Poetry, A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe

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IN lazy laughing Panama—
O flutter of ribbon ’twixt the seas!
The low-roofed houses lie afloat,
White foam-drift of the Caribbees.
Under lithe palms that fan the sky
Down in each drowsy plaza there
Brown-footed girls go glancing by
With red hibiscus in their hair.
Low mountains, trailing veils of cloud,
In the two oceans dip their feet,
And hear the proud tides roaring loud
Where Andes with Sierras meet.
O Panama! O ribbon-twist
That ties the continents together,
Now East and West shall slip your tether
And keep their ancient tryst.
What are you doing here,
Young men, with your engines vast?
Sons of the pioneer
Who conquered wastes austere
And from ocean to ocean passed;
Sons of the men who made
Reaper and telegraph,
Steamer and aeroplane—
All the iron-handed things,
Swift feet and ears and wings,
That would make the old gods laugh
For the bitter games they played
With the secrets they kept in vain:
What are you doing here,
Young men, with your dredges and drills
That level the ancient hills
Into a path for ships?
Open your eyes and lips—
What do you see and hear?

"Oh, we build you the world's last wonder,
The thing not made with hands.
Our steel beasts gnaw asunder
The locked and laboring lands.
We choke the torrent's rage
And bid him his wrath assuage
By drowning the jungle deep."
Our Canal

In steel-locked chambers gray
We hold his floods at bay,
On wide blue lakes asleep.
Now shall the brave ships ride
Over the crouching hill
From eager tide to tide,
That so we may fulfill
The iron century's will;
That so our country, maker of tools sublime,
The nations may surprise
With this last gift of the grand old workman, Time;
His prodigy powerful, delicate, sentient, wise,
Perfect in strange completeness, strong to obey,
Strong to compel the world along its way
And praise man's triumph in its mighty rhyme."

But what are you doing here,
Young men, with your flags?—
With your glamor of joy severe
In the labor that never lags?
With your villages up the hill,
The screened little houses gay,
Where the good of all is the will
Of each in a grand new way?
Sons of the men who founded
New states in the wilds, to be
Garden and range unbounded

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For young Democracy;
Sons of the heroes dear
Who fought for liberty,
What are you doing here?

"Look, it's the same old fight
Out of the dark to the light;
Never the end shall be
Till the last slave is free!
Here while we dig the Ditch
We would build you a perfect state,
Where service makes men great
And the great scorn to be rich;
Where each one has his place
And a measure more than his mead—
A banner of joy to grace
The strength of the daily deed;
Where wan Disease, the slayer,
Is trapped in his poison lair
With Squalor and Want and Care;
Where the Work is a marching song
Sung by us all together,
Bearing the race along
Through good and evil weather.
Oh tell them, shout it through the halls of time!—
When the Big Chief unrolls his glorious plan,
Draws hearts and hands together in perfect rhyme,
Nothing shall be impossible to Man!"
But what are you doing here,
Young men, with your gates?—
With your bells and beacons clear
Where the hope of the whole world waits?
With your call across the seas
To the ships that circle afar,
To the nations that burn and freeze
Each under her separate star?
Sons of the dreamers brave
Who followed the Truth austere,
Of poets and prophets grave—
What are you doing here?

"Hush! we wait at the gate
Till the dream shall be the law,
He gave us our beacons and bells
Who first the vision saw,
And the fleets of the world in state
Shall follow his caravels.
Ghost-led, our ships shall sail
West to the ancient East.
Once more the quest of the Grail,
And the greatest shall be the least.
We shall circle the earth around
With peace like a garland fine;
The warring world shall be bound
With a girdle of love divine.
What build we from coast to coast?
'Tis a path for the Holy Ghost.

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Oh Tomorrow and Yesterday
At its gate clasp hands, touch lips;
They shall send men forth in ships
To find the perfect way.

“All that was writ shall be fulfilled at last.
Come—till we round the circle, end the story.
The west-bound sun leads forward to the past
The thundering cruisers and the caravels.
Tomorrow you shall hear our song of glory
Rung in the chime of India’s temple bells.”

O lazy laughing Panama!
O flutter of ribbon ’twixt the seas!
Pirate and king your colors wore
And stained with blood your golden keys.
Now what strange guest, on what mad quest,
Lifts up your trophy to the breeze!
O Panama, O ribbon-twist
That ties the continents together,
Now East and West shall slip your tether
And keep their ancient tryst.

To Colonel Goethals
and the other laborers
in the Canal Zone
LOVE SONGS

I
I love my life, but not too well
To give it to thee like a flower,
So it may pleasure thee to dwell
Deep in its perfume but an hour.
I love my life, but not too well.

I love my life, but not too well
To sing it note by note away,
So to thy soul the song may tell
The beauty of the desolate day.
I love my life, but not too well.

I love my life, but not too well
To cast it like a cloak on thine,
Against the storms that sound and swell
Between thy lonely heart and mine.
I love my life, but not too well.

II
Your love is like a blue blue wave
The little rainbows play in.
Your love is like a mountain cave
Cool shadows darkly stay in.

It thrills me like great gales at war,
It soothes like softest singing.

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It bears me where clear rivers are,  
   With reeds and rushes swinging;
Or out to pearly shores afar  
   Where temple bells are ringing.

III

And is it pain to you  
   That we must love and part?
Ah, if you only knew  
   The gladness in my heart!

Love is enough. Each day  
   I look upon the sun,
He loves me! I shall say,  
   Now is my life begun.

He loves me! Every night,  
   On the dark verge of sleep
The rapture will alight  
   And to my bosom creep.

Peace, for I should not dare  
   A keener joy implore.
My soul shall feel no care—  
   Until you love no more.
LULLABY

My little one, sleep softly
   Among the toys and flowers.
Sleep softly, O my first-born son,
   Through all the long dark hours.
And if you waken far away
   I shall be wandering too.
If far away you run and play
   My heart must follow you.

Sleep softly, O my baby,
   And smile down in your sleep.
Here are red rose-buds for your bed—
   Smile, and I will not weep.
We made our pledge—you had no fear;
   What then to fear have I?
Though long you sleep, I shall be near;
   So hush—we must not cry.

Sleep softly, dear one, softly—
   They can not part us now;
Forever rest here on my breast,
   My kiss upon your brow.
What though they hide a little grave
   With dream-flowers false or true?
What difference? We will just be brave
   Together—I and you.
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THE INNER SILENCE

Noises that strive to tear
Earth's mantle soft of air
And break upon the stillness where it dwells:
The noise of battle and the noise of prayer,
The cooing noise of love that softly tells
Joy's brevity, the brazen noise of laughter—
All these affront me not, nor echo after
Through the long memories.
They may not enter the deep chamber where
Forever silence is.

Silence more soft than spring hides in the ground
Beneath her budding flowers;
Silence more rich than ever was the sound
Of harps through long warm hours.
'Tis like a hidden vastness, even as though
Great suns might there beat out their measures slow
Nor break the hush mightier than they.
There do I dwell eternally,
There where no thought may follow me,
Nor stillest dreams whose pinions plume the way.
NOW

_Yosemite Valley_

It is creation's morning—
   Freshly the rivers run.
The cliffs, white brows adorning,
   Sing to the shining sun.

The forest, plumèd and crested,
   Scales the steep granite wall.
The ranged peaks, glacier-breasted,
   March to the festival.

The mountains dance together,
   Lifting their domed heads high.
The cataract's foamy feather
   Flaunts in the streaming sky.

Somewhere a babe is borning,
   Somewhere a maid is won.
It is creation's morning—
   Now is the world begun.

_Harriet Monroe_
HERMONAX

Gods of the sea;
Ino,
Leaving warm meads
For the green, grey-green fastnesses
Of the great deeps;
And Palemon,
Bright striker of sea-shaft,
Hear me.

Let all whom the sea loveth,
Come to its altar front,
And I
Who can offer no other sacrifice to thee
Bring this.

Broken by great waves,
The wavelets flung it here,
This sea-gliding creature,
This strange creature like a weed,
Covered with salt foam,
Torn from the hillocks
Of rock.

I Hermonax,
Caster of nets,
Risking chance,
Plying the sea craft,
Came on it.

Thus to sea god
Cometh gift of sea wreck;
I Hermonax offer it,
To thee, Ino,
And to Palemon.

ACON

*After Johnannes Baptista Amaitheus*

I.

Bear me to Dictaeus,
And to the steep slopes;
To the river Erymanthus.

I choose spray of dittany,
Cyperum frail of flower,
Buds of myrrh,
All-healing herbs,
Close pressed in Kalathoi.

For she lies panting,
Drawing sharp breath,
Broken with harsh sobs,
She, Hyella,
Whom no god pitieth.

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II.

Dryads
Haunting the groves,
Nereids
Who dwell in wet caves,
For all the whitish leaves of olive-branch,
And early roses,
And ivy wreaths, woven gold berries,
Which she once brought to your altars,
Bear now ripe fruits from Arcadia,
And Assyrian wine
To shatter her fever.

The light of her face falls from its flower,
As a hyacinth,
Hidden in a far valley,
Perishes upon burnt grass.

Palles,
Bring gifts,
Bring you Phoenician stuffs,
And do you, fleet-footed nymphs,
Bring offerings,
Illyrian iris,
And a branch of shrub,
And frail-headed poppies.

H. D.
THE CODE—HEROICS

There were three in the meadow by the brook,
Gathering up windrows, piling haycocks up,
With an eye always lifted toward the west,
Where an irregular, sun-bordered cloud
Darkly advanced with a perpetual dagger
Flickering across its bosom. Suddenly
One helper, thrusting pitchfork in the ground,
Marched himself off the field and home. One stayed.
The town-bred farmer failed to understand.

What was there wrong?

Something you said just now.

What did I say?

About our taking pains.

To cock the hay?—because it’s going to shower?
I said that nearly half an hour ago.
I said it to myself as much as you.

You didn’t know. But James is one big fool.
He thought you meant to find fault with his work.
That’s what the average farmer would have meant.
James had to take his time to chew it over
Before he acted; he’s just got round to act.

He is a fool if that’s the way he takes me.

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Don't let it bother you. You've found out something.
The hand that knows his business won't be told
To 'do work faster or better—those two things.
I'm as particular as anyone:
Most likely I'd have served you just the same:
But I know you don't understand our ways.
You were just talking what was in your mind,
What was in all our minds, and you weren't hinting.
Tell you a story of what happened once.
I was up here in Salem, at a man's
Named Sanders, with a gang of four or five,
Doing the haying. No one liked the boss.
He was one of the kind sports call a spider,
All wiry arms and legs that spread out wavy
From a humped body nigh as big as a biscuit.
But work!—that man could work, especially
If by so doing he could get more work
Out of his hired help. I'm not denying
He was hard on himself: I couldn't find
That he kept any hours—not for himself.
Day-light and lantern-light were one to him:
I've heard him pounding in the barn all night.
But what he liked was someone to encourage.
Them that he couldn't lead he'd get behind
And drive, the way you can, you know, in mowing—
Keep at their heels and threaten to mow their legs off.
I'd seen about enough of his bulling tricks—
We call that bulling. I'd been watching him.

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So when he paired off with me in the hayfield
To load the load, thinks I, look out for trouble!
I built the load and topped it off; old Sanders
Combed it down with the rake and said "O. K."
Everything went right till we reached the barn
With a big take to empty in a bay.
You understand that meant the easy job
For the man up on top of throwing down
The hay and rolling it off wholesale,
Where, on a mow, it would have been slow lifting.
You wouldn't think a fellow'd need much urging
Under those circumstances, would you now?
But the old fool seizes his fork in both hands,
And looking up bewhiskered out of the pit,
Shouts like an army captain, "Let her come!"
Thinks I, D'ye mean it? "What was that you said?"
I asked out loud so's there'd be no mistake.
"Did you say, let her come?" "Yes, let her come."
He said it over, but he said it softer.
Never you say a thing like that to a man,
Not if he values what he is. God, I'd as soon
Murdered him as left out his middle name.
I'd built the load and knew just where to find it.
Two or three forkfuls I picked lightly round for
Like meditating, and then I just dug in
And dumped the rackful on him in ten lots.
I looked over the side once in the dust
And caught sight of him treading-water-like,
Keeping his head above. "Damn ye,' I says, "That gets ye!" He squeaked like a squeezed rat.

That was the last I saw or heard of him.
I cleaned the rack and drove out to cool off.
As I sat mopping the hayseed from my neck,
And sort of waiting to be asked about it,
One of the boys sings out, "Where's the old man?"
"I left him in the barn, under the hay.
If you want him you can go and dig him out."
They realized from the way I swobbed my neck
More than was needed, something must be up.
They headed for the barn—I stayed where I was.
They told me afterward: First they forked hay,
A lot of it, out into the barn floor.
Nothing! They listened for him. Not a rustle!
I guess they thought I'd spiked him in the temple
Before I buried him, else I couldn't have managed.
They excavated more. "Go keep his wife
Out of the barn."

Some one looked in a window;
And curse me, if he wasn't in the kitchen,
Slumped way down in a chair, with both his feet
Stuck in the oven, the hottest day that summer.
He looked so mad in back, and so disgusted
There was no one that dared to stir him up
Or let him know that he was being looked at.
Apparently I hadn't buried him

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The Code—Heroics

(I may have knocked him down), but just my trying
To bury him had hurt his dignity.
He had gone to the house so’s not to face me.
He kept away from us all afternoon.
We tended to his hay. We saw him out
After a while, picking peas in the garden:
He couldn’t keep away from doing something.

Weren’t you relieved to find he wasn’t dead?

No!—and yet I can’t say: it’s hard to tell.
I went about to kill him fair enough.

You took an awkward way. Did he discharge you?

Discharge me? No! He knew I did just right.

Robert Frost
This is the song of youth,
This is the cause of myself;
I knew my father well and he was a fool,
Therefore will I have my own foot in the path before I
take a step;
I will go only into new lands,
And I will walk on no plank-walks.
The horses of my family are wind-broken,
And the dogs are old,
And the guns rusty;
I will make me a new bow from an ash-tree,
And cut up the homestead into arrows.

Behold how people stand around!
(There are always crowds of people standing around,
Whose legs have no knees)—
While the engineers put up steel work . . .
Is it something to catch the sunlight,
Jewelry and gew-gaw?
I have no time to wait for them to build bridges for me;
Where awful the gap seems stretching there is no gap,
Leaping I take it at once from a thought to a thought.
I can no more walk in the stride of other men
Than be father of their children.
My treasure lured like a bright star,
And I went to it young and desirous.
Lo, as it stood there in its great chests,
The wise men came up with the keys,
Crying, "Blasphemy, blasphemy!
For I had broken the locks..."
And when the procession went waving to a funeral,
They cried it again;
For I stayed in my home and spoke truth about the dead.

Much did I learn waiting in my youth;
At the door of a great man I waited on one foot and then
on the other.
The files passed in and out before me to the antechamber,
for at that door I was not favored:
(O costly preferment!)
Yet I watched them coming and going,
And I learned the great man by heart from the stories
on their faces.
When presently the retainers arrived, one above the
other in a row, saying:
"The great man is ready,"
I had long been a greater than he.

This is the reason for myself:
When I used to go in the races, I had but one prayer.
And I went first before the judges, saying:
"Give everyone a distance, such as you consider best;
I will run scratch."
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II VIRGINS

I have had one fear in my life—
When I was young I feared virgins;
But I do not any more . . .
By contact with them I learn that each is a center,
And has a period of brightness,
And stands epitome in that brief space
Of the Universe!
Ah, the ephemeral eternal!
In virgins' eyes I would live reflected as in a globe,
And know myself purer than crystal.

III NO PREY AM I

No prey am I of poor thoughts.
I leave all of my followers; I tire quickly of them;
I send them away from me when they ask too much; for
though I live alone
Still will I live, night and day . . .

There is not anything in me save mutation and laughter;
My laughter is like a sword,
Like the piston-rod that defies oceans and grades.
When I labor it is a song of battle in the broad noon;
For behold the muscles of a man—
They are piston-rods; they are cranes, hydraulic presses,
powder-magazines:

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Songs of Deliverance

But though my body be as beautiful as a hill crowned
with flowers
I will despise it and make it obey me . . .

Is the old love dead?
Then I shall await the new,
To embrace it more sturdily and passionately than ever
the old;
And break it under the white force of my laughter
Until it lies passive in my arms.
There is nothing in me but renewal;
If my friend bow his head over me I soon surprise him
with shouts of joy:
For in an instant I am again what I was,
Only with a few moments more of the infusion of Earth;
I tell him, the griever, to follow me and he is a griever no
more;
He raises his head and must follow.
Yet it is my battle, not his battle,
For in me I absorb others . . .
I hail parties and partisans from afar;
Not men but parties are my comrades,
Not persons but nations are my associates.
I shake the hand of nations;
For I am a nation and a party, and majorities do not
elect me—
I elect myself.
I swam in the sea, and lo!

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The continents assembled like islands off my coast.
My talk is with Homer and Bonaparte, with David and
Garibaldi, with China and Pharaoh and Texas;
When I laugh it is with Lucifer and Rabelais.
A pathfinder is my mistress, one hard to keep and unbridled,
I have no respect for tame women.
My friends and I do not meet every day,
For we are centuries apart, our salutations girdle the globe.
I have eaten locusts with Jeremiah;
I invite all hatreds and the stings of little creatures,
They enrich me, I glory in my parasites.

No man shall ever read me,
For I bring about in a gesture what they cannot fathom in a life;
Yet I tell Bob and Harry and Bill—
It costs me nothing to be kind;
If I am a generous adversary, be not deceived, neither be devoted—
It is because I despise you.
Yet if any man claim to be my peer I shall meet him,
For that man has an insolence that I like;
I am beholden to him.
I know the lightning when I see it,
And the toad when I see it...
I warn all pretenders.
Yet before I came it was known of me to the chosen, all
that I should do.
Every tree knew it;
Every lion and every leech knew it—
And called out to meet the new enemy,
The new friend. . .
What power can deny me?
It was known that I should do not one thing but hun­
dreds,
For I despise my works and make them obey me.
I have my time and I bide it. . .
It was known that I should turn no whit from my end,
until I had attained it.

Nothing has scathed me,
Nothing ever, nor ever will.
I have touched pitch, I have revelled in it and rolled in it;
Buried in mire and filth, I laughed long,
And sprang up.
I have loved lust and vain deviltries
And taken them into my heart—
Their dirt and their lies—and my heart was aflame
With a new fancy. . .
Not me can pitch defile!
For the Spring, my sister, rose under my feet
And I was again naked and white,
Ready to dive into the deep pool, green and bottomless,
The medium for heroes, since it is dangerous and beau­
tiful—
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The pool of Tomorrow!
It is because I breathe like fishes and live in the waters of Tomorrow that Death fears me...

How often I have intercepted thee, O Death!
O windy Liar!
Thou canst do nothing against me;
If I command thee to stand back thou art afraid and cowerest,
For I have caught thee often and punished thee...

I am the greatest laugher of all,
Greater than the sun and the oak-tree,
Than the frog and Apollo;
I laugh all day long!
I laugh at Death, I hail Death, I kiss her on the cheek as a lover his bride,
But the lover goes not to his bride unless he desire her;
I go not to Death until I am ready.
The strong lover goes not to his bride save when he would people his land with sons,
Then I too, I go not to Death, save it be for the labor greater than all others.
I shall break her with my laughter;
I shall complete her...
Only then shall Death be when I die!

*Orrick Johns*
EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE LAST VICTORIAN


Francis Thompson has not been ten years dead, but already Time's busy secretaries are writing out the verdict. For there is nothing in his verse or prose which only the future can interpret; he was not Shelley crying havoc, or Blake divining the song of the morning stars. Neither in the truth which he uttered nor in his art, its instrument, was he beyond the reach of contemporary judgment, which recognizes, in him, a colder and more austere modern descendant of the mediaeval mystics, one who, as a poet, was the last of the great Victorians.

Of these he was in certain respects one of the least important. The quantity and range of his work are slight; and his lyric strain, however poignant, is less inherently original than were those of Tennyson, Browning, Rossetti and Swinburne. But more than any of these men, his whole intellectual and spiritual life was shut up with the vision; in a narrow chamber, if you will, before a shrine which, to the Anglo-Saxon temperament, seems almost cluttered with gorgeous trappings, but yet free of worldly images and distractions. The fire of physical suffering scarred him to the bone, maiming his creative power and shortening his life; but at least it burned away much modern rubbish.

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Thus of all the Victorians, he was perhaps the most nakedly sincere, the most passionately alive to purely spiritual values. True, he clothed his spirituality in a mediaeval ritual of gorgeous images and colored words; such sublimated materialism was partly an inheritance of his faith, and partly temperamental with him. His eyes saw the vision thus and not otherwise, even as John beheld the jeweled hierarchies of heaven. For him the ultimate truth was thus veiled, but it was not well-nigh concealed, as with Tennyson, by the formidable structure of Society, or dimmed, as with Browning, by distracting vapors of emotional and intellectual delight. It did not contend with a crowd of rights and wrongs, of loves and hates and literary preoccupations, as with Swinburne, or falter beneath suspicion and cynicism, as with Rossetti, or hide behind nineteenth century passimism, as with Arnold. Francis Thompson's life was stripped bare of all these things.

His message is, of course, summed up in *The Hound of Heaven*, the world-old message of the spiritual conquest of man. Roman Catholic and mediaeval mystic as he was, the message is not essentially different from that of Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress*; and, as in the great non-conformist's allegory, the battle becomes a series of symbolic pictures. But the new series is more stern than the old, and we miss the flash of joy, the orchestral finale of ecstasy, at the end. In Bunyan lingered something of Elizabethan rapture; he could not
be robbed of happiness by all the world’s injustice, summed up in years of imprisonment. But Thompson was a child of a colder age; his religion was wrested from a mind afraid of joy.

In his intellectual attitude Thompson was a conservative. He was an orthodox Roman Catholic; he expressed in various odes the conventional British view of the Victorian era, Cecil Rhodes, the Boer war, etc.; and though in *The Nineteenth Century* he passes in proud review the new knowledge won by science, he has but a dim and fleeting vision of new “glories past its own conceit” for the “blind worm” of materialism. In his art also he was content with the old forms, and he clung, more lovingly than most of his contemporaries, to the old archaisms. The encrusted velvet of his poetic diction was further than theirs from the garb of living speech. Yet sometimes he attained a strain of fiery purity, and of rhythmic beauty rarely surpassed. Perhaps his finest moment of lyric utterance is the famous passage from the essay of Shelley. There, free from verse forms which often tempted him to an over-sumptuous ritual, he speaks quite simply and unconsciously, with bolder imagery and a grander rhythmic movement, than in even his finest poems.

But if he was not the prophet of a new era, he was a spirit beautiful and noble astray and well-nigh ruined in a world too huge and clattering and distracted; one who, his gaze thrown onward, saw a few things with
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singular intensity and told of them with complete sincerity; who, reduced to sordid penury, never whined or lost the vision. At the end he could truthfully say of his muse:

Her heart sole-towered in her steep spirit,
Somewhat sweet is she, somewhat wan;
And she sings the songs of Sion
By the streams of Babylon.

LINDSAY’S POEMS

General William Booth Enters into Heaven, and Other Poems, by Nicholas Vachel Lindsay. Kennerley.

It is not for nothing that Nicholas Vachel Lindsay was born in Lincoln’s city, and within eye-shot of the Capitol. Political idealism, typified by the dead leader, wages bloody war in his imagination with political shiftiness, typified by that faulty dome. In boyhood he must have brandished some old soldier’s sword, and sharpened it to a keener edge as he gazed at the forlornly shoddy tomb of the martyred hero. Perhaps the grim humor of the situation was embodied for him in that luckless monument, which was the best that America could do in the sixties to honor the memory of the greatest modern Man, the master-spirit who, among other details of his greatness, included that of being our supreme artist in English prose.

In any case the young Nicholas grew up a crusader,
one with a sense of the tragedy and comedy in all the
futile and costly ugliness around him. The people had
intended beauty—in that belief his faith was sure; it
was his business to strip off the cheap offerings, the
tawdry incrustations of false ideals, and reveal to them
the living shrine.

This, in his opinion, is what a poet is for. This
seems to be what he is trying to do in preaching his
“gospel of beauty,” in crying out against drink, prostitu-
tion, luxury, graft, and other forms of vicious hideous-
ness; and in pleading for bare beggary, true love, imagina-
tive thinking, clean living—all austere ideals. His
sincerity in this use of his art hardly admits of question;
the point for us is, how far does he, in this first book of
poems, get his message into poetry?

Perhaps it is not too fond a claim that at least he
makes a beginning, puts one stout foot on the slope of
Parnassus, in such poems as *General William Booth
Enters into Heaven, Eagle Forgotten, Where is David?*
And one would praise finely phrased lines, and passages
of high spiritual sympathy, in the poems about Poe and
O. Henry, and the light-hearted singing lilt in some of
the fanciful poems.

Mr. Lindsay is a poet with a message, a message
which his fellow-countrymen would seem to be in need
of. May all the prairie muses help him to utter it!

*H. M.*
Mr. Edwin Davies Schoonmaker’s five-act poetic drama, *The Americans*, is announced as a play “dealing with the daily life both of the masses and the classes.” This is enough to prompt misgiving. But Mr. Schoonmaker has put a great deal of life into his types, and his work carries with it the author’s passionate conviction, too often lacking in modern plays presenting social causes. It is true that the play bears the strain of that overwrought emotionalism, at once realistic and artificial, which is the signet of melodrama; but in spite of the forced nobility of his heroes and the mechanical inhumanity of his capitalist, he has nevertheless been able to infuse in his play a spirit of earnestness and passionate faith that raises it above its own envelope, as it were. His scheme is too vast to adapt itself to the practical concerns of stage presentation, and the speech of his characters has not been focused narrowly enough upon the need of concrete realization by the audience. His canvas reminds one of those panoramic views of Gettysburg, or the
Poetic Dramas

Crucifixion, impossible to visualize save by taking in at once a three-quarters' view of the horizon. Because the spirit of the play commands sympathy, the regret is all the more keen that it was not fashioned for immediate and practical stage use. It deals with original, native material and is thus a step in the right direction. For all the activity of our drama leagues and our endowed or subsidized theatres, their stages remain empty or are temporarily filled with foreign literary drama, to which the great mass of our people remain unsympathetic because these plays have no immediate significance for them. The drama ceases to be a moving force when it is divorced from life.

Mr. Ficke's modern version of the Faust legend is not divorced from life, in that it is supposed to give us the essence of life. But life extracted from life tends towards abstraction; and Mr. Ficke's characters become types of the "tough or tender-minded," in the phrasing of William James; they are generalities, puppets, on which the poet strings his philosophical action. The spirit of his message is so modern and so much in the air at present that it would be almost trite to remark that Mr. Faust might just as well have been called Mr. Nietzsche. Judged from the standpoint of poetic dramatic expression, one regrets again the lack of stage sense in conception, and a certain monotonous regularity in the poetic vehicle, apparent also in the drama by Mr. Schoonmaker. Iambic pentameter is a foot-rule supposed to govern all English
blank verse; but the organic rhythms of the classic prototypes transcend the measure.

In *The Wolf of Gubbio*, Mrs. Josephine Preston Peabody varies her blank verse with lyric movements; but her play is also a closet drama. Is it because our stage is so largely pictorial—and all our modern revolutionaries tend to make it more so—that we have lost, as dramatists, the power to endow character with life and action independent of scenic environment and explanation? At present, I believe that if the author were forced to omit all stage directions, and all indications of scenery, relying solely upon his own medium to express his dramatic content, we should come nearer to actable and consistent drama. A large part of the action of Mrs. Peabody's drama is in stage directions quite impossible of stage realization. "Out of the bleak refrain of the wind comes the voice of The Wolf, big and sorrowful," is the opening word of her play.

*Tiger* is a piece of dramatic propaganda, a brief one-act play moving swiftly to a striking climax. Were it comedy rather than tragedy it would be called a farce, since its action is based upon situation, and its characters are types whose parts in life seem to be externally arranged. Destiny, that *deus ex machina* of the old plays, was really far less external than the social conscience that disposes the fate of characters on the stage today. Mr. Bynner's characters are types too, in the sense that they are familiar in contemporary journalism. There is no
objection to this, but one wishes that he could have made them a little more human and less artificial. It would not have hurt the propagandist motive of his play if he had moved us to sympathy for their thwarted sense of life, their perverted instincts, the debased histories of their stunted souls. This would, rather, have given us that sense of time, that spherical depth beneath the surface, which is necessary to the permanent effect of any drama, however short. Synge's short plays have this permanence, just because they do give this sense of the relation of a part to the whole of life, this rounded completeness. Mr. Bynner's play is eminently actable, and the most interesting thing about it for us is that it is written in verse which is close to speech, and that it moves as readily, or in fact more readily, than if written in prose.

A. C. H.

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

I

Mr. William Stanley Braithwaite issued recently through the Boston Transcript his annual pronouncement upon current poetry in American magazines. He has heroically read all the verse in "the seven leading magazines," mostly those solemn standpattlers which print a little verse as a decorative incident. We quote his mathematical table of conclusions:

The total number of poems printed in each magazine, and the number of the distinctive (sic.) poems are: Century, total 58, 30 of distinction; Harper's, total 57, 29 of distinction; Scribner's, total 45, 30 of distinction; Forum, total 53, 27 of distinction; Lippincott's, total 66, 21 of distinction; The Bellman, total 53, 25 of distinction; The Smart Set, total 169, 49 of distinction.

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POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

Happy nation, whose "leading magazines" print 211 "distinctive poems" in one year! From these fortunately numerous 211 poems the cheerful critic selects and reprints the "seven best." POETRY would like to present these seven masterpieces as a Bostonian exhibit. Two of them are indeed by poets of some distinction, Mr. Robinson and Miss Cather, though The Field of Glory and A Likeness by no means represent them at their best. The other five represent current magazine poetry in its most banal mood of mediocrity. Of one of them, November, by Mahlon Leonard Fisher, the Transcript's critic of poetry says: "Not since Keats' On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer and Miss Reese's Tears has there appeared so fine a sonnet in English poetry." We quote the opening lines of this epoch-making production:

Hark you such sound as quivers? Kings will hear,
As kings have heard, and tremble on their thrones.

If this kind of opinionating passes for criticism in Boston, what can be expected of the shadowy region beyond the Alleghenies?

II

In a recent number of The Poetry Review, Mr. Herman Scheffauer lets himself go in a poem called America Inarticulate. Judging from the confusion of images and
rhetorical phrases naked with the shame of having served many masters, it might much better have been called *Inarticulate Scheffauer*. America’s great sin is the lack of bards. *Hear the voice of this bard:*

> Thou at thy fiery breasts hast held me—
> Too bitter was the milk perchance!
> Would that the savage posset then had quelled me
> Ere wrath took sword my nursling peace to slay.

Let us pray, O my compatriots, for poets with stronger stomachs!

> Thou art so young, O soiled yet splendid mother!
> Art thou of song so fruitless, being young?
> Hath youth no magic shell for song,
> Nor ever a sybilline glory for thy tongue,
> No harp to whelm the roar of brazen hives,
> No aethem, no sonorous tubes to smother
> The damor of the anvils, the mad throng
> Of hucksters and of silver-blasted lives? etc.

Not thus does the triumphant artist speak of his mother, his muse, or his mistress. But there is no rage like that of impotence.

*A. C. H.*

**NOTES**

Mr. Orrick Johns, who was born in St. Louis in 1887, was a journalist in that city when he received in 1912, the Lyric Year’s first prize for his poem *Second Avenue*. A few months ago he removed to New York.

Mr. Robert Frost is a young American poet resident
in England. His first book, *A Boy's Will*, was issued in
London a year ago by David Nutt. A second will soon
appear. "H. D.", one of the *Imagistes*, is also a young
American poet resident abroad.

Many volumes and countless articles have celebrated
the Panama Canal, but our poets have had little to say.
The ode in the present number is the only poem on the
subject which has reached the office of POETRY.

**BOOKS RECEIVED**


*The Wolf of Gubbio*, by Josephine Preston Peabody. Houghten-
Mifflin Co.


*The Forerunners: A Fancy*, by Mary Ellis Robins. The Maverick
Press.

"Bubbie": *Being Rhymes by A Proud Parent*. Privately printed.

*Verses*, by Marion Morgan Mulligan. Privately printed.

*Sonnets from the Patagonian*, by Donald Evans. Claire Marie, N. Y.

*At the World's Heart*, by Cale Young Rice. Doubleday, Page & Co.

*Fugitive Poems and a Christmas Story*, by Frank F. Woodall. Methodist
Book Concern.

*Fancies In Verse, and Other Books of Verse*, by Pupils in the University
of Chicago Elementary School.

*The College Chaucer*, by Henry Noble MacCracken. Yale University
Press.

*The Knights of the Chinese Dragon*, and *The Gift of White Roses*, by James
Cloyd Bowman. Privately printed.
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General William Booth Enters Into Heaven and Other Poems; including some poems under the general headings “Fantasies and Whims,” and “A Gospel of Beauty.” Bound in cloth. $1.25 net.

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Prominent among numbers for the year 1914 are Des Imagistes, an anthology of the Imagists' movement in England, including Pound, Hueffer, Aldington, Flint and others; essays by Ellen Key; a play by Frank Wedekind; collects and prose pieces by Horace Traubel; and The Doina, translations by Maurice Aisen of Roumanian folk-songs. The main purpose of the Glebe is to bring to light the really fine work of unknown men. These will appear throughout the year.

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