

# Colby



Colby College  
Digital Commons @ Colby

---

Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and  
Transcriptions

The Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson: A  
Digital Edition

---

3-3-1895

## To Harry de Forest Smith - March 3, 1895

Edwin Arlington Robinson

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson\\_transcriptions](https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson_transcriptions)



Part of the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Robinson, Edwin Arlington, "To Harry de Forest Smith - March 3, 1895" (1895). *Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions*. 167.

[https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson\\_transcriptions/167](https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson_transcriptions/167)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the The Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson: A Digital Edition at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Colby.

TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

[Gardiner, Maine]

My dear Smith—

This is a pale blue day and there seems to be no sun to speak of. I am glad to say, however, that I am not in the blues myself but on the contrary rather radiant over something—though I havent the slightest idea of what that thing is. I think it is the knowledge (or at least the be-  
life) that I can do any thing, in my own way that I undertake.

is

Last Monday I began "John Town" and now it ~~was~~ done. Up to Thursday it seemed hopeless and even now it may not be good for any thing, but it is done and that is something It seems to me to be as good as any of my stuff, but I have lo{s}t faith in my own criticism. If I keep on at the rat{e} of one tale a week I shall have a mess of them befor{e} long.----But then, I cannot do that for I hav{e} written all the short pieces I intend to for a time My next work will be to fix over Theodore, Lévy Condillac and the Three Men & their Wives (the last two of which you do not care for, I think.) Some day I may com{e} to that opinion myself, but just now I it is impossible for me to believe it. I shall peg aw{a}y at these thing[s] all summer (forenoons) and in the fall I shall make a large attempt to do something.  
with them

Your little story of the two friends has made a great impressi{o}n upon me—as great as that of your friend

-2<sup>a</sup>-

H—whose college course was such a failure I have salted him for future use and know just what I am going to do with him I have never said much to you about it, but I think, if I am good for any thing, that I may owe you something for it someday. As for this other case it seems to me just the thing for a three part story of say 12,000 words or so. I hav{e} so much material in my head and good material too that the weight of it makes me dizzy at times; and then there is that fear that I may not do any thing after all. My worst and most persistent enemy, though, is a constant inclination to write poetry

Sometimes

I am half afraid the damned stuff will kill what little ability I have.

The other day I took up Fromont Jeune and read the first book,--which is really a prologue and a masterpiece of artistic fiction After that, the book can-

---

<sup>a</sup> Written vertically.

not help being great There is a chance for all sorts of diabolical occurrences in the coming pages and I hav{e} no doubt but that Sidonie will bring them around. ~~She~~ She seems thus far to be a combination of Becky Sharp<sup>1</sup> and Dolly Varden,<sup>2</sup> with a ve{r}y large percentage of Becky. I am getting more and more convinced that Daudet is the greatest artist in fiction now living—and his art never crowds out his humanity. I hav{e} always been a little suspicious of "Sapho"<sup>3</sup> but shall probably read it before long and find out what {i}t is like. I hav{e} always attributed its

-3-

tremendous sale to the risqué characters of its pages, but I may be doing its author a rank injustice. Have you ever read the book?

I know nothing about "The Melancholy of Stephen Allard"<sup>3</sup> more than that [it] is published by the Macmillans at the rather disquieting price of \$1.75. Nobody mentions it here in Gardiner that I know and whenever I speak of it I speak of a thing totally unheard of. I fancy the book may be something after the style of Daudet's "Robert Helmont—the Diary of a Recluse" another book I am anxious to read.

I am crowding my days a little too ~~hard~~ hard lately and the natural result is that I am beginning to lose sleep. I am becoming filled with an utterly insane desire to get out of bed at six o'clock in the morning, and would do so were it not for two rather dull hours to live through before breakfast. It will be all right whe{n} warm weather comes and a fellow can get out of doors but just now I hav{e} noth{in}g to do but to blow my clarinet; and it is not good for one to do too much of that on an empty stomach.

Regarding that number of Harpers, let me say that you took, or mistook, Whistler for Whittier. I mean the number that contains the third installment of Trilby and has to do with a character who is a "guy" on Whistler,--Joe Somebody I think, who is not in the published volume at all. The sale of the magazine{e} was stopped at W's request and I hav{e} heard that it is now practically impossible to get one of them.

-4-

I have received the first two numbers of "The Bibelot" but cant say that I think much of it except the

covers. And what the deuce does the publisher mean by printing Blakes less<sup>4</sup> known poems as things "not generally accessible." They are just as accessible as any other poems, although they have never become popular. The third number will be interesting, as was the second and I hope the paper may be changed befor{e} long to hold its own with the covers. I detest the type he has chosen for printing his poems, but that I suppose is Mr Mosher's own business.

Joe and I were going to eat beans with your father & mother last evening, but the even[t] did not take place on account of your mother's bad cold. She has been unfortunate this winter in that respect and I trust the coming [spring] may bring a change. I very seldom hav{e} a cold that is of any consequ{en}ce, bu{t} I know what th{e}y are and how<sup>b</sup> to sympathize.

Shall send you John Gray this week and feel sure that you will like it. I see the Critic praises ~~The~~ "A Kentucky Cardinal." by the sam{e} author.<sup>5</sup> He deserves it.

Most sincerely.

E.A.R.

March 3 – 1895.

HCL US, 211-213.

#### NOTES

1. From Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. (SL)
2. A character in Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge*. (SL)
- 3.<sup>c</sup> By Garnet Smith {(1894)}.
4. US reads "best."
5. I.e. James Lane Allen. *A Kentucky Cardinal* was published in 1894. (SL)

---

<sup>b</sup> WA suggests "have" as an alternate reading, but this seems unlikely to me.

<sup>c</sup> Notes 3 and 4 are WA's notes 1 and 2.