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## To Harry de Forest Smith - December 11, 1892

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Expect to leave for Gardiner about the 20th.<sup>a</sup>

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1716 Camb,<sup>b</sup>

Dec<sup>c</sup> 11 – '92

My dear Smith,

This has been a lazy day with me and I doubt if I shall be able to say much that will entertain you, but I will try and you may take the will, etc. This forenoon I wrote out some German sentences, which I suppose is about the highest form of mental torture, and after lunch I read the greater part of Steele's "Lover"

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Papers.<sup>1</sup> They are easily "eighteenth century" but well meaning and interesting. There is something unique in the writer's apparent seriousness that places them in a class by themselves. To my mind they are the best things Steele ever wrote and I shall tell Gates so in my thesis, although he quite overlooked them in his lectures. The Tatler and Spectator are by no means the only 18th cent<sup>d</sup> essays worth reading.

I will now revive that periodical question and I think I can "hit" you. I cannot think of any more satisfactory choice than the "Critic" and the "Nation".

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It is strange that neither of us could have thought of it. By taking those two papers we could not only keep post-

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<sup>a</sup> WA places this sentence after the closing and omits the line.

<sup>b</sup> WA reads a period here.

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

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

ed upon literature but life in general. In the "Nation", the literary departments are conducted more upon the plan of the English reviews—but then you probably know it well enough. Perhaps the best way to do will be for you to subscribe for whichever you like and that will save all difficulty. Let me know which one you want (if you have not soured on the project) and I will take the other.

Dr<sup>e</sup> Schuman dropped in for the first time yesterday afternoon, and I

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him read {sic} some Kipling. He had to confess that it was worth reading. I suppose you have seen the Christmas "Century" with his poem and Miss Wilkins' imitation of the French pastel.<sup>2</sup> It is not a[s] bad as the drool she had in the November Harpers,<sup>3</sup> but I cannot say that I look forward to the day when the pastel will be a recognized form of American literature. The novelty has already worn off in what we know of the French. What I am waiting for is the influence of the French daily newspaper. Our dailies are a disgrace to civilization—that is, of course, with a few exceptions. I guess I am getting a little "grouchy"--so will stop.

Sincerely

R.

HCL US, 78-79.

#### NOTES

1. In addition to his association with Addison in the publication of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729) published a number of other journals, among them *The Lover* under the pen name of Marmaduke Myrtle, Gent. The paper ran for 40 issues from February-May 1714.
2. Kipling's "The Gypsy Train" and Mary E. Wilkins' "After the Rain" appeared in *The Century Magazine* XLV, No. 2 (December 1892) on pages 278 and 271 respectively. {See "Anderson's Yellow Note" file for this letter, to which the Wilkins piece is attached.}

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

3. Chapter 9 of *Jane Field, Harper's New Monthly Magazine* LXXXV, No. DX (November 1892).