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To Harry de Forest Smith - April 16, 1893

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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Recommended Citation

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Cambridge, Apr^a 16 - '93

My dear Smith,

I was intending to stay in my room last evening and write letters, but I was cajoled into going to town to hear Lilian Russell¹ in "Giroflé-Girofla".² I suppose it was a very good thing in the way of comic opera, but I have come to the conclusion that I do not care much for that kind of celebration—for it always seems to me to be celebration of some kind. This was a partially {=particularly}^b spectacular affair and Lillian sang in the punch scene with great gusto.

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There is so much going on now in the way of entertainments that I am a little dizzy. I want to see Willard³ and the Dalys,⁻⁻⁴ the Hasty pudding Burlesque⁵ and the Italian opera week after next. I also have a thesis to write which must be done in two weeks,^c

I have just done up two Nations for you, which, I trust, will make your heart glad. I cannot understand why it is that America cannot publish a decent review. I read the Specker⁶ yesterday morning and it made me feel sorry for my country.

Have you ever read Molière's "L'Avare?" If you haven't I will send it to you^d

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It is easy and it is magnificent. No one seems to be able to write anything nowadays in the way of a comedy that is worth reading—hardly worth acting.--I have heard considerable lately about a new English

^a WA adds a period here.

^b WA transcribes the word as "particularly" but writes "partially?" as a suggestion, in square brackets, after it. The holograph does appear to say "partially".

^c WA reads this as a period.

^d WA has a period here.

novel—two, in fact—"Ships that Pass in the Night", by Beatrice Somebody,⁷ and "The Heavenly Twins".⁸ The last named deals with sexual questions, and [is] called rather effective. Something after the manner of Zola, with a more direct moral purpose.

I haven't seen anything of Kipling's new book yet. Have you? I do not even know if it is on sale, though I

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presume that it is. It has always seemed to me that Kipling could do something much greater than anything he has yet done, if he set himself to work in good earnest. "The Light that Failed" was something above the ordinary novel, and I should like to see him try it again.

Prof. Henry Drummond preaches in the chapel this evening and I shall try to hear him. Have you ever read his "Natural Law in the Spriritual World?"⁹ I never have, but mean to soon. Just as I mean to read a good many other things.

Sincerely
E.A.R.^e

HCL US, 93-94.

NOTES

1. Important American actress, 1860-1922. (SL)
2. *Giroflé-Girofla*, a popular French comic opera (*opéra bouffe*) by Charles Lecocq, Albert Vanloo and Eugène Leterrier. It was first performed in Brussels, in 1874. (SL)
3. Edward Smith ("E.S.") Willard (1853-1915), the prominent English actor. (SL)
4. The reference to "the Dalys" is unclear. John Augustin Daly (1835-1899), of course, was the highly influential producer-manager. He was active at this time, and famous especially as "the principal American purveyor" of Shakespeare's comedies (Shattuck 54). (See also the letter to Smith, June 13, 1892, along with note 2 for that letter.) (SL)
5. The Hasty Pudding Theatricals are cross-dressing burlesques run by Harvard's Hasty Pudding Club, a venerable student social organization. The tradition of Hasty Pudding all-male burlesque productions goes back to 1844. (SL)

^e WA omits the underline.

6.^f *The Spectator*.

7. Beatrice Harraden's novel.

8. By Sarah Grand, pen name of Frances Elizabeth MacFall.

9. Henry Drummond (1851-1897), an ordained minister of the Free Church of Scotland and Professor of Natural Science at Glasgow. His *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* was published in 1883.

^f Notes 6 through 9 here are WA's notes 1 through 4.