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POEMS TO BE CHANTED

THE FIREMEN'S BALL

I

In which the music of the Ball imitates the burning of a great building.

"Give the engines room—
Give the engines room!"
Louder, faster,
The little band-master
Whips up the fluting,
Hurries up the tooting.
He thinks that he stands,
The reins in his hands,
In the fire-chief's place
In the night-alarm chase.
The cymbals whang,

[ 123 ]
The kettle-drums bang;
"Clear the street,
Clear the street,
Clear the street—boom, boom!
In the evening gloom,
In the evening gloom,
Give the engines room,
Give the engines room,
Lest souls be trapped
In a terrible tomb."

The sparks and the pine-brands
Whirl on high
From the black and reeking alleys
To the wide red sky.
Hear the hot glass crashing,
Hear the stone steps hissing—
Coal-black streams
Down the gutters pour.
There are cries for help
From a far fifth floor;
For a longer ladder
Hear the fire-chief call.
Listen to the music
Of the firemen's ball—
Listen to the music
Of the firemen's ball.

[ 124 ]
"'Tis the night of doom,"
Say the ding-dong doom-bells.
"Night of doom,"
Say the ding-dong doom-bells.
Faster, faster,
The red flames come.
"Hum grum," say the engines,
"Hum grum grum."

"Buzz buzz,"
Says the crowd.
"See see,"
Calls the crowd.
"Look OUT!"
Yelps the crowd,
And the high walls fall.
Listen to the music
Of the firemen's ball;
Listen to the music
Of the firemen's ball.

"'Tis the night of doom,"
Say the ding-dong doom-bells;
"Night of doom,"
Say the ding-dong doom-bells.
Whangaranga, whangaranga,
Whang, whang, whang!
Clang, clang, clangaranga,

[ 125 ]
Clang, clang, clang!
Clang........a...........ranga,
Clang........a...........ranga,
Clang...........clang...........clang!
Listen........to........the...........music.....
Of........the........firemen's...........ball.

II

Many's the heart that's breaking,
If we could read them all,
After the ball is over... Old song.

Scornfully, gaily,
The band-master sways,
Changing the strain
That the wild band plays.
With a red and royal
Intoxication,
A tangle of sounds
And a syncopation,
Sweeping and bending
From side to side,
Master of dreams,
With a peacock pride.
A lord of the delicate
Flowers of delight,
He drives compunction
Back through the night;
Poems to Be Chanted

Dreams he's a soldier
Plumed and spurred,
And valiant lads
Arise at his word,
Flaying the sober
Thoughts he hates,
Driving them back
From the dream-town gates.
How can the languorous
Dancers know
The red dreams come
When the good dreams go?
"'Tis the night of love,"
Call the silver joy-bells,
"Night of love,"
Call the silver joy-bells.
Honey and wine—
Honey and wine:
Sing low now, violins,
Sing, sing low:
Blow gently, wood-wind,
Mellow and slow.
Like midnight poppies
The sweethearts bloom;
Their eyes flash power,
Their lips are dumb;
Faster and faster
Their pulses come,
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

Though softer now
The drum-beats fall:
"Honey and wine,
Honey and wine."
'Tis the firemen's ball—
'Tis the firemen's ball.

"I am slain,"
Cries True-Love,
There in the shadow.
"And I die,"
Cries True-Love,
There laid low.
"When the fire-dreams come
The wise dreams go."

But his cry is drowned
By the proud band-master.
And now great gongs whang
Sharper, faster,
And kettle-drums rattle,
And hide the shame
With a swish and a swirk
In dead Love's name.
Red and crimson
And scarlet and rose,
Magical poppies
The sweethearts bloom.

[ 128 ]
Poems to Be Chanted

The scarlet stays
When the rose-flush goes,
And Love lies low
In a marble tomb.

"'Tis the night of doom,"
Call the ding-dong doom-bells,

"Night of doom,"
Call the ding-dong doom-bells.

Hark how the piccolos still make cheer—

"'Tis a moonlight night in the spring of the year."

Clangaranga, clangaranga,
Clang, clang, clang!
Clang........a........rangaranga....
Clang........a........rangaranga....
Clang, clang, clang!

Listen....to....the....music....
Of....the....firemen's....ball....
Listen....to....the....music....
Of....the....firemen's....ball.

III

From the first Khandaka of the Mahavagga:—"There Buddha thus addressed his disciples:—'Everything, O mendicants, is burning. . . . With what fire is it burning? I declare unto you it is burning with the fire of passion, with the fire of anger, with the fire of ignorance. It is burning with the anxieties of birth, decay and death, grief, lamentation, suffering and despair. . . . A disciple . . . becoming weary of all that . . . divests himself of passion. By absence of passion . . . he is made free.'"

[129]
I once knew a teacher  
Who turned from desire,  
Who said to the young men,  
"Wine is a fire;"  
Who said to the merchants,  
"Gold is a flame  
That sears and tortures  
If you play at the game."  
I once knew a teacher  
Who turned from desire,  
Who said to the soldiers,  
"Hate is a fire;"  
Who said to the statesmen,  
"Power is a flame  
That flays and blisters  
If you play at the game."  
I once knew a teacher  
Who turned from desire,  
Who said to the lordly,  
"Pride is a fire;"  
Who thus warned the revellers:  
"Life is a flame;  
Be cold as the dew  
Would you win at the game—  
With hearts like the stars,  
With hearts like the stars."
So beware,  
So beware,  
So beware of the fire!  
Clear the streets—boom, boom!  
Clear the streets—boom, boom!  
Give the engines room,  
Give the engines room,  
Lest souls be trapped  
In a terrible tomb.  
Says the swift white horse  
To the swift black horse,  
"There goes the alarm,  
There goes the alarm."  
They are hitched, they are off,  
They are gone in a flash,  
And they strain at the driver's iron arm.  
Clangaranga, clangaranga,  
Clang, clang, clang ..........  
Clang .......... a .......... ranga .......... clangaranga ........  
Clang .......... clang .......... clang .......  
Clang .......... a .......... ranga ......  
Clang .......... a .......... ranga ......  
Clang .......... clang .......... CLANG ......!
THE SANTA FÉ TRAIL—A HUMORESQUE

I asked the old negro, "What is that bird who sings so well?"
He answered, "That is the Rachel-Jane." "Hasn't it another name—lark, or thrush, or the like?" "No, jes' Rachel-Jane."

I
In which a racing auto comes from the east.

This is the order of the music of the morning:
First, from the far east comes but a crooning;
The crooning turns to a sunrise singing—
Hark to the calm-horn, balm-horn, psalm-horn;
Hark to the faint-horn, quaint-horn, saint-horn . . . .

Hark to the pace-horn, chase-horn, race-horn!
And the holy veil of the dawn has gone,
Swiftly the brazen car comes on.
It burns in the East as the sunrise burns—
I see great flashes where the far trail turns:
Its eyes are lamps, like the eyes of dragons;
It drinks gasoline from big red flagons.
Butting through the delicate mists of the morning,
It comes like lightning, goes past roaring.
It will hail all the wind-mills, taunting, ringing;
Dodge the cyclones,
Count the milestones,
Poems to Be Chanted

On through the ranges the prairie-dog tills,  
Scooting past the cattle on the thousand hills  
Ho for the tear-horn, scare-horn, dare-horn,  
Ho for the gay-horn, bark-horn, bay-horn!  
Ho for Kansas, land that restores us  
When houses choke us, and great books bore us!  
Sunrise Kansas, harvester’s Kansas—  
A million men have found you before us!

II

In which many autos pass westward.

I want live things in their pride to remain.
I will not kill one grasshopper vain,
Though he eats a hole in my shirt like a door.
I let him out, give him one chance more.
Perhaps, while he gnaws my hat in his whim,
Grasshopper lyrics occur to him.

I am a tramp by the long trail’s border,
Given to squalor, rags and disorder.
I nap and amble and yawn and look,
Write fool-thoughts in my grubby book;
Recite to the children, explore at my ease,
WORK when I work, beg when I please;
Give crank drawings, that make folks stare,
To the half-grown boys in the sunset-glare;
And get me a place to sleep in the hay
At the end of a live-and-let-live day.

[ 133 ]
I find in the stubble of the new-cut weeds
A whisper and a feasting, all one needs:
The whisper of the strawberries, white and red,
Here where the new-cut weeds lie dead.
But I would not walk all alone till I die
Without SOME life-drunk horns going by.
Up round this apple-earth they come,
Blasting the whispers of the morning dumb:
Cars in a plain realistic row—
And fair dreams fade, when the raw horns blow.
On each snapping pennant
A big black name—
The careering city
Whence each car came.
They tour from Memphis, Atlanta, Savannah,
Tallahassee and Texarkana.
They tour from St. Louis, Columbus, Manistee;
They tour from Peoria, Davenport, Kankakee.
Cars from Concord, Niagara, Boston,
Cars from Topeka, Emporia and Austin;
Cars from Chicago, Hannibal, Cairo,
Cars from Alton, Oswego, Toledo;
Cars from Buffalo, Kokomo, Delphi.
Cars from Lodi, Carmi, Loami.
Ho for Kansas, land that restores us
When houses choke us, and great books bore us!
While I watch the highroad
And look at the sky,
Poems to Be Chanted

While I watch the clouds in amazing grandeur
Roll their legions without rain
Over the blistering Kansas plain—
While I sit by the milestone
And watch the sky,
The United States
Goes by!
Listen to the iron horns, ripping, racking—
Listen to the quack horns, slack and clacking!
Way down the road, trilling like a toad,
Here comes the dice-horn, here comes the vice-horn,
Here comes the snarl-horn, brawl-horn, lewd-horn,
Followed by the prude-horn, bleak and squeaking.
(Some of them from Kansas, some of them from Kansas!)
Here comes the hod-horn, plod-horn, sod-horn,
Nevermore-to-roam-horn, loam-horn, home-horn,
(Some of them from Kansas, some of them from Kansas!)

Far away the Rachel-Jane,
Not defeated by the horns,
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:
"Love and life,
Eternal youth—
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!
Dew and glory,
Love and truth—
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!"

[ 135 ]
While smoke-black freights on the double-tracked railroad,
Driven as though by the foul-fiend’s ox-goad,
Screaming to the west coast, screaming to the east,
Carry off a harvest, bring back a feast,
Harvesting machinery and harness for the beast.
The hand-cars whiz, and rattle on the rails;
The sunlight flashes on the tin dinner-pails.
And then, in an instant,
Ye modern men,
Behold the procession once again!

Listen to the iron horns, ripping, racking!
Listen to the wise-horn, desperate-to-advice horn—
Listen to the fast-horn, kill-horn, blast-horn

Far away the Rachel-Jane,
Not defeated by the horns,
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:
“Love and life,
Eternal youth—
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!
Dew and glory,
Love and truth—
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!”

The mufflers open on a score of cars
With wonderful thunder,
CRACK, CRACK, CRACK,
Poems to Be Chanted

CRACK-CRACK, CRACK-CRACK,
CRACK-CRACK-CRACK, . . .
Listen to the gold-horn . . .
Old-horn . . .
Cold-horn . . .
And all of the tunes, till the night comes down
On hay-stack, and ant-hill, and wind-bitten town.

Then far in the west, as in the beginning,
Dim in the distance, sweet in retreating,
Hark to the faint-horn, quaint-horn, saint-horn,
Hark to the calm-horn, balm-horn, psalm-horn . . .

They are hunting the goals that they understand—
San Francisco, and the brown sea-sand.
My goal is the mystery the beggars win.
I am caught in the web the night-winds spin.
The edge of the wheat-ridge speaks to me;
I talk with the leaves of the mulberry tree.
And now I hear, as I sit all alone
In the dusk, by another big Santa-Fé stone,
The souls of the tall corn gathering round,
And the gay little souls of the grass in the ground.
Listen to the tale the cotton-wood tells;
Listen to the wind-mills singing o’er the wells.
Listen to the whistling flutes without price
Of myriad prophets out of Paradise . . .
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

Hearken to the wonder that the night-air carries.
Listen to the whisper
Of the prairie fairies . . .
Singing over the fairy plain:
"Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!
Love and glory, stars and rain,
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!"

THE BLACK HAWK WAR OF THE ARTISTS

Written for Lorado Taft's statue of Black Hawk at Oregon, Illinois.

Hawk of the Rocks,
Yours is our cause today.
Watching your foes
Here in our war array,
Young men we stand,
Wolves of the West at bay.

*Power, power for war*
*Comes from these trees divine;*
*Power from the boughs,*
*Boughs where the dew-beads shine,*
*Power from the cones—*
*Yea, from the breath of the pine!*

[138]
Poems to Be Chanted

Power to restore
All that the white hand mars.
See the dead east
Crushed with the iron cars—
Chimneys black
Blinding the sun and stars!

Hawk of the pines,
Hawk of the plain-winds fleet,
You shall be king
There in the iron street,
Factory and forge
Trodden beneath your feet.

There will proud trees
Grow as they grow by streams.
There will proud thoughts
Walk as in warrior dreams.
There will proud deeds
Bloom as when battle gleams!

Warriors of Art,
We will hold council there,
Hewing in stone
Things to the trapper fair,
Painting the gray
Veils that the spring moons wear.
This our revenge,
This one tremendous change:
Making new towns,
Lit with a star-fire strange,
Wild as the dawn
Gilding the bison-range.

All the young men
Chanting your cause that day,
Red-men, new-made
Out of the Saxon clay,
Strong and redeemed,
Bold in your war-array.

Power, power for war
Comes from these trees divine;
Power from the boughs
Boughs where the dew-beads shine;
Power from the cones,
Yea, from the breath of the pine!

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay.
POEMS
FROM A CLUB WINDOW

Life, as I see young old men fight
With sails or rifles, scheme or faith,
And witness oldish young men pass
This section of your hour-glass—
I doubt if War may not be right,
Your substance; Peace, your dawdling wraith.

RODIN

Cold bronze he has made articulate,
More scorching in its eloquence than the flames
That melted it to his will of fire;
Cold marble he has made compassionate,
Wisdom unfathomable which understands
All pain, all dread, all hunger, all desire;
Cold clay he has made animate,
Life that exclaims:
"You are but babbling shells! I, life entire!"
All these things he has done, this god,
Not as a god by sure austere commands;
But by thinking, seeing, feeling, believing;
By invincible patience and tireless hands;
With a back of scorn for the self-deceiving;

[ 141 ]
With faith's disdain for The Day's demands,—
A Titan self-made by his masterful mold,
Who has fused into copper the meaning of gold,
All the truth he could scan,
All his ardor innate;
Breathed his soul in each stone; poured his heart in each clod,—
A man,
Who stands shoulder to shoulder with Fate.

Out of bronze and marble and clay, formless, cold,
One man has given death the lie!

STAR-MAGIC

Though your beauty be a flower
Of unimagined loveliness,
It cannot lure me tonight;
For I am all spirit.

As in the billowy oleander,
Full-bloomed,
Each blossom is all but lost
In the next—
One flame in a glow
Of green-veined rhodonite;
So is heaven a crystal magnificence
Of stars,
Powdered lightly with blue.

For this one night
My spirit has turned honey-moth,
And has made of the stars
Its flowers.

So all uncountable are the stars
That heaven shimmers as a web,
Bursting with light
From beyond,
A light exquisite,
Immeasurable!

For this one night
My spirit has dared, and been caught
In the web of the stars.

Though your beauty were a net
Of unimagined power,
It could not hold me tonight;
For I am all spirit.

Richard Butler Glaenzer.
SITTING BLIND BY THE SEA

Oh, sing me a song of the sea, my son—
Oh, sing me a song of the sea!
For my eyes they are blind and I peer in the dark,
But my man's heart leaps when the sea-dogs bark;
Can thy young eyes follow the yelping pack?
Wild, bounding streaks of yellow and black,
Do they track over meadows of seething foam?
And will they be fetching the white gulls home?
Perhaps they'll retrieve one to me—
To me, sitting blind by the sea.

To me in my door by the sea, sitting blind,
To me, sitting blind in my door,
Days be when a battle is raging afar,
And the tramp of the cavalry crossing the bar
Comes nearer and clearer with many a gun,
So plain to my ears while I sit in the sun
That I'm sure there'll be many a rainbow at play
In and out of the manes and the tails of the spray,
As the chargers plunge down in the roar
To me, sitting blind in my door.

To me, sitting blind in the night by the sea,
Sitting blind by the sea in the night,
Times be when she purrs, a gray cat, at my knee—
Oh, the glow on the hearth and the mother and thee!
'Twas a hitch in her rocker that memory kept,
And I'd know when it eased that our wee laddie slept.
The sea has it all, to the creak in her chair,
And I, peering blind, see the glint in her hair;
And it floods my lone soul with delight,
Sitting dark in my door in the night.

To me, sitting dark by the sea in my door,
   To me, by the sea sitting blind,
Rare times comes a silence as still as a cave,
And I know 'tis His night when He walks on the wave;
And, "strong in the faith," with my feet on the land,
My soul speeds beside Him. I'd strive for His hand
To lay on my eyes, but ah! ever before
I reach Him, He's gone—and I back in my door,
   All alone, by a whiff of the wind,
   In my door by the sea, sitting blind.

Still it's sing me a song of the sea, my son —
   Oh, sing me a song of the sea!
And sorrow's slow leaven I'll nurse nevermore,
For the soul of the sea signals mine on the shore,
Deep calling to deep, high answering high,
Till my bosom seems gemmed with the stars of the sky;
And when the moon nestles, a pearl on my vest,
I feel her white soul come again to my breast;
   And with this, lad—the mother—and thee,
Are we lonely or blind by the sea?

Ruth McEnery Stuart.
WE WANT LAND

Hungry and naked and without a home am I.
My shoulders, you have charged them with loads,
And you spit at me, and you have beaten me,
And I have been to you a dog.
Wandering landowner, brought by the wind,
If you have an understanding with Hell
That we shall be dogs to you, beat us more!
We will endure loads, so will we endure want,
Bridle of horses, yoke of cattle:
    But we want land.

A piece of corn bread left from yesterday,
If you see it in our home, you take it away.
Away you take our boys to the war,
And our girls—you take them too.
You curse our dearest and our holiest things—
No pity have you, nor faith!
Hungry, our children are dying on the road;
And we submit out of pity for them—
Our lives would not be such dreadful things
    If we had land.

The cemetery that was ours in the village,
You wanted it for wheat; We, behind the plough,
Ploughing—O God! it is too dreadful—
Out come bones—oh, what a sin!
They are the bones of our own flesh and blood—
But what is that to you?
You took us out naked from our homes,
In frost and wind you took us;
Even as you took our dead out of their graves.
Oh, for the dead and for their sake
    We want land.

We would like to know, we long to know,
That our bones shall lie still in the grave,
That children of yours will not sin
With us when we shall be dead.
Orphans and all who are dear to us,
If they should wish to weep on our graves,
They would not know what earth we lie in,
Because even for a grave we have no land,
And we are all Christians,
    And we want land.

You have put seed of wheat in the field,
But we have buried here our forefathers and fathers,
Mothers, sisters and brothers.
Away, you heretics!
Our land is dear and holy to us,
Because it is our cradle and our grave.

[ 147 ]
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

With hot blood always we have defended it,
And all the waters that moistened it
Are but tears that we have shed.

We want land.

We have no time even for praying,
Because our time is in your hands.
We have still a soul in our breast—
It seems you have forgotten.
All of you have made an oath
That we shall have no rights, no words to say.
Weapons and tortures when we protest,
Loads and chains when we move,
And dull lead when exhausted we cry

That we want land.

We have no strength, and we can't go on
To live always a life of beggary
And of tortures put upon us
By the bosses brought by winds—
Oh beware, you God Almighty,
That we ask not for land, but for blood!
When the time shall come that we can endure no more,
When hunger shall rouse us all, beware of us!
Even were you all Christs, beware!

Even in your graves!

From the Roumanian of *George Cosbuc.*
PEASANT LOVE SONGS

I.

He
In the garden of my sweetheart
Sing two birds beautifully,
And the sun proudly shines,
And my darling sits and dreams.
Near the garden of my sweetheart
Runs a river clear and crystal
Where my darling sits and weeps.

She
When you are here, little man,
I dress all the time like a bride,
Wearing flowers and pearls
So you will like them.
Since you have gone away, little man,
The red belt and the tulip have vanished—
It is so sad.
Green leaf of the citron:
My little man has gone to the army;
He is gone and does not write to me,
Neither on the leaves, nor on the river,
Nor on the wings of the wind.

II.

Bad, O mother, is fever,
But far, far worse is love.

[149]
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

For fever you can eat and drink,
But for love there is naught but pain.
From fever my mother can cure me,
But love is far from her care;
From fever the priest can pray me,
But not from the evil of love.
All of us learn this evil,
As did I a year from last spring.
The longing is slowly killing me—
Yes, love is an evil thing.

III.

If you did not love me, little man,
God shall curse you for it.
You should marry nine times,
And you should have nine boys.
You should have a girl too—
She shall bring you water in prison,
Because when you left me
You broke my heart and my love.

IV.

Little man, tell me, is it true?
Be honest and tell me, please—
Do you love me or not?

[ 150 ]
Roumanian Poems

If you like me only a little,
Take any road that you wish,
But never the one that leads to my house.

V.

Goodbye, darling, good luck!
Remain beautiful as a violet
In a glass on the table.

VI.

Beautiful girl with blonde hair,
When I see you I begin to lean
Like the leaves in the acacia
When the wind is blowing through them.
Like the leaves of the oak tree I lean
When the breeze is blowing through them.

VII.

I had a beautiful neighbor,
And a path to her garden;
But she went and got married
And said not a word to me.
I would have taken her myself!
If she had married three villages away,
It wouldn’t have hurt me so.

[ 151 ]
But she married a man down our street,
The third door from my mother's home!
When I am in, I hear her voice;
When I go out, I see her face:
It makes my heart burn like fire.

THE CONSCRIPT

I.

Down there in the prairie
Met two brothers from the army.
Said one brother to the other:
"Take this saddle from my horse
And strike me on the head!
What shall we two do at home?
Mother, father, both are dead;
The cattle have grown old in the stable—
Where the house stood, all is grass."

II.

Mountain, mountain, hard rock,
Let the youths pass by!
Let them go to be shepherds,
So they may run away from the army.
Roumanian Poems

The army is a yoke of wood
Which the boys pull until they die.
The army is a yoke of brass
That they pull without ceasing.

III.

When a man goes to the army
The house becomes so poor
Children have not even a hearth.
If some day they grow up,
They will not know they had a father.

IV.

*Why are you leaning, pine of the woods,*
*Without swaying and so sad?*
*Why shouldn’t I bend so sadly*
*When near me stand three woodsmen with their axes?*
*They’ve come to chop me down,*
*And put me in three wagons*
*And take me to their town,*
*Just to make of me a prison.*
*Four stern walls they’ll make of me*
*Where bravest men shall die.*

Translated by *Maurice Aisen.*

[ 153 ]
A FRENCH POET ON TRADITION

Bouvard penchait vers le neptunisme; Pécuchet, au contraire, était platonien.—Flaubert.

We must not boast too much of tradition. It is no great merit to place our feet exactly in the tracks which the road indicates; it is a natural tendency. Though it is not very wrong to give way to this tendency, it is better to attempt a new path. Necessarily it becomes confounded here and there with the old. We must resign ourselves, but without arrogance. The deed is less meritorious than unavoidable.

Tradition is a great power opposing the originality of writers. That is why the present so strangely resembles the immediate past, which again resembles the preceding past. This subjection, which is always very oppressive, even in epochs of apparent literary innovation, tends to become a real yoke when the fashion is obedience to tradition. Hence the literary eighteenth-century, hence the literature of the First Empire.

There is the continuous tradition and there is the renewed tradition. They must not be confounded. The seventeenth century believed that it was renewing the bond with antiquity. The romanticists believed that they had re-discovered the Middle Ages. These discontinued traditions are more fertile when the period which is renewed is distant and unknown.
It seems then that today would be a propitious moment for renewing the seventeenth century. It is an illusion. The seventeenth century, with its appearance of distance, is infinitely near us. It has served as a part of our education. It is known even to those who have not frequented it. We still breathe its atmosphere. Everything derived from it would savor of imitation.

The seventeenth century is, relative to the renaissance, in the position that we are to romanticism: the seventeenth century does not continue the renaissance, for there are erasures, changes in taste; it does take up the renaissance again, but unconsciously and thanklessly. Does it not seem to us that romanticism understood nothing of its own work? We have attempted to refashion it with an unconsciousness comparable to that of the seventeenth century. The works of George Sand and of Alexandre Dumas seem absurd to us; we deny their genius, but we refashion them. We are as incapable of refashioning the novels of Balzac and of Stendhal as the seventeenth century was of refashioning Montaigne and Rabelais.

You take literary tradition as far back as the seventeenth century. Why? Is it from ignorance of the past? Do you not know that our great literary centuries were the twelfth and thirteenth, otherwise good judges would not prefer the Vie de Saint Alexis to a tragedy by Racine?

I like the seventeenth century so much that its most furious admirers will never succeed in disgusting me with it. But
if I had to pick out a unique book I should take it from the
nineteenth century.

Tradition—I find it everywhere. All the past can be a
part of tradition. Why this and not that? Why the labori­
ous mysticism of Bossuet and not the spontaneous irony of
Voltaire?

Tradition is a long chain with alternate rings of gold and
lead. You do not accept the whole of tradition? Then tra­
dition is a choice and not a fact. Considered as a fact, tradi­
tion is merely a mass of contradictory tendencies.

As soon as we choose we commit an act of arbitrary
criticism.

The true masters of tradition were those who, like Sainte-
Beuve, despised nothing and wished to understand every­
things.

Do you believe that anyone who goes back no farther
than Flaubert and Baudelaire can possess a good literary tra­
dition? I know such men and women, and they astonish me
with the delicacy of their taste.

Tradition is sometimes nothing more than a bibliography,
sometimes a library. Brunetière was a bibliography; Sainte-
Beuve a library.

"The best French writer of the seventeenth century is
Hélisenne de Crenne," I was informed by a woman who
possessed a somewhat feminist erudition, and who, besides
that, was a bibliophile.

People who say to me, "You are in the tradition of Mon-
taigne," amuse me, for I am no great reader of the Essays,
a fact of which I am almost ashamed. The greater part of
the discoveries of professors on the formation and tradition
of minds is of this sort. The traditional man cannot see
analogous tendencies in two minds without thinking that the
later comer is an imitator of the earlier. School habits.

My tradition is not only French; it is European. I can­
not deny Shakespeare, Dante and Byron, who taught me
what poetry is; not Goethe, who enchanted my reason; nor
Schopenhauer, who began my philosophical education; I can­
not deny Nietzsche, who gave a principle for my repugnance
to spiritualistic morality; I cannot deny Swift and Cervantes.
And yet the two first books which opened the world to my
soul were Stendhal's Amour and Flaubert's Madame Bovary,
found in a cupboard of the house!

A curate who taught me Latin during the war, when the
schools were shut, revealed Molière to me. I have always
been grateful to curates on that account. The remainder of
the classics were matters for lessons and impositions. I read
them much later in life. Such is my tradition.

What most strikes me in the young men of today is their
docility. They learn what is taught them. In my time a
professor had no authority. We recognized in him a mis­
ion for preparing us for a degree.

I have only enjoyed that which does not teach. This
plunged me into the Latin of the Middle Ages.

I have never put foot in the Sorbonne except to look at
pictures—Puvis de Chavannes and the frescoes of Mlle.
Dufau. It is apparent how much I have been inspired by discussing the teaching at the Sorbonne.

When I see a hand painted on a wall indicating a direction I instinctively look the opposite way. In the street I always walk against the crowd; I go where nobody goes. The voice crying, "Follow the crowd," makes me afraid.

I have often fought against my natural tendencies, often praised a state which was quite inaccessible to me; and several of my books are merely protests against myself. For a long time I have had no aggressive opinions on anything, but, with the débris of my old convictions, deeper convictions have been formed in me with which I judge even those matters on which I am silent.

We are always tempted to imitate what we love, when we do not love enough. If we push love as far as admiration, we become discouraged from imitation.

The true "classics" of the seventeenth century, the models of all men of taste, are today forgotten. They were Patru, Balzac, d'Ablancourt. Boileau in his day was a breaker of dishes.

The punishment of the tribe of professors is that it is eternally destined to despise La Fontaine alive and to venerate him dead. The great classic poet was first of all a kind of Ponchon, who entered life with his hat over one ear and with a girl on each arm. He has the reputation of a Théophile, but La Bruyère, at that time, still hesitated between Théophile and Malherbe.
A French Poet on Tradition

The true tradition of the French mind is the liberty of the mind. To discuss all questions anew, to admit none save those which can be resolved \textit{a priori}, only to admit the best reasons and to consider as the best those which contain a principle of independence. To remember that no tradition is worth the tradition of liberty. To be oneself, to disregard those who speak to one in the name of a dogma, but not to be one’s own dupe, and not to wish to impose on others that liberty of which the constitution of their brains renders them incapable.

Preferences—a good word to use in a matter of literary, or even philosophical, taste. It contains no negation, no dogmatism.

Yet some negations are necessary; there must also be a little dogmatism. Affirm valiantly what you like. Then you also are a tradition.

And you are more complex than you imagine. However religious you are, be certain you are also slightly Voltairian. However positive you think yourself, you contain in yourself so much mysticism that you would be terrified if you could see everything clearly. Your admiration is for the great classics, but if you were quite sincere you would admit that nothing has so taken you as the beautiful works of romanticism.

At bottom everything in literature is useless except literary pleasure, but literary pleasure depends upon the quality of sensibility. All discussions die against the wall of personal sensibility, which is flesh on the inside and on the
outside is a wall of stone. There is a way to turn it about, but this you do not know.

We have put art above everything, and it must remain there in spite of those who wish to replace it by opinions. I put Candide and René into my sack. Take away your Voltairean blague and Chateaubriand faith; they have nothing to do with me.

The French tradition is so vast, so contradictory, that it lends itself to all tastes. A famous poet once told me that his master was Dorat. Why not? I might have liked Dorat myself if I had known him.

How heavy is the burden of this literary tradition, which goes from Émile Deschamps to Verlaine, across Villon, Rabelais, Ronsard, Montaigne, Malherbe, Corneille, Bossuet, Voltaire, Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Flaubert and so many others. It is chaos, a bog in the forest. We can no longer see the sky. Cut them down! Cut them down!

They have taken beforehand all my works, all my phrases, all my ideas. Oh, these obligatory ancestors! They bind me. They suffocate me. Far from drawing tighter the bonds of tradition, we should release the brains which it binds. Bend your branches, great tree,

\[ \textit{Flecte ramos, arbor alta.} \]

What we need is less of models and more of the free light of life which you hide from us.

\[ \textit{Remy de Gourmont—} \]

Authorized translation by Richard Aldington.
Mr. Yeats asked me recently in Chicago: “What are we going to do to restore the primitive singing of poetry?” I find what Mr. Yeats means by the “primitive singing of poetry,” in Prof. Edward Bliss Reed’s new volume on the English lyric. He says in his chapter on the definition of the lyric: “With the Greeks ‘Song’ was an all-embracing term. It included the crooning of the nurse to the child, . . . the half-sung chant of the mower or sailor, . . . the formal ode sung by the poet. In all Greek lyrics, even in the choral odes, music was the handmaid of verse . . . the poet himself composed the accompaniment. Euripides was censured because Iophon . . . had assisted him in the setting of some of his dramas.”

Here is pictured a type of Greek work which survives in American vaudeville, where every line may be two-thirds spoken and one-third sung, the entire rendering, musical and elocutionary, depending largely upon the improvising power and sure instinct of the performer.

I respectfully submit *The Firemen’s Ball* as an experiment in which I endeavor to carry this vaudeville form back towards the old Greek precedent of the half-chanted lyric. In this case the one-third of music must be added by the instinct of the reader. He must be Iophon. And he can easily be Iophon if he brings to bear upon the piece what might be called the Higher Vaudeville imagination. The essential points are: close attention to the turning point in
the middle of the piece, and delicate rendering of the first half of the second section, set in abrupt contrast to the second half, in which the death-whisper of True-Love—and, if you will, of all fine things—is drowned by the noise of the brass-band: “But his cry is drowned by the proud band-master.”

The first half of the third section, including the quotation, could be intoned in a semi-priestly manner. Then comes the final clamor of the engines.

The Santa Fé Trail is another experiment in this manner. Big general contrasts between the main sections should be the rule of the first attempts at improvising. It is the hope of the writer that, after two or three readings, each line will suggest its own separate touch of melody to the performer who has become accustomed to the cadences. Let him read what he likes read, and sing what he likes sung.

The actual Firemen’s Ball occurred in Springfield, Illinois, November 13, 1913. The vast I. N. G. Arsenal was jammed with fire-laddies and their sweethearts of an hour.

N. V. L.

DOINA

It is difficult to explain what the word Doina suggests to a Roumanian peasant. It seems to mean the very spirit of the popular poetry which is sung by native bards to the accompaniment of a simple instrument.

Mr. Aisen, the translator of our group of poems, who is a Roumanian living in Chicago, says:
Reviews

The *Doina* has been created by our bitterly persecuted peasants to keep themselves alive; without it they would have disappeared. Singing or chanting their sufferings, imagining absent happiness, has brought them consolation, given them their only joy. One poet sings to the *Doina*: "Stay with us, for you are our Queen; if you go away, we shall have nothing to live for."

Living through their poetry, the peasants had to create more and more. The *Doina* is an immense body of wonderful poetry. George Cosbuc, the leader of these peasant poets and a man of genius, expresses the very quintessence of the *Doina*. His lyric, *We Want Land*, is the cry of the peasant that has gone on for centuries, and still goes on.

Indeed, it is the cry of the Mexican peon today.

REVIEWS.


Mr. Wheelock's verse has a true lyric quality; it is simple, sincere, spontaneous, musical. For the best things in this latest volume we can only be grateful. And perhaps we should not complain if, like Wordsworth and many another immortal, he leaves the task of weeding-out to his readers.

But these are crowded days—the poet should do his own weeding-out, especially in a large garden of love-songs. For one is cloyed by excess, one wearies of repetition, in these two hundred and thirty-seven lyrics of love; the good things are smothered by the over-facile, the sentimental—one has to search too long for them.

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POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

And then, while these poems seem sincere they come too easily. In these days it were idle to criticize any frank revelation of the reserves of passion; but one has a right to demand that such a revelation shall be, as it were, dragged out of the depths of human agony and rapture, that it shall seem reluctant in proportion to its intimacy. In these lyrics is no reluctance; there is ecstasy—even to the very word—on every page, scattered so lavishly that sometimes it spills over and becomes ridiculous. Indeed, if Mr. Wheelock had a sense of humor he would be saved such lines as

Where four lips are joined together . . .
Oh abandon yourself to an ecstasy sheer ! . . .

But in spite of these lapses, and of the over-profusion of sweets in this volume, one finds, now and then, a lyric as lovely as this:

Tell me why I love you;
   Name yourself, my Heart,
Every inward bounty,
   Every outward art;
The hands, the lips, the eyes,
   The beauty in your breast,
Your very inmost spirit
   Separate from the rest.
When your lips have ceased,
   When your words have done,
I will answer you,
   "Not for these alone."

Also there are a few fine poems on other themes, as The Return to New York, and the song first printed in Poetry, I Shed my Song on the Feet of All Men. In all these best things one feels warmth of sincerity, real tenderness, and clear lyric simplicity.

H. M. [164]
Little Verse for a Little Clan, by F. D. W. Privately printed.

Now and then, in some stray book of poems, the personal note is struck with singular poignancy. The book is a confessional, where the hidden penitent feels deep relief in pouring out his story to the mysterious listener behind the veil. This tiny half-anonymous volume is of that kind, and its "simple and humble" lyric cry comes from a "weary and bewildered heart chained to the treadmill, which yet hears, now and then, through the grinding whir of the machinery, strains of a far-away music."

It is flute-like music, never loud or rich, but often delicate and clear; manifestly the utterance of a fine spirit. The first stanza of *O Dulcis Pimplea* strikes the key-note:

Never was I a hoarder;  
All that I had I spent.  
Upon the twilight border  
Of dreams I pitched my tent.  
The wind to me is brother,  
The stars are kind as bread;  
The old brown earth, my mother,  
Is pillow for my head.

*Adversity, Keats, Titian's Mary, Because, Flawed, and Metamorphosis,* might be quoted as fitly as this one, called *Sacrifice*:

As love's last treasure to the fire you bore,  
What was it lured your hand?  
You did not speak, nor I, but all the more  
I could not understand.

Winged words once passed our lips, I know;  
But there all words seemed vain,
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

The while, before that flame, we trembled so,
Like reeds beneath blown rain.

At last it fluttered, wavered, paused—and fell.
What was it loosed your hand?
Propitiation to what heaven or hell?
Do you yet understand?

H. M.


From Australia comes a pleasant little volume, anonymous, called Unconditioned Songs. Perhaps its charm, or a good part of it, lies in the fact that it makes so little pretense at being great poetry. These are simple but genuine little songs, the occasional flutings, one would say, of a young and very active man who turns to poetry when there is no hard work to be done at the moment. And because he takes it so naturally he has given us what so often eludes the frantic striving of our muse-kissed youth, a true and faithful portrait of his own emotions.

The songs are sometimes derivative as to form and not always clearly crystallized as to content, but they have a distinctly personal tang, and a pleasant one. They have no titles, but of the lyrics the two beginning, “I want to go away—away” and “If I reach the ocean ever,” are perhaps the most distinguished, and of the others, “They made me foreman of the job” and “Who smashed the sliprails down?”

E. T.
Notes


*Men of No Land* is a book of creditable, craftsmanlike verse of a rather unusually even quality. This is perhaps unfortunate, since though there is nothing very bad in it, there is by the same token nothing very good. They are conscientious transcriptions of emotional facts, but they are quite lacking in the vitality this method often brings forth. Any one of these verses taken singly would probably have more effect than a whole book. E. T.


This is a book of the fifth age of man, "full of wise saws and modern instances," full too of Mr. Bangs' characteristic humor. It is homely wisdom, treading sometimes on the heels of art. E. T.

NOTES.

Mr. Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, of Springfield, Illinois, is familiar to readers of *Poetry* through *General Booth* and the *Moon Poems*. His next book, *The Congo, and Other Poems*, to be published in October by Macmillan, will contain the three here printed.

Mrs. Ruth McEnery Stuart, of New Orleans, is well known as a writer of southern stories. She has published little verse as yet.

Mr. Richard Butler Glaenzer, born in Paris in 1876 of Franco-German and American parents, is a resident of New York and St. George's, Bermuda. He has published many poems in magazines.
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