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To Harry de Forest Smith - November 7, 1891

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Cambridge, Mass, Nov 7 – '1891

My Dear Smith,—

As I shall not have an opportunity
to write to-morrow I will take the time now.
Since writing last I have taken two examinations:
Eng. Rhet. & Comp. and Shakespeare. The latter
was positively awful. I probably made a fail-
ure of it, but that fact may not be vital.
Exams are due in Eng. Prose Writers of the XIXth cent.
and in French. The former comes next Friday,
and I shall have to grind in order to meet it.
I have an idea, in fact I know, it will be
more of an historical than a literary test, and
if there is any one thing that I cannot learn
it is biography. If the questions were to be
of an essentially aesthetic character I should
have but little fear as to the result; but as

it is, I am a little nervous.

I have succeeded in dropping Anglo-Saxon
at last, but it has taken me three weeks to do
it. With the four studies I now have, I find
but little time for outside work or diversion. The
trouble is I have forgotten, if I ever knew, how
to follow a system of prescribed study. I have
not read a book outside of the prescribed work
since I came. There are a few that I want to
read very much; for instance, F Marion Crawford's
Khaled, Witch of Prague, Cigarette-maker's Romance;
Thomas Hardy's Laodicean, Group of Noble Dames;
Andrew Lang's Helen of Troy (poems)¹ & his philosoph-
ical & religious books.

I rec'd a letter from Gledhill a while ago;
he seems to be the leading spirit in Canton "University",
eight
is taking twelve courses & is a great club man.²

Well, Art always had the faculty of making
himself popular. He is a good fellow and I
wish him all success.

In the last Scribner you will see a poem by
William Vaughan Moody; he is a Junior here.³
I am not acquainted with him, but as soon as
I get fairly straightened out, if I ever do, I pur-
pose to make a strong attempt to get in with the
literati of Harvard. My ballad may help me
out a little, and it may not. I sent my
"Villanelle of Change"⁴ into the Advocate a day
or two ago, but have not yet heard from it.
I have a long meter triolet in my mind dealing
with passion & death (that is the stuff we need)
and when it is materialized I shall try to get
it published. I have an idea that it is a
fairly good thing in its way.

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I have not written those essays on Godwin & Jef-
frey yet, but will have to before next Friday.
I wrote one yesterday on "Miss Edgeworth & Sir W. Scott."
English 9 is a splendid course, but it requires a
good deal of time for preparation. Mr. Gates is a
man to be envied. He is a proctor in Matthews
Hall, and instructor in English. Only has one course.
He may not get a princely salary, but the sur-
roundings and the honor will easily make up for
a good deal.

It is later than I thought. I have to go to
lecture in eight minutes. Will have to jump.
Excuse errors as I have no time to read it over
Your &a

Robinson

HCL  US, 36-38.

NOTES

1. Harvard College Library records show that EAR borrowed Lang’s book in 1891.
2. Gledhill was studying at St. Lawrence University, Canton, N.Y.
Moody was to become both rival and friend a bit later. For further details, see Donaldson p.

⁴ WA reads "Yours truly" here.
186-92\textsuperscript{b} and EAR's letters to Moody.
4. Written in 1890.

\textsuperscript{b} WA has "see p." here, but did not include any page numbers, possibly not having the book at hand. Since I am not sure which text he had in mind, I have supplied these page numbers from Donaldson, the most recent biographer of EAR, as being the most relevant to the two poets' relationship.