11-21-1889

To Arthur R. Gledhill - November 21, 1889

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO ARTHUR R. GLEDHILL

Gardiner Nov\(^a\) 21 – 1889

Dear Art:

I recd your letter yesterday dated Nov. 4\(^{th}\). 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.\(^1\)

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

I have been amusing myself for the past few days in making a poetical (?) translation of Virgil's third Eclogue—Palaemon.\(^2\) I think it was this one you illustrated so carefully in your Cooper\(^3\) 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.\(^4\)

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

\(^a\) WA adds a period here.

\(^b\) WA omits this crossed-out "I".

\(^c\) WA has Virgil's".
vagaries in my composition for you know

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I always was a kind of "lusus naturae"\textsuperscript{5d} (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 accordingly. 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 celibate life has decided to appeal to the affections of the gentler 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 too 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\textsuperscript{f}

\textsuperscript{d} WA adds a period here.
\textsuperscript{e} 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.

† WA places the signature on a separate line.