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## To Harry de Forest Smith - October 6, 1895

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

My dear Smith.

I must ask you to pardon me for not writing before, but I am afraid that I cannot give any very good excuse for my negligence. All I can say is that I hav{e} not been in the mood and that, after all is more of a reason than it seems at first thought. My ears have been knocking a good deal, but I don't [like?] to say too much about them—especially in letters—so will let that matter drop.

I am glad to know that you are wel[l]-fixed and contented in your new quarters and I trust that you experience in college is none the less congenial.<sup>1</sup> Your few words concerning Professor Goodwin<sup>2</sup> lead me to think that he is a good fellow as well as a great scholar. I never heard him spoken of before as "a really great man" but I suppose he is that—in his line, at any rate. To me, there is only one of the really great sort at Harvard and of course you know who he is—possible you want to hear him speak at the Freshman's<sup>a</sup> reception in Sander's.<sup>3</sup> The Crimsons you sent were like old friends and I hope you will keep on sending them—that is if you are a subscriber—and please let me know if you wish me to keep them It is twice as large as it used to be but I cannot see that there is much more reading in it. But advertising pays and I don't

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blam{e} the editors for their change. As time goes on I suppose the reading matter will increase, for an editor, and above all a college editor, likes to air his English—however good or bad it may be.

I am coming to Cambridge som{e} ~~chance~~ day this week or next so I shall hav{e} a chance to smoke a pipe with you and have some talks. I am through the Messenger's long speech in Antigone and the rest will be plain sailing. I hav{e} omitted the Hyporchema<sup>4</sup> however<sup>b</sup> as I want my time for it—also Jebb's version. It is the most mixed up mess that I hav{e} yet found, and I want all the legitimate assistance I can get. You will be glad to know that I am more enthusiastic than ever over the play and am pretty confident that it will amount to

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<sup>a</sup> WA reads "Freshmen's".

<sup>b</sup> WA omits "however".

something some day. To be sure the time and work I hav{e} spend on it would be ample to write a book, but I do not regret what I hav{e} done. I am a great believer in solid foundations, and what could be better than a creditable translation of a Greek play?

If there is any thing you wish me to bring with me, writ{e} me a letter Monday so I shall hav{e} time. I went out to you{r} place last Sunday and found Joe and his spouse-elect there befor{e} me. I shal{l} probably go out again this afternoon. The notion of going to Boston this fall tickles me exceedingly. I need som{e}th{ing} of the kind if ever a man did and I hav{e} struck my usual luck as regards rooms. Butler tells me, in one of his short spasmodic letters, that he has a room on Bowdoin St that will feel better for my being in it. So, with that and some college rooms, I shall not hav{e} to bother you.

I am glad that you will hav{e} a chance to meet Ford and Hubbell (who, by the way, is a student in the New Church Divinity School) and I only regret that Latham is too far away to be called. I had a letter from him the other day

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acknowledging Une Vie and telling me of various things. He is getting to be an enthusiast on the subject of moulding the young mind and I am mighty glad of it. He is a fellow who might hav{e} a tremendous influence over an intelligent young one and it is very gratifying for me to know that he is bringing it to bear in the right direction. There was a time when I feared the contrary for he used to be full of whimsical precepts that might play the devil without his meaning that they should.

Judging from the weather we are having here, Cambridge must hav{e} been in its glory during the past fortnight. A native will tell you that that {illegible letters crossed out} time is in June, but October is the month for

me. I like the red leaves. Red leaves make<sup>c</sup> me think of De-generation and that makes me think of Lombroso's article in the last Century<sup>5</sup> To ~~jud~~ judge from some extracts I hav{e} seen he comes down upon his disciple pretty hard in places. You hav{e} probably read the thing for yourself by this time. I do not read much of any thing now, as my eyes hav{e} giv{en} out again. Une Vie must have been a little too strong.

I hav [been] composing some more "miouic" lately and am now doing a sort of Funeral March with two themes—or rather it is doing me. I hav the music all settled for a ballad, which, I trust will some day be a Tavern Song. Do not think by this

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<sup>c</sup> WA reads "makes".

that I am beginning to serve two masters for I hav dabbled with notes all my life and probably shall as long as I live. I have no faith in any of it howev{er}, save the ballad just mentioned—which, I think, has a little character and some originality. The words are not yet made, but they will come with time.

I had a letter from Thorne the other day in which he incidentally enclosed a clipping from the New York Sun—a reprint of my "Miracle" business, which you know. "Kosmos," which will appear in the Globe for October 18th is crazier than that.<sup>6</sup> You

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heard me read the first draft of it—which was not much like its present form—and did not care a damn for it. I doubt if you like it any better this time

With my best regards to Mrs Smith, I remain

Yours most truly.

Robinson.

Gardiner, Maine,

6 October, 1895.

HCL US, 231-234.

#### NOTES

1. The letter was addressed to 53 Trowbridge St., Cambridge, Mass. Smith was at Harvard for graduate study.
2. William Watson Goodwin, Eliot Professor of Greek at Harvard, 1860-1901.
3. Charles Eliot Norton.
4. Choral ode.
5. Césaire Lombroso, "Nordau's *Degeneration: Its Value and Its Errors*," *Century*, N.S. XXVIII (October 1895), 936 ff.
6. "Kosmos," *The Globe*, Volume V, Number 20 (October, 1895), p. 407.