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3-13-1892

To Harry de Forest Smith - March 13, 1892

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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Recommended Citation

Robinson, Edwin Arlington, "To Harry de Forest Smith - March 13, 1892" (1892). *Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions*. 62.

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

1691 Cambridge St.

Harvard University,
Cambridge,^a

March 13 - '92

My dear Smith,

I have just been over to Memorial and taken lunch and now I will take advantage of the time and try to write you something. This is one of the days men dream of and read about—glorious. It makes me think of home, and our "bower". If we could be there and talk books for an hour or so while we smoked our pipes I think I should be satisfied. But then, there may be more pleasure in the thought than the reality. That is too often the case in this world, and I often wonder why it should be so. Reality in many cases is a sort of humbug, let people say what they will. We go to a certain place and while we are there feel that there is something wrong. But after the whole thing is over we begin to realize that we were having a good time without knowing it.

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I have been waiting patiently for my mark in English 2 (Shakspeare) but it does not seem to come. They other day Prof. Child told us that they would appear before long, and that they would average pretty low. The more I think it over, the less hope I have of getting above a C. I think a C is about as nasty a mark as a man can get. A D speaks for itself—it shows something definite; but a C is a kind of a half way affair that one cannot tell much about anyway. I have only had one this year and that was in mid-year French, and will not necessarily affect the grade for the year at all,—if I do a good job at the Finals in June. I am beginning to

^a WA omits the letterhead content.

read ordinary French prose now without much trouble, though of course I cannot remember the meaning of all the words I look up. Rather think I shall be able to read a novel at the end of the year without any great labor. Let us wait and see.

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What I want to do now is to come another year and take German B, French 2 or 1a, English 12 and some snap to fill out the required amount of work. German B is a double course and pretends to enable a man of fair parts to read that language with comparative ease. English 12 is a stiff course consisting of fortnightly & daily themes. This course is under Prof. Barrett Wendell of "Duchess Emilia" fame (?). He is a novelist, essayist, poet, and God knows what besides¹. One of these "doncherknow" fellows, but, from what the boys all say, a devilish good fellow to know. There is a graduate course under Prof. Briggs which I should rather like to take for my own amusement. That is English 17--"History & Principles of English Versification". This does not intend students to write poetry, but to read it with some appreciation, and to give him an acquaintance with the origin & growth

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of the various forms. It's a half-course and I cannot think that I would have a very hard time with it. If I come next year, these four courses will probably be the ones that I shall take—if possible.

I have nothing more to tell you concerning that affair in Saben's room. Saben is fired as you know, and I guess we shall hear no more from it. These little affairs will show the value of a good mark. He would never have been dismissed had it not been for his E's. They killed him. He is in Boston now, and keeps on buying books by

the set as before, charging the whole business to his father. He seems to have no idea of the value of anything. We were over to see him last evening and asked him to go with us to see "The Princess of Erie"² at the Museum.³ "Busted" as usual. I paid his fee, and wondered what the deuce would become of him. I always thought I was a poor financier myself but since coming here I have been a little encouraged. But I am writing altogether too much about Saben lately. I have no business doing it, but I do it without thinking. After we

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I enclose a card presented me sometime ago by a namesake of yours.^b

left the theatre I formed an inward resolution that I would drink no beer and visit no midnight palaces. These anatomical investigations grate upon my nerves and I doubt if I ever enter one of the damned holes again. Peters says one of the damsels enquired for me at No^c--, and wanted to know when I was coming again. All of which was very pleasant of course, and gratifying. "'Tis sweet to be remembered."

I have begun a careful and critical reading of "Pendennis" in view of writing my thesis, which must be handed in before the 12th of April. Forty or fifty pages will be a new thing for me but I think I can cover them with something bearing more or less upon the subject. I don't know what devil has got into my handwriting^d--You must swear plenteously over my epistles.--Well, good bye, and please destroy this letter. There are too many personalities in it. Do it as a favor to me. Yours, Robinson^e

HCL Omitted from *US*.

^b This note is written across the top of the page, above the letterhead. WA places it directly below the signature.

^c WA adds a period here.

^d WA adds a period here.

^e WA places the valediction and signature on the next two lines.

NOTES

1. *The Duchess Emilia: A Romance*, published in 1885, is a romantic novel set in Italy. Barrett Wendell (1855-1921) was also known for his textbooks and studies of literature. (SL)
2. A play by Henry Guy Carleton (1856-1910). According to *The Theatre*, X, No. 3 (March-April, 1892), Carleton described it as "an original comedy-drama," and it "received its first production on any stage at the Boston Museum Monday evening, March 7th" (120). (SL)
3. Located on Tremont Street, the Boston Museum, or Boston Museum and Gallery of Fine Arts (not to be confused with the Museum of Fine Arts, also in Boston) was not only an art museum, but a theater, zoo, wax museum and natural history museum. It opened in 1841 and closed in 1903. (SL)