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6-17-1894

## To Harry de Forest Smith - June 17, 1894

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Gardiner, June 17 – 1894.

My dear Smith,

The time is creeping on apace, and this is a ~~devilh~~ devilish hot day—too hot to write letters or to do much of anything else. But when letters are expected at a certain time there is always a little disappointment when they fail to come, so I shall write enough to let you know that I am still in Gardiner and that "Theodore" is playing strange antics with me. He is giving me a hard tussle, but with the assistance of time, patience, perseverance, and a few other things I hope to do something with him before long. His story will be longer than the others you have heard—something like 7000 words, I should think, of which I have about 3500 written. The story is purposely artificial and my only chance of success lies in my possible ability of doing well enough, from an artistic point of view, to keep the artificiality in the background. It is good practice, at any rate, and must help me to a certain extent. I am now reconciled to the fact that my work last winter is of no value except for the practice it gave me, and I now anticipate another winter's work to the same end.—You may be interested to know that "Theodore" is a little study in anti-climax—not much like anything I have ever seen.

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Yesterday I read 70 pages of Daudet's "Tartarin sur les Alpes" but the French was wofully hard, and [the] subject not fitted to my mood. I could not see the fun of it, so threw it down for "Oedipus Coloneus{}", which I shall finish to-day if nothing happens to prevent.—When we get together once more, I want you to criticize my "great poem".<sup>1</sup> The thing cost me much weariness as to my gray matter and I am anxious to fix it up as well as I can. You can doubtless make a few suggestions that will be of much value to me.

"The Critic" has seen fit to accept one of my sonnets,<sup>2</sup> but it positively refuses to pay for my shoes. I have the consolation of a year's subscription, however, which is quite as good. I have heard nothing from the Dial, nor do I expect to. Upon the whole, I am rather glad to have my first publication of any significance (for I confess myself vain enough to think the [=that] there are damned fools in the world who cannot even get into the "Critic") in the eastern review instead of its western

brother. I have no great love for the west, and should not have, even if the Dial had printed my "Poe."<sup>a</sup> This is not "sour grapes", I am really better satisfied as things are. Of course the printing of a sonnet does not amount to much, but it may be a little help toward a beginning.

Excuse the personal note in this brief letter and send yours of June 24 to #404 Putnam Avenue, Cambridgeport. Poverty compels me to go by boat, so I cannot see you in Brunswick.

Sincerely,  
R.<sup>b</sup>

HCL US, 165-166.

#### NOTES

1. "The Night Before."
2. EAR's sonnet "Oh for a poet." It was published five months later in *The Critic*, XXII (November 24, 1894), 354.

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

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