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2-24-1895

To Harry de Forest Smith - February 24, 1895

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

[Gardiner, Maine]

My dear Smith,

You will be glad, I think, to learn that I am more than a hundred pages into "The Greater Glory" and that I am enjoying it more than a little. It is ahead of "Gods Fool" but did it occur to you that the author's style is a little more affected—a little more *décadent*—than is that book. It seems to me that Mynheer Schwartz¹ really sacrific{e}s strength by his freakish use of periods. Of course that really has nothing to do with the language but one cannot get over the impression that such business makes upon the mind. For some occult (?) reason Joe doesnt find the book readable; prefers Marie Corelli.²

Did you tell me that [you] once read Maistres "Voyage around my Chamber?" I hav{e} just read it and have no words to tell what I think of it. There is nothing really reat in it, perhaps, but there is something that appeals to me more strongly than any that I have read for a long time. It suggests "Tristram Shandy" and "Sylv{e}stre Bonnard" but still remains original. Some of the epigrams are fine. I suppose it has been translated into English and I should advise you to get it. I know you cannot be very familiar with it or you would mention it once in a while.—The second pard {=part} (The Nocturnal Expedition) I have not yet read, but it looks as interesting as the first.³

As soon as I finish Maartens I shall take up Volney's "Ruins."⁴ I have always{s} h^a {?} heard of "them" and hav{e} always wanted to read them They seem to be a history of almost every thing from the beginning down—and all in considerably

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less than three hundred small pages. There are (included) 50 pages of notes which seem to contain a world of interesting stuff. I mention the notes of the book thinking that it may interest you for its historical value. And I wil{l} say here by the way that you can get any information you desire concerning English translations by writing to Schoenhof or Brentano's.

I am aching to hav{e} you read Pendennis. I want to hear you talk about it and have your opinion of its merits as compared with those of Trilby. And speaking of Trilby, let me quote you a few lines from a letter I got the other day from Latham. They will interest you as much (and more, I think) than any thing I can write to-day: "Yes. I've

^a WA suggests—with a question mark—"it" as the mistake.

read "Trilby". I haven't got it very bad—it is spread out too thin. The first hundred pages will do, but when you get to talking Darwinism to your dog Tray &c. . . . I have almost given up fiction—you can't do every thing; and as for a book that pleases, Goodwin's "Moods and Tenses"⁴ isn't the worst. . . . The last book I have acquired (I bought it yesterday morning) is Barrett Wendell's "English Composition". Was there ever a more interesting book written on the subject? --I am working somewhat intermittently at several subjects: Greek drama, Italian & the science of language. Have you read Max Müllers lectures? They are fascinating enough for me &c. . . . Can any thing shrivel up a man more thoroughly than reading the same books with his classes year after year?" (This in^b reference to the classics in lower grades. I should hate to believe that L. would apply it to Virgil.)

My posters are standing still but there are two

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declinations due me—one from the "Cosmopolitan" and one from the "Youths Companion" (Quatrain).⁶ My work is going on in the same way only perhaps a little faster. Last week I wrote and copied "Alcander"⁷ a sketch of about 3500 words without a line of dialogue. I rather like it myself but do not think that you will find it worthy of the man who suggested it—Mr. Hutchings.

I had an idea that I warned you that there was no story to "The Marble Faun." If you will think twice you may find someth{in}g in [it] that invites comparison with the "Ebb Tide" though the thing seems absent at first. It makes no difference to me whether Hawtho{r}n has any definite story to tell or not—as long as he doesn't write "Note-Books"⁸

I am still browsing through the "Excursion" and am glad for the chance. My great trouble is that I am rotting {?} for human companionship I have made an inward resolution however, to get to Boston for a few days in June, and the prospect buoys me up strongly^c.

Your term must be more than half through. When do you expect to get this way again?

Yours most sincerely
E.A.R.

Feb 24 – 1895.

^b WA reads "is".

^c WA reads "strangely".

P.S.

I do not know or care any thing about the Bronze Horses of Vienna but you may find something about them in Mark Twain's "Innocents Abroad" Howells, "Venetian Life" Reber's "Medieval Art" Ruskin or somewhere. I have not

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seen The Bibelot⁹ but think I shall subscribe for it when I get another half-dollar. I am sorry that you did not see O.B. Clason.¹⁰

E.A.R.

HCL US, 209-211

NOTES

1. Maarten Maartens, the author, whose real name was Jozua Marius Willem van der Poorten Schwartz. "Mynheer" is the Dutch equivalent of "Mr." (SL)
2. Popular English novelist of the day (1855-1924). (SL)
- 3.^d Xavier de Maistre (1763-1852) as a young Army officer was imprisoned at Turin for six weeks for dueling. *Voyage Autour de ma Chambre* (1794) is a day-by-day account of his physical and imaginative wanderings. *Expédition Nocturne*, similar in nature, was published in 1825.
4. *Les Ruines ou Méditations sur les Révolutions des Empires* (1791) by Constantin Volnes (1757-1820).
5. *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* by William Watson Goodwin (1860, with subsequent editions in 1870, 1879, and 1892). (SL)
- 6.^e "As long as Fame's imperial music sings." See EAR's letter to Smith, December 9, 1894.
7. Formerly entitled "Saturday." See EAR's letter to Smith, February 3, 1895.
8. *Passages from the American Note-Books of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, published posthumously in 1868 under the editorship of his widow, Sophia. (SL)
- 9.^f Pamphlet of literary excerpts published monthly by Thomas B. Mosher {from 1895 to 1914}.
10. Of Gardiner, Maine.

^d Notes 3 and 4 are WA's notes 1 and 2, respectively.

^e Notes 6 and 7 are WA's notes 3 and 4, respectively.

^f Notes 9 and 10 are WA's notes 5 and 6, respectively.