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2-16-1895

## To Harry de Forest Smith - February 16, 1895

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Gardiner Maine  
Feb 16 - 1895

My dear Smith,

I have been sick all the week and am afraid that I haven't much to write save to tell you that I have bought two or three books and have read a little and have written that little marionette thing that I have spoken of once or twice in the past. I call it "Lachesis" & do not think it amounts to any thing in particular, perhaps because I wrote it so quickly.

I have been reading the Excursion & find that I am just beginning to feel the value of the book of Wordsworth that you gave me. Hereafter it will be a part of my life.<sup>1</sup> Of course a great deal of it is slow and of not much value; but the general tone and effect of it is so clear & wholesome, not to say magnificent—that we must all own its power to some extent. In my private opinion his Ode on the Intimations of Immortality is worth all the rest of his work put together, but I am only one man, and not much of a man either—to-day.

The books that I have bought are in French. I borrowed four dollars of ~~de~~ Dean & sent to Jenkyns for Une Vie { (De Maupassant) "Fromont Jeune & Risler Aïne" & "Le Petite Pa{-} roisse" (first edition)—Daudet. There are three stocky volumes and I expect great harvests from them before long. I also ordered in a cheaper edition Les Ruines & La Loi Naturelle (Volney)<sup>2</sup> and

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Voyage Autout de ma Chambre (X de Maistre).<sup>3</sup> I have always wanted to read "Volneys Ruines<sup>a</sup>" and now I have a chance. The book is rather inviting in its appearance—in fact they all are. "Fromont Jeunes<sup>b</sup>" {sic} is illustrated by but not by Myrbach, who did Jack so well in the "Guillaume" edition And by the way that Guillaume edition is all printed by somebody in English—with the original pictures.

I seem to have nothing but books to write about to-day so will go on and tell you about a volume you may possibly care to purchase—or try to. I remember some ten or twenty years ago of an old man calling upon my father and selling him a book which he had spent half his life in writing The man was the Rev. David Q. Cushman and the book was his history. The title page

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<sup>a</sup> WA has "Ruins".

<sup>b</sup> WA has "Jeune".

reads as follows: "The History of Ancient Sheepscott and Newcastle, including Early Pemaquid, Damariscotta and other contiguous places, from the earliest discovery to the present time: together with the genealogy of more than four hundred families. By the Rev David Quimby Cushman, Member of Maine Historical Society and Member of the New England Historico-Genealogical Society and Member of the Sagadahoc H.S.—Bath: E. Upton & Son<sup>c</sup>, Printers 1882."<sup>4</sup> The book is well printed & bound and has 458 large pages. Someday it is going to be as scarce as Hansons Gardiner<sup>5</sup> & infinitely more valuable. I do not know the price of the book—for all I know it is out of print—but I have a dim impression of seeing my father give him two<sup>d</sup> dollars—though it may have been five—or one.

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If the thing should happen to interest you of course you have only to write to E. Upton & Son, Bath, and find what information you want. Or possibly you know all about it and its author to boot.

I have nearly finished John Gray, which is a very good thing though a little strained in places. Sometimes I am tempted to give James Lane Allen<sup>6</sup> the place next to Hawthorne in America{n} fiction but somehow I lack the courage, or something else. If he doesn't belong there he does very near it.

The last Critic is mostly taken up with the sale of the Foote collection. The most valuable book in the bunch was a very rare copy of "The Temple", by George Herbert, which went for \$1050.00 Lots of others went from \$200 to \$800. I will send you the copy to morrow and will now ask you to bring it back with you when you come. There is now and then a copy that I shall want to save.

The "Book Buyers" came last evening and I was mighty glad to get them. Send anything that happens to fall in your way & I will preserve it most carefully. Have you heard any thing about the "Whistler number" of Harpers Magazine (March 1894) being worth thirty or forty dollars?

Most sincerely  
E.AR.

I hope you may find something better than Aldrich's for a book plate.

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<sup>c</sup> WA has "Sons".

<sup>d</sup> WA reads "ten".

HCL US, 207-209.

#### NOTES

1. In December 1893, Smith presented to EAR Wordsworth's *Complete Poetical Works*. With an introduction by John Morley. London and New York, Macmillan, 1893. The volume is now in the Robinson Collection at Colby College.
2. *Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les révolutions des empires*, was published in 1791; *Loi naturelle, ou Catéchisme du citoyen français* was published in 1793. Volney (1757-1820) was a French Philosopher and orientalist. (SL)
3. *Voyage autour de ma chambre*, by Xavier de Maistre (1763-1852), was published in 1794. (SL)
- 4.<sup>e</sup> Also at Colby College.
5. J.W. Hanson, *History of Gardiner, Pittston, and West Gardiner*. Gardiner: William Palmer, 1852.
6. A somewhat romantic local-colorist from Kentucky (1849-1925). *John Gray: A Kentucky Tale of the Olden Time*, 1893.

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<sup>e</sup> Notes 4, 5 and 6 are WA's notes 2, 3 and 4, respectively.