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To Harry de Forest Smith - November 29, 1891

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Harvard University,
Cambridge, Mass. 11-29-'91
717 Cambridge St.

My Dear Smith,

I am a little anxious to learn how that young lady friend of yours is getting along. If Rudyard Kipling should be the means of uniting two young ~~souls~~ souls in eternal bliss ~~maybe~~ by means of his indifferent consideration of such matters I should feel under obligations to write him a letter. I see that he has come to America to wipe out the publishers who have been stealing his works. Have you read "Life's Handicap", and that story in the Century?¹ It seems to me that magazine is making some startling innovations. Rudyard & Bill Nye will make quite a change in the list of its contributors. It strikes me that they are making a mistake in admitting the latter, unless he changes

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his usual tone; but then, I may be prejudiced against him with no adequate reason. It always struck me, though, that he is a trifle coarse for such a periodical as the Century holds itself up to be. In the Sunday Herald or Globe we naturally look for that kind of a thing: we can stand it there and rather enjoy it; but when he jumps into the higher regions of literature, one feels doubtful as to the result. His friend James Whitcomb Riley was probably the indirect, or direct, means of getting him there.²

F. Marion Crawford begins a new ~~s~~ serial in the January "Atlantic."³ It will, of course, be a good thing, and I shall try to peruse it. I have not decided whether to subscribe another year or not. I do not find much

time for reading outside of my prescribed work. Jane Austen has been taking up my time of late. Have read *Pride & Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park* & most,

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or to follow Prof Hill's precepts, almost all of "Persuasion". I suppose I have spoken of this before; I cannot <remember> remember over night what I have written in a letter; so when you find a repetition, deal gently with me.

I went to Mrs. de Sumichrast's reception last Friday evening. Had a rather comfortable time upon the whole. Found a young Law Student right from England. He knows all about Andrew Lang, Philip Bourke Marston et al, & has invited me to call on him. Shall go sometime this week. I also fed an Annex⁴ girl on chocolate and bilious cocoanut cakes. I did not eat any myself, though she urged me to most earnestly. After that I wheedled her off into the Prof's library and we talked for an hour on French novels. She thinks they are shocking in their immorality—and

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hopes I will not read them. They will injure me. This society chatter is something that I was not made for. I can handle one person very well, but when I am to make myself agreeable to the multitude, I feel like a lost orphan. There were a dozen or so in the library working the same dodge (so to speak) so I was not lonesome. ~~Th~~Her {=Her} simplicity and innocence, or mine, was startling. I do not think she was trying to seduce me, however, her eyes were too large and earnest. I do not ~~remember~~ remember her name, but she was apparently growing quite fond

of me when I left her. She seemed to have a sisterly regard for me that gave me a "temporary feeling of safety for the time being". Her nose was a trifle one sided and she carried a whole arboretum on her bosom.

Shall be in G. in three weeks.

Yours

Robinson.

HCL US, 43-44.

NOTES

1. "The Naulahka" by Rudyard Kipling and Wolcott Balestier. {Subtitled "A Story of West and East." Published in serial form in the *Century Magazine* between November 1891 and July 1892 --"a rather mechanical stab at the adventure story" (Mallett 73)}.
2. Edgar W. Nye (1850-1896), generally known by his pseudonym, was one of a group of literary comedians popular at the end of the nineteenth century. Characterized by boisterous humor highly dependent on puns, misquotations, anticlimactic statements, and general incongruity, they often enhanced their popularity by giving humorous lectures. Bill Nye often appeared with James Whitcomb Riley.
3. *Don Orsino*.
4. The Harvard Annex, subsequently Radcliffe College from 1894 until its full merger with Harvard in 1999. Established in 1879, as a private institution, to provide a superior education to young women by Harvard professors. The criteria for admission were the same as those for Harvard, and Annex students had access to Harvard's library. (SL)