

3-7-1893

To Harry de Forest Smith - March 7, 1893

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

HARVARD UNIVERSITY,
CAMBRIDGE.

March 7 - '93

My dear Smith,

I did not get a chance to write to you Sunday, nor yesterday; but I sent the Nation together with some Crimsons, which you have probably received and digested by this time. The Crimson is probably more or less interesting to anyone who has ever been inside of a college, so if you care for them I will stuff in two or three with each Nation. I did not get your letter this morning, but considering the fact that I had not even written one to you, I did not feel much like "kicking". I think I shall have to be a little more regular in my correspondence; when I let it go over Sunday, it is a doubtful affair.

Julia Marlowe¹ is here again, and I went last

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night to see her in Twelfth Night. ("Last evening" would be a little more elegant & euphonious, but we will let it go) I do not [know] what there is about her, but I should like to go every night of her engagement. There is something "unprofessional" in her acting that is refreshing. She is best as Rosalind, and will play that part next week, I think. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew had their midnight drunk over again and sang, together with Maria and the Fool, "Which is the properest day to drink, ~~Sunday~~ Saturday, Sunday Monday? Each is the properest day I think, Why do you mention one day? etc." Shakspeare didn't write the song, but it is a^a good one for all that. Taber² made a good Malvolio, but not as good as Hanford's³ last year.⁴ Shall go Saturday evening and see "Much Ado about Nothing," if my money holds out.

I have some pleasant news to tell you, if you do not know it already. I saw in the London Athenaeum that Kipling has a new book of prose tales in

^a WA omits this "a".

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press entitled "Many Intentions".⁵ The title is not particularly attractive, but ~~but~~ you can tell about as much from his names as from John Ruskin's. I am glad that the book of poems I sent pleased you, but there are some omissions, as I said, which detract a great deal from its value. You have probably discovered before this the best things in the book are in the department entitled "Barrack Room Ballads"^b Tommy;^c Danny Deever, Gunga Din & Mandalay could not be improved much, in their line. I think that "Mandalay, after ~~afout~~ about 47 reading's^d appeals to one's humanity as well as to one's^e ear. Surely, nothing could be more musical. There is also a twist in "Route Marchin" that fetches me, about the "regiment a comin'^f down the Grand Trunk Road' &c^g" I am [afraid?]

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that the Envoi is not in the collection I sent you. Neither is the Ballad of East & West or Bolivar—"Seven men from all the world, back to docks again".

I do not know where this German composition will bring me^h to. That is the devil of the language courses here. The translation is taken as a matter of course and no particular credit is given for it. I suppose this is this is {sic} what one may look for in high class instruction but I have not been used to that kind. French composition is not so bad, though God knows that is bad enough. Did you have much of this business at Bowdoin? If you did you can sympathize with me. You have probably had enough of it in Latin & Greek, anyway. I had about four weeks of Latin Composition with Theodate Smith and then I stopped. That was in Jones' reader and decidedly elementary, but the red ink was in abundance, just as it is to-day in my German. We are translating fairy tales into German. Have Comp.

^b WA adds a period here.

^c WA has a comma instead of a semi-colon.

^d WA omits EAR's apparent greengrocer's apostrophe.

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

^f WA has "a-comin'". The hyphen is in the original poem.

^g WA has "etc" and adds a period here.

^h WA reads "one".

twice a week and translation four times, so you see

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that I am rather fortunate, if the work is a trifle hard. The only time I really kick is when we have five or six pages of "Soll und Haben" to read between 4.30 Thursday & 10.00ⁱ A.M. Friday. It makes my optics ache to read the stuff by ~~lamp-light~~ lamp-light and I breathe a long sigh of relief and smoke a big pipe when it is over.

As you will see, or have seen, I started in
(for me)

to do a particularly [good] job ^ in the way of penmanship, but I soon^j slouched back into my own peculiar way. I do not know how much you read of what I write, but I trust you are able to make something of it—that is, when there is 'anything'.^k

Sincerely

E.A.R.^l

HCL US, 89-90.

NOTES

1. For Julia Marlowe, see note 1 for February 21, 1892. (SL)
2. Robert Taber (1865-1904), a notable American actor and first husband (from 1894-1900) of Julia Marlow. (SL)
3. Charles Barnum Hanford (1859-1906), another successful American actor of the day. (SL)
4. See the 1891-1892 programme for the Hollis St. Theatre in "additional files" for the letter of February 21, 1892 (to Smith). The list of players for that year's production includes Taber as Orsino and Hanford as Malvolio. (SL)
- 5.^m *Many Inventions*, a collection of stories and two poems, was published in 1893.

ⁱ WA has "10 A.M."

^j WA reads "am".

^k WA omits what appear to be single quotes around "anything". It is admittedly uncertain what, if anything EAR meant by these marks.

^l WA omits the underline.

^m This is WA's note 1.