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To Arthur Gledhill - January 4, 1891

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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Recommended Citation

Robinson, Edwin Arlington, "To Arthur Gledhill - January 4, 1891" (1891). *Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions*. 20.

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TO ARTHUR R. GLEDHILL

Gardiner, Me., Jan 4 - 1890. [=1891]

Dear Friend Art--

I am afraid that I came very near digging a hole for myself when I expressed my desire that there should be no more such breaks in the line of our correspondence as had been of late, but remember that while you are surrounded by new scenes and new faces I can reasonably expect you to dive into the moving scene around you and overlook my shortcomings; while I, on the other hand am still buzzing—or crawling—around the same old hive and any voice from the outer world, any reminder of something or somebody that I once was familiar with, comes to me as something more than as passing incident. When I receive a letter from you I like to take out the old brier (I haven't chewed since June) and sit down by the furnace and read it, and wonder whether another year will find me in Harvard as a special. Tempus fugit, and the months will have to pass. Wait and see.

I took a damp-hool excursion with George Barstow, Wednesday afternoon,¹ to Oxbow. During the ride to Tucker I froze my chin; and my great toes were beginning to grow torpid as we reached our destination—that is to say, when we reached Tucker's,--about half a mile (or more) from the camp. This distance we were obliged to wallow through anywhere from 2 ft to 3 f of snow, "o'er moor and fen",² and when we came to the ice it was quite dark, save for the parsimonious glimmer

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[of] the clouded moon. Every step we would take over the ice would fill up with water. Of course there was no danger but the idea was far was far {sic} from pleasant considering the manner in which we were dressed, and the cold. When we did reach the camp at last we we[re] perspiring quite freely, but we soon began to realize that (the mercury would not warrant such luxury. An apology for a fire was kindled (which after a time formed itself into quite a proper glow and eventually we had a beef steak supper which went to the spot. The thermometer stood 25° below zero in Gardiner that night. We spent the evening smoking and reading Shakspeare and Tennyson; and at 12 o'clock George read the "Death of the Old Year"³ with great pathos: he was in about the right condition. But as I do not meddle with such liquids I do not suppose that I was able to realize the ethereal satisfaction of the recitationist.

Apropos of reading have you seen the last "Atlantic." There is an article by Prof Shaler of Harvard on "Individualism in Education" which is fine, though the ideas are not particularly original.⁴ I think you would like it. This system of examinations, as the word goes to-day, counting a hundred students as so many machines from the same factory, is all damned nonsense. Excuse my earnestness but I am sincere:

when I passed from the third to the second class in the GHS. I was conditioned, and no doubt I deserved it; but when I think of some that were not conditioned I feel like kicking a little. Vale--E.A.R.

HCL EAR misdated this letter 1890.

NOTES

1. December 31, 1890.
2. EAR may be alluding here to John Henry Newman's original poem, "The Pillar of Cloud" (1833) or to its subsequent setting as the popular hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light." It's quite possible that he was familiar with either, or both. (SL)
- 3.^a {By Alfred, Lord Tennyson, published in the 1842 edition of *Poems*.} The poem was especially appropriate for this particular New Year's Eve, for the opening lines read as follows:
"Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing;"
4. "Individualism in Education" by Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, *The Atlantic Monthly* (January 1891), 82-90. (SL)

^a This and the following note are numbers 2 and 3, respectively, in WA's manuscript.