

Cambridge, February 28, 1950

Dear Margaret,

82-85-5  
Your letter came and all my resolution to write four or six pages on my Zwingli paper tonight vanished. After I have mailed this letter perhaps I can coerce myself. I wish I had more to offer you than my sympathy. I called up Alec and South Station, the latter informed me that you must inquire at Grand Central in New York. Tomorrow between 9 and 5 I shall telephone the Subway, but I am quite certain you did not lose your plan book there. I think your only hope is that it may yet be found by some kind-hearted porter and turned in to the lost and found at Grand Central.

The useless work which must be repeated unless you find ~~it~~ <sup>your notebook</sup> makes me feel very helpless and much disturbed. Not the note-book in itself, that can be replaced, but the multitude of more essential things which we lose, makes me ashamed and fearful for not being altogether at home with the tangible things of this world. The feeling is like that with which I faced Sunday dinner, an acute consciousness of the scandalous incongruity of most accepted things. — I remember quite vividly my description of you when I first told mother about <sup>the niece of</sup> Alec's two sisters; I referred to Thomas Mann's characterization in Tonio Kröger of girls who as they dance are always stumbling. When you come again, I must show you that passage.

If only there were something I could do to help you! Perhaps you can improvise for the next two weeks, and when you come to Cambridge again I can help you, — or at least give you moral support, — in preparing another notebook. Is it really so very formidable a task? My own work is coming slowly and painfully, with much effort and little result. In the end it will probably turn out to be at least respectable; — in the past it always has. I must work now, although I would very much like to play violin for a few minutes. — Please do not be despondent or despairing, but try to maintain in all your actions a calmness and balance and the consciousness of your own peculiar dignity and worth.

You need not write me a "nice" letter, but you must write me soon, telling me how you are, and how you are managing your work. I think of you very often, and with the painful knowledge that I cannot provide you with the notebook you have lost. I do not even know whether I can help you find it.

John.