

War Poems Prize Awards

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A Magazine of Verse

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Comments and Reviews

Poetry and War—Reviews—New Books of Verse—Notes.

Announcement of Awards

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NOVEMBER, 1914

POEMS OF WAR

THE METAL CHECKS

[*The scene is a bare room, with two shaded windows at the back, and a fireplace between them with a fire burning low. The room is furnished scantily with a few plain chairs, and a rough wooden table on which are piled a great many small wooden trays. The Counter, who is Death, sits at the table. He wears a loose gray robe, and his face is partly concealed by a gray veil. He does not look at The Bearer, but works mechanically and speaks in a monotonous tone. The Bearer is the World, that bears the burden of War. He wears a soiled robe of brown and green and he carries on his back a gunny-bag filled with the little metal disks that have been used for the identification of the slain common soldiers.*]

The Bearer

Here is a sack, a gunny sack,
A heavy sack I bring.
Here is toll of many a soul—
But not the soul of a king.

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This is the toll of common men,
Who lived in the common way;
Lived upon bread and wine and love,
In the light of the common day.

This is the toll of working men,
Blood and brawn and brain.
Who shall render us again
The worth of all the slain?

[*As The Counter speaks, The Bearer pours out the disks
on the table. The Bearer obeys The Counter.*]

The Counter

Pour them out on the table here.
Clickety—clickety—clack!
For every button a man went out,
And who shall call him back?
Clickety—clickety—clack!

One—two—three—four—
Every disk a soul!
Three score—four score—
So many boys went out to war.
Pick up that one that fell on the floor—
Didn't you see it roll?
That was a man a month ago.
This was a man. Row upon row—
Pile them in tens and count them so.

The Metal Checks

The Bearer

I have an empty sack.
It is not large. Would you have said
That I could carry on my back
So great an army—and all dead?

[*As The Counter speaks The Bearer lays the sack over his arm and helps count.*]

The Counter

Put a hundred in each tray—
We can tally them best that way.
Careful—do you understand
You have ten men in your hand?
There's another fallen—there—
Under that chair.

[*The Bearer finds it and restores it.*]

That was a man a month ago;
He could see and feel and know.
Then, into his throat there sped
A bit of lead.
Blood was salt in his mouth; he fell
And lay amid the battle wreck.
Nothing was left but this metal check—
And a wife and child, perhaps.

[*The Bearer finds the bag on his arm troublesome. He holds it up, inspecting it.*]

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The Bearer

What can one do with a thing like this?
Neither of life nor death it is!
For the dead serve not, though it served the dead.
The wounds it carried were wide and red,
Yet they stained it not. Can a man put food,
Potatoes or wheat, or even wood
That is kind and burns with a flame to warm
Living men who are comforted—
In a thing that has served so many dead?
There is no thrift in a graveyard dress,
It's been shroud for too many men.
I'll burn it and let the dead bless.

[He crosses himself and throws it into the fire. He watches it burn. The Counter continues to pile up the metal checks, and drop them by hundreds into the trays which he piles one upon another. The Bearer turns from the fire and speaks more slowly than he has before. He indicates the metal checks.]

Would not the blood of these make a great sea
For men to sail their ships on? It may be
No fish would swim in it, and the foul smell
Would make the sailors sick. Perhaps in Hell
There's some such lake for men who rush to war
Prating of glory, and upon the shore
Will stand the wives and children and old men
Bereft, to drive them back again

The Metal Checks

When they seek haven. Some such thing
I thought the while I bore it on my back
And heard the metal pieces clattering.

The Counter

Four score—five score—
These and as many more.
Forward—march!—into the tray!
No bugles blow today,
No captains lead the way;
But mothers and wives,
Fathers, sisters, little sons,
Count the cost
Of the lost;
And we count the unlived lives,
The forever unborn ones
Who might have been your sons.

The Bearer

Could not the hands of these rebuild
That which has been destroyed?
Oh, the poor hands! that once were strong and filled
With implements of labor whereby they
Served home and country through the peaceful day.
When those who made the war stand face to face
With these slain soldiers in that unknown place
Whither the dead go, what will be the word
By dead lips spoken and by dead ears heard?
Will souls say King or Kaiser? Will souls prate
Of earthly glory in that new estate?

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The Counter

One hundred thousand—
One hundred and fifty thousand—
Two hundred—

The Bearer

Can this check plough?
Can it sow? can it reap?
Can we arouse it?
Is it asleep?

Can it hear when a child cries?—
Comfort a wife?
This little metal disk
Stands for a life.

Can this check build,
Laying stone upon stone?
Once it was warm flesh
Folded on bone.

Sinew and muscle firm,
Look at it—can
This little metal check
Stand for a man?

The Counter

One—two—three—four—

Louise Driscoll

CHANT OF THE SHROUD MAKER

"We shall need also shrouds"

Others work for the living—
Be mine to work for the dead.
Afar there rages the battle loud;
With tender hands I fashion a shroud
For the clay when the soul has fled.

Soldier, stranger, friend,
Man I shall never see,
Loving, I weave a winding sheet
For one who has died for me.

Triply the sheet be folded
For the Blessed Trinity;
And on his bosom his folded hands
Unwanted now for life's demands,
And the scarlet cross shall be.

Soldier, brother, friend,
Face I shall never see,
Loving, I weave a winding sheet
For one who has died for me.

Cover the clay deserted
Now that the life has sped.

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Prayers, blessings and grateful tears
Follow his memory through the years:
Peace to the honored dead.

Soldier, brother, friend,
Man I shall never see;
Loving, I weave a winding sheet
For one who has died for me.

Marian Ramie

IF WAR IS RIGHT

If war is right, then God is might
And every prayer is vain:
Go raze your temples from the hills—
Red death is in the plain.

If war is right, then God is might,
And every prayer is vain:
Look not for Christ upon the hills—
He lies among the slain.

Parke Farley

THE HERO

Bomb and ball and shell
Had done their work so well
That, after many weeks,
The city fell—
(To save the women, so the burghers said.)

Then with red-dripping sword,
We, the enemy, poured
Down through the streets
To know what spoils the city might afford.
(What *are* the spoils of war?)

A corporal, nameless, with a little troop
Of nameless men, has stopped before a stoop
Whose door's ajar.
The corporal laughs. "Ha! Note the family group!"
(A man and wife, three daughters—and a dog.)

Ten of the soldiers enter. "Seize the goat.
No, no, don't shoot him—cut the villain's throat.
That's right, a little blood. Don't splutter so, you fool,
before the ladies.
What, not dead yet? You've bled a quart, you bloat!"
(A corporal must have his joke, you know.)

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"Well, let him die. There's tastier business now.
Here, you two nearest, strip me that old sow.
Too fat by far—but get those rags off, boys—
That's it. Now tie her up, so she can see the row."
(What *are* the spoils of war?)

"Now for the ninnies. Three to each, and quick!
Hell!—what a form! She'd make a queen look sick!
She's mine. You take the others,
And when you're through, a butt'll do the trick."
(A rifle butt is a handy thing, they say.)

An hour later.—"Stretch them in a row.

The old sow's fainted. Didn't like the show,
Perhaps. Fat—ugh! Better unburden her belly—
That's it—a twist of the sword. Well, bring the dog, and
off we go."

(A mascot's good to keep the spirits up.)

.

Again the howl of war;
Again the roar
Of cannon, and the rain
Of bombs from ships that soar.
(And we must win, for God is on our side!)

The Hero

The devilish enemy
Force onward, sullenly.
We are turned, driven, routed—
Drop everything, and flee.
(Why does not God uphold the right?)

But see! The flag is raised
And waved aloft! Amazed,
But ready to be led, we turn about.
'Tis the work of the very God we praised.
(Men can do worse than follow a flag.)

And there in the mighty din
We win,
And turn to see who bore the colors back.
We gather round and hem the hero in—
(A nameless corporal, now to be named forever.)

.

Mark where the hero stands,
A banner in his hands;
Banner of bronze in hands of bronze!
Bronze on granite forever he stands.
(Was he not chosen of God?)

John Russell McCarthy

THE BOMBARDMENT

Slowly, without force, the rain drops into the city. It stops a moment on the carved head of Saint John, then slides on again, slipping and trickling over his stone cloak. It splashes from the lead conduit of a gargoyle, and falls from it in turmoil on the stones in the Cathedral square. Where are the people, and why does the fretted steeple sweep about in the sky? Boom! The sound swings against the rain. Boom, again! After it, only water rushing in the gutters, and the turmoil from the spout of the gargoyle. Silence. Ripples and mutters. Boom!

The room is damp, but warm. Little flashes swarm about from the firelight. The lustres of the chandelier are bright, and clusters of rubies leap in the Bohemian glasses on the étagère. Her hands are restless, but the white masses of her hair are quite still. Boom! Will it never cease to torture, this iteration! Boom! The vibration shatters a glass on the étagère. It lies there formless and glowing, with all its crimson gleams shot out of pattern, spilled, flowing red, blood-red. A thin bell-note pricks through the silence. A door creaks. The old lady speaks: "Victor, clear away that broken glass." "Alas! Madame, the Bohemian glass!" "Yes, Victor, one hundred years ago my father brought it—" Boom! The room shakes, the servitor quakes. Another goblet shivers and breaks. Boom!

The Bombardment

It rustles at the window-pane,—the smooth, streaming rain, and he is shut within its clash and murmur. Inside is his candle, his table, his ink, his pen, and his dreams. He is thinking, and the walls are pierced with beams of sunshine, slipping through young green. A fountain tosses itself up at the blue sky, and through the spattered water in the basin he can see copper carp, lazily floating among cold leaves. A wind-harp in a cedar-tree grieves and whispers, and words blow into his brain, bubbled, iridescent, shooting up like flowers of fire, higher and higher. Boom! The flame-flowers snap on their slender stems. The fountain rears up in long broken spears of disheveled water and flattens into the earth. Boom! And there is only the room, the table, the candle, and the sliding rain. Again, Boom!—Boom!—Boom!—He stuffs his fingers into his ears. He sees corpses, and cries out in fright. Boom! It is night, and they are shelling the city! Boom! Boom!

A child wakes and is afraid, and weeps in the darkness. What has made the bed shake? "Mother, where are you? I am awake." "Hush, my Darling, I am here." "But, Mother, something so queer happened, the room shook." Boom! "Oh! What is it? What is the matter?" Boom! "Where is father? I am so afraid." Boom! The child sobs and shrieks. The house trembles and creaks. Boom!

Retorts, globes, tubes, and phials lie shattered. All his trials oozing across the floor. The life that was his choosing,

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lonely, urgent, goaded by a hope, all gone. A weary man in a ruined laboratory, that was his story. Boom! Gloom and ignorance, and the jig of drunken brutes. Diseases like snakes crawling over the earth, leaving trails of slime. Wails from people burying their dead. Through the window he can see the rocking steeple. A ball of fire falls on the lead of the roof, and the sky tears apart on a spike of flame. Up the spire, behind the lacings of stone, zig-zagging in and out of the carved tracings, squirms the fire. It spouts like yellow wheat from the gargoyles, coils round the head of Saint John, and aureoles him in light. It leaps into the night and hisses against the rain. The Cathedral is a burning stain on the white, wet night.

Boom! The Cathedral is a torch, and the houses next to it begin to scorch. Boom! The Bohemian glass on the étagère is no longer there. Boom! A stalk of flame sways against the red damask curtains. The old lady cannot walk. She watches the creeping stalk and counts. Boom!—Boom! —Boom!

The poet rushes into the street, and the rain wraps him in a sheet of silver. But it is threaded with gold and powdered with scarlet beads. The city burns. Quivering, spearing, thrusting, lapping, streaming, run the flames. Over roofs, and walls, and shops, and stalls. Smearing its gold on the sky, the fire dances, lances itself through the doors, and lisps and chuckles along the floors.

The Bombardment

The child wakes again and screams at the yellow-petaled flower flickering at the window. The little red lips of flame creep along the ceiling beams.

The old man sits among his broken experiments and looks at the burning Cathedral. Now the streets are swarming with people. They seek shelter, and crowd into the cellars. They shout and call, and over all, slowly and without force, the rain drops into the city. Boom! And the steeple crashes down among the people. Boom! Boom, again! The water rushes along the gutters. The fire roars and mutters. Boom!

Amy Lowell.

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AMONG THE RED GUNS

*After waking at dawn one morning when the wind sang low
among dry leaves in an elm*

Among the red guns,
In the hearts of soldiers
Running free blood
In the long, long campaign:
Dreams go on.

Among the leather saddles,
In the heads of soldiers
Heavy in the wracks and kills
Of all straight fighting:
Dreams go on.

Among the hot muzzles,
In the hands of soldiers
Brought from flesh-folds of women—
Soft amid the blood and crying—
In all your hearts and heads
Among the guns and saddles and muzzles:

Dreams,
Dreams go on,
Out of the dead on their backs,
Broken and no use any more:
Dreams of the way and the end go on.

Carl Sandburg

THE CAMP FOLLOWER

We spoke, the camp-follower and I.
About us was a cold, pungent odor—
Gun-powder, stale wine, wet earth, and the smell of thou-
sands of men.
She said it reminded her of the scent
In the house of prostitutes she had lived in.
About us were soldiers—hordes of scarlet women, stupidly,
smilingly giving up their bodies
To a putrid-lipped, chuckling lover—Death;
While their mistresses in tinsel whipped them on. . . .
She spoke of a woman she had known in Odessa,
Owner of a huge band of girls,
Who had pocketed their earnings for years,
Only to be used, swindled and killed by some noble-
man. . . .
She said she thought of this grinning woman
Whenever she saw an officer brought back from battle,
dead. . . .
And I sat beside her and wondered.

Maxwell Bodenheim

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THE JEWISH CONSCRIPT

*There are nearly a quarter of a million Jews in
the Czar's army alone.*

Newspaper clipping

They have dressed me up in a soldier's dress,
With a rifle in my hand,
And have sent me bravely forth to shoot
My own in a foreign land.

Oh, many shall die for their fields and homes,
And many in conquest wild,
But I shall die for the fatherland
That murdered my little child.

How many hundreds of years ago—
The nations wax and cease!—
Did the God of our fathers doom us to bear
The flaming message of peace!

We are the mock and the sport of time!
Yet why should I complain!—
For a Jew that they hung on the bloody cross,
He also died in vain.

Florence Kiper Frank.

WHENCE COMES THE STRANGER

Whence comes this stranger
That with hoarse, lifted throat
Threatens the fields?

Night's darkness
And the darkness of mystery
Cover him as in a tent
Of two hides.

At twilight
I looked through the windows of my body,
And, lo!
The sheaves scattered,
And the rooted trees upturned.

His feet are flails of iron:
What he has threshed
Only the birds of the air will gather.
Bedstraw and branch
Will lie, and rot,
And dig unseen graves.

The wind blows where it wills:
(The Gift of Heaven wrote it in Patmos).
I hear the sound thereof,

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But cannot tell whence it comes,
Or whither it will go.

War rides, without thought,
On a pale horse
Through quiet places.
His banners are smoking torches;
His trumpets blow horribly.

He reaps a red harvest,
But not with the crooks of sickles.
The swaths fall slowly,
And the wings of vultures shadow them.

Love is a lamb, for weakness;
Kin a dove, for sorrow;
Peace the silence of a song.

He thunders,
And the suckling's cry
Is not heard:
He casts his lightning,
And flame breaks from the roofbeam:
He shakes the earth,
And the stones of the altar
Are dust.

Whence Comes the Stranger

At dawn
I looked through the windows of my spirit,
And, lo!
A sower had passed,
Sowing.

For my thoughts
Are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways
My ways,
Saith the Lord.

Joseph Campbell

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PHASES

I.

There's a little square in Paris,
Waiting until we pass.
They sit idly there,
They sip the glass.

There's a cab-horse at the corner,
There's rain. The season grieves.
It was silver once,
And green with leaves.

There's a parrot in a window,
Will see us on parade,
Hear the loud drums roll—
And serenade.

II.

This was the salty taste of glory,
That it was not
Like Agamemnon's story.
Only, an eyeball in the mud,
And Hopkins,
Flat and pale and gory!

III.

But the bugles, in the night,
Were wings that bore
To where our comfort was;

Arabesques of candle beams,
Winding
Through our heavy dreams;

Winds that blew
Where the bending iris grew;

Birds of intermitted bliss,
Singing in the night's abyss;

Vines with yellow fruit,
That fell
Along the walls
That bordered Hell.

IV.

Death's nobility again
Beautified the simplest men.
Fallen Winkle felt the pride
Of Agamemnon
When he died.

What could London's
Work and waste
Give him—
To that salty, sacrificial taste?

What could London's
Sorrow bring—
To that short, triumphant sting?

Wallace Stevens

FALLEN

He was wounded and he fell in the midst of hoarse shouting.
The tide passed, and the waves came and whispered about
his ankles.

Far off he heard a cock crow—children laughing,
Rising at dawn to greet the storm of petals
Shaken from apple-boughs; he heard them cry,
And turned again to find the breast of her,
And sank confusèd with a little sigh. . . .
Thereafter water running, and a voice
That seemed to stir and flutter through the trenches
And set dead lips to talking. . . .

Wreckage was mingled with the storm of petals. . . .

He felt her near him, and the weight dropped off—
Suddenly. . . .

Alice Corbin

THE WAKENED GOD

The War-god wakened drowsily;
 There were gold chains about his hands.
 He said: "And who shall reap my lands
And bear the tithes to Death for me?

"The nations stilled my thunderings;
 They wearied of my steel despair,
 The flames from out my burning hair:
Is there an ending of such things?"

Low laughed the Earth, and answered: "When
 Was any changeless law I gave
 Changed by my sons intent to save,
By puny pitying hands of men?

"I feel no ruth for some I bear. . . .
 The swarming, hungering overflow
 Of crowded millions, doomed to go,
They must destroy who chained you there.

"For some bright stone or shining praise
 They stint a million bodies' breath,
 And sell the women, shamed, to death,
And send the men brief length of days.

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"They kill the bodies swift for me,
And kill the souls you gave to peace. . . .
You were more merciful than these,
Old master of my cruelty.

"Lo, souls are scarred and virtues dim:
Take back thy scourge of ministry,
Rise from thy silence suddenly,
Lest these still take Death's toll to him!"

The War-God snapped his golden chain:
His mercies thundered down the world,
And lashing battle-lines uncurled
And scourged the crouching lands again.

Margaret Widdemer

UNSER GOTT

They held a great prayer-service in Berlin,
And augured German triumph from some words
Said to be spoken by the Jewish God
To Gideon, which signified that He
Was staunchly partial to the Israelites.
The aisles were thronged; and in the royal box
(I had it from a tourist who was there,
Clutching her passport, anxious, like the rest,)
There sat the Kaiser, looking "very sad."
And then they sang; she said it shook the heart.
The women sobbed; tears salted bearded lips
Unheeded; and my friend looked back and saw
A young girl crumple in her mother's arms.
They carried out a score of them, she said,
While German hearts, through bursting German throats
Poured out, *Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott!*

(Yea, "Unser Gott! Our strength is *Unser Gott!*
Not that light-minded Bon Dieu of France!")

I think we all have made our God too small.
There was a young man, a good while ago
Who taught that doctrine . . . but they murdered him
Because he wished to share the Jewish God
With other folk.

They are long-lived, these fierce
Old hating Gods of nations; but at last

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There surely will be spilled enough of blood
To drown them all! The deeps of sea and air,
Of old the seat of gods, no more are safe,
For mines and monoplanes. The Germans, now,
Can surely find and rout the God of France
With Zeppelins, or some slim mother's son
Of Paris, or of Tours, or Brittany,
Can drop a bomb into the *Feste Burg*,
And, having crushed the source of German strength,
Die happy in his blazing monoplane.

Sad jesting! If there be no God at all,
Save in the heart of man, why, even so—
Yea, all the more,—since we must make our God,
Oh, let us make Him large enough for all,
Or cease to prate of Him! If kings must fight,
Let them fight for their glory, openly,
And plain men for their lands and for their homes,
And heady youths, who go to see the fun,
Blaspheme not God. True, maybe we might leave
The God of Germany to some poor frau
Who cannot go, who can but wait and mourn,
Except that she will teach Him to her sons—
A God quite scornful of the Slavic soul,
And much concerned to keep Alsace-Lorraine.
They should go godless, too—the poor, benumbed,
Crushed, anguished women, till their hearts can hold
A greater Comforter!

(Yet it is hard
To make Him big enough! For me, I like
The English and the Germans and the French,
The Russians, too; and Servians, I should think,
Might well be very interesting to God.
But, do the best I may, my God is white,
And hardly takes a nigger seriously
This side of Africa. Not those, at least
Who steal my wood, and of a summer night
Keep me awake with shouting, where they sit
With monkey-like fidelity and glee
Grinding through their well-oiled sausage-mill—
The dead machinery of the white man's church—
Raw jungle-fervor, mixed with scraps sucked dry
Of Israel's old sublimities: not those.
And when they threaten us, the Higher Race,
Think you, which side is God's? Oh, let us pray
Lest blood yet spurt to wash that black skin white,
As now it flows because a German hates
A Cossack, and an Austrian a Serb!)

What was it that he said so long ago,
The young man who outgrew the Jewish God—
"Not a sparrow falleth—?" Ah, God, God,
And there shall fall a million murdered men!

Karle Wilson Baker

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WAR YAWP

America!
England's cheeky kid brother,
Who bloodily assaulted your august elder
At Bunker Hill and similar places
(Not mentioned in our history books),
What can I tell you of war or of peace?
Say, have you forgotten 1861?
Bull Run, Gettysburg, Fredericksburg?
Your million dead?
Tell me,
Was that the greatest time of your lives
Or the most disastrous?
Who knows? Not you; not I.
Who can tell the end of this war?
And say, brother Jonathan,
D'you know what it's all about?
Let me whisper you a secret—we don't!
We were all too fat with peace,
Or perhaps we didn't quite know how good peace was,
And so here we are,
And we're going to win. . . .

It's fine to be a soldier,
To get accepted by the recruiting sergeant,
Be trained, fitted with a uniform and a gun,

War Yawp

Say good-bye to your girl,
And go off to the front
Whistling, "It's a long way to Tipperary."
It's good to march forty miles a day,
Carrying ninety-one pounds on your back,
To eat good coarse food, get blistered, tired out, wounded,
Thirst, starve, fight like a devil
(i. e., like you an' me, Jonathan),
With the Maxims zip-zipping
And the shrapnel squealing,
And the howitzers rumbling like the traffic in Piccadilly.

Civilization?—

Jonathan, if you could hear them
Whistling the *Marseillaise* or *Marching Through Georgia*,
You'd want to go too.
Twenty thousand a day, Jonathan!
Perhaps you're more civilized just now than we are,
Perhaps we've only forgotten civilization for a moment,
Perhaps we're really fighting for peace.
And after all it will be more fun afterwards—
More fun for the poets and the painters—
When the cheering's all over
And the dead men buried
And the rest gone back to their jobs.
It'll be more fun for them to make their patterns,
Their word-patterns and color-patterns.

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And after all, there is always war and always peace,
Always the war of the crowds,
Always the great peace of the arts.

Even now,
With the war beating in great waves overhead,
Beating and roaring like great winds and mighty waters,
The sea-gods still pattern the red seaweed fronds,
Still chip the amber into neck-chains
For Leucothea and Thetis.

Even now,
When the *Marseillaise* screams like a hurt woman,
And Paris—grisettes among cities—trembles with fear,
The poets still make their music
Which nobody listens to,
Which hardly anyone ever listened to.

The great crowds go by,
Fighting over each other's bodies in peace-time,
Fighting over each other's bodies in war-time.
Something of the strife comes to them
In their little, high rock-citadel of art,
Where they hammer their dreams in gold and copper,
Where they cut them in pine-wood, in Parian stone, in wax,
Where they sing them in sweet bizarre words
To the sound of antiquated shrill instruments;
And they are happy.

War Yawp

The little rock-citadel of the artists
Is always besieged;
There, though they have beauty and silence,
They have always tears and hunger and despair.
But that little citadel has held out
Against all the wars of the world—
Like England, brother Jonathan.
It will not fall during the great war.

There is always war and always peace;
Always the war of the crowds,
Always the great peace of the arts.

Richard Aldington

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

POETRY AND WAR



IN the seventeenth century the poet Milton set himself "to justify the ways of God to man."

God was held accountable to man for his actions, it seems, and the fact that there was an open breach between divine and human ideals of responsibility is obviously indicated in the need for justification. Or were not the shortcomings of man, his essential weakness in conduct and understanding, glozed over by fixing the responsibility for this weakness upon the divine author of creation?

Today, in the supreme crisis of the twentieth century, it would seem that the heavy task imposed upon the poets is to justify the ways of man—or nations—to God.

Is it any wonder that the poets have failed?

We can hardly expect Mr. Hardy, Mr. Kipling, Mr. Bridges, or Mr. Masfield to succeed where modern diplomacy has failed; but the failure of the poets, unlike that of the diplomats and kings, is due to a lack of conviction. Actually the poets have progressed beyond the stage of that confident national self-assertion which the particular crisis calls upon them to celebrate. If their poems are not faint-hearted, they are at least interchangeable, and would apply equally well to any country engaged in the struggle.

Clearly what we instinctively demand of the poet today is not a justification of the ways of man to God, but a justification of the ways of man to man.

If the patriotic poems of Mr. Kipling, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Bridges, or Mr. Masefield seem to us inadequate, it is because these poets have in reality outstripped the stage of martial enthusiasm and partisan spirit; it is because these poets feel, even if they do not realize the fact themselves, that it is impossible to justify the ways of man—or of any country—to God in the present conflict. Varying degrees of right and wrong, included in a greater wrong, can count for little with disillusioned minds. War has actually lost its illusion and its glamour. Some shreds of illusion may cling to the individual experience; the elemental sense of tragedy may lift the unforgiveable facts to the height of emotional eloquence, but of what worth is this eloquence beside the collective naked waste?

The American feeling about the war is a genuine revolt against war, and we have believed that POETRY might help to serve the cause of peace by encouraging the expression of this spirit of protest.

Just as the neutrality of the United States is in no sense passive, so the spirit of her poets is one of active antagonism to the barbaric survival of war.

English poets are not in a position just now to celebrate the spirit of democracy, as against that of empire. Yet is not this democratic sympathy the cause of the subtle undercurrent of regret we detect in their poems? Mr. J. A. Cramb, in *Germany and England*, says: "England is a nation schooled in empire from the past, the power which once belonged to the few passing more and more

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into the ranks of the English race itself, so that you have for the first time in history at once a nation and a democracy that is imperial." If the English poets seem to us to lack conviction, it may be because at heart they are better democrats than imperialists.

There is very little of the taint of military imperialism in the 738 poems received in this contest. Instead there is a general disposition to substitute for the retrogressive military ideals of a Bernhardt, a Treitschke, or a Cramb, the divine common sense of Abraham Lincoln. No future historian of the United States will be able to use quotations from her twentieth-century poets in support of an imperial policy of conquest and slaughter.

The American poet may fail, indeed he does not even attempt, to justify the ways of man to God; but he does not fail to realize that it is only through the justification of the ways of man to man that the ways of man may be ultimately justified to God.

A. C. H.

REVIEWS

The Sea is Kind, by T. Sturge Moore. Houghton-Mifflin Company.

Mr. T. Sturge Moore has the magic wand, and all he touches turns to gold, or at least to a shimmering silver. Rich lingering syllables, slow phrases full of sound, long recitative clauses with unexpected little turns of melody—these fill his book to the brim with music as rich and delicate as a Debussy pastoral. Like Debussy's, also, it is a new note, a

modern development, though it is easy enough to trace the poet's ancestry, direct or collateral, through his friend Mr. Yeats, and those remoter friends, Arnold, Keats, Crashaw perhaps, back to the singing Elizabethans, especially Spenser, and the romance poets they hearkened to.

In the lyric dialogue which gives its name to the volume, the nightingale says to Eucritos in a pause of song:

There is a sorcery in well-loved words;
But unintelligible music still
Probes to the buried Titan in the heart,
Whose strength, the vastness of forgotten life,
Suffers but is not dead.

So, in Mr. Moore's poetry, one listens to the word-sorcerer's music with but slighter care for what he is saying. The music itself is full of profound emotion; it expresses spiritual stature and majesty, and keeps the soul alive with longing. Yet, if the mind takes thought, it finds deep meanings clad in proud new raiment; it goes seeking for truth, for the high nameless love beyond love, with a poet who finds these infinite ideas infinitely dear, and who cares comparatively little for lesser loves and sorrows, the staple of most lives. *The Dying Swan* illustrates this loftiness of mood, which one may follow with more detail in many longer poems:

O silver-throated Swan
Struck, struck! a golden dart
Clean through thy breast has gone
Home to thy heart.
Thrill, thrill, O silver throat!
O silver trumpet, pour

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Love for defiance back
On him who smote!
And brim, brim o'er
With love; and ruby-dye thy track,
Down thy last living reach
Of river, sail the golden light—
Enter the sun's heart—even teach,
O wondrous-gifted Pain, teach thou
The God of love, let him learn how!

Lesser subjects are transfigured by this light. Some of the poems for children are as honestly child-like as Stevenson's but they deal more with the spirit of rapture in childhood, even when the subject is as ordinary as *Shoes and Stockings Off* or *Beautiful Meals*:

How nice it is to eat!
All creatures love it so
That they who first did spread,
Ere breaking bread,
A cloth like level snow
Were right, I know.

In *David and Goliath* it is the poet, rather than the child, who half sighs:

It is always good to be
Where long-sighed-for things
Are done with that felicity
Every hero with him brings.

Mr. Moore's poetry is "done with felicity"; in it is the rapture which a true musician strikes out of a noble instrument, and every *opus* is in his own authentic style, although the quality varies. There are delicate surprises in his rhythms, even when he uses a form as sharply defined as the sonnet; but he is more happy in freer rhymed forms.

H. M.

The Sister of the Wind, by Grace Fallow Norton. Houghton-Mifflin Co.

If it were not for her former book, *Little Gray Songs from St. Joseph's*, this little volume might be dismissed with a few words of praise for occasional charming lines, and the immature character of many of the verses passed over without remark. But Miss Norton, by her former book, has earned the right to be taken as a serious poet, and regarding her in that light, much of this collection is disappointing. It would seem to be made up largely of youthful poems, written before the period of *Little Gray Songs*, and it is always a pity, after an assured success, to let early work see the light of day. The reader has a right to expect a surer technique, a more ripened habit of mind, than early work can give.

Miss Norton always writes in a kind of strange, unearthly glamour; hers is a dream imagery, her scenic effects are those of a vision. This is not a modern method, and Miss Norton is practically the only writer today who employs it, and to be alone in a field is always a distinction. It is a pity, therefore, that the poems in this volume suffer so frequently from irritating mannerisms. For instance, repetition:

Far, far, far—
Wild love, bear me far!

I was a flame, I was a flame
That danced too hotly bright.

It is also annoying to have to pronounce *horizon* on the first syllable for the sake of the metre, as in the lines:

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O Sower of the Seed,
I have no horizon
Save where dream-rush and reed
Were o'er this memory won.

or *forest* on the last, in the poem of *Lawrence Hope*. And to speak of hands which *have shook* for the sake of the rhyme, in the same poem, is unpardonable.

But in spite of these faults, due, I am sure, to the verses being youthful attempts, there are some beautiful poems in the book. First of all, I think, *Allegra Agonistes*, but also *A Lament of Yasmini*, *Fear-bred* and *A Letter to a Friend*. There are some verbal felicities too, to make up for the infelicities:

Thy pretty crescent island, leaf-gay by day I see,
is an attractive internal rhyme, and in *Malarude* to speak of a wave as

All purpled, fringed and Tyrian-tinged
gives a shiver of pleasure.

The Sister of the Wind, from which the volume takes its name, is the most considerable poem in the book, and would seem to be of later production than most of the others. The divisions of it which are, to my mind, the most successful are VII, X and XIII. *A. L.*

Songs for the New Age, by James Oppenheim. The Century Co.

Songs for the new age these latest poems of Mr. Oppenheim's are in truth as well as in name; an expression, always adequate and at times beautiful, of the ideals of many of

the younger men today. But with the advantages of this type of verse they share the disadvantages. Their value as art is for today only. They are topically, not technically, interesting. The impression left on the mind is not, as with the older poets, that here is a lover of the beautiful, but that here is a lover of life as it is lived today. It seems almost adventitious that they should be in verse form at all, even so loose a form as "polyrhythmics."

Mr. Oppenheim has definitely abandoned the rhymed verse forms of his earlier work for this more elastic medium, which, in spite of its new name, was old when Whitman used it. But fortunately he has not entirely laid aside the sense of artistic restraint which the technic of these earlier forms gave him.

Rhythmically the poems in this volume are not equally successful. Naturally enough, perhaps, the more fundamental and primitive emotions, like love and the sheer physical joy of living, seem to create in Mr. Oppenheim more simple and beautiful rhythmical expressions than his more intellectual concepts. There is some splendid love poetry here, honest open-air love poetry, from which the "lilies and languors of virtue" are as lacking as the "roses and raptures of vice." Something of the spirit, and of the rhythm, of the old Hebrew poets is in it.

As representing three different facets of the same spiritual attitude—*Sin*, *Beloved*, and *One Flesh* are especially noteworthy. Here is a short poem, *The Runner in the Skies*, which will give a little of the book's flavor.

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Who is the runner in the skies,
With her blowing scarf of stars,
And our earth and sun hovering like bees about her blossoming
heart?

Her feet are on the winds, where space is deep,
Her eyes are nebulous and veiled,
She hurries through the night to a far lover.

E. T.

Beyond the Stars and Other Poems, by Charles Hanson
Towne. Mitchell Kennerley.

One is soothed, not startled, by this small book of quiet poems. Many of them are obvious enough, perhaps too obvious, in idea and metrical arrangement, and none of them ventures far into new fields. Yet there is a soft slow music in their cadences, and in the feeling of certain ones is a gentle dignity and beauty.

These qualities are most evident in the title-piece of the volume, which was one of POETRY'S earliest publications in a number now far too rare. They appear also in certain of the shorter poems. *A Ballad* contains this quatrain:

It was her eyes that held me most—
I never dreamed such eyes could be;
Tired as the dust of ancient queens
Or ruined cities by the sea.

And the first four couplets of *How Softly Runs the Afternoon* pile up whites upon whites in softly musical syllables:

How softly runs the afternoon
Beneath the billowy cloudy of June!
How brightly every moment slips,
How lightly sail the great cloud ships!
How slowly all the galleons go
Within that airy sea of snow—

Their white sails set, vast argosies
Bound for mysterious Hebrides!

H. M.

The Falconer of God, and Other Poems, by William Rose Benét. Yale University Press.

The real magic of Mr. Benét's *Merchants from Cathay* and his *Baron Munchausen*, the strange if deliberate magic of Arabia and Ind, of ivory and spices and jewelled turbans, is somehow lacking in this newest volume. It should be there—the recipe is much the same—but the mystery is flown. Only in spots does it gleam fitfully. The title poem, for instance, which appeared recently in POETRY, has some truly magical lines:

I flung my soul to the air like a falcon flying.
I said, "Wait on, wait on, while I ride below!
I shall start a heron soon
In the marsh beneath the moon—
A strange white heron rising with silver on its wings"

But for the most part Mr. Benét spoils his effects by over-much striving. His technic is too conscious, his rhyme and rhythm schemes too elaborate and involved to produce unity of effect. His words trip the mind constantly. Take these lines for instance:

Like miraculous shining electrum
This wide amber light.
As a lyre that is plucked by a plectrum
The wind in the firs on the height.

There are, however, besides the title poem, several deserving of mention. *The Foreign Sailor*, *Café Tortoni* ('81), and, in another style, *Poor Girl*, are distinctly interesting.

E. T.

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The Shadow of Aetna, by Louis V. Ledoux. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

One may well decry the use of general terms to define or pigeon-hole authors, but the term classicist as applied to Mr. Ledoux is not general but precise. His work has that quality of security which is gained through an appreciative sense of balance and repose. It has not the violent gesture of romantic or realistic awakening—a painful mood is not necessarily an unpleasant one. From this it may be inferred, that the word classicist is not here used, as it is so often used today, as a term of reproach. Occasionally one feels, however, that Mr. Ledoux's poems are a little remote from life. *Persephone*, *A Masque*, and *The Shadow of Aetna*, leave a less definite impression than the brief songs and lyrics in the book which record fleeting personal emotions.

A. C. H.

CHIEF JOSEPH ON WAR

Speaking of war poems, one of the finest we have read is this by the great Indian, Chief Joseph, which was quoted in a recent issue of the college magazine published by the Indian boys at Carlisle:

Hear me, my chiefs; my heart is sick and sad;
Our chiefs are killed,
The old men are all dead,
It is cold and we have no blankets;
The little children are freezing to death.
Hear me, my chiefs; my heart is sick and sad;
From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever!

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARDS

The HELEN HAIRE LEVINSON Prize of two hundred dollars, offered by Mr. Salmon O. Levinson, of Chicago, for the best poem or group of poems by a citizen of the United States, published by POETRY during its second year, is awarded by the editorial staff of the magazine to

MR. CARL SANDBURG

of Chicago, for his group of *Chicago Poems*, published in the March number.

This prize will be continued for the magazine's third year by the generous donor.

The prize of one hundred dollars, offered in our September number by anonymous donors, for the best war or peace poem "based on the present European situation," is awarded to

MISS LOUISE DRISCOLL

of Catskill, New York, for her poem, *Metal Checks*, which opens the present number.

The committee regrets that it is unable to award prizes to two or three other poets. It would like especially to honor in this way the beautiful poem, *On Heaven*, contributed by Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer to the June number.

We urge with confidence the endowment of further prizes and scholarships by generous patrons of art. Prizes of a thousand, fifteen hundred, even two thousand dollars, and many travelling scholarships, are given annually to

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painters, sculptors and architects in this country, and these artists receive as well good prices for their works. Poets, on the contrary, receive no prizes except ours; no university or other institution, so far as we are aware, offers a scholarship for excellence in this art; and few poets could live on bread and water in a hermit's cell from the pitiful income they derive from verse. No artist has more need of cosmopolitan culture and experience than a poet; yet the extravagantly endowed American Academy at Rome, which gives bed, board, and a liberal income to other artists, does not recognize his existence.

Besides the prize-winners above mentioned, the committee desires to include in the honor list of the year—Oct. 1913-Sept. 1914—the following poems. Translations, and poems by two members of the committee (Miss Monroe and Mr. Pound) are withdrawn from competition.

On Heaven, by Ford Madox Hueffer (June).

The Santa Fé Trail, by Vachel Lindsay (July).

A Woman to Her Dead Husband, by D. H. Lawrence (January).

Dark Wings, by James Stephens (August).

Indian Summer, by William Ellery Leonard (October).

Songs of Deliverance, by Orrick Johns (February).

Consummation, by Witter Bynner (April).

The King, by Skipwith Cannell (September).

Lesbia, by Richard Aldington (January).

The Blue Symphony, by John Gould Fletcher (September).

Announcements of Awards

The Coal Picker, by Amy Lowell (August).

The Code—Heroics, by Robert Frost (February).

The Sharing, by Agnes Lee (December).

Our Lady of Idleness, by Florence Wilkinson Evans
(December).

The Steam Shovel, by Eunice Tietjens (September).

NEW BOOKS OF VERSE

Many interesting books of verse are announced for fall publication. Although it is not possible to give the full publishers' lists, the following books are selected as certain to engage the attention of all who are interested in contemporary poetry. Of course there are others by new writers whose quality is yet to be discovered. Reviews will appear in future issues of POETRY.

The Sea Is Kind, by T. Sturge Moore; *Poems*, by Clinton Scollard. Houghton-Mifflin Co.

Borderlands Through Thoroughfares, by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson; *The Congo, and Other Poems*, by Vachel Lindsay; *Poems*, by James Stephens; *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*, by Amy Lowell; *You and I*, by Harriet Monroe. Macmillan Co.

The Poems of Edward Sanford Martin; *The Grand Canyon, and Other Poems*, by Henry Van Dyke; *One Woman to Another, and Other Poems*, by Corinne Roosevelt Robinson; *The Pathflower, and Other*

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- Poems*, by Olive T. Dargan. Charles Scribner's Sons.
Trees, and Other Poems, by Joyce Kilmer; *In Deep Places*,
by Amelia Josephine Burr. George H. Doran Co.
Open Water, by Arthur Stringer. John Lane Co.
Poems, by Brian Hooker. Yale University Press.
The Single Hound, by Emily Dickinson, with Introduction
by Martha Dickinson Bianchi. Little, Brown & Co.
Poems, by Harry Kemp. Mitchell Kennerley.
The Shoes of Happiness, by Edwin Markham. Doubleday,
Page & Co.
Songs for the New Age, by James Oppenheim. Century Co.
The Wild Knight, Early Poems, by G. K. Chesterton. E. P.
Dutton & Co.
Songs and Poems, by Martin Schütze. The Laurentian
Publishers.

NOTES

In response to POETRY's offer of a prize for the best war or peace poem, so many acceptable poems came in among the over seven hundred submitted, that it was decided at the last moment to devote this entire issue to them. The editors feel that subscribers, and the public in general, will be profoundly interested in this assemblage of widely varying ideas, and that the number will be recognized as a fine presentation of American feeling, and a little British as well, on the absorbing subject of the present war.

Each poem submitted was read and decided upon before

the envelope containing the poet's true name was opened.

Miss Louise Driscoll, of Catskill, New York, the prize-winner, has published no volume as yet, but has contributed to POETRY and other magazines.

Of the other contributors, Mr. Joseph Campbell, the Irish poet, and Mr. Richard Aldington, the young English imagist, need no introduction to readers of POETRY. Nor do Miss Amy Lowell of Boston, Miss Margaret Widdemer of Philadelphia, and the Chicago contingent, Mr. Carl Sandburg, Mr. Maxwell Bodenheim, Florence Kiper Frank (Mrs. Jerome K.), and Alice Corbin (Mrs. Wm. P. Henderson), who is assistant editor of the magazine. Miss Lowell's poem was not in competition for the prize.

Karle Wilson Baker (Mrs. T. E. Baker) of Nacogdoches, Texas, has contributed verse to the magazines under the name of Charlotte Wilson.

Miss Marian Ramié is a Red Cross nurse serving the wounded in England.

Mr. John Russell McCarthy and Mr. Wallace Stevens are unknown as yet to the editor. Parke Farley is a pseudonym.

BOOKS RECEIVED

The Theory of Poetry In England, by R. P. Cowl, M. A. Macmillan.

Mary Magdalene, and Other Poems, by Laura E. McCully. Macmillan.

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- The Falconer of God*, by William Rose Benet. Yale University Press.
- Earth Triumphant, and Other Tales in Verse*, by Conrad Aiken. Macmillan.
- The Congo, and Other Poems*, by Vachel Lindsay. Macmillan.
- Lichens from the Temple*, by Robert Restalrig Logan. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Lux Juventutis*, by Katharine A. Esdaile. Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Songs for the New Age*, by James Oppenheim. The Century Co.
- Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*, by Amy Lowell. Macmillan.
- The Little King*, by Witter Bynner. Mitchell Kennerley.
- The Gypsy Trail, an Anthology for Campers*, Compiled by Mary D. Hopkins and Pauline Goldmark. Kennerley.
- America and Other Poems*, by W. J. Dawson. John Lane Company.
- Open Water*, by Arthur Stringer. John Lane Company.
- Poems*, by Katharine Howard. Sherman, French & Co.
- One Woman to Another and Other Verse*, by Corinne Roosevelt Robinson. Scribner.
- Pagan Poems*, by Franklin Henry Giddings. Macmillan.
- Philip the King and Other Poems*, by John Masefield. William Heineman, London.
- Borderlands and Thoroughfares*, by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. Macmillan.
- The Great Grey King and Other Poems Old and New*, by Samuel Valentine Cole. Sherman, French & Co.
- Undine, A Poem*, by Antoinette de Coursey Patterson. H. W. Fisher & Co., Philadelphia.
- The King of the Dark Chamber*, by Rabindra Nath Tagore. Macmillan.
- Gitanjali*, by Rabindra Nath Tagore. Macmillan. (New Edition.)
- The Ebon Muse and Other Poems*, by Léon Laviaux. Englished by John Myers O'Hara. Smith & Sale. Portland, Me.
- Poems Obiter*, by R. E. L. Smith. The Gorham Press, Boston.
- Justification, A Philosophic Phantasy*, by John W. White. Richard G. Badger.

A NOTABLY AMERICAN BOOK

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John Lane Company—New York

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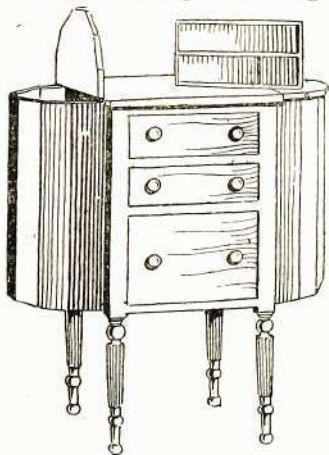
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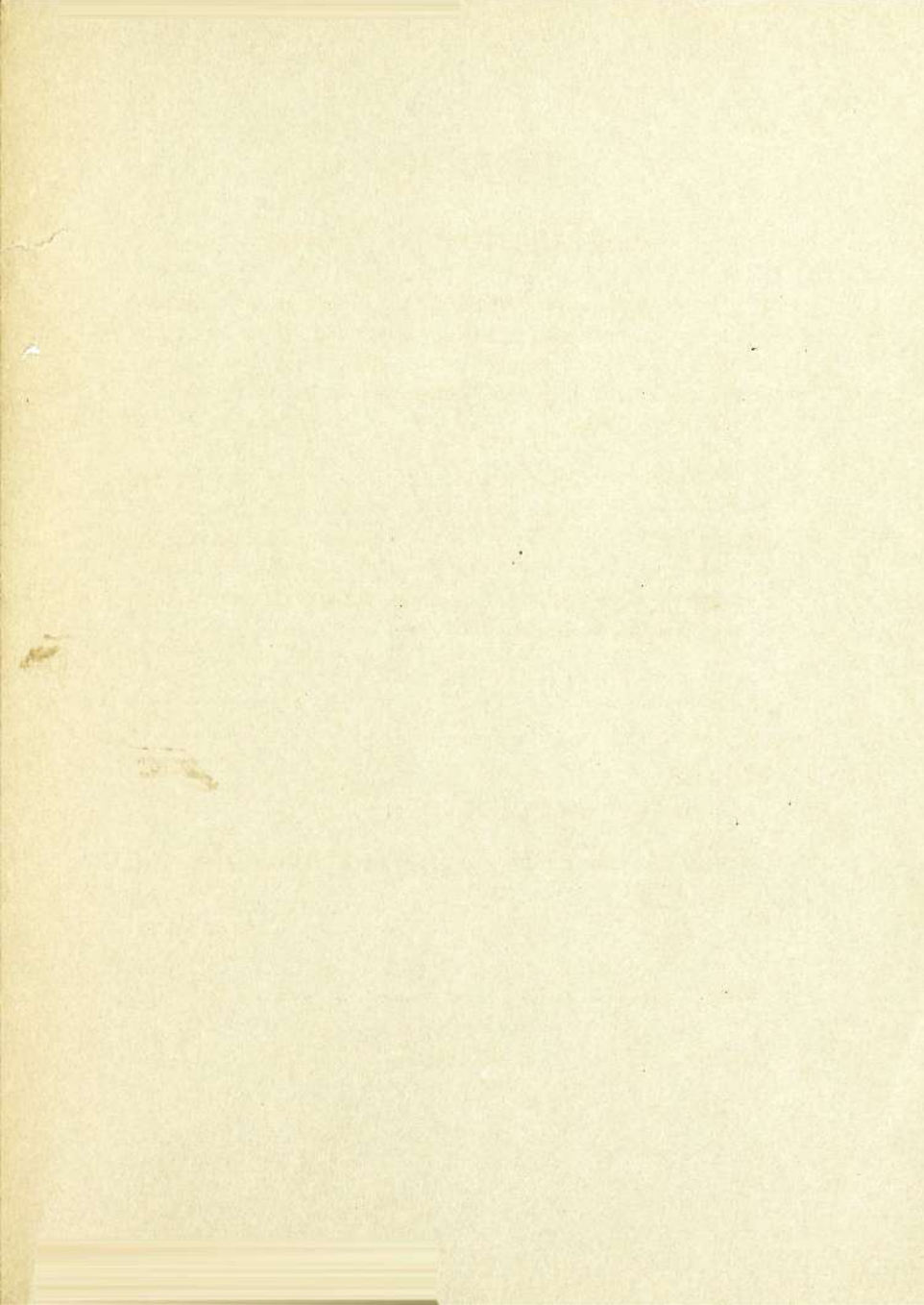
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