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9-15-1894

## To George W. Latham - September 15, 1894

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO GEORGE W. LATHAM

Gardiner, Maine,  
Sept<sup>a</sup> 15 – 1894.

My dear Latham,

My only excuse for not writing before this is that I have [been] so thoroughly out of sorts with the world and all in it during the past six weeks that I had no heart to write to anybody. I think you can imagine just about how I have been feeling the greater part of the time, but you cannot imagine how I felt when, to crown the whole business, my ear ran like a brook for two nights, leaving me as weak as a dishrag—more from disappointment and discouragement, however, than from any physical "collapse". I supposed the thing was all right, but shall never think so again. I am glad to say that I am feeling better now than I have felt for a long time. "Antigone" is good for me, and I have hopes for the future. If my confounded itch for writing poetry would leave me, I could do sensible work with much better results; but something gets singing in my head and the only way to get it out is to write it—which

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generally takes some time, with my fussy way of doing such<sup>b</sup> things, and when that is done there is sure to be something else all ready to bother me. Some of them I can drive away, but others I cannot. If you have never writ "poetry" you cannot appreciate this; and that is your good fortune.

This summer has been a queer season with me. I have managed to make life bearable by looking down upon our prominent citizens and letting my gorge rise at the materialism reflected in the prodigious circulation of Muns{e}y's<sup>c</sup> Magazine. I do not think I care much for "up to date" literature, if Munsey's is a fair sample of it, and the pictures savor too much of the dog-and-horse-kind to fill me with any great rapture. Munsey's is very popular in Gardiner and is taken quite seriously. We speak of it as our "favorite magazine" and it lies in state on all our parlor tables. If the end of

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

<sup>b</sup> WA omits this word.

<sup>c</sup> WA transcribes the "e".

our century encourages such rot what will the twentieth  
 be like? I am not a pessimist but I think that nine  
 and published  
 tenth{s)<sup>d</sup> of the stuff that has been written during the past  
 ten years might be (to quote from Cosmotheism Thorne  
 of the Globe Review) "be buried in hell to-morrow and  
 never be missed"<sup>e</sup>—I see that Andrew Lang has  
 written a book on ghosts. Have you seen it? The

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critics speak rather well of it and I fancy it is  
 pretty good reading, though perhaps a little tedious.  
 You know I mentioned "Donaldson's History of the Greek  
 Drama" some time ago? Since then I have read the  
 most of R.G. Moulton's<sup>f</sup> *€ Ancient Classical Drama*—a  
 big book in the Clarendon Press Series—and found it  
 magnificent. It is quite different from the other and of  
 infinitely more value to the general student. Above all  
 it is interesting,<sup>g</sup> If it is in your nearest library do not  
 fail to read it—or as much of it as you care to.  
 By the way, did you carry out your plan of taking  
 an A.M. in the Greek Drama? I hope you have con-  
 cluded to do so as nothing could so effectively serve  
 to solidify your literary character. I do not mean by  
 this that it needs "solidifying"—but we are all open  
 to improvements. My little experience with Antigone—and  
 that at second-hand—has done wonders for me. If  
 you are inclined to let the matter slip through your  
 fingers kindly do me the favor of thinking of it  
 seriously once more and try to think my words of  
 some account when I tell you that a year's<sup>h</sup> study of  
 the three masters wil make a complete<sup>i</sup> transformation  
 in your whole mental and moral life. (Of course I  
 use "moral" in its broadest sense. If I seem to take  
 an undue interest in your affairs, you must remember

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<sup>d</sup> WA transcribes the "s".

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

<sup>f</sup> WA has "Moulton's".

<sup>g</sup> Read as a period.

<sup>h</sup> WA has "year's".

<sup>i</sup> WA has "comple".

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that my friends are all parts of myself. Although I may never see you again in this world, you have made your everlasting impression upon my mind—or rather upon my life—and I shall always have that interest in your life which I have in all (and they are few) whom I have touched and found warm with congenial fire. All this costs nothing, but it is sincere. There was something in you that I never found before and never expect to find again. I do not know what it was—I do not think there is any name for it. Perhaps, by straining the language a little, I might call it an intellectual conception of a certain kind of humor which sometimes threatens to lose itself in insincerity. For God's<sup>j</sup> sake, don't misinterpret this, for we both have the same thing. Hence our opposite [?], though sympathetic attitudes toward the "Corn-Cob Club."<sup>k</sup> Tryon and Butler each had a strain of this quality but it did not show itself in their words and actions as it did in yours. In Saben it was wanting even [?] to picturesqueness, and I doubt if the Semitic element of the C.C.C.<sup>l</sup> had it to any great extent.—But it was the more serious side of the thing that interested me the most<sup>m</sup>—You are one of my strong men. You have a personality, and you understand things. Sometimes I wonder if you understand "Ships that Pass in the Night."

I hope this will answer your former request for a personal letter, and I also hope you will answer it soon.

Most sincerely,

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

HCL

#### NOTES

1. William Henry Thorne (1839-1907), editor of *The Globe*. See EAR's letter to Smith, October 7, 1894.

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<sup>j</sup> WA transcribes the "s".

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

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

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

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

