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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.