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To Harry de Forest Smith - December 5, 1890

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Gardiner Dec 5th—1890.

Dear Smith:--

How do you like this:
 have

"The skies ~~are~~ sunk and hid the upper snow
 (Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie),
 The rainy clouds are filing fast below,
 And wet will be the path and wet shall we.
 Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La Palie."

You will find it in the poems of Arthur Hugh Clough entitled, "Ite Domum Saturae, Venit Hesperus". The refrain "Home, Rose etc" runs all through it and makes a mess quite pleasing to the ear. I have been expecting a letter from you ever since I came home from Brunswick but my expectations have thus far failed to materialize, so I see no other way but to write something myself. I have led a very innocent existence since I saw you and with the exception of the tube--(videlicet the pipe) have indulged in no no {sic} manner of dissipation save reading occasional episodes in "Don Juan". And by the way did you get the decorated tobacco box I sent you a while ago. I think if ~~the~~ you take the prescription "seapissimum" [?]^a as ordered you will

-2-

derive most prodigious benefits. I think that the judicious use of tobacco is to be commended—especially to students: it makes them strong (that must be a joke) and if they use it freely it "sicklies them o'er with the pale" saffron of nicotine which quite takes the place of the "pale cast of thought"¹ and leaves marks of the midnight oil upon their very raiment.

"Sublime tobacco! - - -

Divine in hookas, glorious in a pipe,

When tipped with amber, mellow, rich & ripe"—The Island.²

If there is an "h" in hooka(h?), you can put it in yourself.

^a There is a bit of a mystery here. Beneath the underlined word in the holograph (here following WA's tentative transcription of "seapissimum"), the word "saepissimum" ("most frequent") is written in pencil, apparently in the same handwriting. If the handwriting is indeed EAR's then this word makes more sense as EAR's intended text ("seapissimum" having no meaning that I am aware of in Latin or English). Still, it is puzzling why EAR did not, as is his habit, cross the first word out. Also, "saepissimum" doesn't exactly fit here, either, as it is a superlative adjective, rather than the adverbial form "saepissime" ("most frequently"), which one would expect in the context of this sentence. One would have imagined that EAR's knowledge of Latin was good enough at this point (he was, after all, reading the *Aeneid* in the original) to enable him to realize this point of grammar.

I have about come to the conclusion that I shall take a year @ Harvard next fall. I shall never be satisfied unless I go away somewhere to school for a year or so and it seems to me that Harvard would be the best school for a special course. If this should come to pass, as soon as I get settled I shall invite you up to my room, read you the "Future",³ give you my biggest pipe and tell you to spit in the stove. All of which would be duly pleasing and edifying. I sat down here with the intention of writing a letter but my room is so devilish cold that I shall have to stop

Write and let me know what you are doing.

Yours, E.A Robinson

HCL US, pp. 7-8.

NOTES

1. *Hamlet* 3.1.86. (SL)

2.^b Byron, Canto II, lines 445, 454-455.

3. "The Future," by Matthew Arnold. Robinson's poem "For Some Poems by Matthew Arnold" was written about this time.

^b This and the following note are numbers 1 and 2, respectively, in WA's manuscript.