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11-19-1893

## To Harry de Forest Smith - November 19, 1893

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITHGardiner, Nov<sup>a</sup> 19--'93.

My dear Smith

If there is one thing in the world that I intend to do more than another, that is to mind my own business; but I must ask you to reconsider your scheme of making the coming trip to Boston by boat. By so doing you will not only lose the whole of Thanksgiving day and probably the evening, but run a good chance of spoiling yourself for Friday. I can only judge by myself, of course, but if you have never taken an all-night trip in a steamboat [=t], I wish for<sup>b</sup> your sake and mine that you would not try it now. The loss of a day in town is what troubles me. With only Friday & Saturday I do not think you would call it economy in the end. Sunday will be dull at the best, far duller than Gardiner without the woods or the apple-tree, and then would be the best time to economize provided a boat leaves Boston Saturday night. But no, we want the Saturday night in town. Well, do as you think best, only remember that it may be a long time before we get together there again, and you may find ample opportunity to draw in the strings a little this winter to make up for the four or five dollars sacrificed to the M.C.R.R.<sup>1</sup> I myself could save \$3.50 by taking the boat, but would

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about as soon think of walking. I ~~at~~<sup>c</sup> would suffer the whole trip and be used up the next day. I have done it three or four times and shall never do it again as long as there is a man or woman in the state of Maine that will lend me a dollar and seventy five cents.--I am making this trip in far more straightened circumstances than you realize, but still I expect to enjoy myself if my stomach holds out. When that goes back on me I am totally done up. About all the money I can see is spoken for in gifts that I owe. I ~~sp~~ suppose I shall end up by borrowing some of Butler or Barnard, with great hopes of paying it sometime.

George & Joe tell me that they had an advantageous sitting you with in Rockland last week. It probably seemed good to see some Gardiner faces once more, notwithstanding your indifference to the place. Speaking of that, I do not think I ever before fully realized what

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

<sup>b</sup> WA adds a comma here.

<sup>c</sup> WA omits the crossed-out "a".

a hermit I am getting to be. Were it not for the B.<sup>2</sup> brothers, I should be absolute[ly] with[out] intimate friends of my own age. This is considerable<sup>d</sup>

to say, but it is practically true. And the worst of it all is that the truth does not trouble me half as much as it ought. I know there are fellows somewhere who are congenial—that is a great deal.

you 2 1

It is much more to me to be able to write a letter to ^ know and that it will be read with a friendly eye than to converse an hour with someone who is no more to me than are the majority of good fellows who make the world. The people who interest me

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are my close associates and the creatures of my own fancy. I have a dozen or so of the latter who have kept me company for a long time. Now I want to see them on paper, and if the fates are will[ing] I propose to before spring. Perhaps no one will see them save myself, but there will even then be the satisfaction of knowing that I have done something. But, woe is me! where are the shekels? This feeling of dependence is hell. You cannot imagine it if you try. I do not mind so much what other people think, but I cannot help wondering if I am not making an ass of myself. Two or three years at the most ought to tell something. If I then find that I have [been] laboring under a delusion for the past fifteen or sixteen years, it will not be too late to start out for an occupation and a living. It will be another case of a disappointed life, blasted hopes, and the usual accompaniments. Whatever I do outside of literature<sup>3</sup> will be done as a task, pure and simple. Some of my friends seem to have confidence in me with nothing in the world to base it upon—that is, nothing in the line of writings. Where they get their opinions is a mystery to me and I am ~~weak~~ weak enough to let their words encourage me a little. I expect a grand collapse some day and then wonder if they will all (!) stand by me?

It is time to have a smoke now, so will descend to

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the cellar and send strange odors up through the floors into the parlors. Mother objects and I shall probably quit soon and do my smoking in my den. If that stinks up the house I may stop the whole business.

Trusting you have decided by this time regarding the Boston affair, I await what you have to say with much

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<sup>d</sup> This is the last word of the previous line.

interest.

Sincerely  
Rob.<sup>e</sup>

HCL US, 118-120.

#### NOTES

1. The Maine Central Railroad.
2. Barstow.
3. It is notable at this time that EAR had staked out a claim larger than that of poet alone. His "itch for authorship" encompassed the realm of literature. The half dozen or so "creatures of . . . fancy" mentioned above would soon people the prose sketches that EAR would devote so much time to during the next couple of years.

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