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Poetry
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POEMS

BY

ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

SWINBURNE, AN ELEGY

I

THE autumn dusk, not yearly but eternal,
Is haunted by thy voice.
Who turns his way far from the valleys vernal
And by dark choice
Disturbs those heights which from the low-lying land
Rise sheerly toward the heavens, with thee may stand
And hear thy thunders down the mountains strown.
But none save him who shares thy prophet-sight
Shall thence behold what cosmic dawning-light
Met thy soul's own.

II

Master of music! unmelodious singing
Must build thy praises now.

Master of vision! vainly come we, bringing
Words to endow
Thy silence,—where, beyond our clouded powers,
The sun-shot glory of resplendent hours
Invests thee of the Dionysiac flame.
Yet undissuaded come we, here to make
Not thine enrichment but our own who wake
Thy echoing fame.

III

Not o'er thy dust we brood,—we who have never
Looked in thy living eyes.
Nor wintry blossom shall we come to sever
Where thy grave lies.
Let witlings dream, with shallow pride elate,
That they approach the presence of the great
When at the spot of birth or death they stand.
But hearts in whom thy heart lives, though they be
By oceans sundered, walk the night with thee
In alien land.

IV

For them, grief speaks not with the tidings spoken
That thou art of the dead.
No lamp extinguished when the bowl is broken,
No music fled
When the lute crumbles, art thou nor shalt be;
But as a great wave, lifted on the sea,
Surges triumphant toward the sleeping shore,

Thou fallest, in splendor of irradiant rain,
To sweep resurgent all the ocean plain
Forevermore.

V

The seas of earth with flood tides filled thy bosom;
The sea-winds to thy voice
Lent power; the Grecian with the English blossom
Twined, to rejoice
Upon thy brow in chaplets of new bloom;
And over thee the Celtic mists of doom
Hovered to give their magics to thy hand;
And past the moon, where Music dwells alone,
She woke, and loved, and left her starry zone
At thy command.

VI

For thee spake Beauty from the shadowy waters;
For thee Earth garlanded
With loveliness and light her mortal daughters;
Toward thee was sped
The arrow of swift longing, keen delight,
Wonder that pierces, cruel needs that smite,
Madness and melody and hope and tears.
And these with lights and loveliness illume
Thy pages, where rich Summer's faint perfume
Outlasts the years.

VII

Outlasts, too well! For of the hearts that know thee
Few know or dare to stand

On thy keen chilling heights; but where below thee
Thy lavish hand
Has scattered brilliant jewels of summer song
And flowers of passionate speech, there grope the throng
Crying—"Behold! this bauble, this is he!"
And of their love or hate, the foolish wars
Echo up faintly where amid lone stars
Thy soul may be.

VIII

But some, who find in thee a word exceeding
Even thy power of speech—
To whom each song,—like an oak-leaf crimson, bleeding,
Fallen,—can teach
Tidings of that high forest whence it came
Where the wooded mountain-slope in one vast flame
Burns as the Autumn kindles on its quest—
These rapt diviners gather close to thee:—
Whom now the Winter holds in dateless fee
Sealèd of rest.

IX

Strings never touched before,—strange accents
chanting,—
Strange quivering lambent words,—
A far exalted hope serene or panting
Mastering the chords,—
A sweetness fierce and tragic,—these were thine,
O singing lover of dark Proserpine!
O spirit who lit the Maenad hills with song!

O Augur bearing aloft thy torch divine,
Whose flickering lights bewilder as they shine
Down on the throng.

X

Not thy deep glooms, but thine exceeding glory
Maketh men blind to thee.
For them thou hast no evening fireside story.
But to be free—
But to arise, spurning all bonds that fold
The spirit of man in fetters forged of old—
This was the mighty trend of thy desire;
Shattering the Gods, teaching the heart to mould
No longer idols, but aloft to hold
The soul's own fire.

XI

Yea, thou didst burst the final gates of capture;
And thy strong heart has passed
From youth, half-blinded by its golden rapture,
Into the vast
Desolate bleakness of life's iron spaces;
And there found solace, not in faiths, or faces,
Or aught that must endure Time's harsh control.
In the wilderness, alone, when skies were cloven,
Thou hast thy garment and thy refuge woven
From thine own soul.

XII

The faiths and forms of yesteryear are waning,
Dropping, like leaves.

Through the wood sweeps a great wind of complaining
As Time bereaves
Pitiful hearts of all that they thought holy.
The icy stars look down on melancholy
Shelterless creatures of a pillaged day:
A day of disillusionment and terror,
A day that yields no solace for the error
It takes away.

XIII

Thee with no solace, but with bolder passion
The bitter day endowed.
As battling seas from the frail swimmer fashion
At last the proud
Indomitable master of their tides,
Who with exultant power splendidly rides
The terrible summit of each whelming wave,—
So didst thou reap, from fields of wreckage, gain;
Harvesting the wild fruit of the bitter main,
Strength that shall save.

XIV

Here where old barks upon new headlands shatter,
And worlds seem torn apart,
Amid the creeds now vain to shield or flatter
The mortal heart,
Where the wild welter of strange knowledge won
From grave and engine and the chemic sun
Subdues the age to faith in dust and gold:
The bardic laurel thou hast dowered with youth,

In living witness of the spirit's truth,
Like prophets old.

XV

Thee shall the future time with joy inherit.
Hast thou not sung and said:
"Save its own light, none leads the mortal spirit,
None ever led"?
Time shall bring many, even as thy steps have trod,
Where the soul speaks authentically of God,
Sustained by glories strange and strong and new.
Yet these most Orphic mysteries of thy heart
Only to kindred can thy speech impart;
And they are few.

XVI

Few men shall love thee, whom fierce powers
have lifted
High beyond meed of praise.
But as some bark whose seeking sail has drifted
Through storm of days,
We hail thee, bearing back thy golden flowers
Gathered beyond the Western Isles, in bowers
That had not seen, till thine, a vessel's wake.
And looking on thee from our land-built towers
Know that such sea-dawn never can be ours
As thou sawest break.

XVII

Now sailest thou dim-lighted, lonelier water.
By shores of bitter seas

Low is thy speech with Ceres' ghostly daughter,
Whose twined lilies
Are not more pale than thou, O bard most sweet,
Most bitter;—for whose brow sedge-crowns were mete
And crowns of splendid holly green and red;
Who passest from the dust of careless feet
To lands where sunrise thou hast sought shall greet
Thy holy head.

XVIII

Thou hast followed after him whose hopes were
greatest,—
That meteor-soul divine;
Near whom divine we hail thee: thou the latest
Of that bright line
Of flame-lipped masters of the spell of song,
Enduring in succession proud and long,
The banner-bearers in triumphant wars:
Latest; and first of that bright line to be,
For whom thou also, flame-lipped, spirit-free,
Art of the stars.

TO A CHILD—TWENTY YEARS HENCE

You shall remember dimly,
Through mists of far-away,
Her whom, our lips set grimly,
We carried forth today.

But when, in days hereafter,
Unfolding time shall bring
Knowledge of love and laughter
And trust and triumphing,—

Then from some face the fairest,
From some most joyous breast,
Garner what there is rarest
And happiest and best,—

The youth, the light the rapture
Of eager April grace,—
And in that sweetness, capture
Your mother's far-off face.

And all the mists shall perish
That have between you moved.
You shall see her you cherish;
And love, as we have loved.

PORTRAIT OF AN OLD WOMAN

She limps with halting painful pace,
Stops, wavers, and creeps on again;
Peers up with dim and questioning face
Void of desire or doubt or pain.

Her cheeks hang gray in waxen folds
Wherein there stirs no blood at all.
A hand like bundled cornstalks holds
The tatters of a faded shawl.

Where was a breast, sunk bones she clasps;
A knot jerks where were woman-hips;
A ropy throat sends writhing gasps
Up to the tight line of her lips.

Here strong the city's pomp is poured . . . .
She stands, unhuman, bleak, aghast:
An empty temple of the Lord
From which the jocund Lord has passed.

He has builded him another house,
Whenceforth his flame, renewed and bright,
Shines stark upon these weathered brows
Abandoned to the final night.

THE THREE SISTERS

Gone are the three, those sisters rare
With wonder-lips and eyes ashine.
One was wise and one was fair,
And one was mine.

Ye mourners, weave for the sleeping hair
Of only two your ivy vine.
For one was wise and one was fair,
But one was mine.

AMONG SHADOWS

In halls of sleep you wandered by,
This time so indistinguishably
I cannot remember aught of it,
Save that I know last night we met.
I know it by the cloudy thrill
That in my heart is quivering still;
And sense of loveliness forgot
Teases my fancy out of thought.
Though with the night the vision wanes,
Its haunting presence still may last—
As odour of flowers faint remains
In halls where late a queen has passed.

A WATTEAU MELODY

Oh, let me take your lily hand,
And where the secret star-beams shine
Draw near, to see and understand
Pierrot and Columbine.

Around the fountains, in the dew,
Where afternoon melts into night,
With gracious mirth their gracious crew
Entice the shy birds of delight.

Of motley dress and maskèd face,
Of sparkling unrevealing eyes,
They track in gentle aimless chase
The moment as it flies.

Their delicate beribboned rout,
Gallant and fair, of light intent,
Weaves through the shadows in and out
With infinite artful merriment.

. . . . . .

Dear Lady of the lily hand,
Do then our stars so clearly shine
That we, who do not understand,
May mock Pierrot and Columbine?

Beyond this garden-grove I see
The wise, the noble and the brave
In ultimate futility
Go down into the grave.

And all they dreamed and all they sought,
Crumbled and ashen grown, departs;
And is as if they had not wrought
These works with blood from out their hearts.

The nations fall, the faiths decay,
The great philosophies go by,—
And life lies bare, some bitter day,
A charnel that affronts the sky.

The wise, the noble and the brave,—
They saw and solved, as we must see
And solve, the universal grave,
The ultimate futility.

. . . . . .

Look, where beside the garden-pool
A Venus rises in the grove,
More suave, more debonair, more cool
Than ever burned with Paphian love.

'Twas here the delicate ribboned rout
Of gallants and the fair ones went
Among the shadows in and out
With infinite artful merriment.

Then let me take your lily hand,
And let us tread, where starbeams shine,
A dance; and be, and understand
Pierrot and Columbine.

Arthur Davison Ficke

POEMS
BY
WITTER BYNNER

APOLLO TROUBADOUR

WHEN a wandering Italian
Yesterday at noon
Played upon his hurdy-gurdy
Suddenly a tune,
There was magic in my ear-drums:
Like a baby's cup and spoon
Tinkling time for many sleigh-bells,
Many no-school, rainy-day-bells,
Cow-bells, frog-bells, run-away-bells,
Mingling with an ocean medley
As of elemental people
More emotional than wordy,—
Mermaids laughing off their tantrums,
Mermen singing loud and sturdy,—
Silver scales and fluting shells,
Popping weeds and gurgles deadly,
Coral chime from coral steeple,
Intermittent deep-sea bells
Ringing over floating knuckles,
Buried gold and swords and buckles,
And a thousand bubbling chuckles,
Yesterday at noon,—

Such a melody as star-fish,
And all fish that really are fish,
In a gay, remote battalion
Play at midnight to the moon!

Could any playmate on our planet,
Hid in a house of earth's own granite,
Be so devoid of primal fire
That a wind from this wild crated lyre
Should find no spark and fan it?
Would any lady half in tears,
Whose fashion, on a recent day
Over the sea, had been to pay
Vociferous gondoliers,
Beg that the din be sent away
And ask a gentleman, gravely treading
As down the aisle at his own wedding,
To toss the foreigner a quarter
Bribing him to leave the street;
That motor-horns and servants' feet
Familiar might resume, and sweet
To her offended ears,
The money-music of her peers!

Apollo listened, took the quarter
With his hat off to the buyer,
Shrugged his shoulder small and sturdy,
Led away his hurdy-gurdy
Street by street, then turned at last

Toward a likelier piece of earth
Where a stream of chatter passed,
Yesterday at noon;
By a school he stopped and played
Suddenly a tune . . . .
What a melody he made!
Made in all those eager faces,
Feet and hands and fingers!
How they gathered, how they stayed
With smiles and quick grimaces,
Little man and little maid!—
How they took their places,
Hopping, skipping, unafraid,
Darting, rioting about,
Squealing, laughing, shouting out!
How, beyond a single doubt,
In my own feet sprang the ardour
(Even now the motion lingers)
To be joining in their paces!
Round and round the handle went,—
Round their hearts went harder;—
Apollo urged the happy rout
And beamed, ten times as well content
With every son and daughter
As though their little hands had lent
The gentleman his quarter.—
(You would not guess—nor I deny—
That that same gentleman was I!)

No gentleman may watch a god
With proper happiness therefrom;
So street by street again I trod
The way that we had come.
He had not seen me following
And yet I think he knew;
For still, the less I heard of it,
The more his music grew:
As if he made a bird of it
To sing the distance through. . . .
And, O Apollo, how I thrilled,
You liquid-eyed rapscallion,
With every twig and twist of Spring,
Because your music rose and filled
Each leafy vein with dew,—
With melody of olden sleigh-bells,
Over-the-sea-and-far-away-bells,
And the heart of an Italian,
And the tinkling cup and spoon,—
Such a melody as star-fish,
And all fish that really are fish,
In a gay remote battalion
Play at midnight to the moon!

ONE OF THE CROWD

Oh I longed, when I went in the woods today,
To see the fauns come out and play,

To see a satyr try to seize
A dryad's waist—and bark his knees,
To see a river-nymph waylay
And shock him with a dash of spray!—
And I teased, like a child, by brooks and trees:
"Come back again! We need you! *Please!*
Come back and teach us how to play!"
But nowhere in the woods were they.

I found, when I went in the town today,
A thousand people on their way
To offices and factories—
And never a single soul at ease;
And how could I help but sigh and say:
"What can it profit them, how can it pay
To strain the eye with rivalries
Until the dark is all it sees?—
Or to manage, more than others may,
To store the wasted gain away?"

But one of the crowd looked up today,
With pointed brows. I heard him say:
"Out of the meadows and rivers and trees
We fauns and many companies
Of nymphs have come. And we are these,
These people, each upon his way,

Looking for work, working for pay—
And paying all our energies
To earn true love . . . For, seeming gay,
"Once we were sad," I heard him say.

NEIGHBORS

Neighbors are not neighborly
Who close the windows tight,—
Nor those who fix a peeping eye
For finding things not right.

Let me have faith, is what I pray,
And let my faith be strong!—
But who am I, is what I say,
To think my neighbor wrong?

And though my neighbor may deny
That faith could be so slight,
May call me wrong, yet who am I
To think my neighbor right?

Perhaps we wisely by and by
May learn it of each other,
That he is right and so am I—
And save a lot of bother.

THE HILLS OF SAN JOSÉ

I look at the long low hills of golden brown
With their little wooded canyons
And at the haze hanging its beauty in the air—
And I am caught and held, as a ball is caught and held by a player
Who leaps for it in the field.
And as the heart in the breast of the player beats toward the ball,
And as the heart beats in the breast of him who shouts toward the player,
So my heart beats toward the hills that are playing ball with the sun,
That leap to catch the sun
And to throw it to other hills—
Or to me!

GRIEVE NOT FOR BEAUTY

Grieve not for the invisible, transported brow
On which like leaves the dark hair grew,
Nor for the lips of laughter that are now
Laughing inaudibly in sun and dew,
Nor for those limbs that, fallen low
And seeming faint and slow,
Shall yet pursue
More ways of swiftness than the swallow dips

Among . . and find more winds than ever blew
The straining sails of unimpeded ships!
Mourn not!—yield only happy tears
To deeper beauty than appears!

THE MYSTIC

By seven vineyards on one hill
We walked. The native wine
In clusters grew beside us two,
For your lips and for mine,

When, "Hark!" you said,—"Was that a bell
Or a bubbling spring we heard?"
But I was wise and closed my eyes
And listened to a bird;

For as summer leaves are bent and shake
With singers passing through,
So moves in me continually
The wingèd breath of you.

You tasted from a single vine
And took from that your fill—
But I inclined to every kind,
All seven on one hill.

PASSING NEAR

I had not till today been sure,
But now I know:
Dead men and women come and go
Under the pure
Sequestering snow.

And under the autumnal fern
And carmine bush,
Under the shadow of a thrush,
They move and learn;
And in the rush

Of all the mountain-brooks that wake
With upward fling
To brush and break the loosening cling
Of ice, they shake
The air with Spring!

I had not till today been sure,
But now I know:
Dead youths and maidens come and go
Below the lure
And undertow

Of cities, under every street
Of empty stress,

Or heart of an adulteress:
Each loud retreat
Of lovelessness.

For only by the stir we make
In passing near
Are we confused, and cannot hear
The ways they take
Certain and clear.

Today I happened in a place
Where all around
Was silence; until, underground,
I heard a pace,
A happy sound.

And people whom I there could see
Tenderly smiled,
While under a wood of silent, wild
Antiquity
Wandered a child,

Leading his mother by the hand,
Happy and slow,
Teaching his mother where to go
Under the snow.
Not even now I understand—
I only know.

Witter Bynner

REVIEWS AND COMMENTS

The Story of a Round House and other Poems,
by JOHN MASEFIELD (Macmillan)

NOT long ago I chanced to see upon a well-known page, reflective and sincere, these words: "The invisible root out of which the poetry deepest in and dearest to humanity grows is Friendship."

A recent volume may well serve as a distinguished illustration of the saying's truth. Few persons, I think, will read *The Story of a Round House and other Poems* without a sense that the invisible root of its deep poetry is that fine power which Whitman called Friendship, the genius of sympathetic imagination.

This is the force that knits the sinews of the chief, the life-size figure of the book. *Dauber* is the tale of a man and his work. It is the story of an artist in the making. The heroic struggles of an English farmer's son of twenty-one to become a painter of ships and the ocean, form the drama of the poem. The scene is a voyage around the Horn, the ship-board and round-house of a clipper where Dauber spends cruel, grinding months of effort to become an able seaman on the road of his further purpose—

Of beating thought into the perfect line.

His fall from the yard-arm toward the close of the conquered horrors of his testing voyage; the catastrophe of his death after

> He had emerged out of the iron time
> And knew that he could compass his life's scheme—

these make the end of the tragedy.

Tragedy? Yes. But a tragedy of the same temper as that of the great Dane, where the pursuit of a mortal soul's intention is more, far more, than his mortality. Unseen forever by the world, part of its unheard melodies, are all the lines and colors of the Dauber's dreaming. At Elsinore rules Fortinbras, the foe: the fight is lost; the fighter has been slain. These are great issues, hard, unjust and wrong. But the greatest issue of all is that men should be made of the stuff of magnificence. You close the poem, you listen to the last speech of its deep sea-music, thinking: Here is death, the real death we all must die; here is futility, and who knows what we all are here for? But here is glory.

Only less powerful than the impression of the strain of Dauber's endeavor, is the impression of its loneliness. The sneers of the reefers, their practical jokes, the dulness, the arrogance, the smugness and endless misunderstanding, the meanness of man on the apprentice journey, has a keener tooth than the storm-wind.

The verities of *Dauber* are built out of veracities. The reader must face the hardship of labor at sea. He

must face the squalors, the miseries. If he cannot find poetry in a presentment of the cruel, dizzying reality of a sailor's night on a yard-arm in the icy gale off Cape Horn, then he will not perhaps feel in the poem the uncompromising raciness inherent in romances that are true. For the whole manner of this sea-piece is that of bold, free-hand drawing of things as they are. Its final event presents a genuinely epic subject from our contemporary history—the catastrophic character of common labor, and one of its multitudinous fatalities.

Epic rather than lyric, the verse of *Dauber* has an admirable and refreshing variety in its movement. It speaks the high, wild cry of an eagle:

> —the eagle's song
> Screamed from her desolate screes and splintered scars.

It speaks thick-crowding discomforts on the mast with a slapping, frozen sail:

> His sheath-knife flashed,
> His numb hand hacked with it to clear the strips;
> The flying ice was salt upon his lips.
> The ice was caking on his oil-skins; cold
> Struck to his marrow, beat upon him strong,
> The chill palsied his blood, it made him old;
> The frosty scatter of death was being flung.

Some of the lines, such as—

> The blackness crunched all memory of the sun—

have the hard ring, the thick-packed consonantal beauty of stirring Greek.

Dauber will have value to American poetry-readers if only from its mere power of revealing that poetry is not alone the mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells, though it be that also, but may have music of innumerable kinds.

Biography, the next poem in the book, sings with a different voice and sees from a different point of view, the difficulty of re-creating in expression—here expression through words, not through colors—

> This many-pictured world of many passions.

Biography, too, rises from the invisible root of friendship and bears with wonderfully vivid arborescence an appreciative tale of the fine contribution of different companionships to a life.

Among the two-score shorter lyrics of the collection are songs of the sea or of the country-side; chants of coast-town bells and ports, marine ballads, and love-poems. This is, however, the loosest entitling of their kinds; nothing but the work itself in its entirety, can ever tell the actual subject of any true poem. Of these kinds it is not to the marine ballads that one turns back again and again, not to the story of "Spanish Waters" nor to any of the jingling-gold, the clinking-glass, the treasure-wreck verses of the book. Their tunes are spirited, but not a tenth as spirited as those of "The Pirates of Penzance." Indeed, to the conventionally villainous among fictive sea-faring persons of song, Gilbert and Sullivan seem to have done something that cannot now ever be undone.

The poems in the volume one does turn back to again and again are those with the great singing tones, that pour forth with originality, with inexpressible free grace and native power. Again and again you will read *A Creed, C. L. M., Born for Nought Else, Roadways, Truth, The Wild Duck, Her Heart,* and—

> But at the falling of the tide
> The golden birds still sing and gleam.
> The Atlanteans have not died,
> Immortal things still give us dream.
>
> The dream that fires man's heart to make,
> To build, to do, to sing or say
> A beauty Death can never take,
> An Adam from the crumbled clay.

Wonderful, wonderful it is that in the hearing of our own generation, one great voice after another has called and sung to the world from the midst of the sea-mists of England. From the poetry of Swinburne, of Rudyard Kipling, of John Masefield immortal things still give us dream.

Among the poems of this new book, more than one appear as incarnations of the beauty Death can never take. Of these, perhaps, none is more characteristic of the poet, nor will any more fittingly evince his volume's quality than *Truth.*

> Man with his burning soul
> Has but an hour of breath
> To build a ship of Truth
> In which his soul may sail,
> Sail on the sea of death.
> For death takes toll
> Of beauty, courage, youth,
> Of all but Truth.

Life's city ways are dark,
Men mutter by, the wells
Of the great waters moan.
O death, O sea, O tide,
The waters moan like bells.
No light, no mark,
The soul goes out alone
On seas unknown.

Stripped of all purple robes,
Stripped of all golden lies,
I will not be afraid.
Truth will preserve through death;
Perhaps the stars will rise,
The stars like globes.
The ship my striving made
May see night fade.

Edith Wyatt

Présences, par P. J. Jouve: Georges Crès, Paris.

I take pleasure in welcoming, in Monsieur Jouve, a contemporary. He writes the new jargon and I have not the slightest doubt that he is a poet.

Whatever may be said against automobiles and aeroplanes and the modernist way of speaking of them, and however much one may argue that this new sort of work is mannered, and that its style will pass, still it is indisputable that the vitality of the time exists in such work.

Here is a book that you can read without being dead sure of what you will find on the next page, or at the end of the next couplet. There is no doubt that M. Jouve sees with his own eyes and feels with his own nerves. Nothing is more boresome than an author who pretends to know less about things than he really does know. It is this silly sort of false naïveté that rots the weaker productions of Maeterlinck. Thank heaven the advance guard is in process of escaping it.

It is possible that the new style will grow as weak in the future in the hands of imitators as has, by now, the Victorian manner, but for the nonce it is refreshing. Work of this sort can not be produced by the yard in stolid imitation of dead authors.

I defy anyone to read it without being forced to think, immediately, about life and the nature of things. I have perused this volume twice, and I have enjoyed it.

E. P.

THE POETRY SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The Poetry Society of America, organized in 1910, was a natural response, perhaps at the time unconscious, to the reawakened interest in poetry, now so widely apparent.

There seemed no reason why poetry, one of the noblest of the arts, should not take to itself visible organization as well as its sister arts of music and painting, since it was certain that such organization contributed much to their advancement and appreciation. Poetry alone remained an isolated art, save through the doubtful value of coteries dedicated to the study of some particular poet. In the sense of fellowship, of the creative sympathy of contact, of the keener appreciation which must follow the wider knowledge of an art, poetry stood alone, detached from these avenues open from the beginning to other arts.

The Society was therefore founded, with a charter membership of about fifty persons, which included many of the poets doing significant work to day, together with critics and representatives of other arts, the purpose from the outset being to include the appreciators of poetry as well as its producers. It has grown to nearly two hundred members, distributed from coast to coast, and eventually it will probably resolve itself into branch societies, with the chief organization, as now, in New York. Such societies should have a wide influence upon their respective communities in stimulating interest in the work of living poets, to which the Poetry Society as an organization is chiefly addressed.

Since the passing of the nineteenth-century poets, the art of poetry, like the art of painting, has taken on new forms and become the vehicle of a new message. The poet of to-day speaks through so different a medium, his themes are so diverse from those of the elder generation, that he cannot hope to find his public in their lingering audience. He must look to his contemporaries, to those touched by the same issues and responsive to the same ideals. To aid in creating this atmosphere for the poet, to be the nucleus of a movement for the wider knowledge of contemporaneous verse, the Poetry Society of America took form and in its brief period has, I think, justified the idea of its promoters.

Its meetings are held once a month at the National Arts Club in New York, with which it is affiliated, and

are given chiefly to the reading and discussion of poetry, both of recently published volumes and of poems submitted anonymously. This feature has proved perhaps the most attractive, and while criticism based upon one hearing of a poem cannot be taken as authoritative, it is often constructive and valuable.

The Society is assembling an interesting collection of books, a twentieth century library of American poetry. Aside from its own collection, it is taking steps to promote a wider representation of modern poets in public libraries. *Jessie B. Rittenhouse.*

NOTES

"THAT MASS OF DOLTS"

Mr. Pound's phrase in his poem *To Whistler, American*, has aroused more or less resentment, some of it quite emphatic. Apparently we of "these states" have no longing for an Ezekiel; our prophets must give us, not the bitter medicine which possibly we need, but the sugar-and-water of compliment which we can always swallow with a smile.

Perhaps we should examine our consciences a little, or at least step down from our self-erected pedestals long enough to listen to this accusation. What has become of our boasted sense of humor if we cannot let our young poets rail, or our sense of justice if we cannot cease smiling and weigh their words? In certain respects we Americans

are a "mass of dolts," and in none more than our huge, stolid, fundamental indifference to our own art. Mr. Pound is not the first American poet who has stood with his back to the wall, and struck out blindly with clenched fists in a fierce impulse to fight. Nor is he the first whom we, by this same stolid and indifferent rejection, have forced into exile and rebellion.

After a young poet has applied in vain to the whole list of American publishers and editors, and learned that even though he were a genius of the first magnitude they could not risk money or space on his poetry because the public would not buy it—after a series of such rebuffs our young aspirant goes abroad and succeeds in interesting some London publisher. The English critics, let us say, praise his book, and echoes of their praises reach our astonished ears. Thereupon the poet in exile finds that he has thus gained a public, and editorial suffrages, in America, and that the most effective way of increasing that public and those suffrages is, to remain in exile and guard his foreign reputation.

Meantime it is quite probable that a serious poet will have grown weary of such open and unashamed colonialism, that he will prefer to stay among people who are seriously interested in aesthetics and who know their own minds. For nothing is so hard to meet as indifference; blows are easier for a live man to endure than neglect. The poet who cries out his message against a stone wall

will be silenced in the end, even though he bear a seraph's wand and speak with the tongues of angels.

One phase of our colonialism in art, the singing of opera in foreign languages, has been persistently opposed by Eleanor E. Freer, who has set to music of rare distinction many of the finest English lyrics, old and new. She writes:

> In the Basilikon Doron, King James I of England writes to his son: "And I would, also, advise you to write in your own language; for there is nothing left to be said in Greek and Latin already * * * and besides that, it best becometh a King to purify and make famous his own tongue." Might we add, it best becometh the kings of art in America and England to sing their own language and thus aid in the progress of their national music and poetry?

Messrs. Arthur Davison Ficke and Witter Bynner belong to the younger group of American poets, both having been born since 1880, the former in Davenport, Iowa, and the latter in Brooklyn. Both were graduated from Harvard early in this century, after which Mr. Ficke was admitted to the bar, and Mr. Bynner became assistant editor of McClure's.

Mr. Ficke has published *From the Isles*, *The Happy Princess*, *The Earth Passion* and *The Breaking of Bonds;* also *Mr. Faust*, a dramatic poem, and a series of poems called *Twelve Japanese Painters*, will be published this

year. Mr. Bynner has published *An Ode to Harvard and Other Poems*, and *An Immigrant*. His play, *His Father's House*, was recently produced in California.

The March number of *Poetry* will contain *The Silent House*, a one-act play, by Agnes Lee, and poems by Alice Meynell, Alfred Noyes, Fannie Stearns Davis and others.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Bugle Notes of Courage and Love, by Althea A. Ogden. Unity Publishing Co.

Altar-Side Messages, by Evelyn H. Walker. Unity Publishing Co.

Dream Harbor, by J. W. Vallandingham. Privately printed.

Hopeful Thoughts, by Eleanor Hope. Franklin Hudson Publishing Co.

The Youth Replies, by Louis How. Sherman, French & Co.

Songs of the Love Unending, A Sonnet Sequence, by Kendall Banning. Brothers of the Book.

William Allingham, The Golden Treasury Series. The Macmillan Co.

Idylls Beside the Strand, by Franklin F. Phillips. Sherman, French & Co.

The Minstrel with the Self-Same Song, by Charles A. Fisher. The Eichelberger Book Co.

The Wife of Potiphar, with Other Poems, by Harvey M. Watts. The John C. Winston Co.

A Scroll of Seers, A Wall Anthology. Peter Paul & Son.

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