

Colby



Colby College  
Digital Commons @ Colby

---

Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and  
Transcriptions

The Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson: A  
Digital Edition

---

11-22-1891

## To Harry de Forest Smith - November 22, 1891

Edwin Arlington Robinson

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson\\_transcriptions](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 22, 1891" (1891). *Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions*. 48.

[https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson\\_transcriptions/48](https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson_transcriptions/48)

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 SMITH

Cambridge, Mass, Nov 22 - '91

My Dear Smith—

-- The banners of Harvard are still crimson, but the air is blue—in a double sense. You could not well picture a more melancholy gang than came home from Springfield Saturday night.<sup>1</sup> There was no enthusiasm, no yelling, and practically no drinking. Sorrow was drowned in thought rather than in booze. I am drowning in mine in self-hatred, for this reason:

I was fool enough to ~~sa-~~ sacrifice the Springfield game for "Dr Jeckyll & Mr. Hyde." It was Mansfields only performance of the play in Boston this season and I was determined to take it in.<sup>2</sup> Hinc illae, etc.<sup>3</sup> The play was totally disappointing. Beyond the transformation scenes it does not amount to much anyway; and much to my surprise and disgust, the stage was in total darkness whenever they took place, and all the time that Hyde was personated. It might as well have been performed by an usher, as far as scenic effect was concerned. Of course we had the voice, but that was hardly satisfactory.

Just now, as I am writing, the Sabbath stillness is broken by a gang of four fellows riding by

-2-

in a carriage yelling "Ya-a-a-le! Ya-a-a-le!" It seems surprising that a Yale man should be in Cambridge to-day and perhaps they are only friends of the New Haven boys. They are making noise enough, whoever they are. If I could have the money that has changed hands through the game I should invite you down for a year or two. It would have done your soul good to see the scramble for tickets. As high as twenty & twenty-five dollars was paid for ~~seats~~ seats on the Harvard Side. I might have bought a seat in the centre section for three dollars Saturday morning, but I was set on Dr Jeckyll. In consequence, I am now in a fierce humor for having made such an unconscionable fool of myself. Read the Sunday Herald and judge for yourself what I missed, while I might have taken it in as well as not. Experience is no doubt a good thing but I hate to think of spending

a whole life in acquiring it.

I am beginning to feel blue already, thinking that I have but one year in Cambridge. And yet it is a little strange that I should feel so. I have made no intimate friends,--in fact I have not yet met a single soul to whom I have been in any manner drawn. Literature is at a discount here, but I may

-3-

find some damned fool yet who will read and smoke with me. The satisfaction I derive is doubtless due to the absolute change and the college atmosphere, which is enormous. I think of the old gray-headed buffers who have climbed the stairs of Massachusetts and Harvard Halls, and dream of a room in classic Holworthy<sup>4</sup>. This is foolishness, but there is no great harm in it.

I took an examination last week in English 9 but will not hear from it till a week from Thanksgiving. And by the way, I am invited out on Thanksgiving evening to Mrs. de Sumichrast's. This, I suppose, is the fruit of my calling on the Prof. There will probably be ten or a dozen fellows there, and I am some concerned as to how the man from Maine will carry himself. There are some great bloods here and their style may squelch me; but I shall not worry about it. A "society

be,  
man" is something I can never ^ and never wish to be; but it is not pleasant to feel one's self a stick. The Prof. himself, is a fine man; this I know. If his wife matches him they must be a rather remarkable pair. I only wish that the English professors held up their end with the others. Outside of Prof Child, Prof Briggs, & Mr Gates the instructors in my mother tongue

seem to be little better than failures. Perhaps I am

-4-

over critical, I but I cannot think so. I am fully convinced the the course in English Rhet & Composition is conducted to the least possible advantage to the student. It practically amounts to nothing. If a fellow is well posted, or thinks he is, on the subject, he is disgusted; if

---

<sup>a</sup> This is the closest approximation I can make to markings which I see here in the holograph. WA omits them.

he is ignorant, he is not in a way to gain a great deal of facility in writing. As to the text of rhetoric, there is altogether to[o] much time wasted on it by a course of ~~of~~ rather watery lectures. I cannot quite understand how it is kept up as it is.<sup>b</sup> To tell the truth my experience in the XIXth century Prose course has been of twice the value to me in composition that Eng. A. has. I have to write an essay next week on Jane Austen. I should have written it this week but for some reason did not get around to it. I am still behind on Godwin & Jeffrey, and I may not write on them at all. No blood will flow if I do not.

Without wishing to give offence I will say that your last letter was a little unsatisfactory. It is evident that that girl of yours is getting the upper hands of you. When you want congratulations, let me know; I will write a hymeneal sonnet that will lift your soul to Paradise. I have not heard from the Villanelle I sent to the Advocate.<sup>5</sup> It is no good, and I doubt if they print it. Yours,  
Robinson.

HCL US, 41-43.

#### NOTES<sup>c</sup>

1. Yale had defeated Harvard (10-1) on November 21, 1891, the last game of the season. (SL)
2. Thomas Russell Sullivan adapted Stevenson's novel *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to the stage especially for Richard Mansfield, brilliant American actor-manager. The play opened originally in Boston on May 9, 1887. {See also the letter to Smith from Nov. 15, 1891.}
3. "Hence those tears," Horace, *Epistles*, I, xix, 41.
4. Holworthy Hall is one of Harvard's dormitories. (SL)
5. "Villanelle of Change" was published in *The Harvard Advocate* LII, No. 5 (November 25, 1891), 73.

---

<sup>b</sup> WA omits this entire sentence.

<sup>c</sup> Notes 2, 3 and 5 here are notes 1, 2 and 3, respectively, in WA's manuscript.