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To Harry de Forest Smith - January 23, 1893

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Cambridge, Jan^a 22 [=23] - ' ~~92~~ -93

My dear Smith.

It is Monday noon and I will write you something now while I have a good chance. I have several minutes before lunch & after that I must grind for Psychology. The mid-year examinations will begin Wednesday, and my first (French) comes Thursday. College shuts down for about three weeks in which time the students are supposed to be at work. I have made great resolutions but do not expect they will amount to much. They never do, as regards my studies. For instance, in French I am supposed to be thoroughly acquainted with the first book of La Fontaine's fables and able to quote four of them from memory, Les Trois Mousquetaires, Marianne (Geo. Sand)² "Les Freres Colombe" (G. le Peyrebrune)¹ and some odd plays. But the bulk of the exam. will be the translation of English into French, and that is where I am generally at

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sea. The German does not worry me—though I shall probably make a botch of the composition. I can get through the translation in some way or other.--I am very happy to ~~say~~^b that I am at last able to send you a copy of the "Nation". My first number came Saturday, so you may hereafter look for it with my letter—that is when I send it. I will try to be reasonably regular however, and hope you will find no cause for complaint.--No, I don't quite understand the paragraph in the "Critic" about Blackmore and Hardy.¹ I should think that was enough to damn a paper of its character as a reliable sheet for reference. There is no excuse for such a blunder. It may be a printer's error, but I can hardly understand what the proof-reader was doing. I doubt if you find the copy of the "Nation" very entertaining; it is not a star number, and for that matter I am sure that I

^a WA adds a period here.

^b WA has "to <to> say". In the holograph, the aborted "to" is written directly under the "s" of "say," which is why I have transcribed it thus.

shall have to educate myself into reading it. Did

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you ever meet a fellow brought up on the New York Tribune? If you have you will understand what I mean.--I have not been doing much of any reading lately—except an occasional story in the magazines, which I am getting more and more disgusted with every day. I think Harpers is easily at the head now, and there is much in that that nobody but a scholar or a lunatic would care to read.--I am getting more and more soaked in Rudyard Kipling's poems, and I was glad to read of him in the "Athenaeum's" summary of ~~eng~~ English literature for the past year.⁴ In poetry the[y] mention Tennyson first,⁵ William Watson,⁶ and then the Barrack room Ballads, mentioning in particular, "Tommy" and "Mandalay"--"on the road to Mandalay, where the flying fishes play, etc"^c--Come you back you British soldier, come you back to Mandalay." And, by the way, did you ever think what a figure Kipling and his kid must cut among the Vermont farmers?

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especially when he (Kipling) goes to get his mail.⁷ I have been hoping that the English club here would get him to lecture, but have not heard it mentioned. After writing the "Rhyme of the Three Captains", it seems a little inconsistent for him to live in America, but ~~it~~ it must be confessed this [=that] he writes a good deal for effect—and he generally succeeds.

Well, the hands of my clock have come together and there was a time when I could tell when they will be in that situation again, but I could not now to save my life. I can see occasional hungry men drifting into Memorial from my window, and I will put on my goloshes and and {sic} try to find something to be thankful for. Think I shall blow in five cents and have some fried hasty-pudding. That is about the only thing one can depend upon here. Hope to get a letter to-morrow morning.

Yours as ever,

^c WA adds a period here.

E.A.R.

HCL US, 80-82.

EAR misdated this letter January 22, 1893.

NOTES

1. Georges de Peyrebrune (1841-1917) was a highly popular French novelist of the day. Her novel, *Les Frères Colombe*, was published in 1880. (SL)
2. *Marianne*, a novella by George Sand (1804-1876), published in 1876, and her last work to be published in her lifetime. (SL)
- 3.^d *The Critic*, January 14, 1893, attributed the authorship of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* to Richard Blackmore, p. 26.
4. See the anonymously written "English Literature in 1892" in *The Athenæum*, No. 3402 (January 7, 1893), 19-25. (SL)
5. Tennyson had died on October 6, 1892, and the literary world was naturally still in mourning. (SL)
6. Sir William Watson (1858-1935), a once-popular English poet. (SL)
7. Between 1892 and 1896 Kipling lived happily and in relative seclusion near Brattleboro, Vermont with his wife and two young daughters (both of whom were born there), at the cottage he named "Naulakha." (SL)

^d This is WA's note 1.