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10-28-1893

## To Arthur R. Gledhill - October 28, 1893

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO ARTHUR R. GLEDHILL

Gardiner<sup>a</sup> Me<sup>b</sup>, Oct<sup>c</sup> 28 -<sup>d</sup> '93

My dear Gledhill,

Your letter came some time ago, and I would have answered it before this if I had not lost it in some way. You see I was not sure of your address. All I remember about that part of it is that the envelope was post marked<sup>e</sup> Fort Plain. What you may have said about your address in what you wrote has skipped<sup>f</sup> my memory. I was chiefly interested in the letter itself.

You and Ed are making me feel old, with your marrying and looking out for yourself—excuse me,<sup>g</sup>—yourselves. I do not see any immediate chance of amounting to any-

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thing though I have by no means given the thing up. This itch for authorship<sup>1</sup> is worse than the devil and about spoils a man for anything else. Perhaps I have never given you to understand that this is what ails me, but such is the case. I will make a clean confession and say that writing has been my dream ever since I was old enough to lay a plan for an air castle. Now for the first time I seem to have something like a favorable opportunity and this winter I shall make a beginning. If I make a failure of it, and the chances are about ten to one that I shall, my life will be a disappointment and a failure. I do not know much about the ways of successful men, and the thing called "business" was always a bugbear and a mystery to

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<sup>a</sup> WA reads a comma here.

<sup>b</sup> WA adds a period here.

<sup>c</sup> WA adds a period here.

<sup>d</sup> WA omits the dash.

<sup>e</sup> WA has "postmarked".

<sup>f</sup> WA transcribes "slipped" and suggests "skipped?" in square brackets.

<sup>g</sup> WA omits the comma.

me. Business men are necessities I sup-

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pose, and all I ask of them is to keep themselves as such out of my way. If I had a little of your general intellect, and faculty of making yourself popular wherever you go, life would be a different thing for me. I have lived nearly twenty four years and am thankful chiefly that I haven't them to live over again<sup>h</sup> So you see my life hasn't been such a pleasant affair as some men's seem to be. Perhaps it is partly my own fault, but I hardly understand how it can be so to any great extent. Well, I will not growl on in this way. You are beginning the second period of your life now and I hope that you are as happy as your letter indicates. ~~The~~ [?] I do not imagine that you are rich, but do not let that bother you. My money has all gone to the devil in a bad investment and I am as poor as need be.<sup>2</sup> But that is all right.

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The loss of money is a small thing after all, compared with other things.

Sometimes I almost fancy I see you coming into the yard as you used to, with your hands in your trousers pockets and your mouth half full of tobacco. Those were good days. I suppose they have pretty much disappeared from your thoughts by this time, but it is different with me. Some little incident that gave me pleasure five or six years ago will come back to me in all its foolish simplicity and cheer me up to an extent that seems incredible. Were I not so much a fool, perhaps it would be otherwise. But then, about all I find here in Gardiner to interest me is what I conjure up from my own fancy and memory so perhaps I am not so much an ass as I am inclined to think some-

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<sup>h</sup> WA adds a period here.

times. Gardiner and its people have no

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charms for me, and I long to get back to Cambridge with a den of my own to do and think as I please in. Owing to many things of a domestic nature my life there was about one fourth as pleasant as it would have been otherwise, but for all that I am thankful for the time I was able to spend there. It seems more like a dream now than anything else, but I can feel that change it has made in my [life]. I am a better man with better ideals than ~~than~~<sup>i</sup> I was before I went, but I am afraid they are not the ideals to help me in the active walks of life, whatever they may be.

So you are a professor of mathematics. Mehercule!<sup>j</sup> You would not have surprised me much more if you had told me that you were the Dey of Algiers. I am glad for you

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all the same and hope that the Fates have many years in store for you and Mrs. G. and as many little G's as they see fit to send you. Your marriage did not surprise me any. I was expecting it at any time. Ed's did surprise me, as he is rather differently situated. I may be wrong, but I cannot get over the feeling that his entry into Wiley's tin-shop was a bad thing for him. But it is the thing that was to be, so there is no use in conjecturing what might have been the result if he had done differently. More than that, I am hardly in a position to criticize anyone's actions.

I will ask you to be generous enough not to give me up altogether ~~yet~~ for a time at least. I may do something to make myself respectable and eventually earn enough

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<sup>i</sup> WA places "that" entirely in angle brackets (to indicate a strike-through). Then he transcribes "than".

<sup>j</sup> WA has "Me hercule".

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to pay for what I eat and wear. I do not dare to look farther than that, at present. Write whenever the spirit moves<sup>k</sup> and be sure that your letters will always be welcome. It would be too bad to let our correspondence drop off now.--I do not know just where you are so will prefix Prof. to your name on the outside address. It may assist Mercury a little<sup>l</sup>--If it is not asking too much I should like a photograph of your wife.<sup>m</sup> if you have one too many. Do not judge my chances in literature by this letter, as it would be cruelty to me. I am inclined to be a little too colloquial in my correspondence<sup>n</sup> a fault which I shall ask you to overlook.

Sincerely

E.A.R.<sup>o</sup>

HCL SL in part, 9-11.

## NOTES

1. An echo of Juvenal's "scribendi cacoëthes," 7,52.
2. After Edward Robinson's death in July 1892, the finances of the family were in the hands of Herman. Much of the estate was invested in western land which depreciated greatly during the Panic of '93.

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<sup>k</sup> WA reads a comma here.

<sup>l</sup> WA reads a period here, before the dash.

<sup>m</sup> WA reads has comma instead of the period. Read as a comma.

<sup>n</sup> WA reads a dash here.

<sup>o</sup> WA omits the underline.

