



11-29-1892

To Harry de Forest Smith - November 29, 1892

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

1716 Camb.

Nov^a 29 - '92

My dear Smith,

Your letter came this noon, and I will answer it now without putting it off any longer. I should like to go home when you do but it is impossible. I shall get a week somewhere around Christmas and shall probably return the 2d or 3d of January—though perhaps before—I do not know just when the recess comes. We do not have

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"vacations" here—I suppose the word does not sound well to a Cambridge ear. But it makes little difference what they call it, as long as they let a fellow go home and see his friends. I have so many dear friends in Gardiner that it ~~p~~ will probably take all my time to get around and see them all. How is it with you?

I bought Maspero's "Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient"^b a week or so ago and blew myself on a binding for it. I wish you could see it. You can twist it

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around anyway you like but it makes no difference. I cannot well see how it can wear out. There is a peculiar satisfaction in having books bound to your own taste. I do not know of any more refined vice than buying imported books in

^a WA adds a period here.

^b WA omits the end quote.

a foreign language and taking them to McNamee's in the Square and looking over his samples of crushed morocco in all colors and grades. If you have any book you would like rebound it will be ~~for~~ to your advantage to send them to

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me. You can get an elegant binding for \$1.25 or so that will make your heart glad and improve your appetite.

I am up to my ears in German. It is harder than I expected but very interesting. I am now reading Hauffs^c "Said's Schicksale"² which is very good and tolerably easy, though it takes me two hours steady grinding to read a hundred lines. We have to do all our writing in the German script, which is rather attractive but thoroughly nonsensical.

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At least that is my opinion.

The worst thing I have is French Comp. I wish you could hear one of Prof. Norton's lectures in "Fine Arts". They are simply magnificent. To day he said that there was not half as much buncombe in the Darius Inscription which Maj.³ Rawlinson spent ten years in copying from a cliff in some god-forsaken region in Mesopotamia⁴ as there is in one of Chauncey Depew's⁵ after dinner speeches. He likes to swipe the World's Fair and enjoys ~~the~~ telling the anecdote of the Chicago man

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^c WA adds an apostrophe, i.e. "Hauff's".

who said "they had not much culture out there yet, but when they got it, they were going to make it hum." You know John Ruskin calls Norton "his first tutor". I suppose there is no doubt that he is by all odds the greatest man in America; and I am beginning to realize what a privilege it is to sit within six feet of him three times a week and hear him talk.

Hope you will get up here some{-}
time before June. <Thanks for the dollar,
Sincerely <it came in good
<time.>^d

Robinson

Excuse pencil—the pen has given out.

HCL US, 75-77.

Written in pencil.

NOTES

1. {By Gaston Maspero (1846-1916), a French Egyptologist.} For his course Fine Arts III with Charles Eliot Norton.
2. *Saids Schicksale*, a short novel by Wilhelm Hauff (1802-1827), a German Romantic writer. (SL)
- 3.^e US reads "May."
4. Major-General Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810-1895) was a British army officer and Assyriologist. EAR is referring here to Rawlinson's rather Romantic efforts to decipher the ancient Behistun Inscription of Darius the Great, which was written on a cliff in Iran. (SL)
- 5.^f Chauncey Depew (1834-1928), lawyer, legislator, and orator, was Mr. Republican of his era. Internationally known as an orator and after-dinner speaker, he gave the dedicatory address at the World's Columbian Exposition, popularly referred to as the World's Fair, in Chicago.

^d In his holograph, EAR inscribed a triangular boundary around this parenthetical remark (see scan in the "additional files" for this letter). WA makes no attempt to reproduce this graphic or otherwise indicate that the sentence is set off from the rest of the text.

^e This is WA's note 2.

^f This is WA's note 3.