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11-21-1889

## To Arthur R. Gledhill - November 21, 1889

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO ARTHUR R. GLEDHILL

Gardiner Nov<sup>a</sup> 21 – 1889

Dear Art:--

I recd your letter yesterday dated Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>. It must have been delayed in some way or else misplaced in the office up to that time, but I found it at last and was mighty glad to do so, as I had about come to the conclusion that you had no further use for Pine Tree acquaintances.<sup>1</sup>

I suppose by this time all your early <sup>h</sup> ideas of going through college have dissolved and your stentorian voice will never fill the the {sic} atrium of learning again, or your jocund feet press with elastic step the the ~~fe~~ vernal mead of the campus. Be it so.

I have [been] amusing myself for the past few days

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in making a poetical (?) translation of Virgil<sup>c</sup> third Eclogue—Palaemon.<sup>2</sup> I think it was this one you illustrated so carefully in your Cooper<sup>3</sup> during our post graduate course, when Prof. Stuart took us so kindly under his scholastic wing and led us for a second time through the maze of elemental instruction in loco parentis. Giles was not such a bad fellow after all.<sup>4</sup>

I have been thinking myself of having you come and eat a turkey with me on Thanksgiving but under the circumstances stated in your letter of course I must resign all claims. "Amor omnia vincit" saith the amorous Ovid in his Metamorphoses. Doubtless he was right; those old fellows generally knew what they were writing about, and that is more than I can say at the present moment. But you must pardon any

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<sup>a</sup> WA adds a period here.

<sup>b</sup> WA omits this crossed-out "I".

<sup>c</sup> WA has Virgil's".

vagaries in my composition for you know

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I always was a kind of "lusus naturae"<sup>5d</sup>  
 (Don't think that I sling in this Latin out  
 of pedantry—it is only because I know  
 no better--) and have to be humored according-  
 ly. I think that I shall have  
 to go down to Miss Turner's and and look  
 at your girl's picture,--by the way, what  
 is the fair one's name?--You have never told  
 me. My girl is still designated by the  
 character (x) unknown quantity doncherknow.  
 I am afraid, Art, that I shall have to  
 advertise in the Police Gazette when I yearn  
 towards matrimony. How would this do;  
 "A young man of good character and  
 unquestionable ability having wearied of  
 his hitherto el-elib<sup>e</sup> celibate life has  
 decided to appeal to the affections of the gen-  
 tler sex through the columns of this periodical.  
 The person in question must be blessed  
 with a liberal education, have dark

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hair and eyes, weigh from 110 to 125  
 and keep her finger nails clean. She must  
 be of an amiable disposition and not t[oo]  
 fond of soused tripe, as the writer draws  
 the culinary line at that article of food.  
 The field is now open—Correspondence solicited."

Think that would fetch one, Art?

It is as cold as the weather will permit  
 where I am writing and my fingers are  
 sensibly stiffening; and if I keep on  
 much longer the rigor mortis (more Latin)  
 will have me stretched out a cold corpse.

Give my regards to the unknown at  
 the turkey dinner and don't get married  
 until spring. Write when you can.

Yours E. A. Robinson<sup>f</sup>

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<sup>d</sup> WA adds a period here.

<sup>e</sup> WA has "<cl [?]>".

HCL

Gledhill, a boyhood friend and high school classmate, Gardiner High School, Class of 1888. Gledhill took the college course; EAR did not. After graduation Gledhill left Gardiner; EAR remained, taking an additional year of high school to study Milton and Horace, and at home furthering his study of Virgil. The mocking tone and the inflated language of the Latinate allusions in these early letters to Gledhill belie the underlying seriousness of purpose in EAR's study of the classics. It was during this year, 1889, that he realized, as he later wrote, that he "was doomed, or elected, or sentenced for life, to the writing of poetry."

#### NOTES

1. Gledhill had moved to Spencer, Mass.
2. See EAR's letter to Gledhill dated April 17, 1890. Two years earlier EAR had become "violently excited over the structure and music of English blank verse." In order to find out more about it, he made a blank verse translation of Cicero's first oration against Cataline, no longer extant.
3. Giles Stuart, principal of Gardiner High School, had added an extra year to the high school program.
4. Sport of nature.

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<sup>f</sup> WA places the signature on a separate line.

