June 1974

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Richard Cary

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Recommended Citation

Colby Library Quarterly, series 10, no.6, June 1974, p.372-385

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the willingness to pay attention, but trusting implies faith. Moreover, the directions have changed somewhat, for in the first stanza Luke Havergal is told to “Go to the western gate,” but in the final stanza he is told “There is the western gate.” Evidently he has made some progress already in his journey. He has made up his mind to proceed, or perhaps he has even taken the first steps in the direction of the gate.

In centering his poem on this particular moment, at the very first of the Divine Comedy, Robinson is stressing the vital point of decision that a man must arrive at and act upon if he is to change his way of living. Just what action Luke Havergal takes we do not know, for it is the moment of decision itself that is the subject of this poem. A Joycean scholar would most likely recognize this moment as an “epiphany” in the life of the protagonist.

ROBINSON’S FRIEND ARTHUR DAVIS VARIELL

By Richard Cary

For a taciturn, recessive man, Edwin Arlington Robinson had an astounding number of friends who could be classified as close or even intimate. A singularity of his relationship with each — for his correspondence clearly reveals no two sharing the same level or degree of Robinson’s sensibility — is that he rarely introduced those unknown to each other and otherwise made mention of little beyond their names. Except as they might meet under auspices outside his ken, he chambered and isolated one from the other, esteeming each for his private and exceptional essence. So it is that Robinson’s friends often chanced upon some unsuspected association, old in time yet utterly new to them.
A totem of many such cases was Arthur Davis Variell. One of Robinson's manifest cronies during childhood and adolescence in Gardiner, Maine, he turned up again in 1922 and they sustained an intensive renewal of companionship for seven years during the crest of Robinson's public career. Despite these circumstances it cannot be corroborated in Robinson's published record that he spoke or wrote of Variell to anyone not familiar to both of them in Gardiner. In his usual way Robinson seems to have sequestered Variell for his own intermittently absorption. Fifty-three letters and one postcard by Robinson to Variell, dated from August 14, 1922 to September 23, 1929, are now in Colby College Library, gift of the recipient's daughter Mrs. Howard Hart, and here quoted by permission of the poet's late niece Ruth Robinson Nivison. Empty envelopes attest the absence of at least two letters and obvious gaps in the dialogue indicate there must surely have been others, variously addressed to Waterbury, Connecticut; Deland and Miami Beach, Florida; Kennebunk, Maine; 375 Park Avenue, the hotels St. Regis and Somerset, New York City; Paris and Calcutta. Robinson, not addicted to staying at a single location for very long and given to traveling light, doubtlessly discarded Variell's communications to Peterborough, New Hampshire; 28 West 8th and 328 East 42nd streets, New York City; 30 Ipswich and 99 St. Botolph streets, Boston. Only one copy of a letter and one telegram by Variell survive.

Arthur Davis Variell was born in Gardiner on August 26, 1868, sixteen months before Robinson in Head Tide. He attended the town's public school then shifted to Maine Wesleyan Seminary at Kents Hill at the time Robinson went on to Gardiner High School. Variell prepared at Portland Academy of Medicine, was graduated from Bowdoin Medical School in 1894. For the next two years he served internship and took postgraduate education in hospitals and clinics in Portland, New York, London, and Paris. He practiced general medicine and surgery in Watertown, Connecticut (1896-1907) and in Waterbury (1908-1916). At this juncture he abandoned medical practice to take up business management, successively secretary and half owner of Waterbury Steel Ball Company (1916-1923), vice-president and half owner of Waterbury Lock and Specialty Company (1923-1928). He retired from active participation in
1924, reverting to medical research and extensive travel in Asia, Africa, the Balkans, and particularly Syria. For his profuse contributions to medical relief among postwar refugees and his researches in leprosy he was knighted and decorated by Portugal, France, Syria, Wied, Malta, Belgium, Montenegro, the Vatican, and elected to national honorary societies by other grateful sovereignties.

Dr. Variell was no less international and polymorphic in personal activity. His interests, as reflected by the clubs he joined, included athletics, the fine arts, boating, history, geography, and literature. He had a definite if inhibited impulse to write: his letter to Robinson is a high-comic hymn to "the juices of a certain [fermented] fruit," with versical embellishment, and Mrs. Hart cites a book he left in rough draft. Big game hunting and its possible furthest remove, chess, were among his prime diversions. And he owned to enjoying a lusty tale of mystery and detection.

There is no evidence that Robinson saw or heard of Variell for more than twenty years after they both left Gardiner permanently. How Variell discovered that Robinson was in summer residence at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough is not disclosed. Another colonist, perhaps one of Variell’s artistic friends, noting their mutual home town, may have passed the word along. At any rate Variell seems to have sent an initiating note, which Robinson answered on August 14, 1922.

Dear Variell:

I am not good at saying such things, but I hope all the same that you will understand how much your friendliness is appreciated, and how pleasant it is to me to get word of you after so many years, and to find you, apparently, on such good going. God knows what eruptions are going on inside you, but I trust that they aren’t very violent. If they are, you know how to keep the cover on. On the whole, I suspect that you are doing what the world calls fairly well, and rather better, and I hope that your interior life is calm. I shall be up to my ears in work for the rest of my time here, and so shall not even think of making any excursions outside. But I hope surely to see you in New York, and perhaps—if your invitation holds good—in Connecticut sometime this winter. I'm not yet sure where I shall be, but will let you know.

After this uncommitted foreword Robinson invoked the names and whereabouts of several schoolboy chums (Drew, Dorr, Smith, Atwood), and admonished in a postscript, "my only
name now is 'E.A.' — which is easy to say and to write, and serves every purpose." Protective of the time he must devote to writing and unsure of what Variell might turn out to be, Robinson warily left his escape hatches open. With customary caution he said nothing of himself and alluded only to persons long known to Variell.

The doctor was not put off by the poet’s nebulous promises. As Robinson pictured it to Harry DeForest Smith on September 1: “Arthur Variell rolled in on me the other day, driving a giant car and looking generally like a millionaire. We talked about all the old crowd, including yourself.” That was all until the week before Christmas, when Robinson resumed contact. He apologized for having been in New York a month without writing sooner, blaming “the proverbial damned thing after another”— indisposition after an oversize Thanksgiving dinner, “a rotten cold,” etc. He declared languidly that he might get to Variell’s place in Waterbury “sometime later,” though he was not averse to seeing Variell “whenever you are in New York with time on your hands.” He “would be glad to arrange an evening if you will let me know a few days ahead.”

Once again Variell seized the initiative, setting a time for dinner together on January 27 and leaving the choice of theatre afterward to Robinson. On this first occasion emerged the pattern of openhanded grace that was to mark Variell’s conduct toward Robinson through the whole interlude of their late renascence. To elicit Variell’s preference, Robinson sent him a news clipping of available shows,² fully expecting to stand the cost as his part of the festive evening. Instead, Variell reserved and paid for seats probably in excess of what Robinson had in mind, for on February 6 he avowed “feeling a bit guilty about those

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¹ Robinson early evaded the use of his reverberant full name, acquired under circumstances that both amused and repelled him (see Laura E. Richards, E.A.R. [Cambridge, Mass., 1936], 4-5). “Ed” no more suited his personality than would a sweatshirt. Of its diminutive, he told Edith Brower in 1898, “call me anything you like — anything but Eddie.” The favored family brief, “Win,” issuing from others, made him uncomfortable. “E.A.” was dispassionate, anonymous, barricading him from too near approach.

² Robinson’s slender judgment as to what constituted sterling theatre, best exemplified by his own futile attempts to write producible drama, is evinced again in this instance. Given the choice of Capek’s R.U.R., Ruth Draper’s creative monologues, Lenore Ulric in Kiki, Jeanne Eagels in Rain, David Warfield in The Merchant of Venice, John Barrymore’s Hamlet, and Galsworthy’s Loyalties, he singled out for recommendation Whispering Wires, a banal dramatization of a Saturday Evening Post mystery story rated “trash” by Channing Pollock.
tickets” and suggested they forego the theatre “when we get together again, as I hope we may before long.” The meeting unquestionably came off well. Robinson expressed himself greatly obliged and greatly pleased.

They convened many another time in New York while Variell lived in Waterbury or in the city itself, ordinarily for an illicit nip in Robinson’s room (Prohibition extant), then faring out for dinner. So deeply satisfying were these episodes to Robinson that he dropped his habitual mode of oblique praise, when Variell was going abroad, to say in straight-arm fashion, “New York will not be right this winter without an occasional glimpse of you.” Variell invited him for visits in Florida and Europe which Robinson smilingly declined, restricting himself to several treks to Waterbury, once to watch the fiftieth anniversary game in the Yale-Princeton football series.

Even before the affair of the tickets Variell had divulged his intrinsic generosity, sending a “most useful and unlooked-for remembrance” to Robinson for Christmas 1922. Besides a succession of unspecified “packages” and “objects” on subsequent holidays, Robinson also acknowledged cigars, cartons of cigarettes (his brand was Sweet Caporals), a cigarette case, a “Dog” from India (which for a while he feared might be animate and was relieved on arrival that it “doesn’t bark or require house-breaking”), a woodcarving, a Japanese “Socrates,” an old coin, and books, books. When in February 1923 Variell enclosed a check Robinson hoped his talk of “a possible contingency” had not been misconstrued, for he was “not in any immediate need.” “On the other hand,” he reflected, “with my gilt-edged dentist and my ticket to England to consider, I find that I haven’t the moral force to refuse.”

From Variell’s viewpoint Robinson’s end of the correspondence proceeded by fits and starts. Although in fact a voluminous letter-writer, Robinson rationalized the defect on the grounds of internal paucity. In May 1923: “all I can say is that I can’t write them [letters] any more to anybody — at least at this stage of my existence. Should I live to be altogether too old, it is possible that I may become garrulous, — but in the meantime you and all the other people I care for will do well not to measure my affection and regard with any sort of epistolary yardstick.” In August 1926: “my epistolary habits are not only bad but are
steadily growing worse. All my friends know this, and do not hesitate to tell me so, though for some reason or other they still remain my friends.” He had said that so often to so many that he may have convinced himself, and possibly them.

The second obstacle against regular communication, especially between 1924 and 1928, Robinson legitimately assailed as Variell’s bewildering “departure for far places.” In November 1925 Robinson was “not quite sure” of Variell’s Paris address; in January 1926 he wailed, “I don’t know where you are”; in December 1927 he had “no notion of an address”; and so on in the same vein as Variell hunted and studied on other continents and sunned himself in Florida. There must have existed between them a pellucid point of rapport else Robinson would not have persevered. As he couched it (March 14, 1923), “we cannot get into certain regions by the still primitive way of words. We feel before we know, and then we don’t always know.”

As became two men of broad reach and lively perception, they talked of many things, including ships and kings. Robinson eschewed portentous philosophizing in his letters, dispelling any such tendency with a deprecatory quip. For instance, he commiserated Variell on his entrapment in the “social racket and empty talk,” drily extending “my complete sympathy”; and with wry aphorism: “Very few men are contented, for that matter, and most of those few are damned fools.” Nevertheless he could hold to a serious line, as in this nostalgia-drenched Cassandra-cry:

This country has its advantages for the fellow whose main aim is to make money and whose other aim is to paralyze his insides with redistilled alcohol, but for those who like myself are engaged in neither of these pursuits, it’s a rather prosaic region. I don’t like to be reactionary, but I’m still half inclined to see the end of the world in moving pictures, radio, and prohibition. I think of the days when we used to read Beadle’s Half Dime Library behind our geographies in the old schoolhouse in Neal Street (it is still there, by the way, long since made over) and learn much to our advantage about Tornado Tom and Shorty and Chips and Chin-Chin. But why go back? It won’t do — and it won’t do any good. Harper’s Magazine will never again run Bleak House and Little Dorrit for two years as serials — and that may not be altogether bad. The bad thing is that they will not, from present indications, have any more B.H.’s and L.D.’s to run at all. Things are going too fast, and the scientists nowadays are beginning to be scared. (January 7, 1926)
Or this self-analysis of an esthete’s niche in a commercial world:

I’m afraid that you, like most men of affairs, have a rather fanciful notion of the attitude of the artist towards “fame” and the price he pays for it. What he pays so heavily for is not fame, but the opportunity to do what he wants to do. Given a reasonable amount of intelligent recognition (and I have more than I ever expected to get during my life) he would push all the Morgans, Fords, and Rockefellers off the sidewalk if they were in his way, and would ask what the devil anyone was driving at who suggested an exchange of his possessions for theirs. Money, beyond enough to live on, is no more to the real artist than an extra Parker’s that you didn’t want would be to you. We are just about what we are, in spite of all the jargon of the “behaviorists,” who will soon be forgotten. Some people want money for its own sake, while others, like yourself, want it for what they can get for it. Others — a few others — would rather play the best game of billiards ever played than do anything else. And so it is, and so we are. So don’t for God’s sake be sorry for the price I have paid for whatever I have done. I should have been miserable doing anything else, and I thank God now for sense enough to realize that I am and have been one of the most fortunate of men. When I can see no one with whom I would exchange possessions, what the devil have I to growl about? I growl only when I can’t produce. (June 30, 1929)

Highly regrettable is the sequel to Variell’s request in his letter of February 19, 1924. “Please write me the definition of philosophy as you stated it the other evening.” An empty envelope postmarked February 21, 1924 verifies that Robinson responded promptly. The extracted lost letter probably contained the statement Variell solicited, perhaps a clarifying ray in Robinson’s Weltansicht.

Two topics — liquor and England — occupied them considerably and, before long, became inextricably commingled in Robinson’s mind. The 18th Amendment, which prohibited intoxicating spirits, was already an object of travesty rather than compliance, and the two friends likemindedly joked about their surreptitious drinking. Variell’s letter drolly laudates the “fragrance, aroma and bouquet” of the “limpid juice” of the grape. Robinson, free now of the frustrations and insecurity which beset him in the first years of the century, drank more “in protest” than out of compulsion. Not once but several times he assured Variell that he was “living altogether so abstemious and industrious a life as to surprise me after my slight loosening up of
last winter," that he was "high and dry," that he was riding "the joyless wagon" — "though as wet in principle as ever." He visualized Variell "coming upstairs again in New York with (or without) something illegal" in his pocket, planned quiet dinners "with a little moisture," hoped Variell would find some "tolerably good contraband Scotch in Florida, and no centipedes." And when the doctor set out for big-game country, Robinson warned him, "Don't get shot — in either sense of the word."

The unpredictable ingredients that found their way into the illegitimate booze served as an auxiliary guardrail, if guardrail he needed. Robinson was capable of taking the matter lightly: "No doubt I shall go to my grave, which can't be exactly an early one now, without knowing whether or not a certain, or uncertain amount of illegal alcohol and citric acid have been a benefit or an injury. So far as I can see, I am just about as foolish and just about as intelligent as heretofore" (August 2, 1924); or direly: "A friend of mine who has been absorbing too much bootleg Scotch woke up the other morning with his right arm paralyzed, which doesn't sound good. The doctor's giving him about two years to kill himself if he keeps it up. It's all very sad" (March 10, 1929). Gay or grim, Robinson had laid for good the specter that once haunted his Dark House.3

As early as January 1898 Robinson told John Hays Gardiner that he "should prefer London to New York." The pull of his British ancestry and rich literary heritage reinforced by the push of Prohibition, free verse, and moving pictures — "a triumvirate from hell" — moved him finally to make the long-aspired voyage to England. He sailed in mid-April 1923, stayed until the end of July, and was back happily at Peterborough the first week in August. London initially struck him as "feverish and on the whole desperate," but the hospitality of John Drinkwater, Edmund Gosse, J. C. Squire, John Masefield, Alfred Noyes, Arnold Bennett, May Sinclair and others soon revised his perspective. What he saw of England appeared a "paradise" he could easily inhabit "for the rest of my life." He returned, assertedly, because he found he loved New England's stone walls more than England's hedges, and because he could get no work

3 Hermann Hagedorn and Chari Powers Smith, companions and chief biographers of Robinson, agree that his drinking during this period represented revolt against a nonsensical law and that he could abstain whenever he chose. Many of Robinson's letters to others warmly reiterated these points.
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done.

His sole letter to Variell from London, after a month there, reaffirms both his altered attitude toward England and the en-
dogenous hold New England had on him.

Everything goes well with me here, and after a few excursions into
the country, I have about decided that London is good enough. Later I
may settle for a while in Oxford, but not until the notion of writing
takes on at least a glimmer of possibility. Sometimes I'm inclined to be
restless on this account — but my restlessness ends in my coming to see
that it doesn't do any good, and in having a lobster to keep me quiet.
(May 28, 1923)

In the next three years England took on for him increasingly
the idealized role of super-democracy, where an individual's
prerogative to drink whatsoever he pleased was not stupidly
proscribed. Repeatedly he educed England as Elysium, a place
to “break away” to whenever America's misguided paternalism
rattled his sense of inalienable rights. He thought of a “dry”
England with abhorrence. “Sometime or other I may get so dry
that I shall have to go to England again. . . . In England I find
everything that I have dreamed of all my life. . . . I'm getting sat
in my ways and have murderous instincts even when my best
friends try to tell me what I want to do. . . . You will find me [a]
teetotaler, under protest” (March 28, 1926). He grumbled in
this manner a number of times but the clench of his roots pre-
vailed. He never went back to England.

Before the appearance of his Captain Craig (1902) Robinson
frequently interlaced his letters with extended critiques of books
he was reading or had recently read. Later he compressed his
reactions austerely. His remarks to Variell on books and authors
are correspondingly brief. One exploratory quiz he dismissed
bluntly: “My knowledge of South American poets is rather shad-
owy, I fear. It is hard enough to keep up with North America.”
On Christmas day 1923 he assured Variell that “Wells's Outline
will tell you a lot — partly truth, partly imaginary — about the
races.” (Robinson had some foreboding ethnic ideas of his own,
and considered H. G. Wells a false prophet.)4 When Variell
sent him Robert Boudry's Le Valet de Coeur Robinson admitted

4 For one instance see Richard Cary, editor, Edwin Arlington Robinson's
Letters to Edith Brower (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 198; for another, Ridgeley
Torrence, editor, Selected Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson (New York,
1940), 84.
ignorance of the author but promised to read it “on your strong recommendation,” adding at large, “Most of the new Frenchmen that I have tried have been thin and rather disappointing, but I’ll hope that this is better. Anyhow, you make it look as if it were going to startle me — if anything can do that any more.”

On August 20, 1926 Robinson announced himself “surprised and mightily pleased” on receiving a new edition of François Villon’s *Oeuvres* in three volumes, bound handsomely in calf, with panels, raised bands, silk ribbon, and gold-stamp, suitably inscribed by the donor. Robinson offered no opinion on Villon. Although not mentioned in this set of Robinson’s letters (further token that more than a few failed to survive), three other books equally resplendent and duly autographed by Variell reached Robinson in this period from Paris: Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Gautier’s *Émaux et Camées*, and *Oeuvres de Henri de Régnier.*

In the work of his contemporary Ernest Hemingway, Robinson discerned a new and not entirely felicitous trend. While *A Farewell to Arms* was still issuing serially he alerted Variell, “If you want to see how things have changed you might read Hemingway’s new novel, now running in *Scribner’s Magazine* — May, June, etc. They stopped it in Boston.” Six weeks later he elucidated: “I called your attention to the Hemingway novel to show you how times have changed things in the house of Scribner, not because I thought you would find anything in it that you didn’t know before. It is clever, but hardly more than that.” He seemed less disturbed about another contemporary, thanking Variell “for the Mussolini [John Hearley’s *Pope or Mussolini*], which I’m glad to have and shall read as soon as I’m done with a Balzac novel,” explaining further that “The only time I have for reading is an hour or two in the evening.”

Evenings he distinctly preferred to reserve for a “nourishing” detective story, or two. He read the prototype, Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone*, revelled in the current masters E. Phillips Oppenheim, Edgar Wallace, Erle Stanley Gardner, and Valentine Williams, while insatiably devouring uncounted lesser figures. He need not have urged, “Send along a detective yarn whenever you have a good one that is lying idle”; Variell fed his appetite

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5 All four titles are now in the Edwin Arlington Robinson Memorial Room of Colby College Library.
by the batch. On August 24, 1929 Robinson wrote him: “Many thanks for the three thrillers, which are a good prescription for a tired brain. When night comes I’m good for nothing but a bad game of pool and a stealthy sleuth. The world must be full of brains just like mine, or there wouldn’t be so many men and women sitting up nights — trying to make money by writing for them.” After “months of work at high pressure,” i.e., summers at Peterborough, no anodyne afforded him sunnier respite.

About his activities outside writing, Robinson imparted trifling slivers to Variell, news of his routine movements from New York to Boston to Peterborough or some variant of that etched orbit. On June 15, 1925 he veered slightly off course. “I’m going to Maine for a week, first to be ‘doctored’ at Bowdoin and then for a few days in Gardiner.” He did not report to Variell the outcome of this trip to Brunswick for an honorary degree, and to Gardiner and Head Tide where he looked up relatives, old comrades (mostly gone), and old haunts (mostly changed). While he was “glad” for having gone, he was commensurately glad to depart. To one friend he confided that the experience “on the whole made me a little melancholy”; to another, “Gardiner gave me the creeps when I saw it.” Once more the morose drama of You Can’t Go Home Again was played out to its foregone finale. Robinson never returned.

While still in his teens Robinson realized that he was “doomed, or elected, or sentenced for life, to the writing of poetry,” so he persisted at it with the zeal of moral obligation even though sometimes it occurred to him that “After all, perhaps I have written more already than anyone will ever read” (May 28, 1923). His credo draws a speck from Emerson’s theory of mystical guidance — Michelangelo building “better than he knew.” “In the meantime,” Robinson wrote Variell on July 15, 1925, “the gods amuse themselves, or forget themselves, in compelling me to keep on writing.” It was a bearing that kept him from becoming overly irate with shorthanded critics or overly arch about his accomplishments. Except when specifically impaled by an academic, Robinson dwelt with commendable brevity on his own work, exuding quiet satisfaction over another job conscientiously completed or discharging it with a deadpan

6 Edwin Arlington Robinson, “The First Seven Years,” Colophon, Part Four (December 1930), [81].

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Down East quip. During the span of his correspondence with Variell, Robinson published twenty-three individual poems and eight volumes. This is what he said about some of them.

"ANNANDALE"

"I'm sorry to learn that you have been laid up, but if you can read 'Annandale' aloud to your nurse, with her approval, everything must be going well" (January 20, 1923). Robinson meant either "The Book of Annandale" in *Captain Craig* (1902), reprinted in 1915 and 1921, or "How Annandale Went Out" in *The Town Down the River* (1910), reprinted in *Collected Poems* (1921).

THE MAN WHO DIED TWICE

"It appears to be making a good impression and I can't quite believe that it is entirely bad" (April 9, 1924).

TRISTRAM

"Spring is here and my nose is pointing to New Hampshire, where I hope to finish the long thing that wasn't finished last year" (March 28, 1926).

"Since early in June I have been working about seven hours a day on my long Tristram poem, which is now done—or rather ready to be done. But I know what it is and shall have no great difficulty in licking it into shape after my own peculiar fashion. It is really long, but you don't have to read it—though you will probably consider yourself obliged to try" (August 20, 1926).

"I left there [Peterborough] about the middle of September, having finished the long thing that has kept me busy for the past two summers, and caused me to bury myself in a vacant studio, and sleep, and forget all about writing—even to my friends. It appears that I can't keep up full steam as long as I could once without paying for it, and perhaps you will be glad to know that my next book will in all probability be made up of short poems—that is, if there are any more left in me" (October 23, 1926). Robinson did not publish another volume with new short selections until *Nicodemus* in 1932; *Sonnets 1889-1927* (1928) was made up of previously published pieces.

"I have just been in New York for a day or two, where I left the Ms. of *Tristram* with the publishers. It will appear, to your discouragement on account of its length, sometime early in the spring" (November 5, 1926).

COLLECTED POEMS

"According to my publishers' statement, my collected poems are going better with each year—which is encouraging and perhaps a little surprising. If you will look in on me sometime in the summer of 2026, I may be able to tell you whether my things are going to last or not" (August 20, 1926).

"In the fall the whole business is coming out in one volume—thirteen books in one, over a thousand pages. Why shouldn't I feel old?"
CAVENDER'S HOUSE

“I haven’t much to report except a new book, which you will not have to read. You don’t like blank verse, but you may possibly like the rest of it. It is beginning with a large advance sale, which I hope will keep up” (April 23, 1929).

“I doubt if you will care for it, as you don’t like blank verse. Have you ever tried to find music in it? It’s supposed to be there. Your friend’s criticism (I can’t make out his name) is for the most part sound and intelligent. I think he understands that the woman isn’t a ‘ghost’ in any accepted sense of the word. She is a projection of his own condition, and cannot speak except as he makes her. Consequently she cannot tell him anything that he doesn’t know” (June 23, 1929).

NICODEMUS

“I hope in the course of two years or so to have enough short pieces, in rhyme, to make a book that you can read. I’m glad to hear that you like ‘Annandale’” (August 6, 1929). Here Robinson meant “Annandale Again,” which appeared in Scribner’s Magazine for August 1929 and was collected in Nicodemus in 1932.

THE GLORY OF THE NIGHTINGALES

“I shall be grinding away all summer on my new long poem” (July 26, 1929).

“I’m sorry to tell you that my next book is to be another longish thing in blank verse, which you needn’t read” (August 6, 1929).

“My new thing will keep me busy through September, and I hope it is going to be good. You will not call it poetry because it is in blank verse, but there’s some poetry in it just the same” (August 24, 1929).

“I have written another book, God help me, and one for which you should rejoice. It isn’t the kind that you can read” (September 23, 1929).

Variell’s assiduous “jumping about” and “globe-trotting,” which had made receipt of Robinson’s letters “very problematical,” posed no less a hazard to packets of his books. In June 1925 Robinson writhed uncertainly over the fate of a Dionysus in Doubt he had mailed to Variell’s latest New York City residence, and inquired by the way about another book he had sent to Paris. He petitioned Mrs. Variell for a sound address, then hopefully dispatched a second copy. Four years later he pedaled through a similar cycle with Cavender’s House, this time from Peterborough to Miami Beach to Peterborough to New York to Kennebunk, Maine.

And at this point the correspondence foundered. Variell had retired from all professional ties and moved to his Kennebunk
home in the summer of 1929. On August 6, after presumably a number of invitations, Robinson somberly indited: “If you are a real friend of mine, and I know you are one, you will take me at my word in regard to visiting, and at the same time be assured of my complete appreciation of your hospitality. I have simply come to the time of life, or stage of decay, when visiting — no matter where — is a form of torture to me.” Only two more letters followed. In the fall Variell suffered a minor stroke and he changed base permanently to Miami Beach, where he died April 16, 1940. Whatever underlay the cessation of this re-vivified relationship at its seeming height (three reasons — expanding introversion, infirmity, distance — suggest themselves), it graphically illustrates by its character and content Robinson’s self-shielding modus vivendi of archipelago friendships.

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ADDITIONS TO THE ROBINSON COLLECTION: II

By Richard Cary

All four issues of Colby Library Quarterly in Edwin Arlington Robinson’s centennial year of 1969 were devoted to essays on his life and literary works. Each issue also contained an annotated listing of books and periodicals inscribed by or to him, and of letters and manuscripts written by or pertaining to him then in Colby College Library. An auxiliary list appeared in the September 1971 issue.

Further additions to our collection of personalized Robinsoniana are itemized below, bringing the account up to date. Categories are the same in numeration and title as previously observed.

ROBINSON BOOKS AND PERIODICALS: ADDENDA II

I. BOOKS BY E. A. R.