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To Harry de Forest Smith - January 15, 1894

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Gardiner, Jan^a 15, 94.

My dear Smith,

I wrote you yesterday and sealed the letter. This morning I burned it. You can fancy from this statement that I was not in the mood for letter writing^b and I fear that my condition has not improved a great deal yet. ^cI have been lonely since you went away, although I have not had much of Tryon's "depression"; but I know well enough ^f how the man felt when he wrote that little note I showed you.

You see you are the only man around here that I feel thoroughly at home with,

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and I must confess that you did not seem ~~that~~ your old self much of the time during your last visit home. I trust you will come around all right by next summer and hope for some pleasant sessions. I am sorry that I cannot join you in your tramps across the country, but I will say here, once for all, that such a thing gives me absolutely no pleasure—not only that but [it] is positive suffering for me while it lasts. It is unfortunate that I am not a more enthusiastic pedestrian but I cannot get over my dislike for long walks in

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hot or even warm weather. Late in the fall after schools have begun and you are not available, I find some pleasure in a tramp through the red forest, but until then I prefer my ease under a tree. There is an energetic streak in you that has

^a WA adds a period here.

^b WA has a period here.

^c WA omits this space.

no companion in my make-up. I am abnormally lazy in many directions, albeit my mind is active the greater part of the time; and yet sometimes I thoroughly enjoy the most painlessly bucolic labor conceivable—such as sawing wood or the lumpers part of gardening. Trimming trees and then trimming the limbs was always a delight to me, and I am fond of gathering apples from small trees. I like to watch other people gather them from big

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trees. But these remarks are a trifle out of season, and of not particular value. I am writing this chiefly to let you know that I cannot be a partner in your geological excursions for the reason that it would be^d punishment to me. If a pipe and a book under a tree is as much a punishment to you, for God's sake tell me so and we will try to form some kind of a compromise. Your side remark one evening a little^e over a week ago that you would rather have climbed through the woods and swamps after flowers than have done as you did (apparently to please me) put the many Sundays that I have been accustomed to look back upon as the bright spots in a rather dingy retrospect in an entirely new light. Still,

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I cannot believe that you would martyrize yourself a great deal for me or for anyone else. I fancy your remark was one of the fruits of a comparatively recent enthusiasm^f

I had a very pleasant surprise last Friday in the form of a letter from Latham, one of my college friends whom I thought had gone back on me. Perhaps I had better say "half-thought" for I never gave him up. I

^d WA has "be a".

^e WA transcribes the "l".

^f WA adds a period here.

knew well enough that I should hear from him sometime. He writes me that the principal of his school (Delaware Literary Institute, Franklin^g N.Y.) is a man from Auburn, Maine,^h He further adds, however,ⁱ that if he had not seen other men from Maine he

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would not think much of the state. He is teaching Latin, Greek, & History. He spends his spare time in reading French and German with one of the assistants as an advantageous way of passing an evening. She is a graduate of Cornell and has been in Germany two years. Latham [makes] a few remarks concerning his silence and rather hard treatment of me, and proves himself the man at heart I have always believed him to be. He also writes "I find a new satisfaction in Ritualism", and goes on to quote Matthew Arnold to the effect {that} the best part of religion is its unconscious poetry. (Excuse my colloquial paraphrase). L. is one

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of those complex men whom we can never understand; he has more than his share of trouble, which, together with a kind of unnatural (I might say abnormal) pride, render confidences almost impossible.—But I forget that every man lives in his own world and that Latham is only a name to you. I may never see him again in my life, but I never shall forget him. I think almost all of the few men he knew went back on him—that is, gave him up for a sneak—but me. Somehow I could not do it. His remarkable intellect may hav^e^j saved him for me. Though desultory in every sense of the word he was "posted" upon every-

^g WA adds a comma here.

^h WA has a period here. Read as a period.

ⁱ WA has a comma here. Read as a comma.

^j WA transcribes the "e".

thing and weighed everything with Matthew Arnold's poetry for a balance.

Forgive me for writing so much and saying so little that will interest you, and keep up the regular correspondences if pleasant to you. I believe there was nothing said about it this time.

Sincerely,

E.A.R.^k

HCL Omitted from *US*.

^k WA omits the underline.