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Edwin Arlington Robinson

Mark Van Doren

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For the Centennial
of
Edwin Arlington Robinson

MAINE'S MOST ILLUSTRIOUS POET

Born: Head Tide, Maine, Dec. 22, 1869

Died: New York, N. Y., April 6, 1935

* *

*We cannot know how much we learn
From those who never will return,
Until a flash of unforeseen
Remembrance falls on what has been.
We've each a darkening hill to climb . . .*

* *

ROBINSON'S WORKS

- 1896 THE TORRENT AND THE NIGHT BEFORE
1897 THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT
1902 CAPTAIN CRAIG
1910 THE TOWN DOWN THE RIVER
1914 VAN ZORN
1915 THE PORCUPINE
1916 THE MAN AGAINST THE SKY
1917 MERLIN
1920 LANCELOT
1920 THE THREE TAVERNS
1921 AVON'S HARVEST
1921 COLLECTED POEMS
1923 ROMAN BARTHOLOW
1924 THE MAN WHO DIED TWICE
1925 DIONYSUS IN DOUBT
1927 TRISTRAM
1927 COLLECTED POEMS
1928 SONNETS 1889-1927
1929 CAVENDER'S HOUSE
1929 COLLECTED POEMS
1930 THE GLORY OF THE NIGHTINGALES
1931 SELECTED POEMS
1931 MATTHIAS AT THE DOOR
1932 NICODEMUS
1933 TALIFER
1934 AMARANTH
1935 KING JASPER

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EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

By MARK VAN DOREN

The reputation of Edwin Arlington Robinson was something he never attended to himself. His singular reticence—I can remember evenings in New York when he seldom uttered a word—was such that he preferred to have others, if they would, speak of him as a poet. His superb intelligence must have told him that his work was good—very good—but he was not in the habit of making claims for it, or of maneuvering opinion in its favor. The result was, and still is, that readers have to find him for themselves. They did so at the beginning of this century, and they do so now. His early poems, which are among his finest, moved people to read them aloud to one another; and in his later years there was a devoted audience for his long narratives, Arthurian or otherwise, whose members vied with one another in admiration and devotion. But he never pushed himself forward. He was grateful to those who reviewed him well, and wrote them exquisite letters in return. He remained to the end, however, a lonely artist whose pride in his work, if pride there was, he kept inviolably secret.

There is something very touching about this, yet it has nothing to do with the fact of his eminence among American poets, an eminence that will never be in question. Neither vanity nor the absence of it proves excellence in a poet. Robinson's poems continue to stand quite by themselves: his sonnets, his lyrics, his character pieces—his portraits of persons—no less than his extended narratives. He was a master of every form he tried, and that is enough to say now in his praise.

