1-5-1882

To Fred W. Palmer - January 5, 1882

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO FRED W. PALMER

Gardiner Jan 5/82

Dear Cousin,

I guess I will try to write a few lines to you to-night, but let me give you a description of the table; It is in the little room and it has got a pile of papers & books on one end and a dish of apple-skins and "chompings" on the other but I guess I will not talk about that any more, because you have been here enough to have it look natural to you.

I want to ask a favor of you if you will do it that is, not to show this letter to any body, and "I mean business and no joking" but don't be in such a rush I want to ask you another and that is: Please don't name any more branches of the Kennebec not at present at any rate. School commenced last Tuesday. We had about five inches of snow Sunday night and Monday morning it was blustering hard and I [?] we (please excuse that tall e) for it was an accidental slip of the pen.) had some large drifts to wade through. I suppose you got it bad up there. James I weighs between nine and ten pounds and is as black
as your boots.

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Herman got a watch Christmas and a few other things. The upper story and roof of Joshua Grays office burnt off last tuesday fore-noon & came near burning some other buildings laying near it. It has been 'bully' skaek. 

Herman has gone skating this evening and Dean has gone to a party, mother is knitting and father has just got done reading a paper,-- and I'm here; So good bye

E.A.R.

HCL Written in red ink.

NOTES

Fred W. Palmer was a first cousin, son of Seth and Lydia Anne Palmer, EAR's mother's sister. The Palmers lived on a farm in nearby Pittston, and there was frequent visiting back and forth during EAR's boyhood. EAR was 12, his cousin 27, when this letter was written. In addition to its boyish charm, it is a curious letter in a number of respects. What is the occasion for the letter? Why would a twelve-year old write to a cousin fifteen years his senior? If it is a thank you note for an unmentioned Christmas or birthday present, it is indirect to say the least. Why the request for secrecy? The letter starts off in a descriptive manner, a word-painting of the table in the little room. Then it breaks off, in embarrassment perhaps, as if fearful of ridicule for attempting to portray so familiar a scene. But the graphic sense is there. EAR began writing verse at eleven. It is not too far-fetched to conjecture that the future poet had conveyed to his cousin an inkling of an aspiration to write and had struck a responsive chord.

1. Herman E. Robinson, the middle brother, was four years older than EAR.
2. Gardiner is located in hilly country at the confluence of the Cobbossee and the Kennebec.
3. Dr. Horace Dean Robinson, the oldest brother, was 12 years EAR's senior. In 1882-1883 Dean was City Physician for Gardiner.