

Colby



Colby Quarterly

Volume 2
Issue 1 *February*

Article 4

February 1947

A New Poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cq>

Recommended Citation

Colby Library Quarterly, series 2, no.1, February 1947, p.12-13

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colby Quarterly by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Colby.

12 Colby Library Quarterly

Only five of the twenty-six copies now located in public or institutional libraries are outside of New England.

"Some day," Robinson is said to have remarked as he gave a copy of *The Torrent* to his schoolmate Will Gay, "some day that's going to be worth something." The passage of half a century has proved Robinson right.



A NEW POEM BY EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

IN assembling the forty-three poems which he printed in *The Torrent and The Night Before*, Robinson put in the twenty-seventh place a series of eight-line stanzas entitled "For Calderon." Apparently the poet came to believe that the publication of this poem had been a mistake, for a year later, when he reprinted most of *The Torrent* in *The Children of the Night*, he suppressed "For Calderon" and he never thereafter revived it.

In place of "For Calderon" and the similarly suppressed "Poem for Max Nordau" (No. 41 in *The Torrent*), Robinson printed sixteen new poems in *The Children of the Night* in 1897. The most persistently followed form in this group was one that Robinson called simply "octave." No. 16 in *The Children* was "Two Octaves" and No. 53 was entitled merely "Octaves," a group of twenty-five of them. This total of twenty-seven octaves does not, however, exhaust the list of Robinson's work in this metrical form. For he wrote at least one more which seems never to have achieved print. He wrote it out and sent it to Miss Edith Brower, of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. She pasted this Octave into her copy of *The Torrent*, one that Robinson sent her in January 1897. This copy—presented to Colby College by Mr. H. B. Collamore, a member of its Board of Trustees—was the copy that attracted most attention when it was placed on exhibition in the Treasure Room last December.

Robinson had been called a "pessimist" by one of the reviewers of *The Torrent*. To the Literary Editor of *The*

Colby Library Quarterly 13

Independent the poet wrote on December 19, 1896: "I wish you would read *The Torrent*, *The Children of the Night*, and *Two Sonnets*, and then ask yourself if I am a pessimist." Miss Brower seems to have written Robinson, denouncing the critic who was so blind as to call the poet a pessimist; *he* was no pessimist; he was an idealist. In reply Robinson wrote:

IDEALIST?—Oh yes, or what you will,
I do not wrangle any more with names—
I only want the Truth. Give me the Truth,
And let the system go; give me the Truth,
And I stand satisfied. Fame, glory, gold,—
Take these, and keep them. They were never mine—
I do not ask for them. I only ask
That I, and you, and you, may get the Truth!
E. A. R.

With the kind permission of the poet's niece, Mrs. William Nivison, the COLBY LIBRARY QUARTERLY here has the honor of being the first to print this interesting Octave,—preserved all these years for us in Miss Brower's copy of *The Torrent*. Members of the Colby Library Associates and subscribers to this QUARTERLY thus acquire a genuine Robinson first edition!



RECENT GIFTS TO THE COLBY LIBRARY

FROM Miss Olive Floyd, of South Lincoln, Massachusetts, we have received two splendid letters written by Sarah Orne Jewett to Miss Floyd's father, the late Andress Small Floyd of Union, New Jersey. The letters from Miss Jewett were written in November 1894.

From Mr. George S. Chappell, author of the amusing *Rollo in Society* (New York, 1922), we have received a five-volume set of Jacob Abbott's Little Rollo books, published in 1853 by B. F. Jackson in Philadelphia. This is the first