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To Harry de Forest Smith - November 26, 1893

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO HARRY DE FOREST SMITH

Gardiner, November 26, 1893.

My dear Smith,

I leave for Boston to-morrow morning, and my address for the first half of the week will be 404 Putnam Ave., Cambridgeport, so you can wire me there where I shall meet you. If possible, do so by three o'clock Monday afternoon, so I may know whether or not to get "Black Crook"¹ tickets for Thursday evening. I hope you have given up the idea of going by boat, but that is your business, not mine.

There will be no need of my buying any other tickets before you come - besides, we shall probably want to go with some other fellows - Butler, Barnard or Whitney, or some of your friends. There are almost always tick^ets enough to be had in the forenoon. We must have the symphony^b anyway Friday afternoon. Sincerely trusting that the departure may not involve any excessive urination on your part,

I remain,^c

Yours truly

E.A. Robinson^d

^a Written, with the caret, in black ink. In the holograph, the "k" and "t" have no space between them.

^b WA placed a superscript "2" for a note here, but he left the corresponding note space blank and I have been unable to identify the reference.

^c WA places these words on the line above, after "part,".

^d "Yours truly" and the signature are written in black ink.

-2-2

Nothing is there more marvellous than man!
 Driven by southern storms he sails amidst
 The wild white water of the wintry sea,
 And through the thunder of engulfing waves;
 And Earth - unceasing monarch of the gods -
 He furrows, and the plays go back and forth,
 And turn the broken mold year after year.

He traps and captures - all inventive man! -
 The light birds and the creatures of the wild,
 And in his nets the fishes of the sea;
 He trains the tenants of the fields and hills,
 And brings benæath^e {beneath} the neck-encircling yoke
 The rough-maned horse and the wild mountain bull.³

{Written in black ink;}

I have been been {sic} compelled to mix up clauses a little, but it has been done with always one end in view—to get the effect of the original. That is my theory of translation. If you like it better say "while the plows go etc. And is more poetical to me. "Light birds" overcomes the difficulty and will do whether the word means light hearted or light in everything. Which seems to be a question.^f

Ox.{?}

HCL Omitted from *US*.

{Typewritten, except where otherwise indicated.}

NOTES

1. An important forerunner of what is now the "musical," *The Black Crook*, with book by Charles M. Barras and music by various composers, opened on Broadway in 1866 and proved highly successful through various revivals and tours in the last decades of the 19th century. (SL)
- 2.WA includes this enclosure with the letter to Smith of October 28, 1894. See footnotes x, y and z of that letter. (SL)
- 3.^g EAR subsequently revised some of these lines and included them in "Captain Craig":
 "Of all the many marvelous things that are,
 Nothing is there more marvelous than man,"

^e The "e" is typed directly over an "a".

^f These are the last two words of the previous line.

^g This note has been moved from its original place as note 1 of the letter to Smith, October 28, 1894.

Said Sophocles; and he lived long ago;
"And earth, unending ancient of the gods
He furrows; and the ploughs go back and forth,
Turning the broken mould, year after year."

See James A. Notopoulos, "Sophocles and 'Captain Craig'," *The New England Quarterly*, XVII
(March 1944), 109.