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1-5-1882

To Fred W. Palmer - January 5, 1882

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO FRED W. PALMER

Gardiner Jan 5/82

Dear Cousin,

I guess I will
try to write a few lines
to you to-night, ~~but~~.
but let me give you a
description of the table; It
is in the little room and
it has got a pile of papers
& books on one end and a
dish of apple-skins and
"chompings" on the other
but I guess I will not
talk about that any
more, because you have
been here enough to have
it look natural to you
I want to ask a favor
of you if you will do it
that is, not to show this

-2-

letter to any body, and "I
mean business and no
joking" but dont be in such
a rush I want to ask you
another and that is: Please
dont name any more
branches of the Kennebec
not at present at any
rate. School commenced
last Tuesday. We had
about five inches of snow
Sunday night and Mon-
day morning it was blus-
tering hard and I [?] wE (please
excuse that tall e) for it
was an accidental slip of
the pen.) had some large
drifts to wade through.
I suppose you got it bad
up there. James I weighs
between nine and ten
pounds and is as black

as your boots.

-3-

Herman¹ got a watch
 Christmas and a few
 other things. The upper
 story and roof of Joshua
 Grays office burnt off
 last tuesday fore-noon &
 came near burning some
 other buildings laying near
 it. It has been 'bully' ska-
 eek.

ting on the river all the w
 and good sleighing since
 Tuesday.² Herman has
 gone skating this evening
 and Dean³ has gone to a
 party, mother is knitting
 and father has just got
 done reading a paper,--
 and I'm here;

So good bye
 E.A.R.

HCL Written in red ink.

NOTES

Fred W. Palmer was a first cousin, son of Seth and Lydia Anne Palmer, EAR's mother's sister. The Palmers lived on a farm in nearby Pittston, and there was frequent visiting back and forth during EAR's boyhood. EAR was 12, his cousin 27, when this letter was written. In addition to its boyish charm, it is a curious letter in a number of respects. What is the occasion for the letter? Why would a twelve-year old write to a cousin fifteen years his senior? If it is a thank you note for an unmentioned Christmas or birthday present, it is indirect to say the least. Why the request for secrecy? The letter starts off in a descriptive manner, a word-painting of the table in the little room. Then it breaks off, in embarrassment perhaps, as if fearful of ridicule for attempting to portray so familiar a scene. But the graphic sense is there. EAR began writing verse at eleven. It is not too far-fetched to conjecture that the future poet had conveyed to his cousin an inkling of an aspiration to write and had struck a responsive chord.

1. Herman E. Robinson, the middle brother, was four years older than EAR.
2. Gardiner is located in hilly country at the confluence of the Cobbossee and the Kennebec.
3. Dr. Horace Dean Robinson, the oldest brother, was 12 years EAR's senior. In 1882-1883 Dean was City Physician for Gardiner.