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2-24-1895

## To George W. Latham - February 24, 1895

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO GEORGE W. LATHAM

My dear Latham,

Whenever I am out of the mood for work or reading. I always try to wreak [?] myself in some way upon my friends; so to-day I am going to write to you— Do not think from this that I always take such times for my correspondence—that is hardly true. But I do now and then.—I say that I cannot read. I mean that I cannot read any longer. Work was out of the question for me me {sic} this morning, or I made myself believe that it was, so I took up "The Greater Glory" by Maarten Maartens and kept to it as long as my eyes would let me. The book is rather stronger in some ways than "God's Fool" but doesn't read so easily. You seldom [?] [read] a book that does—and right here while I am speaking of novels I must take up my old line of preaching again and tell you that I do not half like your way of abusing fiction. You go through Marlitt<sup>1</sup> (isnt that name about an equivalent for our "Duchess?") Freytag & "Adam & Eve" indiscriminately. Had I known that you were wasting your eyes in the way you spoke of in your letter I should have sent you my two volumes of Heyce's {=Heyse's} Im Paradiese, which are of no use to

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me now, beyond the fact that they are bound book[s] and not have a respectable look upon my shelves. That is ^ just my ideal of a books utility however, and I should infinitely prefer to give the novel to novel to somebody who would care for it than to watch it rotting, so to speak, as it is now.—I know from experience that it is not very thrilling to receive a book that one already owns or has just read; so if you will just take the trouble to tell me whether it would be of any use to you or not I shall act accordingly. I once forced a book of good advice upon Ford and have always been a little sorry for it.—I think you are more in the right than in the wrong when you put fiction aside but isnt that all the more reason why you should ~~read~~ give the really big men a show when you do take up a novel? In other words read Daudet, and pardon me for not minding my own business.

I am giving Antigone a long rest. I think I told you that I gave out at the 900<sup>th</sup> line and was positively

unable to go any farther This coming summer I intend to take it up again and sometime to get the thing off my hands by printing a private edition of 100 copies or so for my friends & enemies to make fun of. The work has a tremendous fascination for me—too great in fact, for my well being—and I shall feel something like a slave out of his chains when I am done with it:--one of those slaves we read of who long for their servitude again.—My other work goes on at

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a fair rate and I shall make a strong effort to get a book out in the fall. This will make you laugh, may be, but I mean business. If it fails to appear it will be no laughing matter with me. I assure you. Not that I shall be discouraged, or any thing of the kind but I shall be most damnably dis-

appointed—which is partly the same thing, after all. I am sometimes afraid that the ambition of my life is to be a "pote", but I am slowly learning (I think) to tread that under. It comes up once in a while in spite of me, however and causes me to send away sonnets & things, which, for a wonder, sometimes stick.

Lippincotts Magazin has my sonnet to "Poe," and the Critic printed another some

time ago which I will send with this letter.<sup>2</sup> I am not much for doing that sort of thing but you may possibly like to look it over. You wont think quite so much of me after reading it but a man may as well pass for what he is—damned fool or whatever.

Your remarks about the disappearance of old friends strikes me at a most significant time. I am about to lose (through his marriage) the only "spiritual" friend that I have in Maine. I think a friend with me is more ~~that~~ than with most fellows as my happiness rests almost wholly in the hands of

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other people than myself This is weakness, I suppose, but I don't know that I have ever made claims for a great deal of strength. There are two kinds of bridge-builders and I am one of the other kind, I guess. If I were not I should not care half so much as I do for "Ships that pass in the Night."—I am rather puzzled by your remarks concerning Hubbard. I did not know that there was a New Church

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<sup>a</sup> Written vertically.

<sup>b</sup> Written vertically.

school in Cambridge If you will give me his address I will send him a letter and asking {sic} what he is trying to do with himself I shall always remember H as a mighty good fellow—a clean man—and the only man I ever drank whisky with over a public bar. That was in Springfield.—Ford writes to me every fortnight or so and his letters go a good way towards making my life something other than a Mantalini friend.<sup>3</sup> He likes Exeter but tells me that there is absolutely no literary atmosphere there.—I think yo{u}r solid course of reading will land you in the right place someday and I shall be around borrowing money of you befor{e} you realize what has taken place or what years have gone by. No, I have not read Max Müller<sup>4</sup> and doubt if I ever could read him with your interest. I haven't your intellectual stamina.—I hear no more from Tryon, but I fancy that he is still a friend of mine. Butler [~~illegible word crossed out~~] writes a letter or two once in a while, but he is in trouble of some kind. His home life is anyth{in}g but happy.—Saben's address is "Oxford Hall, Oxford" where his tailor says that he is "living high, borrowing money & lending it & sel- dom paying his bills". He seems to hav{e} no further use for his American friends. Have you read Bourget's "Outre-Mer?"<sup>5</sup> I understand that it is quite a thing,

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and has raised no small amount of discussion. The next book I take up will be Volney's "Ruines". That book (or rather the name of it) has been chasing me for years with Kinglake's Eöthen<sup>6</sup> and I hav{e} never read either of them. "Les Ruines" is by no means a large book, but it seems to contain a large amount of good matter.

I am going to mak{e} a large effort to get to Boston this coming June. I need a sight of Cambridge—Ford—Butler and the rest of them—to say nothing of a pop concert. The scheme is very much in the future now as I have no dollars; but I shall try to raise a few in some way.—The lack of companionship is what ails me

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

as well as you. Sometimes I get almost desperate, but I manage to drive it off. My eyes seem to be improving a little of late and that is a great deal more to me than you can possibly realize.

Apropos of weak ~~eyesight~~ eyes, I will stop this writing now for fear that I may be the means of putting you in my own place. Hoping to hear from you now and then, when the spirit moves, I remain

Most sincerely,  
Robinson

Feb. 24, 1895

HCL

#### NOTES

1. E. Marlitt (Eugenie John – 1825-1887), German novelist. (SL)
- 2.<sup>d</sup> "Oh for a poet," not retained with the letter.
3. Dependent character in Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*.
4. Max Müller (1823-1900), the German Orientalist, especially well-known among the educated public for the fifty-volume *Sacred Books of the East*, which was published between 1879 and 1910 under his editorship. (SL)
5. By Paul Bourget (1852-1935), French novelist. *Outre-Mer* records his visit to the United States in 1894.
6. By Alexander Kinglake (1809-1891), whose tour through Turkey, Egypt, and the Holy Land is graphically portrayed in *Eothen, or Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East*, 1844.

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<sup>d</sup> Notes 2 and 3 are WA's notes 1 and 2.