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8-14-1890

To Arthur R. Gledhill - August 14, 1890

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO ARTHUR R. GLEDHILL

Gardiner Aug 14 - 1890

Dear Friend Art;

I received your letter of condolence a short ago, time ^ which I read with much interest. While it is very pleasant to know that our friends have an interest in us, at the same time they occasionally express thoughts which we never supposed they had entertained. You say that you can now look back upon the last two years of your school life and realize what a fool you were. Think it over, Art. You say that the future stretches before you to be seized with earnest hands, etc. Seize it, by all means, but dont regret that you were enabled to enjoy two years as you never will again. No, Art in all probabilities you never will again browse over Cooper's Virgil or climb into the laboratory to smoke the fragrant academic pipe; you will never roost upon the belfry rafters and chew the contemplative weed that you and I have now forsaken; you will never again balance yourself to open that well-remembered scuttle to let the fumes escape and float away into the winter air, and you [will] hear no more the melted snow and ice dropping upon the tin roof over your head. It is possible, but hardly probable, we, that ^ the old "three", together with Doc¹ will take another "half-

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day off", and stretch ourselves beneath the shadows of the "Pines" (You will hear the wind soughing through them yet, sometime when you are alone in after years) as we did in the fall of '87. Yes, it is all over. It will be many years before I shall drift across the common and find you stretched upon the seat where the four walks meet near the G.H.S., a little after one o'clock and the "check"² will be produced as in days or yore. Remember from Virgil:

"Forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit,"³

and dont for God's sake labor under the delusion that those days were wasted. This world is at best a diabolically practical place and if you are able to draw a little poetry somewhere out of the past—do it. I know how you feel now with your "large and loyal love", but I tell you what is [=it] is, old man, the time will come when you will realize that life was something before you came to Spencer. Some dark night you will lie awake and listen to the rain falling

upon the roof; your thoughts will travel down to Maine, and
your head will be full of belfries, laboratories, "arma virumque
cano"⁴ Miss Austin, Stuart, Moore, Sawyer, and you may
gaze into the phantom clouds of smoke and meet the face of
Robinson.

HCL Previously published, in part, in *SL*, pp. 5-6.

NOTES

1. Dr. Alanson Tucker Schumann, EAR's next-door neighbor and family physician, a prolific writer of versess under whose tutelage EAR cut his metrical eye teeth. For further details, see p.
2. ". . . the name of the tobacco they cherished most and they plastered the beams with the brass baggage-checks which came with every package." Hagedorn, pp. 41-42.
3. Perchance even these things it will be delightful to remember hereafter.
4. "Arms and the man I sing," the opening lines of Virgil's *Aeneid*. (SL)