

Colby



Colby College
Digital Commons @ Colby

Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and
Transcriptions

The Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson: A
Digital Edition

11-9-1890

To Harry de Forest Smith - November 9, 1890

Edwin Arlington Robinson

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson_transcriptions



Part of the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Robinson, Edwin Arlington, "To Harry de Forest Smith - November 9, 1890" (1890). *Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions*. 16.

https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson_transcriptions/16

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the The Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson: A Digital Edition at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Colby.

TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITHGardiner Nov 9th 1890--

Dear Friend Smith;

As long as I am not in Brunswick to-day I suppose that the least I can do is to sit down and try to write something to take the "cuss" off, to use a mannerism of polite society. Nothing would have pleased me better than to have carried out your proposition, but circumstances would hardly permit it this week, though I may possibly come down & see you next Saturday A.M if agreeable. Please let me know as soon as you get this as I should feel like a strayed reveler¹ to go without hearing from you and find you had gone to a Sunday-school convention or a mill-pond baptism.

This is as ~~h~~ about as mean a day as the Lord ever made. The sky is about the color of a dirty shirt and the air is impregnated with a sort of frigid clamminess that is anything but bracing; and what with the fact that I am blessed with a "whoreson" cold in the head and that the Bros. Barstow² are at Oxbow (so that there is no one for me to smoke a pipe with) renders the state of my mind anything but amiable. Long-fellow assures us that "Behind the clouds is the sun still shining",³ but there is little consolation in that while

-2-

we cant see him (the sun) and feel his grateful rays crawl down the back of our neck. Poetry is a good thing, provided a man is warm enough.

Do you have a chance to read the Atlantic where you are? If so I think you would like an article on William Tell⁴ in the November number. It seems to make William a nonentity, and reveals him a myth with his counterpart in the folk-lore of a dozen countries. Nor can the genealogists find any Gessler that could possibly have had the position of the one in the legend: the whole story (to use another mannerism) goes to pot. Besides this article there is a translation of the 4th canto of the Inferno in the original terza rima. It is a fine thing and must have taken a world of time, patience & rum on the part of the translator.⁵ At times the meter is a little shaky and identical rhymes are a little too frequent, but considering the nature of the work we can easily overlook these defects. Frank R. Stockton's "House of Martha" also begins in this number and bids fair to be a good thing.⁶

My fingers are as cold as proverbial charity and I feel that, if I have any desire to behold the glimmer of another summer, I had better stop writing (?)⁷ and shake

-3-

myself. There is a barrel of cider in the barn, but I have no desire to tamper with it. This will prove to you that my indisposition is no affectation. Write and let me know if you care to harbor me over next Sunday and I will try to come if you feel that you need me.

Vale--

EA Robinson

HCL *US*, pp. 6-7.

NOTES

1. Allusion to Matthew Arnold's poem "The Strayed Reveller". . . .^a
2. There were four Barstow brothers, all good friends of EAR.
3. Longfellow, "The Rainy Day."
- 4.^b "The Legend of William Tell" by W.D. McCrackan (*The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1890, pp. 598-605.) (SL)
5. "The Fourth Canto of the Inferno" by John Jay Chapman (*The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1890, pp. 647-650.) (SL)
6. "The House of Martha" by Frank R. Stockton (*The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1890, pp. 577-590.) (SL)
7. *US* omits EAR's parenthetical question mark.

^a The last few words of WA's note are illegible.

^b WA numbered notes 4-6 but left them blank.