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To Harry de Forest Smith - October 25, 1891

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

717 Cambridge St.,

Harvard University.

Cambridge, Mass., Oct 25, 1891

My Dear Smith,—

I have just been having a quiet spell of thinking, the while I have smoked my new bull-dog. This thinking is bad business for a man, but sometimes he falls into it in spite of all he can do. I fear that I do so altogether too often. If you care to know what I have been thinking about, I will say that I have been wondering what the deuce I am here for. This is an old story and you are doubtless heartily sick of it; but to be honest, I cannot get over the idea that I am wasting time and money. To be sure I shall be able to read a French novel—unless I fail in the course—by next June, but I might have done that without leaving Gardiner. I can-

not understand how a text-book can be so lucidly written as Chardenal's "First French Course" is. Any person with ordinary ability could take it up of his own accord and read ordinary French with after comparative ease in six months of regular application. The pronunciation is of course another matter. I called on Prof. de Sumichrast Thursday evening and found him in his library with his two dogs. "That gentleman", he said, pointing to a York-

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a Everything in red here is part of the printed Harvard stationary. The month, date and "1" for the year were written in black. WA omits "Harvard University."
shire pup asleep in an easy chair, "is apparently satisfied with worldly existence."
At the same time he was holding a snow-white terrier of some breed or other in his
arms. I had a great time with the Prof.
for about an hour, and when I came left
he came to the door lugging the pup
in his arms. He advised me to drop
Anglo-Saxon, as Prof. Child did, and I shall

probably have no difficulty in so doing.
Then I shall have a little time for breathing.  bI have got to read one of
Scotts novel's for English 9. Think I shall
take Guy Mannering, as it is the only one
I have with me, and is one of the shortest
that Sir W. has written. A very little
of Scott will go a great way with me.
I shall have to write an essay on some
subject dealing with him before next Friday.
 I have just written one on "Sydney Smith:
His character as displayed in his writings."
It is a somewhat marvelous production,
I expect, though it may never immortalize
the writer.  Shakespeare is going on finely,
and there will be the devil of an
examination before long on Hamlet and
Shakespeare's life and times. I shall have

to do considerable reading before it comes
off, but I do not apprehend much trouble.
A fellow can generally do something with
a subject that interests him.
 I am moving rather slowly through
L'Abbé Constantin, as it comes hard when
one is absolutely ignorant of French grammar.
De Sumichrast is beginning to conduct recitations
in French,--but I guess I told you so last
Sunday. I have not sent any more
contributions to the Advocate yet but think

b WA reads this space as a paragraph break and hence starts a new paragraph on the next line.
I will sometime next week. The number I sent you is not a fair sample of the periodical; you have probably seen enough of them to know that. And you will also see that the editors spoiled my ballade in the mechanical punctuation they adopted. This letter is rather personal, but I trust you will overlook that and let me know what you and [are] doing, and how the Columbia scheme is going on.--Shall look for a letter to-morrow noon. Y's--Robinson

HCL  US, 33-35.

NOTES