

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

Wes McNair writes: “I exit from this column celebrating Maine poets and their poetry with a poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson, which deals with an exit of its own — that of a man who died failing to live up to the high expectations of those around him. Like all of the poems featured in *Take Heart* over a period of nearly five years, today’s entry gives us a new way to look at the world we thought we knew, encouraging a change of mind and a change of heart. I’m grateful that so many of you have written and spoken to me about these poems and passed them on to others. May Maine’s rich offering of poetry, in individual collections, anthologies, and readings throughout our state continue to inspire you.”

Exit

by Edwin Arlington Robinson

For what we owe to other days,
Before we poisoned him with praise,
May we who shrank to find him weak
Remember that he cannot speak.

For envy that we may recall,
And for our faith before the fall,
May we who are alive be slow
To tell what we shall never know.

For penance he would not confess,
And for the fateful emptiness
Of early triumph undermined,
May we now venture to be kind.

Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. This poem is in the public domain. Please note that the column is no longer accepting submissions; comments about it may be directed to special consultant to the poet laureate, Gibson Fay-LeBlanc, at mainepoetlaureate@gmail.com or 207-228-8263. **Take Heart: More Poems from Maine, a brand new anthology collecting the final two and a half years of this column, will be available in early January from Down East Books.**