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To Harry de Forest Smith - June 13, 1892

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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Recommended Citation

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

1691 Camb. St,

Cambridge, June 13 – '92.

My dear Smith,

I did not get a chance to ~~y~~ write you a letter yesterday so I will write an apology for one now. The fact is, the day is so damnably hot that it^a is positively laborious to move a pen; so you must excuse me if I am brief and dull. About all I have to say is that I am hard at work on stuff that I neglected in Eng. 9. and my time is pretty well taken up. Been grinding to-day on Geo. Eliot and Cardinal Newman. That Oxford movement¹ has given me more trouble than a little, and I am far from sure of it now. I have a vague idea of what it was, and that is about all. The subject does not interest me, to begin with, and that makes it doubly dry. I have no sympathy with the Tractarians and have to strain my imagination to its utmost to make myself believe that Cardinal Newman was a great man—outside of his scholarly attainments. I had better not say so in my examination book though. I fear that Gates would not appreciate my individualism. I called on him the other day to get some special reports I handed in some time ago and he received my [=me] quite kindly.

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He is a dreamy sort of a devil and went off into a long monologue upon the Spencerian {sic} Revival and finally ended up with the classic French drama. He told me that I was "impressionistic—if I would excuse the euphuism". I excused it inwardly and went out and bought a box of Turkish (?) cigarettes. I have contracted a habit of smoking those things which I must stop. They make a man dull and sleepy, but there is a fascination about them that is hard to describe. I suppose they are loaded. Peters hit it about right

^a WA has "that i <s> t," but while the holograph does look as if EAR covered up an abortive "s" with a "t," I can see no indication of any crossing out and am therefore transcribing according to his manifest intention here.

when he said each puff from them feels as if it were killing you.--Went to see the "Forresters" (Tennyson-Daly)² Sat. evening with Dr. Schuman. Drank more beer than I have for a month past, but did not feel any ill effects from it. Guess I will try it again. I think I told you that I bought "Tess of the D'Urbervilles."^b Have not read it yet.

There is a game here this afternoon between Harvard and Brown. Guess I will go down and see the end of it. If Hell is any hotter than Cambridge a man will do well to behave himself here on earth.

Will see you in two weeks anyway, but hope you will be here at the game. The seats are all sold but we can get in early and lie under a tree.

Sincerely
Robinson

HCL US, 67-68.

NOTES

1. The Oxford Movement, in which John Henry (later "Cardinal," after his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845) Newman (1801-1890) originally played a leading role, was a 19th century effort by Anglican clergymen and scholars, many from Oxford University, to restore the Church of England to its more traditional Catholic theological and liturgical roots. Members of the group, including Newman, John Keble (1792-1866), and Edward Pusey (1800-1882) wrote and published a series of "Tracts for the Times" between 1833 and 1841, and hence became known as the "Tractarians." (SL)
2. *The Forresters* was a play written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) and produced by American producer/director Augustin Daly (1838-1899), opening in New York in March 1892. It was comprised of both blank verse and prose, with music by Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900). A great success, it went on tour in the U.S. in April 1892. (SL)

^b WA has the period outside the quotation mark.