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12-7-1890

To Arthur R. Gledhill - December 7, 1890

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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Recommended Citation

Robinson, Edwin Arlington, "To Arthur R. Gledhill - December 7, 1890" (1890). *Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions*. 18.

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TO ARTHUR R. GLEDHILL

Gardiner, Me, Dec 7 – 1890.

Dear Friend Art.

Whether I am to apologize to you, or you to me, for not writing before, I cannot say, but my impression is that my studious friend in Canton, N.Y. owes me a letter; but, as you are probably aware, I am rather a peaceable mortal and not much of a fighter. I will let that all go by and try to write you something to let you know that I am still among the living and still breathing in prodigious draughts of this bracing Maine atmosphere, which, by the way, is especially bracing to-day.

It snowed about six or seven inches day before yesterday but Nature was evidently not quite satisfied with her job and gave us three inches more last night. The wind is blowing like the very devil—Mehercule!¹ What have I said! The fact is, Art, that writing to a divinity student is entirely a new thing for me and if I slip in my writing occasionally and make use of a semi-ungodly expression (I never swear ~~out~~ outright) you must try to pardon me. You know that I am not given to wickedness—wantonly, I mean—and ~~and~~ am inclined to be wonderfully kind withal: did I ever refuse you a chew of tobacco in our G.H.S. day{s}? No; by the rood, no!

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Nor did you ever refuse me. I wonder how many of those tags² are left in the belfry now? When I went to school, after you had moved to Spencer, the boys in the senior (?) class used to wear them for badges on their coats. O sacriligious dogs!

Every now and then I think of the Latin poetry you wrote in those days, and that always gives me visions of the old belfry with its scuttle open two or three inches open to make an outlet for the unhallowed smoke that arose from [word scratched out (out?)] our clandestine

symposia. Of course, speaking from a practically standpoint, the the time spent in that manner was wasted, but I believe, and I pride myself that I am not altogether a fool, that in after years, when we are fairly established in the arena (if we ever are) that memories of those days will come back and we will regard them, not with contempt, but with a finer sense of realization of contentment than we have ever known yet. I may be wrong, but what would life be worth if it was all absorbed in this feverish drudgery of business. Now [word or part of a word scratched out at the end of the line]

don't think that I am one of those ~~ethera~~ ethereal, bubbling fellows that think the main idea of existence is to sprawl out under a tree in summer and rhapsodize upon the setting sun etc., I am not; but I do believe that a man should have breathing spells^a, so to speak, when he may throw off the yoke

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of the dollar and take a glance at what is given him to behold with[out?] a monetary compensation.

Three weeks ago to-day I spent Sunday with Smith at Bowdoin. It was a new thing to me and awoke all my latent desire for a taste of college life. For the past two or three months I have been harboring an idea that I may take a year's course next Fall in something (I have not decided what) at Harvard. You may remember that I was "contemplating" three years ago. Of course this may never come to pass, but ~~but~~ I can see nothing now to hinder it.

I have been reading Edna Lyall's "Donovan". It is a fine thing, being an intense character study. "We Two", a kind of sequel, I have just begun, which seems to be more of a study than a story.³ I believe you mentioned it to me sometime ago in one of your letters. (It has been so long since I have received one that I can hardly remember what was in them.) Now, Art, don't be so devilish chary (there I go again) of your correspondence, but write and let a fellow know what you are doing and I will try to answer you. Hoping there may not be a second "hiatus" as long as this last has been, I am

Yours as ever

E.A. Robinson

HCL

NOTES

1. By Hercules! (SL)
- 2.^b That is, the brass tags that came with "Check" tobacco.
3. Edna Lyall, pen name of Ada Ellen Bayly (1859-1903), popular English novelist and early espouser of women's rights. "Donovan" was published in 1882, "We Two" in 1884.

^a WA reads "space".

^b This and the following note are numbers 1 and 2, respectively, in WA's manuscript.