered immediately. I shall start Wednesday A.M^ so your letter must arrive Tuesday afternoon.

If I mussn’t^ come—

Telegraph to postpone to some specified time.

I shall get there Wednesday a little afternoon. With the rest of the five dollar[s] we can go to picture shows. Unless I get something meanwhile. Then we will do something grander.

Sincerely

N.V.L.

[P.S.] *Joy is married Saturday evening.

[Enclosures: Four envelopes, the first containing small squares, the second containing strings of small stars, the third containing small individual stars and hearts, and the fourth containing larger individual stars and hearts. The envelopes are inscribed as follows:]

Open First.
Sometimes it snows in spring—
And puts the season back.
The bushes get the blues—
The emerald buds turn black—

Open Second
I send a snowy wind—
(And yet from lands of drouth)
A sparkle for your hair
A laughter for your mouth.

Open Third—(out of doors.)
A praise for your swift pen
And darling artist's eyes:
I hope your bit of park
Grows greener where it lies—

Open Fourth—(out of doors.)
I hope my rascal snow
Makes winter far and dim—
And brings the flowers of May
To mad sweet Seraphim.

Note

^1For the subject of the review, see *Ficke, Arthur Davison.
77) “We’re going to raise hell on $1.75 . . .”

Springfield Ill.
April 6, 1914.

[Large white star attached to front page with inscription: “FOR THY BROW.”]

(Monday Evening—5:30.)

Now lady—There was no letter this A.M. and I’m scant that you’re mad. I hope not. At least not so bad but what my [Monday] Wednesday visit will mollify you.

Your last letter is about worn out.

I suppose you just think I am a fake promiser. Well—I will explain when we meet. It sounds better. I tore up one letter.

Now we must not expect too much of this Wednesday visit—but two visits naturally argues three—1 2 3. [Arrows drawn from 1 to 2 and from 2 to 3.] And the third will likely be a wonder!

Do you know I sprung a scheme on *Harriet—without your consent. I told her I wanted her to get me lionized by Somebody in St. Louis—in May—if it could be done without overstraining anybody’s basting threads. She wasn’t to tell why I wanted to get to St. Louis. She was just to get me there. In exchange for entertaining somebody’s friends in their parlor—for three successive evenings—I was to be taken care of for that length of time (and ten dollars for car-fare and pocket money sent to me as an inducement.) I am not smitten on being lionized at the present moment—but it looked to me the easiest—cheapest and surest method of getting to St. Louis. You see if I went down there for a public performance—an audience that never heard of me would have to be drummed up on an excuse—and all that, and audiences are hard to get for anything. But little parlor circles—when there are eats etc.—can be called together most anytime—if the hostess wants the wear and tear.1

I thought awhile of getting *Reedy to do something—but he is probably still sick—and I was not sure you would like his crowd and all.

I would expect to call on you of afternoons—if this scheme went through—and not plague you too much any one time.

Reedy has already asked me down to St. Louis twice—once he said he wanted me to address the Chamber of Commerce I believe. I do not know how seriously he meant it. But if Harriet does not take up with the idea—I shall write Reedy about it—leaving Seraphim out of the conversation—of course.

Meanwhile—

This $5. from Harriet for my review in Poetry2—passed my letter to her on the road—and I am coming down scooting—with the *Santa Fe Trail in my pocket.—We’re going to raise hell^ on $1.75. (Fare to & from St. Louis 3.25?)
I am just hoping for a letter by special delivery first thing tomorrow morning. 
Today I have lacquered the registers, gilded two Chandeliers, put the lids on *Joy’s packing boxes and directed them—and acquired a deal of merit.

With love to Sara  
from Vachel.

With much love to Sara, [drawing of a star]. Scads of publicity rolld^ in today.

Notes

1For the results of this “scheme,” see Letters 86, 88, and 108. The “scheme” is outlined in detail in VL’s letter to Harriet *Monroe, published in Chénetier, Letters of VL, pp. 91-92. Essentially, however, VL explains his “scheme” to ST in this letter.

2For the “review,” see the previous letter and *Ficke, Arthur Davison.

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78) “I could just get on my knees and pray for all young lovers . . .”

Springfield Ill.
April 10, 1914.

Dear Steele-true^ and Blade-Straight:¹

First—if it is not too informal—please convey to your parents my very earnest gratitude for their kindness and hospitality—and tell the girl in the kitchen I did appreciate her culinary arts—and the man in the stable—the horse was well hitched up. By all means—convey my best bows and informal acknowledgements. [Drawing of a bowing, stick man.]

This is me bowing—with hand-on-heart.

Cut off the letter on this line—and show ’em the top half.

My feeling for you—or my memory is on an entirely new plane—based on the little Stevenson verse—which I have pasted in the back of your book of verses. I shall read it over every time I start my letter to you. I am going to play that you are that kind of a friend anyway, and that—kind of a feminine—and if you are always—well I shall be one happy lad. I certainly would like to be that kind of a masculine.

It is midnight. The modest gentle little wedding-party was entertained in the most informal neighbor style by the next door neighbor. When I came from taking one girl home—I found in the parlor the best man—the groom’s brother and his darling basket-of-peaches-sweetheart “sitting on” the parlor [tiny] sofa—they made me welcome but I withdrew with the proper josh. In the library—I understand—the bride—to be and her lad are exchanging—confidences. The house hasn’t been so elaborately turtle-dovey for ten years—when I—the best man—sat on that same sofa—with the maid-of-honor, and my other fair sister—and her lad—now in China—[was] were in the library. Well—it sounds
more crude than beautiful to say it—but that little library couple of ten years ago have certainly consecrated and vindicated their dove hours by many a battle and victory over the world, and many a bitter sorrow.\(^2\)

And no doubt these little couples will do the same. But I hope little-basket-of-peaches in the parlor ropes and ties her man better than that noble little maid-of-honor did me.

I felt like saying—“My dears—if you want your vows to last—try the library sofa and let that parlor sofa alone.” What nonsense. I was going to be sensible tonight.

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I am so glad of my visit—especially the drive. I think that did us the most good of anything. I am very happy over it I assure you.

Well the bride has come up stairs and is gossiping with her chums in the next room. Little peaches is being ensnared all by herself. I could just get on my knees and pray for all young lovers—especially these. The dears look so happy—and so young.

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Possible interlude—to be woven all through the *Santa Fe Trail:*

Far away the Rachel Jane—

[Singing] Almost drowned\(^1\) by the horns

Sings within a hedge of thorns—

Love and Life. Love and youth—sweet sweet sweet sweet.

[Love and harvest] Dew and glory. Love and Truth—sweet sweet

sweet sweet

All this—to balance the crudity of the horns.

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay

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**Notes**

\(^1\)Quoted from Robert Louis Stevenson’s poem “My Wife” (*Songs of Travel*, 1896). VL pasted a copy of the poem inside the back cover of his copy of ST’s *Helen of Troy:* see Letter 3. The title of the poem is likely indicative of VL’s feelings. After a second visit to St. Louis, and with the excitement of Sister Joy’s immanent wedding, VL is in an especially romantic mood and apparently hinting at marriage. For additional references to “The Wife,” see the openings of Letters 79 and 81 below.

\(^2\)See *Wakefield, Paul.*

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79) “The house is empty—the wedding over . . .”

Springfield III.
Sunday Evening—
April 12, 1914.

Dear Eyes-of-Gold-and Bramble-Dew:\(^1\)
I tore up last night's letter—written after the wedding. I roasted one friend too hard in it. Though that has nothing to do with the wedding.

It was the prettiest, merriest most sacred possible. Not a soul there but *Joy’s most intimate—and Papa and Mama’s oldest set of church friends, etc—theirs of nigh forty year’s standing, and most of Joys' high School and College friends. About 50 altogether.

I am so happy over the wedding. Joy is so unpretending and substantial and incognito about everything as it were—and we planned what might be called a strictly sober unpretending affair—but the thing actually bloomed like a flower when the time came—with all sorts of pretty happenings and not one hitch, these partly because the wedding party had one or two most efficient and charming and worthwhile friends in it. I was just proud of Joy’s friends. She only makes about one a year—but in a bunch they certainly are a credit to her—and themselves. And then there was the maid of honor—my darling cousin Frances Frazee. Please let me rave about her. When I was 17—she was three—and I was her devoted slave. When I was 22 she was eight—and I was her slave and she was mine. We [nearly] always nearly wept for Joy at sight of each other. Once a year I visited my Indiana kin and saw her. Our devotion was always so blind—I was never able to size her up for a minute as to her abilities. But she is a Junior at Northwestern and I could really sit back a few minutes and take a dispassionate view—this time—and find her a grown up young lady, lovely of manner, and accomplished a plenty.

Well—I must not get on the Frances question or I will never quit. She has the same blind worship I give her from half her kin—and is utterly unspoiled and good and gentle. I suppose to tell the cruel truth to myself—I am devoted because she satisfies my family pride so elaborately and completely. A cousin’s devotion is a sort of exaggeration of a brother’s devotion for his favorite sister.

I tell Frances that to be in the same bunch of Cousins with her is the most wonderful thing in the world. And I mean it with all my soul.

Well—this doesn’t interest you a bit—I’ll bet.

The house is empty—the wedding over—and I haven’t told you a thing^ about it—or anything else.

The Rachel-Jane bird greatly softens the Auto-Horns of the middle section of the Santa Fe Trail.

It seems impossible Joy is not in the next room. I keep listening for her, unconsciously, and then remembering. She wrote a midnight letter to Ben. But she is in Cleveland Ohio. She and Ben joined the Cleveland church tonight near their new home. Ben becomes a member for the first time. Joy carries her church letter from here. Nice sober young folks.

With love and friendship

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay
[Enclosure: Typed manuscript of “*Two Easter Stanzas,” with a headnote: “From last Fridays^ Mirror.” Lines 6-21 of “We Meet at the Judgment and I Fear It Not” are underlined and the following note written in the margin: “Old Joe Ferris^—one of the local radicals^3—has had a great fit of enthusiasm over this second piece—and has spent a whole evening working the deft approach to finally ask me if this verse concerned a real person. I told him I would tell him sometime(? ) But I think a heap of Joe, Just the same.” Marginal note: “Not actually written at Easter—but when I came home from the West—a year and a half ago.”]

Notes

1 Quoted from Stevenson’s “My Wife”: see Letter 78.

2 For Frances Frazee, see Letters 16, 74, and 124.

3 Springfield’s Illinois State Register (July 26, 1913) publishes a picture of Joseph “Joe” Farris and reports that he has been elected the first president of the local “Single-Tax Club.” For VL’s memory of Farris, see “Adventures While Preaching Hieroglyphic Sermons” (Poetry of VL, p. 968). VL’s poem “Two Easter Stanzas,” each stanza with its own title, was first published in Reedy’s Mirror (April 10, 1914): see Poetry of VL, pp. 215-216.

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80) “Please change your correspondence habits at once . . .”

Springfield Ill.
April 13, 1914.

Dearest Saraphim:

I adjure you by the living reality of our friendship to answer my letters—the day they arrive, if possible. Not one since I left St. Louis! And remember I look for one every mail—9 A.M. and 2 P.M. and I realize now if never before—that half the fun of writing is the hope that what I say just sends you smiling to your ink-bottle at once! That’s^ one of the reasons you are dear—because you play the game of tennis and send the ball back.

If I have said anything I shouldn’t—I didn’t mean it THAT way—whatever way it was that I shouldn’t have meant it—I take it back entirely—I denounce myself as an ingrate—a traitor—a scoundrel—a mud-fence-tadpole (whatever that is!) for saying it; I insist that any man who did say such a thing to such a Sara should be strung up by the thumbs, hung, drawn and quartered, eaten alive by a Jabberwock, chewed by a lion—stepped on by an Elephant. All this he deserves. But Sara is merciful—Sara is kind, Sara discerns the truly repentant, Sara is Queenly and royal in discerning the truly repentant—she knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust and that at the best we are mud—that is—ourselves in the singular is mud—she being Marble—porphory^, silk, samite, ivory, bird-of-paradise^, and bunch of petunias.
Sara being merciful and kind will let byegones^ be byegones and henceforth answer on a correspondence card if on nothing larger—at her very first free moment, on receiving a letter from her humble slave and disciplined gentleman-knight. Nicholas Vachel Lindsay aforesaid.

Please change your correspondence habits at once!

If I had two cents worth of excuse I would come down and fight it out with you. But (1.) I am ded^ broke. (2.) I really oughtn’t to come unless I have a new piece to read.

Do you object if I put some of those verses about you in “The Mirror” and call you Polly Ann? “In Praise of Polly Ann’s Remarkable Golden Hair” and “On Suddenly receiving a curl long Refused” and [Your pen needs] [“]On Receiving a Good Letter from Polly Ann?”

I just can’t bear to keep peddling my work. I much prefer to keep my desk cleared, and give away what I have, and write something new.

Maybe you do not want to be the suspicioned heroine among *Reedy’s local set. I find the Mirror readers take a real and personal interest in my work—and a person with a real interest is worth a hundred half-asleep.

This letter is written immediately upon the passing-by of the Postman—Monday afternoon, with no letter from Saraphim.

I take dinner tonight with the people who make the Springfield Survey. (Sociological.)

You and *Yeats and Jessie *Rittenhouse you most of all—are refining my poetic ideal.

To please the Reedy’s—the *Untermeyers etc. I shall blow the *Kallyopes, etc. but to please the Sara’s I shall do my best to bring in dozens of refinements and overtones and tiny flutes and fairy whispers and Yeatsy quietness and twilights—and they shall all be done with the thought of you—if you only care enough. To put it very realistically I am in love with your kind of a literary-nervous-system—I want to please it and ensnare it—I would not jar it or discomfort it for the world.

I heard once not long ago a very poor duet of a church organ and a violin. For the most part it was poor—there were not enough intermediate elements. But once in a while, rare indeed.

[But] I assure you it is a real object with me to meet and satisfy your mind with the most delicate as well as the strongest and richest music the Lord allows me to make—I want to make my music for you and I want you to care.

N.V.L.

I shall start clearing up my correspondence today. There are 30 important letters—to people like your friend Louis *U[ntermeyer] and the like. And then a lot of poets who want me to look over original ms. etc. etc.
As soon as these letters are cleared—I start a new big attempt in Rhyme. The *Santa Fe Trail is about ready for *Harriet.

Notes

1 “Polly Ann” finally became “Gloriana” (see Letter 93), although VL did retain the name “Polly Ann” in “The *Blacksmith’s Serenade.” Variations of all three poems named here, with the name Gloriana, not Polly Ann, were first published in the Chicago Herald (September 1, 1914) and then collected in The Congo and Other Poems (1914).

2 In 1914, the Russell Sage Foundation began a sociological survey of Springfield, the first survey of its kind in the United States. During the following six years, the Foundation issued nine reports on various aspects of Springfield life. These were summarized by Shelby M. Harrison, Foundation director, in Social Conditions in an American City (1920). See Massa, Vachel Lindsay, pp. 110-114. Also see Letter 161.

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81) “Please answer this letter at once! Do you hear? . . .”

Springfield Ill.
April 13, 1914.

Dear Honor-Anger-Valor-Fire: ¹

First let me say that your September piece quoted in the Digest haunts and holds me as a perfect thing, and helps me to your mood better than most any.² I have pasted it in the back of your book. There is something in it that fills me with the very fine loves and desires that make up the strange world of ART.

Here is the *Rachel Jane song as it stands:

Far away the Rachel Jane—
Not defeated by the horns—
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:
Love and Life:—Eternal Youth!
(Sweet, sweet, sweet sweet)
Dew and glory! Love and truth!
(Sweet sweet sweet sweet!)

It comes in twice—in parenthesis—first—for contrast—after the Quack horn—slack and clacking—and second—just before the muffler opens—Crack Crack etc. It puts quality into both passages I hope—and takes out the thinness and the brass, in a fashion.

Please answer this letter at once! Do you hear? Just one word—but answer. And send at least one star. Here are two. [Drawings of two stars]. Or anything saucy you please. But a letter. A scrap—fragment—souvenir of you—hot from your Saraphim hand!

Here Is a squib I may Work up:

The Anglo-Saxon Language.
The Anglo-Saxon Language.³

The Anglo Saxon Language
Like the endless salty ocean
Washes every shore of Earth
And lifts to meet the moon:
And every-world wide storm we face
Heaps up the ravening breakers
And every ore or merchandise
Takes ship there, late or soon.

Rouse Oh little poet—
You walk not by a river
But skirt the waves of Saxon speech
Where [morning] mighty sail-paths shine
Now make a boat of song so stout
That it will ride in glory
From evening land to morning land
From ice-fields to the line—
From Crusoes Isle to Ireland—
From Elsinore to Camden—
Naught hinders that your new boat goes
Except your silly hands—
That lay a keel so flimsy
It cannot cross a river
Much less launch forth on such strong seas
That bind such granite lands—
Now there is Rudyard Kipling
Whose modern chants establish
The precedent of Saxon speech
In one big conquering tune—
But shall our clans produce [but one] one King—
One Charlamagne^—then Chaos—
One lonely Noah on the sea
That lifts to meet the moon?

I was talking to Professor Paul⁴ last night about how much vaster a thing was the Saxon speech—than the Saxon Literature. We have no more Literature than France or Germany, but an infinitely wider practical experience and dominion.

You fine-grained little lady—the sense of what you actually are—is much keener since my last visit to St. Louis.

With love—Goodnight—

N.V.L.
82) “remember I want to feel your letters come snowing this way . . .”

Springfield Ill.
April 14, 1914.

My Dear Sara:

It is indeed a noble pleasure to catch sight of even a tired note from that noble bright-angel Saraphim again. I sit right down to answer this very minute that it comes and hope you will do the same.

(I want to see that dress that caused such tiredness.)

I send you a Copy of the *Santa Fe Trail. I submit another to *Harriet this same mail—and keep one myself—in Carbon. I hope you will send back any changes that occur^ to you. If you choose—mark up this copy and send it back, and I will forward your amendments to Harriet. I have about done my best on it—and the other fellow will have to do the tinkering henceforth. You have no idea how much the passion to please you precisely with my work has grown with my last visit.

Now you lovely lady, esteemed and clung to, remember I want to feel your letters come snowing this way. Theres^ no fun writing—unless I feel that my letter is going to bring back an answer, unless I can feel it provoking little answers in your brain, even as I write. I want your little note to be part of every day like the sunrise—even if it is only a little letter—little as this: [Drawing of envelope], with nothing in it but “affectionately Sara.”

With much love

[Signature cut off.]

[P.S.] September midnight is a fine poem, as I said in my last letter.

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