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2-22-1894

## To George W. Latham - February 22, 1894

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO GEORGE W. LATHAM

Gardiner, Maine,  
Feb<sup>a</sup> 22 - '94

My dear Latham,

I wrote you a letter som{e} time<sup>b</sup> ago in which I fear I said too much. As I remember it there were some passages which might easily be misinterpreted and place me in a different light from that in which I intended to "pose."<sup>c</sup> I am subject to fits of over enthusiasm—I might say impulsiveness—and upon such occasions I am like to say or to write a little more than I mean. I fancy that the letter as a whole might leave you in doubt as to the

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real state of my feelings. I did not think of that at the time of writing, and I may be mistaken in thinking so now; but to avoid any doubt on your part let me say that about all of my life which seems worth remembering was spent in Cambridge and most of that under the most trying circumstances. For many reasons I had a "hard pull" of it, but for all that I managed to squeeze in considerable enjoyment. The result is that whenever I think of Cambridge—which not is most of the time I am working at my literary scheme, I think of you and Tryon, Saben Butler and one or two others. Now I am out of reach of you all except by mail. There is a stanza in Matthew Arnold's "Switzerland"—one from the last, I think, which pretty well describes my feelings at times when I think too seriously

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of my isolation.<sup>1</sup> At the same time I realize that [I] am better off where I am, as it would be impossible for

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

<sup>b</sup> WA has sometime.

<sup>c</sup> WA places the period outside the quotation mark.

in  
me to live in Boston ~~with~~ anything like comfort. I am  
biding my time or "dreeing my weird" and hoping for a  
change before long. If I ever succeed in getting one of my  
sketches printed in a prominent periodical (which is very doubt-  
ful) I shall feel that I am on the road either to success  
or failure. It makes no great matter which.<sup>d</sup> provided we  
are given sufficient enthusiasm to work and hope.

Do not think that I attribute your silence to  
any offence you may have taken at what I said regarding certain  
matters in my letter—you are too strong a man for  
that—but merely read this and understand that I  
am making apologies for anything that may demand them.  
Perhaps I was too confidential regarding a few little things  
and so revealed the child in my nature which you

seen  
must have ~~seen~~ occasionally at Harvard. I cannot

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controll {sic} it at all times and I have no doubt  
it has made me ridiculous upon more than one occasion.

I have just read "Meta Holdenis" by Cherbuliez.  
It is a g queer thing—very finely done, but not, in my  
opinion up to Jean Teterol—which I suppose you  
will never read after all I have said in times past.

I received a good letter from Hubbell not long ago  
in which he enquired for your worldly prosperity. He  
has been sick for six or eight weeks and is just back  
from a health [?] journey. His short visit to Cambridge  
he writes, gave him "little but sadness". I wrote him  
in reply that Dante lied in his famous quotation<sup>2</sup> and  
half of what we think sadness is sentimental pleasure.  
Do you think I am right or wrong?

Well, I send this along, hoping for a reply  
when the spirit moves you sufficiently. As you said to  
me "tell me a little more about yourself". I now seize  
my opportunity and write a letter to Ford. I found  
the real man in him during my recent trip to Harvard.

Yours most sincerely

E.A. Robinson<sup>e</sup>

{HCL}

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<sup>d</sup> WA omits the period. Read as a comma.

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

## NOTES

1. Stanza from "Switzerland".<sup>f</sup> {Since *Switzerland* is a suite of seven short lyric pieces, and the wording of "one from the last" is ambiguous, it is not clear which stanza EAR is referring to. In the last piece, "The Terrace at Berne", the stanza that is "one from the last" is certainly suggestive:

"Like driftwood spars, which meet and pass  
Upon the boundless ocean-plain,  
So on the sea of life, alas!  
Man meets man,—meets, and quits again."

The stanza that is "one from the last" in the fifth lyric, "To Marguerite. Continued," is another candidate, likewise highlighting EAR's sense of devastating isolation:

"Oh! then a longing like despair  
Is to their farthest caverns sent;  
For surely once, they feel, we were  
Parts of a single continent!  
Now round us spreads the watery plain:  
Oh, might our marges meet again!"

Or does "one from the last" mean "one of the stanzas from the last lyric"?

2.<sup>g</sup> "No greater grief than to remember days/ Of joy, when mis'ry is at hand!" (*Inferno*, Canto V.107-9, Cary translation.) (SL)

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<sup>f</sup> This note by WA was started but not completed.

<sup>g</sup> WA began this note, but merely wrote "Dante" in this space.