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To Harry de Forest Smith - April 30, 1891

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Gardiner, Me., Apr. 30 1891.

My Dear Smith, -

I will now seize the opportunity, upon a full stomach, to answer your last letter. When you were at home sick I started out one Sunday afternoon to see you, but met "Gib" on the way and he told me that you were sick in bed. Upon hearing that I turned and went home, thinking that if that were the case my room would be more desirable than my company. I afterwards learned that I might have called and had a session with you as well as not. So you will see that my feelings were all right, though a false report spoiled my chances of meeting you. You had been in the store nearly a week before I knew that you were in town.

Speaking of Rudyard Kipling, I must say that I am tired of him. There was a time when I thought that he was booked for something great, but my ideas have changed since considering the feverish notoriety he has received and the fulsome praise that has been showered upon him by the great and small alike, in the light of what he has really done for literature. I don't think five yearshence will hear a great deal of Rudyard; but of course I may be wrong. What I have seen of his verse I like better than his prose. It is a relief to turn from him to Mr. Thomas Hardy.

I have just finished "A Pair of Blue Eyes" Why the author should have given such a love-in-a-cottage title to a really great novel, I cannot understand; nor can I understand how it is that Hardy has failed to be{-}

come popular. I think the book just named is really the best one I have

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read by him. It has not the quiet pastoral finish of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* nor *The Return of the Native*; but the character analysis is deeper than in either, which, by the way, is saying a great deal.

My time is now pretty well taken up with farming, and I am raising giant harvests of cucumbers, cauliflowers, onions, and God knows what more, in the prolific garden of my mind.¹ That is the only garden in which I have succeeded in raising anything thus far during my life, but I have hopes that I may plant a seed before long that will take root and bring forth something if no more than fifty cents a week, provided I am to some extent contented with the soil. I am not grumbling but it is impossible for a fellow to keep on as I am doing now and not be discontented at times. However, I shall stick to the dirt this season, at least, and trust in Providence. It is becoming painfully apparent that I am not in the mood to write a letter, and I think the best thing that I can do is to stop. Burn this thing up when you get it and I will try to do better next time.

Yours truly

E. A. R.

HCL US, 17-18.
Typewritten.

NOTES

1. Cp. the line "Love-rooted in God's garden of the Mind" from EAR's poem "The Garden."