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6-20-1895

## To George W. Latham - June 20, 1895

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO GEORGE W. LATHAM

Gardiner, Maine –  
20 June – 1895—

My dear Latham,  
I have got myself into a little "mess"  
with "Im Paradiese", but the way out of it is  
not hard so no great harm is done. Wh{en} you  
wrote me that you had read the book but  
thanked me all the sam{e} for my offer, I had  
not much enthusiasm for the idea of sending [it]  
to you even {t}hough I thought you might like  
it as a gift from a friend; so I have given  
the novel to Ford with the intention of send-  
ing you something in its place. So when  
a package comes to you from Maine, you  
will know wel{l} enough what is in it. Just  
when it will come, I cannot say.

I spend Sunday (the 16th) with  
Ford at Exeter and found him in most  
flourishing circumstances—popular and hold-  
ing a far more prominent position than I  
had supposed probable—considering his age  
and the standing of the school. Not that  
I doubted his ability to fill the position,  
but you know there is a popular prejudice  
against over-young<sup>a</sup> instructors. The kids  
call him "Little Joey" and seem to like  
him he says{s} becau{se} he makes them think

-2-

that they know more than they do. That  
is the first thing for a man to do in a place  
like Exeter—or any other place for that  
matter: get the boys to like you. If  
they dont you had better be in hell and  
done with it. Ford is going to France in  
about a week to stay all summer. He  
has an invitation from Paul Bourget &  
will doubtless hav{e} a "little glass" with  
Daudet and the rest of them. He tells  
me that he would give dollars to talk an

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<sup>a</sup> WA suggests this reading in square brackets, with a question mark, but transcribes "our young".

hour with Zola. By the way, the girls are reading La Debacle<sup>1</sup> at Radcliffe. Old things seem to be passing away from Cambridge.

I entertained vague hopes that I might manage to see you som{e}ho{w} this summer, but I fear it will be impossible unless you happen to com{e} dow{n} this way—which I suppose, is hardly probable<sup>b</sup>. I shall not go to Boston this spring, for som{e} very good reasons, and one in particular. But if you go there—you wrote in yo{ur} last letter that yo{u} think of it—do not forget to call upon Butler.

-3<sup>c</sup>-

He is not enjoying himself over much just a[t] present and I know that a call from you would put new life into him. He hasn't a single friend in the city whom he cares for—at least he had none a year ago—and I know what he thinks of you. As to his father's failure, he did not write me much—only told me that the business would go right on and the balance would be returned to the firm when the creditors had fixed things to suit themselves. So I suppose it was not a total smash—like DeQuincey's trunk. Or was that a "grand smash?" I know it was one or the other—it struck me as one of the best things in the Opium-Eater.<sup>2</sup>

I rather fancy that you ask me those questions concerning Meredith<sup>3</sup> to see what you can draw of out of me; but I will take them in earnest and say this:--Read ever{y}<sup>d</sup> f novel for the style and nothing else. Read every word and repeat the reading of every striking paragraph<sup>e</sup> and abov{e} all—take your time. To read Meredith in a hurry is to

-4<sup>f</sup>-

drink Pommery from the bottle. More than that, it is intellectual waste. No good can come from it and it is a rank injustice to a man who works like the devil with his pen. If "The Egoist"—the "hardest" by all odds of them all—seems to[o] much for a process like that, take Rho{n}-da Fleming—but no, dont take that, either,--for you would forget all

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

<sup>c</sup> Written vertically.

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

<sup>e</sup> WA reads "very striking paragraphs".

<sup>f</sup> Written vertically.

about the style, which is only half Meredithian. Diana of the Crossways is about midway ~~and~~ but contains the damnedest opening chapter in the world. But whatever you take, try to forget that you are reading a novel and I think you will have no more trouble; for Meredith is really great and intensely entertaining when once you "get into<sup>s</sup> him" I remember my battle with "The Egoist," however, and am inclined to think that you would do better to take up Diana—which, along with Daudets Jack, I hold to be a proper book for all men and women to read; particularly women, per-

but,  
haps. I have never read Lord Ormont, ~~by~~ judge from Gates' criticism and others that it must be a good thing. The morality—has been questioned—something after "The Woman Who Did"<sup>4</sup> in plot, isn't it?—I should like to have seen that article in the Nation—and, speaking of articles, be sure to send

me yours when it appears. It will [be] the next thing to a talk with you.

Yours most sincerely,

I suppose you know of Hubbells engagement E.A.R.  
to a Miss Slade. He has taken her  
home for inspection.

-5-

P.S. (Copy)

William Butler Jr Tremont Street Boston  
Saben destitute Will you cable hundred dollars  
for return to America Wallace Jones Reply  
Lithophyl London.

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What is going to be the future of this man?  
Of course one can have no feeling for him but that  
of honest pity. If he isn't a genius he is  
lost and I must confess that I have yet to  
discover the spark There was a time when I  
thought him gifted with a tremendous intellect but  
but {sic} during the second year of his acquaintance I went  
through many disillusions. I am generous enough,  
however to hope that I am all wrong and that  
he may ultimately be greater than Herbert Spencer.  
In the meantime let us thank God—or whatever  
it is—that we can work and wait.<sup>5</sup>

Butler writes me a letter in which he  
tells me that he has worn away 30 pounds by  
riding a bicycle—a bit of grave yard humor  
which fits beautifully to the four long

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<sup>5</sup> WA has "onto".

pages that go before it. He wants me to tell him what I know about you, but I think it better for you to tell him your own story. Some day, when things are straightened out, we will hav{e} a "feed" together and talk it over --Saben too, if he is around.

Sincerely,  
R.

-6<sup>h</sup>-

P.P.S.

Hubbell's engagement is not yet announced but Ford said nothing about keeping still so I suppose{e} it is all right for me to tell you. It seems to me that some girl has done confoundedly well.

R.

HCL

#### NOTES

1. The next to the last volume of Zola's series of novels, "Les Rougon-Macquart," portraying various aspects of French life through the history of a family. Published in 1892, *La Débacle* deals with military life at the time of the Franco-Prussian War.
2. Thomas De Quincey's memoir *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, published in 1821. (SL)
3. George Meredith (1828-1909), influential Victorian novelist and poet. (SL)
4. A controversial novel of 1895 by Grant Allen, depicting an unmarried couple and the struggles of a single mother whose child was born out of wedlock. (SL)
- 5.<sup>i</sup> Cp. EAR's line in "Richard Cory": "So on we worked, and waited for the light."

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<sup>h</sup> Written in the center of the page.

<sup>i</sup> This is WA's note 2.