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2-22-1894

To Joseph S. Ford - February 22, 1894

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO JOSEPH S. FORD

Gardiner, Maine,
Feb 22 -+1894.

My dear Ford,

I am glad that I did you a service in mentioning Joubert and hasten^(?) to say that you have done me the sam{e} in your remarks on his works and characteristics. I shall read him when I get a good opportunity and anticipat{e} much pleasure. There is something in the man's personality that attracts me: he seems entirely dis-associated from literature as a trade—even as a profession.

I hav{e} found time and eyesight during the past week to read "Meta Holdenis" by Cherbuliez and have been marvelously entertained. The book is a curiosity, and, it seems to me, a rather daring experiment on the part of the author. Such a complexity as Meta staggers one a little at first but her possibility in the human scheme begins

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to fasten itself in the mind of the reader so that when the wonderfully clever conclusion is reached he is puzzled with mystery and admiration. It is a light novel in the true sense of the word. There is no attempt at any{-} thing like the heroic or the "grand style", and yet there is a depth in the character of the heroine that compels considerable consideration on the part of an ordinarily intelligent and thoughtful reader. The book is short and excellently printed. When you feel a need of that kind of exhilarant you could not do better than take it from the library and write me what you think of it.

I received a parsimonious letter from Tryon the other day. Tell him I thank you that he has found time to write a hundred words to a man in Maine and that my hopes of his success are doubled—if the thing be possible. Tryon is a good man to know and I have visions of his getting me a "job" in years to come--when my golden bowl of anticipation is broken and the spirit of reform in fiction flown forever.

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But wait, do you know what I am talking about? If you don't ask T. He will tell you all about my dreams and intellectual nightmares. That is, he will tell you what he sees

fit to tell and probably much more than he knows—or I, for that matter. You may tell him, however, that my ideas are changing a little every day and that I have written a program for a panorama-show in which I tell the very

of

devil of a story the devotion of a strongly sentimental woman ~~married~~ married to a business man who read two newspapers a day, but no sonnets.

Have you read any of Coppée's dramas? They are very fine—at least the two I have read "Le Tresor" & "Le Luthier de Crémone." They are highly finished and intensely human withal their romantic flavor. You know Coppée is the poet of the [?] common people, and writes largely of common things in a more or less romantic light; for example, "La Grève des Forgerons". The two plays, however, are distinctly (tell Tryon I said "distinctly") poetical both in subject and in treatment. In "The Treasure" there is an old tragedian filled with hopes much like my own,

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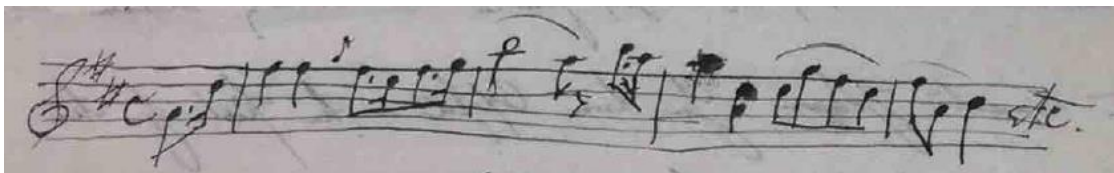
who says the following obviously good thing:

--"Et je monte là-haut pour songer à ma pièce. . .

Voyons!—Un dénoûment—qui ne soit pas banal—

Qui pourrais-je imiter, pour être original?"¹

And by the way there are many good things in Meta Holdenis One in particular I remember:--"Sait-on jamais de quoi mouvent les femmes?" This means a good deal when we stop to think it over.—I think you are a little of a musician, and ca[n] understand me when I say that I always have some air running through my brain. Just now it is an aria from Bellinis^a "La Sonnambula"² It would be good for you to take the piano-score of the opera from the library some afternoon before you go home and then marvel at the melody you find. You may know the one I refer to:



The opera is full of things almos[t] as good as this and you will be the richer for knowing them—if you do not

^a WA reads "Bellew's 'La Somnambule'".

know them
happ(en) to ~~the~~ already. Did you hear Brahms's Second
Symphony last Friday?

Sincerely,
Rob.

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P.S.

I may possibly be the man who mentioned
Stevens's *Memories & Portraits*,³ but I think
I should be far more likely to praise Vir-
ginibus Puerisque³ and especially "Familiar Studies
in Men & Books"³ This last named volume
deals with men ~~with~~ in whom you must
be particularly interested.—Also read the
Cliff-Dwellers if you find the time.

R.

UVA

NOTES

1. "And I ascend up yonder to contemplate my play. . . / Let us see!—A denouement—which is not to be commonplace—/ Who could I imitate, in order to be original?" The third line—"Qui pourrais-je imiter, pour être original?"—is the motto for EAR's first book of poetry, *The Torrent and the Night Before*. (SL)
2. *La sonnambula*, an opera of 1831 by Vincenzo Bellini. (SL)
3. Collections of essays by Stevenson, published in 1887, 1881, and 1882, respectively. (SL)