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11-5-1893

## To Harry de Forest Smith - November 5, 1893

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Gardiner, Nov<sup>a</sup> 5 – '93

My dear Smith,

Here it is Sunday again, and time for me to write you according to agreement. It doesn't seem a week ago that you were here, but the calendar says that it is. Before long we shall be walking the streets of Boston if nothing happens. I am looking forward to that dinner at Young's, or wherever we choose, with more enthusiasm that [=than] I have felt over anything for a long time. I want to see men that I can talk with once more, I want to get out of Gardiner for a time, and with God's help I am

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going to if I can. I see nothing now to prevent and shall try not to borrow any uneasiness. Be sure and find out what time your train arrives and at what station. We will have a breakfast at Parkers<sup>b</sup> and then a good stroll over the city. I intend to go up about the first of Thanksgiving week and stay about ten days. I may change my mind though and do nothing of the kind.

I suppose that you are back in your old rut again and are moderately contented with the present state of things—that is, as far as what we call the present itself is concerned. I cannot say as much. This eternal doubt as to how things are

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coming out, keeps me in a perpetual state of discontent. The worst of it is a certain guilty feeling that I am not producing anything. I am neither benefiting

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<sup>a</sup> WA adds a period here.

<sup>b</sup> WA has "Parker's".

myself or anyone else. I am making no moneys<sup>c</sup> wherewith to buy the worlds<sup>d</sup> goods and and {sic} I have no settled occupation to keep my conscience clean. I am fixing up my room now and it will soon be ready to go into. The improvements are chiefly a radiator and a book case. When it is all settled it will not be the worst place to sit and work in. But there the old question comes up—what is my work going to amount to? I think I have a little originality, but

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have I the genius for selection that is the one requisite of a literary man next to an easy flow of language?--<sup>e</sup>Not necessarily rapid, but easy in effect. I could never make a rapid writer; I am too fussy. I have fiddled too much over sonnets and ballades. I demand a certain something in the arrangement of words, and more in their selection, that I find in very few of our writers to-day. The question is—will it be found in what I write? and if it is, will the public care anything about it? I do not wholly believe in art for art's sake, but I do not think that anything is good literature when art is wholly sacrificed to the subject-matter. Well, Atwood<sup>1</sup> has just called and I'll draw this to a close. Shall look

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for a letter to-morrow.

Sincerely,

E.A.R.<sup>f</sup>

HCL US, 114-116.

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<sup>c</sup> The "s" is speculative—there is a mark here, which WA omits, but it is difficult to tell what it is.

<sup>d</sup> WA has "world's".

<sup>e</sup> WA omits this dash.

<sup>f</sup> WA omits the underline.

NOTES

1. Willis Atwood, Class of 1888, Gardiner High School.