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2-23-1890

## To Arthur R. Gledhill - February 23, 1890

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO ARTHUR R. GLEDHILL

Gardiner Feb 23 - 1889 [:1890]

Dear Friend Art:--

I rec'd your somewhat confidential letter some time ago and would have answered it sooner if I could have found time. It's all right old man; go ahead. I think I have mentioned to ~~Lus~~ Gus,<sup>1</sup> before I received this epistle, something to the effect that your affections were captured—perhaps you may have done so yourself--but you need not be ~~alarmed~~ alarmed by the fear that I shall break the confidence that you placed in me. I had just returned from Herman's hymeneal symposium<sup>2</sup> when your letter was handed to me. I must confess that it seemed a trifle strong at the first reading—I doubt if you could repeat half of it now<sup>a</sup>—but still I had no inclination to laugh at your rather tempestuous rhetoric. You know I am different from most people;-- Is that why you wrote it? If she goes back on you, Art, all you

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will have to do is to lay back and become a skeptic, misanthrope, misogynist and pessimist and let the whole race of womankind go to the devil, or "dree your weird"<sup>3</sup> through the lonely years consoling your self with the poet's lines (not mine)--

"'Tis better to have loved and lost  
Than never to have loved at all."<sup>4</sup>

I wonder what the effect would be if I were to be caught in the same trap as yourself?--Basta! Basta! As 'Bulwers':<sup>b</sup> Pocket Cannibal was wont to say in "What will he do with it?"<sup>5</sup>--Did you ever read it? Tis one of the best things ever written. At present I am keeping time for the Oakland Ice Co and my time is pretty well taken up. I have had the very devil of a cough for the past week and I assure you that it has been

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<sup>a</sup> WA omits "half of it".

<sup>b</sup> The transcription proves particularly challenging here. The text above is the closest rendering I could make to what I can see on the page. EAR seems to have wished to enclose "Bulwer" within single quotation marks (since the novel was published under a pseudonym). What appears as a superscripted semicolon after the novelist's name is in my reading an error, and a second single quotation mark was actually intended. It is quite likely that EAR simply did not intend any of these markings as a possessive apostrophe, and indeed he often does leave these out. WA omits the first single quotation mark and reads "Bulwer's".

no pleasant affair to get up a[t] 5.00 and go down on the river to shiver all day. "But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that honor feels"<sup>6</sup>—sore-throat as well.

Trusting that Shakspeare aphorism "The course of true love, etc."<sup>7c</sup> will be contradicted in your case I remain the same old

anchorite.  <sup>8</sup> Don't leave off smoking.

HCL EAR misdated this letter. {No signature.}

#### NOTES

1. E.G. Moore.
2. The bachelor party for the groom. Herman E. Robinson and Emma L. Shepard were married February 12, 1890 in Farmingdale. According to the family legend, as reported by Chard Powers Smith, both Dean and EAR were also in love with Emma and neither attended the wedding. {Donaldson affirms, however, that EAR "did attend the bachelor party" (67).}
3. Endure your fate.
4. Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, xxvii. Note the implication of EAR's parenthetical "not mine." {WA is apparently pointing here to EAR's own doomed love for his brother Herman's wife, Emma. According to Scott Donaldson, she was "the one lasting love of his life" (6). For more on this letter and its interpretation, see Donaldson, p. 67.}
5. Popular humorous novel by Bulwer-Lytton, first published pseudonymously (Pisistratus Caxton) in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1858.
6. Tennyson, "Locksley Hall," l.105. If "the legend" of EAR's love for Emma Shepard Robinson is true, this reference to Tennyson's story of love rejected for a marriage of worldly gain takes on added significance, as does the previous allusion to *In Memoriam*.
7. "The course of true love never did run smooth." From *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1.1.134. (SL)
8. On this symbol, see letter to Gledhill, January 3, 1890, note 6. (SL)

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<sup>c</sup> WA omits ", etc."