

# Colby



Colby College  
Digital Commons @ Colby

---

Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and  
Transcriptions

The Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson: A  
Digital Edition

---

3-10-1895

## To Harry de Forest Smith - March 10, 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 10, 1895" (1895). *Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions*. 168.

[https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson\\_transcriptions/168](https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson_transcriptions/168)

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, March 10 – 1895.

My dear Smith,

I did not write you a letter yesterday, because I was not in the mood for any thing of the kind. I am afraid that I am not to-day, either but can at least let you know that I hav{e} just read Hamlin Garland's little obstetrical story in the Chap-Book,<sup>1</sup> and that I rather like [it] It is strong & true to life, according to my notions, but is a thing to play the devil with readers who are ignorant and naturally "easy." I cannot say that I agree with Mr Garland's ideas of realism—what it should be, be, but the story is good and I am glad that the Chap Book was on hand to print it, though a paper of that sort is not the place for a serial story

I have finished Fromont Jeune and shall next take up "La Petite Paroisse" which the new paper, "Vanity," calls one of Dau-dets best things. I had intended to put off reading it for a time but hav{e} changed my mind. The book deals with the old story of a woman's infidelity, but that is a subject which, if treated by a master, can never wear out. De Maupassants "Une Vie" touches infidelity of the kind and the book seems be {?} a great performance. I haven't read it, however, so cannot tell you much about it. But you must hav{e} "Fromont" in translation to read this summer. A translation would probably have an entirely different title from the original as

-2<sup>a</sup>-

Fromont Junior & Risler Senior would not sound so well in English But I wont say any th{in}g more about this summer until I find out whether you are going to get married or not. If you do, you must not ask me to go to the wedding (I said that a year ago, I think) nor expect any wedding present for a time. I am almost on my sacram, but I hop{e} to get righted, or right myself, before very long.

Do you think a great deal of Peter Schlemihl?<sup>2</sup> I sent for it, with Lessings Nathan the Wise<sup>3</sup> in Cassell's Library and read it the other day. It doesn't seem to me that there is quite enough in it to warrant its reputation, but I suppose{e} there is I fancy the trouble all lies # in the fact that such figurative extravaganzas seldom appeal to me I cannot appreciate them—not even Gulliver. There is a kind of romance that I like but I can{no}t define it. I like Paul & Virgin{e},<sup>4b</sup> & I like Picciola;<sup>5</sup> I like Atala<sup>6</sup> & Undine<sup>7</sup>—in other words I like the roma{n}c{e} of

---

<sup>a</sup> Written vertically.

<sup>b</sup> WA has "Paul & Virginia".

the commonplace—without a{n}y guns or swords or cavaliers to speak of. Of course this doesn't exclude Peter, but for some reason I was disappointed in reading it.

-4-

Yesterday Joe & I went over the Iron Mine to call on your father & mother. The walking was damnation itself but the day was glorious So is to-day for that matter.

I shall be glad when you come this way again as I am in a bad way for Theocritus, I think. I haven't used a{n}y tobacco for six weeks and hav{e} about concluded to stave it off for an indefinite time—a year, perhaps. I think I do a little better work without it and sleep better--though it may all be fancy. There is surely no "great change". Have made two additions to my collection of declinations—"Cosmopolitan" & "The Youth{s} Companion" Think I may as well stop now and wait till the Lippincotts print my Poe.—If you think of buying St. Ives, why didn't you send your nam{e} in for a first {?} edition?—or wouldnt that work?

I have lately caused a lawyer in Omaha to read Jack & The Manxman. He doesnt think that Cain{e} succeeds in making a man of Philip—if he tries to.

Sincerely,  
E.A.R.

HCL US, 213-215.

#### NOTES

1. *The Land of the Straddle-Bug*. See EAR's letter to Smith, February 3, 1895.
2. *Peter Schlemihls Wundersame Geschichte (The Wonderful History of Peter Schlemihl)*, 1813, by Adelbert von Chamisso de Boncourt, German naturalist and poet (1781-1831). A famous German fairy-tale in which the hero exchanges his shadow for a magic sack of gold.
3. Originally published in German as *Nathan der Weise*, 1778, by Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781), German critic and dramatist. A poem in dramatic form concerned with the nature of religion and religious tolerance.
4. *Paul et Virginie*, 1787, by Bernadin de St. Pierre (1737-1814), a romantic tale of two children living on a tropical island and brought up in accordance with nature.

5. The title means "poor little one," written by Joseph X. Boniface (1798-1865) and published in 1836. A simple tale of a prisoner and his care of a plant growing in his cell. When he becomes ill the juice of the plant brings him back to health. When he leaves the prison the plant dies.
6. By Chateaubriand. See EAR's letter to Smith, May 7, 1893.
7. By Friedrich Fouqué, Baron de La Motte (1777-1843), German poet and novelist. A romantic German fairy-tale about a water sprite who gains a soul through marriage.