

Colby



Colby College
Digital Commons @ Colby

Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and
Transcriptions

The Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson: A
Digital Edition

5-24-1891

To Arthur R. Gledhill - May 24, 1891

Edwin Arlington Robinson

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson_transcriptions



Part of the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Robinson, Edwin Arlington, "To Arthur R. Gledhill - May 24, 1891" (1891). *Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions*. 31.

https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/robinson_transcriptions/31

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the The Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson: A Digital Edition at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Edwin Arlington Robinson Letters and Transcriptions by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Colby.

TO ARTHUR R. GLEDHILL

Gardiner, May 24, 1891.

Dear Friend Art: -

In response to yours of some time ago, permit me to assume the fatherly for a little season and give you a little advice upon the subject of your studying short-hand as an aid in the lecture-room. It happens that I can speak from experience upon this matter, and I can assure you that if you expect to lighten the burden of note-taking by the course mentioned you will be tremendously disappointed. To begin with, the loss of time involved in a partial mastery of any of the Pitmanic - or any other standard - systems could never be offset by the benefits derived.¹ At least three or four hours of practice a day for say twelve or fifteen weeks would be required to familiarize yourself with the system to the extent necessary for writing with an ordinary longhand speed and readily transcribing the same. It is far easier to write ninety words than to read forty unless you practice reading continually from the very beginning; and if there is anything more dull and discouraging than transcribing short-hand notes for practice, I have yet to do discover it. Upon the whole, I have no hesitation in saying that a full course in one of the higher studies—if not in two—could easily be taken in time that would be required in gaining anything like a practical knowledge, or rather facility, in phonegraphy. Now Art, if I had not been through the mill

myself I would not say what I have, but the idea of your wasting hundreds of good hours, which might be spent in profit (or at least, pleasure) compels me to make some mild remonstrance. Believe me, it will never amount to Hannah Cook. I do not say that you will not be able to take down lectures, but it will be one of the most expensive transactions that you ever entered. Think what a world of good reading a man could do in five hundred hours!

But I will say no more about it now. Think it over yourself.

I have just read my friend Thomas Hardy's novel, *Desperate Remedies*. It is a great thing, both as a story and a fine specimen of rhetoric. There is no question about it, these English fellows have a finish that the American writer lacks; and the more I read the more fully am I convinced of the fact. They may lack a certain freshness and sparkle that characterizes the novelists of our country but there is a certain element of completeness and rhetorical ease that more than balances the other. I believe I have dilated upon Hardy before and, rather than tire you, I will wind up my string. It has not been a very long one this time, but I will try to do better when I write again. Let me know what you think of the short-hand business when you write next time, which I trust will be in the near future.

Yours as ever,

E.A. Robinson.^a

^a The signature is written in black ink in the holograph.

HCL Typewritten.

NOTES

1. Apparently EAR had taken some stenographic lessons the year before, at which time his attitude was somewhat different. At least the experience resulted in a poem of praise to the originator of the Pitmanic system, "Isaac Pitman," *The Phonographic World* V (May 1890), 280. The poem was dated March 21, 1890.