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Dear John,

The most delightful incident just occurred and I hope it will amuse you. Since my article in Scientific American appeared on the stands, I was invited to lunch with some professors of the Geology Department in the local university and inadvertently you were brought into the conversation with a most unusual review.

Hearing that I did not have a degree of any sort, nor do I intend to get one, one elderly man of science was horrified and became very angry. He said I would never amount to anything, and it was a terrible shame that I didn't get my degree and there was practically no other way to gain knowledge.

There was a general discussion and some of his companions saw my point. While they said a degree is very useful, they admitted that there are thinking people in this world that have achieved a measure of success without a formal piece of paper stating that they had. But this professor was not to be moved, and almost shrieked, "Just name me one."

"John Steinbeck," I offered.

"Oh yes, I know Steinbeck," he scoffed, "he's the smart aleck that wrote that Sea of Cortez. I didn't like it. Everyone says it's a good book and recommends it, but I didn't care for it at all. What kind of character is this Steinbeck? He sounds like some kind of bum who leads an immoral life, a boon-dock sitter, an upstart, someone with a little knowledge of a lot of things and puts it all down on paper in a smart-aleck way," he spluttered vehemently.

He ranted and raged against this fellow Steinbeck for about five minutes and then asked, "What ever happened to him anyway? He's probably end up on the boon docks. Did he ever publish anymore?"

"Yes," I replied and started counting off on my fingers, "Grapes of Wrath, Cannery Row, Tortilla Flats, Men and Mice...."

"That Steinbeck!" The old geologist was agast, "Why I never connected the two." But to save face because all his colleagues were laughing at him, he saidx righteously, "Well, wasn't I right in describing his character? Without even knowing it, I described someone who leads this... this unstable,

unprofessional existence of a writer." He said "writer" as if it were some blasphemist, heretical creature, an outcast of society and something to be shunned and drivern off ~~xxxx~~ with a stick.

But, he finished, "Steinbeck is only one in millions and what makes you think that you can fight your way up ~~the~~ the ladder, particularly ~~a~~ in science on your own terms.

But enough. I hope you don't mind my relating this little incident~~x~~, but I was highly amused at this little man of science's reaction to you. Just across the campus, students are sweating over analysis of your writings in contemporary English literature courses.

Incidentally, I am coming up to New York in the middle of April, after <sup>1</sup> finish my French course and I would like to see you. Macmillian has written me to letters about my Sci. Am. article, they want me to do a book on methods of collecting and preserving marine animals. Trouble is, I've got the outline with another publisher, Natural History Press, who has held another one of my manuscripts for three months before rejecting it. And my agent is handling the whole situation with her usual blundering incompetence.