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12-26-1894

To Arthur R. Gledhill - December 26, 1894

Edwin Arlington Robinson

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TO ARTHUR R. GLEDHILL

Gardiner, Maine,
Dec^a 26 – 1894.

My dear Gledhill,

I have owed you a letter for many weeks I think and now will attempt to write it. The reason that I have not written before is that I have not felt much like it. I am afraid that I have not been in particularly good spirits of late—another long "grouch". Things have not been running as smoothly as they might, but I have been philosophizing a good deal and begin to see the effects of it.

Sometimes I wonder if I am not a damned fool, after all, and feel very queer as I watch my old friends all going by me in the race^b Perhaps my turn is coming—I rather think it is—but doubts are heavy and the devil seems to be the boss of things. However, I work on in my own ridiculous way (like Bret Harte's "Dow"¹ and manage to see now and then a glimpse of the show. I don't^c think it amounts to very much, upon the whole, but I do not growl half so much as this letter may lead you to think.

Yesterday, which was the sorriest Christmas I ever spent, I passed in a pleasant place, viz.,^d Smith's. But there were things to bother me so I could only play that I was enjoying myself. Ordinarily the day would have been any event under such circumstances, but I am only glad that is [=it] is gone now and am in no hurry for it to come again. Christmas has an effect upon me

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which I cannot describe—something like that of the first hand-organs in the spring—makes me feel hollow and vaguely conscious of wasted time, or as I prefer to call it, lost time. Smith hopes to get married in June, but I tell him that he had better wait until fall so as to give me one more summer with him in the pines behind his house. I don't^e imagine that my words will count for much with him as it is impossible for me [to] talk of such things seriously without making an ass of myself. But, joking aside, there will be a great hole made in my life when Smith gets married^f He is my last really intimate friend within

^a WA adds a period here.

^b WA adds a period here.

^c WA has "don't".

^d WA has "viz.,".

^e WA has "don't".

^f WA adds a period here.

my call. When he goes, I shall be alone—except for letters^g which are more than they sometimes seem.

I read the first book of *The Manxman* some time ago and it bids^h fair to be great. I can see all sorts of possibilities in the coming pages, and I have ~~not~~ no doubt but that the author has made the most of them. Hav{e}ⁱ also been reading a little of Bret Harte "*The Luck of Roaring Camp &c*"² which is, in its way, as good as any thing can be. I have read some of the stories before, but so long ago that they are as good as new to me.

I find that I cannot write a letter today—only a mixed-up scrawl. If you cannot read it, accept my good intentions in lieu of words and write whenever you feel like it.—I send with this a copy of the *Critic* for Nov^k 24 which has one of my poetical "side issues" issues"³—not to be taken too seriously.

Yours most sincerely.¹

E.A.R.

HCL US,

NOTES

1.^m An allusion to Bret Harte's poem, "Dow's Flat" (1856), about a miner with bad luck who strikes gold right when he is about to commit suicide—in some ways eerily prophetic of EAR's own course in his struggles for recognition and financial security. The stanza EAR is alluding to is this:

Then the bar petered out,
And the boys would n't stay;
And the chills got about,
And his wife fell away;
But Dow, in his well, kept a peggin' in his usual ridicilous
way.

(SL)

2. *The Luck of Roaring Camp, and Other Sketches*, published in 1870. (SL)

3.ⁿ "Oh for a poet."

^g WA has a comma here.

^h WA has "holds".

ⁱ WA transcribes the "e".

^j WA has "etc."

^k WA adds a period here.

^l WA omits the period.

^m WA started but did not complete this note, writing only "Bret Harte's 'Dow.' ???" in the allotted space. The textual superscriptive numeral is mine.

ⁿ This is WA's note 2.