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To Harry de Forest Smith - October 25, 1891

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

717 Cambridge St.,
Harvard University.

Cambridge, Mass., Oct^a 25 *1891*^b

My Dear Smith,--

I have just been having a quiet spell of thinking, the while I have smoked my new bull-dog. This thinking is bad business for a man, but sometimes he falls into it ~~it~~ in spite of all he can do. I fear that I do so altogether too often. If you care to know what I have been thinking about, I will say that I have been wondering what the deuce I am here for. This is an old story and you are doubtless heartily sick of it; but to be honest, I cannot get over the idea that I am wasting time and money. To be sure I shall be able to read a French novel—unless I fail in the course—by next June, but I might have done that without leaving Gardiner. I can-

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not understand how a text-book can be so lucidly written as Chardenal's "First French Course"^{1c} is. Any person with ordinary ability could take it up of his own accord and read ordinary French with
after
comparative ease ~~in~~ six months of regular application. The pronunciation is of course another matter. I called on Prof. de Sumichrast Thursday evening and found him in his library with his two dogs. "That

^a WA adds a period here.

^b Everything in red here is part of the printed Harvard stationary. The month, date and "1" for the year were written in black. WA omits "Harvard University."

^c WA has a double closing quotation mark.

gentleman", he said, pointing to a Yorkshire pup asleep in an easy chair, "is apparently satisfied with worldly existence."^d At the same time he was holding a snow-white terrier of some breed or other in his arms. I had a great time with the Prof. for about an hour, and when I ~~eam~~ left he came to the door lugging the pup in his arms. He advised me to drop Anglo-Saxon, as Prof. Child did, and I shall

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probably have no difficulty in so doing. Then I shall have a little time for breathing. ^eI have got to read one of Scotts^f novel's for English 9. Think I shall take Guy Mannering, as it is the only one I have with me, and is one of the shortest that Sir W. has written. A very little of Scott will go a great way with me. I shall have to write an essay on some subject dealing with him before next Friday.

I have just written one on "Sydney Smith: His character as displayed in his writings." It is a somewhat marvelous production, I expect, though it may never immortalize the writer. ^gShakespeare is going on finely, ~~th~~ and there will be the devil of an examination before long on Hamlet and Shakespeare's life and times. I shall have

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to do considerable reading before it comes off, but I do not apprehend much trouble. A fellow can generally do something with a subject that interests him.

I am moving rather slowly through L'Abbé Constantin, as it comes hard when one is absolutely ignorant of French grammar.

^d WA places the period outside the quotation mark.

^e WA reads this space as a paragraph break and hence starts a new paragraph on the next line.

^f WA has "Scott's".

^g WA omits this space.

De Sumichrast is beginning to conduct recitations
 in French,--but I guess I told you so last
 Sunday. ^hI have not sent any more
 contributions to the Advocate yet but think
 I will sometime next week. The number
 I sent you is not a fair sample of the
 periodical; you have probably seen enough
 of them to know that. And you will also
 see that the editors spoiled my ballade
 in the mechanical punctuation they adopt-
 ed. This letter is rather personal, but
 I trust you will overlook that and let me
 know what you and [=are] doing, and how the
 Columbia scheme is going on.--Shall look
 for a letter to-morrow noon. ⁱY'si--Robinson

HCL US, 33-35.

NOTES

1. C.A. Chardenal, *First French Course, or Rules and Exercises for Beginners*. Probably the "New and Enlarged Edition" published in 1886 (Boston: Allyn and Bacon). (SL)

^h WA omits this space.

ⁱ WA places the valediction on the following two lines.

^j WA has "Yours" but the holograph seems to actually have what I have transcribed above, as an abbreviation.