

1932  
12/13

33 Rippon Ave.,  
Hillsdale, Mich.,  
Christmas Day.

Dear Dick:-

I received the package some few days ago; and only by an almost superhuman force of will did I restrain myself from opening it before the proper time. I deduced from the contour, texture, etc., of the package that it was a book; and it required only a modicum of the well-known imponderable force of the old intellect to inculcate into the cerebrum the intimation that said volume might very well be authored by the Grand Llama of us all.

However, when I finally was allowed to open the mystery (and I might as well confess that it was not entirely of my own will-power that I refrained from opening it sooner---Lady Jean also had to restrain me by caustic words and almost by violence at times); and I read the mystic phrase upon the inner wrapper, ending in "...from me and \_\_\_\_\_"---I pretty nearly fell out of the Christmas tree. The above-mentioned intelligence assured me that Merritt must have autographed it; but I couldn't really believe it. Even then, I supposed of course that it was a routine autograph; but when I read it and its real meaning gradually percolated through the practically impermeable skull.....

Thanks, youngster. I do not know whether you realize or not what a fine and thoughtful thing it was that you have done. You selected unerringly the one thing above all others that would knock me into an outside loop! I have received a lot of presents of one kind and another during my life; but this one carries a wallop peculiarly, unmistakable, and characteristically its own. For sheer thoughtfulness, understanding, and real sentimental value; I do not believe that I have ever seen its equal.

Since in real life I am not an orator all I can say is "thanks"---but I believe that you can also understand the exact sense in which the word is used here. If you got half as much kick out of my autograph as I did, do, and always shall out of this gift---not Merritt's autograph only or principally, (but the whole gift---I am surprised. You aren't old enough to hold that much emotion!

However, I will add this much---if you ever want any more autographed stories of mine, or any rough drafts, or anything else that I can furnish along that line, all you have to do is to intimate your desires! And if I ever am published in book form, you won't even have to do that!

Cordially (what a weak word!) yours,

*S. W. L. W. Doe*