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11-2-1891

## To Harry de Forest Smith - November 2, 1891

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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### Recommended Citation

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

*Harvard University.*

*Cambridge, Mass., Nov<sup>a</sup> 2 1891<sup>b</sup>*

My Dear Smith,--

I shall have to crave your pardon this week for a break in the order of our correspondence. I felt so mean yesterday that I knew it would be of no use to attempt writing you, though I managed to get a few lines to the folks at home.<sup>1</sup>

I rec'd your letter this morning & you may be sure that I was more than glad to do so. I have been rather blue for the past week, and am not at all confident of remaining here as long as I hoped. Following a course of prescribed study seems to [be] almost an impossibility. Sometimes I plug for three or four hours without any apparent benefit. I have ~~tried~~<sup>e</sup> been trying to drop Anglo-Saxon for the simple reason that I

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have not the brains to carry it, and do anything in French.<sup>d</sup> & English 9. I tell you what it is, Smith, I have had enough ~~more~~ conceit taken out of me, in a passive manner, since I came here, to fill a Saratoga trunk. Do not infer by this that I have been in any way imposed upon, for nothing of the sort has happened. I was not even guyed when I called the Coöperative Society the "cō-ōp" instead of the "Coop"<sup>2</sup>--in the presence of a sophomore & two juniors.

<sup>a</sup> WA adds a period here.

<sup>b</sup> 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."

<sup>c</sup> WA transcribes the mistake as "tried".

<sup>d</sup> WA omits the period.

Everything is quiet and each man minds his own business. But I am so grievously rusty that sometimes I am afraid that January may find me working on the ice in Gardiner. Exams are coming on this week & next and I am three themes behind in English 9. The subjects are these: William Godwin's *Delineation of Character* in "Caleb Williams", Lord Jeffrey's<sup>3</sup> *Pessimism*, & Miss Edgeworth's<sup>4</sup> *Realism*. Not very

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jovial topics, are they? But they do not worry me any; the trouble is coming with the little points I have not remembered or taken down in lectures. Prof. Child has an exam in Shakspeare next Friday @ 10.00 A.M. It will be a "stinker".

I seem to be doing very well in French, and I ought to get out all right. As to Eng<sup>e</sup> A. (Comp. & Rhet.) I have no idea what it will be like. In short, I am feeling rather down in the mouth. If I were discharged, I don't know as I would have the nerve to go back to Gardiner. Upon the whole I think I should try to hunt up some job in Boston where I could get enough to pay my board & lodging until the year is up. That would be better than being at home for everybody—my "dear friends"<sup>5</sup>—to cast their remarks at and hold up as an example. <sup>f</sup>But this may be due to

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my being "out of sorts" generally. By next Sunday I shall have taken most of the examinations and will be able to tell you something definite, perhaps. I feel that I am doing about twice the work necessary to carry my courses but cannot seem to improve matters any. All the reading I

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<sup>e</sup> WA adds a period here.

<sup>f</sup> WA omits this space.

have done since I came here is Guy Mannering  
—prescribed in Eng. 9. Wrote an essay on Dom-  
ine Sampson.<sup>6</sup> Would give five dollars  
to smoke a pipe with you in the "bower."<sup>g</sup>

Yours very truly

Robinson.

717 Cambridge St.<sup>h</sup>

P.S. It seems to me that ~~the Prin~~ you  
and the Prin. are having a devil of a time  
with those two "young lady friends." I am  
beginning to think you may have found  
that ideal you have been seeking so long.  
How is it?

R.

HCL US, 35-36.

#### NOTES

1. Unknown letter. (SL)
2. The Cooperative Society, or "COOP," is the university bookstore. Established in 1882 in Harvard Square as a cooperative. (SL)
3. Francis Jeffrey, Lord Jeffrey (1773-1850) was a Scottish literary critic who is known for his contributions to, and editorship of, the *Edinburgh Review*. (SL)
4. Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849), an influential Anglo-Irish novelist known for her didacticism and as an important precursor of realism. (SL)
- 5<sup>i</sup>. See EAR's sonnet "Dear Friends," which begins:  
"Dear friends, reproach me not for what I do,"  
and ends:  
"The shame I win for singing is all mine,  
The gold I miss for dreaming is all yours."  
See also EAR's letter to Smith dated October 1, 1893.
6. Dominie Sampson, notable character in Scott's *Guy Mannering*.

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<sup>6</sup> WA places the period outside the quotation mark.

<sup>h</sup> WA places the address in the heading, above the date

<sup>i</sup> This and the following note are numbered 1 and 2, respectively, in WA's manuscript.