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MID-AMERICAN SONGS

SONG OF STEPHEN THE WESTERNER

I AM of the West, out of the land, out of the velvety creeping and straining. I have resolved. I have been born like a wind. I come sweating and steaming out of the cornrows.

Deep in the corn I lay, ages and ages, folded and broken, old and benumbed. My mother the black ground suckled me. When I was strong I builded a house facing the east. The hair on my arm was like the long grass by the edge of the forests.

Behold, I am one who has been building a house and driving nails with stones that break. The hammer of song has been given me. I am one with the old gods, an American from Dakota, from the deep valley of the Mississippi, from Illinois, from Iowa, from Ohio.

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Would you know what has befallen? In my warm ignorance I lay dead in the corn rows. On the wind came rumors and cries. I squirmed and writhed. I was frightened and wept. My fathers emerged from the corn and killed each other in battle.

I am a man come into the city of men out of the mouth of the long house. Hear the wind in the caves of the hills! My strength is terrible. I stand in the streets and shout. My children are as the dust of city streets for numbers. I am so small men do not see me. So tiny am I that I walk on the ball of your eye.

*Saddle a horse—sweep away!*
*Saddle a horse for liberty!*
*Harry my men, harry my men—*
*Broken ground for mine and me!*

In the long house at evening the old things were sweet. The nuts and the raisins lay deep on the tables. The women cut white bread with long knives. They hid the sweets of their bodies with clothes. They knew old things but had forgotten old singers.

On the straw in the stables sat Enid the maker of harness. Beside him sat old men. Long we lay listening and listening. On their haunches they sat and talked of old gods. Above the sound of the tramping of the hoofs of the horses arose always the voices of old men.
Now, my beloved, I have fallen down from my horse. I have returned to kill my beloved on the threshing floor. My throat is sore with the dust of new cities. The voices of new men shake the drums of my ears. I await long in the darkness the sweet voice of old things, but the new death has put its hand into mine. I have killed my beloved in the place of the deep straw and cast her away.

*Saddle a horse. Sweep away.*
*Break-neck speed to liberty.*
*Harry my men, harry my men—*
*Broken ground for mine and me!*

I am of the West, out of the land, out of the velvety creeping and straining. It is day and I stand raw and new by the coal heaps. I go into the place of darkness at the beginning of the new house. I shall build my house with great hammers. New song is tearing the cords of my throat. I am become a man covered with dust. I have kissed the black hands of new brothers and cannot return to bury my beloved at the door of the long house.
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

**AMERICAN SPRING SONG**

In the spring, when winds blew and farmers were plowing fields,
It came into my mind to be glad because of my brutality.

Along a street I went and over a bridge.
I went through many streets in my city and over many bridges.
Men and women I struck with my fists and my hands began to bleed.

Under a bridge I crawled, and stood trembling with joy
At the river's edge.
Because it was spring and soft sunlight came through the cracks
Of the bridge, I tried to understand myself.

Out of the mud at the river's edge I moulded myself a god,
A grotesque little god with a twisted face,
A god for myself and my men.

You see now, brother, how it was.

I was a man with clothes made by a Jewish tailor;
Cunningly wrought clothes, made for a nameless one.
I wore a white collar and someone had given me a jeweled pin
To wear at my throat.
That amused and hurt me too.
American Spring Song

No one knew that I knelt in the mud beneath the bridge
In the city of Chicago.

You see I am whispering my secret to you.

I want you to believe in my insanity and to understand that
I love God—
That's what I want.

And then, you see, it was spring and soft sunlight
Came through the cracks of the bridge.
I had been long alone in a strange place where no gods came.

Creep, men, and kiss the twisted face of my mud god.
I'll not hit you with my bleeding fists.
I'm a twisted God myself.

It is spring and love has come to me.
Love has come to me
And to my men.

A VISIT

Westward the field of the cloth of gold. It is fall. See the corn. How it aches.
Lay the golden cloth upon me. It is night and I come through the streets to your window.
The dust and the words are all gone, brushed away. Let me sleep.

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SONG OF THE DRUNKEN BUSINESS MAN

Don't try, little one, to keep hold of me.
      Go home! There's a place for you by the fire.
Age is waiting to welcome you, love—
      Go home and sit by the fire.

Into the naked street I ran,
      Roaring and bellowing like a cow;
Shaking the walls of the houses down,
      Proclaiming my dream of black desire.

_Eighteen letters in a pigeon-hole,_
_Eighteen letters in a pigeon-hole._

If there's a thing in this world that's good it's guts.
      I'm a blackbird hovering over the land:
Go on home! Let me alone.

_Eighteen letters in a pigeon-hole,_
_Eighteen letters in a pigeon-hole._

Do you know, little dove, I admire your lips—
      They're so red.
What are you doing out in the street?
      Take my arm! Look at me!
Ah, you be gone. I'm sixty-five years old tonight,
      Now what's the use of beginning again.
Song of the Drunken Business Man

Eighteen letters in a pigeon-hole,
Eighteen letters in a pigeon-hole.

Well, I'm tired. I ache. What's the use?
I can't meet the note. I have a son.
Let's go home. It's twelve o'clock.
I'm going to get that boy into West Point yet.

Eighteen letters in a pigeon-hole,
Eighteen letters in a pigeon-hole.

EVENING SONG

My song will rest while I rest. I struggle along. I'll get back to the corn and the open fields. Don't fret, love, I'll come out all right.

Back of Chicago the open fields. Were you ever there—trains coming toward you out of the West—streaks of light on the long gray plains? Many a song—aching to sing.

I've got a gray and ragged brother in my breast—that's a fact. Back of Chicago the open fields—long trains go west too—in the silence. Don't fret, love. I'll come out all right.

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SONG OF INDUSTRIAL AMERICA

They tell themselves so many little lies, my Belovéd. Now wait, little hand. You can't sing. We are standing in a crowd, by a bridge, in the West. Hear the voices. Turn around. Let's go home. I am tired. They tell themselves so many little lies.

You remember, in the night, we arose. We were young. There was smoke in the passage and you laughed. Was it good—that black smoke? Look away—to the streams and the lake. We're alive. See my hand, how it trembles on the rail.

Here is song, here in America, here now, in our time. Now wait. I'll go to the train. I'll not swing off into tunes. I'm all right. I just want to talk.

You watch my hand on the rail of this bridge. I press down. The blood goes down, there. That steadies me; it makes me all right. Now here is how it's going to come—the song, I mean. I've watched things, men and faces. I know.

First there are the broken things, myself and the others. I don't mind that. I'm gone, shot to pieces. I'm a part of the scheme. I'm the broken end of a song myself. We are all that, here in the West, here in Chicago. Tongues clatter against teeth. There is nothing but shrill screams and a rattle. That had to be. It's a part of the scheme.
Song of Industrial America

Souls, dry souls, rattle around.
Winter of song. Winter of song.

Now, faint little voice, do lift up. They are swept away in the void. That's true enough. It had to be so from the very first.

Pshaw, I'm steady enough—let me alone. Keokuk, Tennessee, Michigan, Chicago, Kalamazoo—don't the names in this country make you fairly drunk? We'll stand by this brown stream for hours. I'll not be swept away—watch my hand, how steady it is. To catch this song and sing it would do much, make much clear.

Come close to me, warm little thing. It is night. I am cold. When I was a boy in my village, here in the West, I always knew all the old men. How sweet they were—quite biblical too—makers of wagons and harness and plows, sailors and soldiers and pioneers. We got Walt and Abraham out of that lot.

Then a change came.

Drifting along. Drifting along.
Winter of song. Winter of song.

You know my city, Chicago-triumphant—factories and marts and the roar of machines—horrible, terrible, ugly and brutal.

It crushed things down and down. Nobody wanted to hurt. They didn't want to hurt me or you. They were caught
themselves. I know the old men here—millionaires. I've always known old men all my life. I'm old myself. You would never guess how old I am.

Can a singer arise and sing in this smoke and grime? Can he keep his throat clear? Can his courage survive? I'll tell you what it is—now you be still. To hell with you. I'm an old empty barrel floating in the stream—that's what I am. You stand away. I've come to life. My arms lift up. I begin to swim.

Hell and damnation—turn me loose! The floods come on. That isn't the roar of the trains at all. It's the flood, the terrible, horrible flood turned loose.

Winter of song. Winter of song.
Carried along. Carried along.

Now in the midst of the broken waters of my civilization rhythm begins. Clear above the flood I raise my ringing voice. In the disorder and darkness of the night, in the wind and the washing waves, I shout to my brothers—lost in the flood.

Little faint beginnings of things—old things dead, sweet old things—a life lived in Chicago, in the West, in the whirl of industrial America.

God knows you might have become something else—just like me. You might have made soft little tunes, written
cynical little ditties, eh? Why the devil didn't you make some money and own an automobile?

Do you believe—now listen—I do. Say, you—now listen! Do you believe the hand of God reached down to me in the flood? I do. 'Twas like a streak of fire along my back. That's a lie? Of course. The face of God looked down at me over the rim of the world.

Don't you see we are all a part of something, here in the West? We are trying to break through. I'm a song myself, the broken end of a song myself. We have to sing, you see, here in the darkness. All men have to sing—poor broken things. We have to sing here in the darkness in the roaring flood. We have to find each other. Have you courage tonight for a song? Lift your voices. Come.

Sherwood Anderson
SONGS FROM THE WOODS

WHITE MAGIC

Who bids us be wary
Of briar and snake
Is led by a fairy.

Who finds dry wood
For the fires we make—
His magic is good.

Who gathers wild berries
High on far hills,
Or gets sand-cherries;

Or catches the trout
Where the deep hole fills,
Is a mage, no doubt.

Who knows the cool hollow
Where springs drip cold
Is a wizard to follow.

Let the magic begin
With the dawn's red gold—
But the cook is the Jinn!

A THOUGHT WHEN NOON IS HOT

Joy will cool my face,
Joy will wash my hands,
A Thought When Noon is Hot

Into very joy I shall plunge my arms
And sing;
Joy will sweeten my mouth,
Joy will gladden my throat,
And freshen my very life, when I reach
The spring!

BEFORE DAWN IN CAMP

Upon our eyelids, dear, the dew will lie,
   And on the roughened meshes of our hair,
While little feet make bold to scurry by
   And half-notes shrilly cut the quickened air.

Our clean, hard bodies, on the clean, hard ground,
   Will vaguely feel that they are full of power;
And they will stir—and stretch—and look around—
   Loving the early, chill, half-lighted hour,

Loving the voices in the shadowed trees,
   Loving the feet that stir the blossoming grass.
Oh, always we have known such things as these,
   And knowing, can we love and let them pass?

I CAME TO BE ALONE

I went out from the world of futile talking and trying,
   From the world of the wearing of clothes to the nude and silent sky,
And into the woods I came, to the easily flowing river,
Here of my own nude soul to ask, "What manner of man am I?"

But I have strangely forgotten all that I dreamed and wanted,
All that I thought and spoke and dared only a month ago.
Even the friends of my heart I have lost in the glancing shadows,
And the slim white self I see in the stream is the only self I know.

I shall remember again, perhaps, when the blessed summer passes;
But now—oh, nothing but storm or peace under a bending sky,
Racket of winds at night that slap and tug at the flapping canvas,
And the rock of a good canoe by day on the rapids racing by!

I shall remember again, perhaps, but now I have clean forgotten—
For I have been glad of hunger and thirst, the fear of death I have known;
Jagged rocks in the rip I have seen and quiet waters beyond them,
And the clean green banks of perfect rest, since I came to be alone!

Harley Graves
THE SCARLET TANAGER

All through the silent summer day
He sings “Ke-i, ke-o, ke-ay”—
A rich wild strain that sounds to me
Like bugle-notes of anarchy.

O black and burning scarlet one,
You flare and flicker, like the sun
Against the black void’s freezing breath:
Like life triumphant over death.

I see you burning in a tree;
From tree to tree you flame and wave:
You wave the blood of liberty
Against the black shroud of the brave.

You flare and flare, you call and call,
Amid the dim leaves’ emerald shade.
Your note’s a love-note after all!
Of love your scarlet flame is made!

Richard Hunt
A SIMPLE SONG FOR AMERICA

1917

Gather us to thy heart,
Lay us thy spirit bare:
Give us in thee our part,
O Mother young and fair!

Thou art so great, so great,
Thy children are so small,
We cannot guess thy state
Nor compass thee at all.

Our spirits yearn and ache
To forge, from these few years,
What soberer peoples make
From centuries of tears:

Love, like a tempered sword,
Glittering forth at need!
We can but pray the Lord
Who knows nor church nor creed,

The Day-spring from above,
The Truth that maketh free:
Give us great hearts to love
A great land worthily!

Karle Wilson Baker
THE DREAMERS

War gnawed the bones of nations; Hunger went
Into the hearts and souls of people. Then
The dreamers called their tenderest dreams and sent
Them out to stay the carnage of brave men . . .
Back to the dreamers came the dreams' lament,
"Oh, take your swords, that we may live again!"

NOCTURNE

Clouds, piled up like the dunes
In a world that cried for rain,
Shifted by winds that shifted
The dunes themselves in the night,
Came from the night and drifted
Into the night again!

Dreams, restless as the dunes
Where things that were remain—
Buried while the winds shifted
Or brought once more to sight—
Wandered from you and drifted
Back to you again.

Glenn Ward Dresbach
I am an ancient reluctant conscript.

On the soup wagons of Xerxes I was a cleaner of pans.

On the march of Miltiades' phalanx I had a haft and head; I had a bristling gleaming spear-handle.

Red-headed Caesar picked me for a teamster. He said, "Go to work, you Tuscan bastard! Rome calls for a man who can drive horses."

The units of conquest led by Charles the Twelfth, The whirling whimsical Napoleonic columns: They saw me one of the horseshoers.

I trimmed the feet of a white horse Bonaparte swept the night stars with.

Lincoln said, "Get into the game; your nation takes you." And I drove a wagon and team and I had my arm shot off At Spottsylvania Court House.

I am an ancient reluctant conscript.  

Carl Sandburg
AMONG THE RODINS

If I were a man of Herculaneum—
A twentieth-century city
Of the brooding North—
And I were praying or cursing in the dark,
And the lava came upon me as I prayed or cursed,
It would shape me like you, Prodigal Son,
And my pleading and despair would stay forever
In that stark gesture of two rigid, upright arms
Pointing like two trees, charred and leafless,
Towards the sky.

Or if a great wind came,
Winging sorrow,
And blew and blew,
And laid me, battling with it, prostrate;
And then if the sun came in the wind's wake,
And kissed my cold lips,
And made my back quiver gently with revived hope,
Then, Fallen Angel, I should be one with you.

Let the tranquil, tolerant Buddha,
Towering in the background
Like the Fuji-yama above the pilgrims crossing a wind-swept
bridge—
Smile upon us all together,
And breathe his eastern peace upon us.

John Cournos

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POEMS

LAKE MICHIGAN AT NIGHT

The lazy ships all lazy lie,
Quiet against the quiet sky.
The little silver ship-lights make
A play of wonder on the lake.

A mist of smoke that blurs the air
Is washed with silver everywhere;
The silver moon, a silvering rose,
Upon the silvered water glows.

Each window on the avenue
Hangs out a star for me and you.
The silvery winds of dusk awake
A flute of silver on the lake.

YOUR NEIGHBOR AND MINE

Her life was like her quiet dress,
Her burning soul a quenchless light.
Mothering her sisters and her brothers
Who cried for mothering in the night,
Mothering them she knew
Not if the sea was blue
Or the sun in the sky.

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Your Neighbor and Mine

She who was like a light—
Like a thief in the night
Love passed her by.
But on the day she came to die
Death laid her quiet dress away.
The common room filled with the light
Of her bright soul. That night
The neighbors did not stoop to pray
Marvelling at the light.

THE OLD MAN

I am old now,
I am very old.
The sleep has come upon me
And my words. Today
Have I given all away.
Nor will I join in the talk
Of the old men in the park,
Tapping their canes around the well.
I have forgotten many things
For I am old,
Being cloaked in twilight.
I will stuff my pipe with stars
And go to sleep.
WAR-TIME CRADLE SONG

The king sent out your father to war
As once he sent my father before.
My wedding ring and the gold on my ear
Today have I bartered for bread, my dear.
The moon is dying, her throat is red,
The wind is crying, "Your father's dead."

The holy priest for saying a mass
Will take our gentle ox and our ass,
And we must give our cow away
To a man who digs the grave today.
The king has given us a reward—
A medal of bronze, and your father's sword.

Grain there is none on the granary floor.
The lean wolf, Misery, howls at our door—
Until I wake and cut off my hair.
My son, I will keep you strong and fair,
For soon you shall take your father's sword
And bring me the king's head for reward.

Scharmel Iris
Glimmering meadows miles around,
Drenched with dew and drowsy sound,
Drink the moonlight and the dream.
Veiled in mists the lowlands seem—
Through wild ways and fragrant aisles
Of the country miles on miles
Drifting cloudlike without will;
And soft mist is on the hill.

Everywhere earth's shrill delight
Shakes and shimmers through the night;
Silver tides of music flow
'Round the world; the cricket's low
Harp, the starry ecstasy
Of the keen cicada's cry—
With, "I love, I love, I love!"
To the cloudless moon above—
Lifts the old, the endless song.
And the firefly, frail among
The low boughs and heavy leaves,
His hushed flight in silence weaves:
Deeper than the love they sing,
The unutterable thing—
The sheer pang wherewith he glows—
Burns his body as he goes.

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Now earth draws the trembling veil
From her bosom cloudy pale,
And the messenger of night
Flows to her in shadowed light—
Memories of the absent sun
Dreaming of his lovely one.

From that fiery embrace
Wearied out, with lifted face,
Tangled hair, and dewy eyes,
Drowsed and murmurous she lies
In the bride-sleep, the deep bliss
After some exalted kiss,
Swooning through the darkness dim.

Still with memories of him
Her hushed breath comes fierce and low,
And the love that thrilled her so
Stirs her slumber; from her lips
A deep sigh of longing slips.

Fragrant is thy flowery hair,
O belovèd—everywhere
Thy faint odor on the air
From dread arches of thy grace
Wafted! What dark secret place
Of dusk tresses in the wild
Midnight of thy locks beguiled,
Beckoning vistas of thy sheer

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Maddening loveliness, the dear
Curves of thy bright beauty, all
Lure me to thy love! The call
Of past lives is in my breast—
Premonitions dimly guessed
Of seraphic solemn things,
Mingled lips and murmurings
On cool nights that gave me birth.
Yet, O mother, awful Earth!—
What stark mystery no less
Breaks the bosom that I press
Close against thy carelessness.

Where the holy poem of night—
In veiled music and moonlight,
Shimmering cries and stars and dreams—
Onward in soft rhythm streams;
With reluctant pulse and pause
To its lovely ending draws
Thy long passion, when unroll
The starred heavens like a scroll—
The old parable and story,
Some transcendent allegory—
Mother, mother, yet I know
Of cool nights that whispered so
When I was not, long ago!
When thy beauty, murmuring low
With abandon like a bride,
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Throws her glimmering veils aside,
The dread love I dare not say
Turns my trembling lips away—
Something deeper, something more
Than I ever guessed before,
A new homesickness at heart
Hungering for the home thou art:
As the rivers to the one
Sea with solemn longing run,
So my being to thy breast,
So my sorrow to thy rest.
Thou art mother, thou art bride—
By what dearer name beside
Must I name thee, must I call,
Who art dearer far than all?

On thy heart I lay my head—
Oh, what is it thou hast said!
Secret beautiful and dread,
Lovely moment drawing near,
Thought most terrible and dear:
To be one with thy complete
Dark sweet loveliness, my sweet,
One with thy wild will again—
To descend in rushing rain
To thy ravished breast, to pour
Through the veins that I adore,
Drink deep draughts of thee, and grow

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The Moonlight Sonata

Through long love and longing so
Into the belovèd, flow
In thy deepest pulse, at home
In the dark and silent loam
Drenched with thee, and tremble up
In the lily’s lifted cup—
Odors, clouds, and starry haze,
Breath of the wet country ways
On cool, moon-clear, fragrant nights;
Or where thy supreme delight’s
Radiant passion draws aghast
Sobs of thunder through the vast—
Shuddering breath and murmur of
Thy fierce wrath of sullen love,
Laughter of thy mingling heart—
In thy lifted lightning’s dart
Through awed heaven’s glimmering bound,
With bright laughter all around,
With dark tears into the ground
Glide, and slake with loving rain
The parched caverns of thy pain!

Rapturous bridal! O wild heart!
To be part of thee, a part
Of this holy beauty here—
Sacred sorrow drawing near!
Sweet surrender! O my sweet,
Longingly my pulses beat—

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Dazzling thought and fearful of
The dear fury of thy love!—
Even now that draws me down
My faint body to thine own
Near and nearer yet, till I
Tangled in thy being lie,
Close and close, for sheer excess
Wearied out with loveliness,
All this little self, this me,
Soothed into the self of thee,
Rendered up in ecstasy!

Almost now thou seem'st to steal
From my breast the self: I feel
How my being everywhere,
As in dream, upon the air
Widens 'round me, till I grow
All I look on, overflow;
And into the life adored
All the life of me is poured,
Through warm portals of thy heart
Drifting gently where thou art
Who art all things, in the breeze
Stirring all the tangled trees
To low whispers; how I pass
Through each tiny blade of grass,
Tremble in moonlight, and rise
Looking out of other eyes—
The Moonlight Sonata

Mystery of mysteries!
Pang of self, and tragical
Birth into the enlightened all—
O dark rapture!—to flow, press,
Cease into thy loveliness,
With exalted weariness
Render up myself, and be,
Selfless, the dear self of thee,
In divine oblivion
One with the belovèd one!

Where I press my burning face,
Weeds and grasses interlace:
Sweetheart, are these dewy, soft
Tears for me, who must so oft
Perish of thee to be thine?
Deep I drink of them, divine
Dizzy draught, bewildering wine!

On the grass my head is bowed.
The vague moon is in a cloud.
From my breast I feel it stream,
All I loved so, like a dream.
Ah, I cannot understand,
But the wind is like a hand
On my forehead in caress.
And the earth is tenderness—
Holy, grave, and very wise,
The deep tears are in her eyes;
While around her sleeplessly
Shrills the restless will-to-be.
Passion for eternity
Shakes in sound and floats in light
Through the darkness. Through the night
Clouds, and dreams, and fireflies,
And my songs of her arise.

John Hall Wheelock
Y friend read for the first time Emerson's essay *The Poet*. A lover of Emerson, he had somehow omitted this rhapsody: "My morning's reading, therefore, was a delight, as I sat on the loggia of a house among ancient trees that shut away the village and left little more visible than the vault of the sky." Thus enshrined from the world, he finds in Emerson "just what I aimed to say when I presumed to rail at the fad for modern clover blossoms that we love to pretend are Elysian orchids;" and by way of proof triumphant he quotes this passage:

The sign and credentials of the poet are that he announces that which no man foretold. He is the true and only doctor; he knows and tells; he is the only teller of news, for he was present and privy to the appearance which he describes. He is a beholder of ideas and an utterer of the necessary and causal. For we do not speak now of men of poetical talents, or of industry and skill in metre, but of the true poet. I took part in a conversation the other day concerning a recent writer of lyrics, a man of subtle mind whose head appeared to be a music-box of delicate tunes and rhythms, and whose skill and command of language we could not sufficiently praise. But when the question arose whether he was not only a lyrist but a poet, we were obliged to confess that he is plainly a contemporary, not an eternal man.

So I re-read this essay of the eighteen-forties, bridging an interval of many years. Even the first reading had not found or made me quite the worshipful Emersonian—perhaps I arrived on earth too late for that. And since then, though I have constantly cherished Emerson's small book
of poems as the innermost best of New England, his essays have rarely called me back.

Well, how did I feel—reading *The Poet* not in a country-house loggia but a city flat; not in idle isolation, but after a rush of poets' manuscripts, each—even the worst—revealing its author's secret, tingling with his hope? I felt like Tommy—or let us say Sammy—in the trenches saluted by a doctrinaire in a dress-suit. Noble sentiments about war and its ideals, about the sworded hero on his charger, about honor and gallantry and glory, about

> The royal banner, and all quality,
> Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war,

would seem true enough to Sammy but not relevant. Now and then, indeed, some high-sounding ideal, rhythmically dressed in its toga phrase, would seem to Sammy almost grotesquely irrelevant: "Hell," he would say, "what are you giving us!—don't you see the dead bodies lying around?"

So Emerson talks about *THE POET*, but he forgets the dead bodies—he forgets even the men on the firing-line. His POET is a grand inaccessible figure—Dante, Homer, Shakespeare—who shall have no successors if only the common people can be frightened away. The Concord sage was not bombarded daily, as I am, with proof that there is a poet in each of us, that the dead and wounded of the muses strew the ground, that the broken ranks are always filling up with new recruits who charge desperately, with unfailing courage—even with shouts and wild laughter—against fearsome odds. He did not gather laurel for the lesser victors in this battle, but stood with his round wreath on a moun-
Emerson in a Loggia

tain-top, searching far horizons for some noble conqueror, full armed and panoplied, to ride in and be crowned. Thus preoccupied, he had no eyes for Whitman or for Poe, those dusty travellers through sun and gloom to whom a more profound seer would have given their due reward. Indeed "the recent writer of lyrics," whom he dismisses, in the passage quoted by my friend, as "plainly a contemporary, not an eternal man" (as if any man were eternal!) might have been Poe himself, that "jingle-man" who has proved a "true poet" after all, one not easy to dismiss.

I can hear my friend protest that Emerson speaks for the poet in all of us in certain passages, like: "The people fancy they hate poetry, and they are all poets and mystics;" "language is fossil poetry;" or, "the poet is representative—he stands among partial men for the complete man, and apprises us not of his wealth but of the common wealth." But this is a concession of the aristocratic mind; as who should say, "Even the king is made of common clay." The general effect of the essay is to make of the poet a thing apart, a figure "enskied and sainted" upon whom common humanity must look with awe. Nowhere in it do we find that sense of the poet's intense and common humanness—a humanness vulgar as well as fine—which Carlyle, at about the same time, expressed with such a passion of suffering sympathy in his essay on Burns. Indeed, Emerson's Poet may be considered one of the influences which have tended, since those early-Victorian days, to shelve the poet; to persuade the people that he is not quite one of them but a wax-works figure, dressed picturesquely in the costume of some bygone
period, to be safely enshrined and—forgotten.

Here in the POETRY office the commonness of the poet stands proved from hour to hour; even as it was proved in the Tabard Inn, the Mermaid Tavern, or the original academic grove. I say it without arrogance—poets are the same breed, whether their names be Dante or Orrick Johns, Euripides or—that last young freshman vers-libertine whom the editor turned down. In this office we hold one of the first-line trenches of the struggling human spirit: reading hundreds—nay, thousands—of manuscripts, we deal with naked souls; we see them in the throes of divine despair, moved to the uttermost by the intolerable need to speak, to sing. We watch them giving themselves away, urged on by all that is rich and generous within them, hindered by all that is weak and dull. Always it is the same tragedy, played with infinite variety of detail: Neither Will Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon, nor Jonathan Swift Somers, of Spoon River, can ever express the utmost that is in him, and no doubt Shakespeare's failure was the greater of the two.

The point which needs to be emphasized, in short, is one which Emerson's Ossa-on-Pelion of praise rather tends to obscure, that the poet is like everybody else. Being an artist, he is a little bit more so, perhaps, than most people—with a keener zest for life, keener senses for beauty, a keener urge toward the fine flower of the phrase, a keener impulse to hand out that phrase, to give himself away with style. The germ of him is in everyone; there are many of him, more or less incomplete, in our streets; and at any moment, in any hovel or palace, the type may be individualized among
us in a perfection as complete as Sappho's on her island, or Shakespeare's on his rough-and-ready stage.

It is of some importance, both to him and to us, that we should stand with him when he comes, that we should reinforce him with our strength, that we should know what he is doing when he, as Emerson says, "adorns nature with a new thing," gives to his thought, his vision, "an architecture of its own," whether that architecture be in rhymed metrics, free verse, or some form still undivined.

To this end no other practice is available than a discriminating sympathy with the poets of the hour. Even what my friendly correspondent calls "the canter and frolic of the chopstick brigade besieging the bar of Helicon" may be worth listening to for its wild music, for its dare-devil upsetting mockery of the sedateness of English song. My friend professes a "trembling apprehension when we gather to ourselves fireflies and call them Promethean;" but his apprehension is part of that Emersonian over-reverence which puts the poet out of our lives by setting him on a pedestal. The firefly carries an authentic and personal light, a heaven-lit spark of the Promethean fire—are we spirits of lightning that we should scorn him? Will the lightning-bearer scorn him when he comes? If we shut out the fireflies—and the stars as well—with hard walls and roofs of prejudice and custom, saving ourselves from all out-door barbarities, shall we be quite sure of seeing the lightning-bearer himself—Emerson's, "winged man," supra-human, sacrosanct, eternal—when he tears apart the clouds and descends from heaven?

H. M.
THE GREAT ADVENTURE

War makes everything else seem unreal, but it is not war that is real—but death. Perhaps we all desire death and go towards it, even while we dread it, far more than we realize, and it may be this that gives Rupert Brooke's war sonnets and Alan Seeger's *I Have a Rendezvous with Death* their permanent appeal. Certainly the instinct of death is more pronounced in some people than in others, and both these men may be said to have experienced death emotionally, if one may phrase it that way, long before the war. But there is another aspect of death than that presented by war or by catastrophe, or by sudden sickness, and I am reminded of this in reading again the poems of Adelaide Crapsey. War lifts dying to a plane of group-heroism, when perhaps the hardest thing to do is to keep from wanting to give one's life. But it is one thing to die for a cause, and because others are dying for it; it is quite another to die prematurely, and alone, and against one's will: to die when life is still more desirable than death. There is, perhaps, nothing very novel in the experience, but the experience itself has seldom been recorded with a more piercing reality than in the little book, *Verse*, published about a year ago by the Manas Press in Rochester. One knows that Adelaide Crapsey would have faced death for a cause quite as willingly as did Edith Cavell, but one respects her honesty because, facing an unnecessary death quite as unflinchingly, her mood remained one of spiritual rebellion rather than of submission. She was more Greek than Christian, in the ordinary sense, more pagan

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than puritan, in spite of a delicate asceticism of the spirit, which is not, after all, un-pagan.

There is no waste in her little book. It represents the quintessence of experience, and its art is governed by a restraint occasioned by intensity. It is like the light from a candle, which may not pierce the outer darkness, but which makes of a single room a world of poignant reality, so long as the flame lasts. It is hard to separate Adelaide Crapsey's poems from the circumstances of her death, as recorded in the brief preface written by a friend. She died at Saranac, New York, in her thirty-sixth year, in her room overlooking "Trudeau's garden," as with "grim-gay irony" she called the little graveyard of the patient dead, against whose patience she rebelled: "I'll not be patient. I will not lie still!" She fought a losing fight, yet kept her courage and her humor, and the extreme tragedy of her experience was only revealed in these poems, of which even her family were in ignorance until after her death.

She hated to die: reading these poems one is reminded of a chorus of young and popular poets who clamor of death to the usual refrain of "Because I have loved life well I shall not be loth to die." And anything that treats of death less easily and happily will not be accepted by the editors. Think of the classics that they would have to discard on that basis! But one need not love life less because one is loth to die. The mood of sacrifice may be heroic, but, put to the test, one may have reservations about it, and yet be no less heroic. Our own national optimism, particularly
that insisted upon by editors, seems to be based not on an acceptance, but on an avoidance, of the facts of life. In truth our national temper in this respect is sometimes contrasted favorably with the supposed pessimism of races whose outlook is not conditioned by a blind-folded vision of life. Is not our attitude in reality more youthful, more suggestive of an arrested development, of an immaturity which can never become outgrown because it is unwilling to face what it fears to face? Of course a youthful poet may lack simply the test of experience, but one expects from editors and from other adults a deeper, a more seasoned maturity of judgment. Adelaide Crapsey faced the fact of death as a reality. Her poems record not merely a personal experience but also a philosophy of life:

There is a brown road runs between the pines,
And further on the purple woodlands lie,
And still beyond blue mountains lift and loom;
And I would walk the road, and I would be
Deep in the wooded shade, and I would reach
The windy mountain tops that touch the clouds.
My eyes may follow but my feet are held.
Recumbent as you others must I too
Submit? Be mimic of your movelessness
With pillow and counterpane for stone and sod?
And if the many sayings of the wise
Teach of submission, I will not submit,
But with a spirit all unreconciled
Flash an unquenched defiance to the stars.
Better it is to walk, to run, to dance;
Better it is to laugh and leap and sing,
To know the open skies of dawn and night,
To move untrammeled down the flaming noon:
And I will clamour it through weary days
Keeping the edge of deprivation sharp,
Nor with the pliant speaking on my lips

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The Great Adventure

Of resignation, sister to defeat.
I'll not be patient. I will not lie still.
And in ironic quietude who is
The despot of our days and lord of dust
Needs but, scarce heeding, wait to drop
Grim casual comment on rebellion's end;
"Yes, yes... Wilful and petulant, but now
As dead and quiet as the others are."
And this each body and ghost of you hath heard
That in your graves do therefore lie so still.

Can anyone doubt that the attitude of these poems is one of victory? "Keeping the edge of deprivation sharp," she tasted experience to the full, and as the thought of death could not numb her will, she perhaps experienced death too to the full.

All her poems indicate a delicate and fastidious sense of rhythm. In Birth Moment and the Cry of the Nymph to Eros the movement suggests that of a butterfly poised above a flower before it alights. Other poems that move me are Angélique; Lo, All the Way; The Lonely Death; and The Mournar. There is something akin in these, in the swift vivid touch, to the poems of Emily Dickinson. This book stands on my shelf beside those of Emily Dickinson and the two slim volumes by Stephen Crane—poets who have given much in little.

A. C. H.

Our Cowboy Poet

Soon after the August Poetry went to press, the authorship of High Chin Bob, the cowboy song published in that number, was discovered. As we stated last month, Mr. H. H. Knibbs found the song in southern Arizona, where the

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cowboys who sang it were entirely ignorant of its origin. He sent a copy to Mr. Lomax at least a year ago, and just the other day Mr. Lomax came upon the song under the title of *The Glory Trail* in a little book of western verse by Charles Badger Clark.

The circumstance is particularly interesting as it reveals how a folk-song comes to be a folk-song. It shows the folk-song in process of growth, both by elimination and by accretion, for the changes made in this poem through oral transmission are very interesting. I think the author himself would recognize that they add to the directness, vividness and force of the song. Inversions are straightened to natural order, adding emphasis, and active verbs substituted for weaker forms, increasing the action. Slight as the changes are, they give life. Not that the song was not a good one in the start: we congratulated Mr. Clark in the last number of *POETRY*, hypothetically; now that the hypothesis is removed, we congratulate him again. It is not everyone who wakes to find himself a folk-poet, and that in less than a generation.

*A. C. H.*

**REVIEWS**

**JOHN MASEFIELD**


It is not every poet whose personal reading of his poems makes friends for them, but Mr. Masefield is one of these.
The simplicity of the man—a simplicity neither child-like nor Olympian, but unassertively big and human—this in itself seems to enlarge any audience-chamber with the breadth of far horizons and quiet it with the stillness of a night of stars. And his deep bass voice is like the music of the seven seas, rich with all the sorrows of the world. One feels in watching him that this poet is a great man, with reserves of power in him which his art has not yet expressed; indeed, may never express unless the organ he plays is the fittest instrument of all life's orchestra for the expression of that power.

Personally I doubt if it is: his life is like to be a finer poem than any he will write. He writes perhaps too easily, so that his genius does not reach down deep enough into the innermost heart of the man. His poetry is not insincere or superficial—far from it; but it is not so big and simple and profound as he is. Compared with the all-round completeness of a great character, it is fragmentary—mere half-strains and side-lights.

Like the sixty sonnets printed last year with Good Friday, most of the poems in Lollingdon Downs are the meditative inquiry of a modern mind into the meaning of life. The first one begins:

So I have known this life—
These beads of colored days,
This self the string.
What is this thing?

They are an inquiry, not a solution. They are a search for the principle of life, a search through and beyond the assertions of science. How much does man see?
Out of the special cell's most special sense
Came the suggestion when the light was sweet;
All skill, all beauty, all magnificence
Are hints so caught, man's glimpse of the complete.
And, though the body rots, that sense survives,
Being of life's own essence it endures
(Fruit of the spirit's tillage in men's lives)
Round all this ghost that wandering flesh immures.
This is our friend, who, when the iron brain
Assails, or the earth clogs, or the sun hides,
Is the good God to whom none calls in vain,
Man's Achieved Good, which, being Life, abides:
The man-made God, that man in happy breath
Makes in despite of Time and dusty death.

But beyond man and even the "man-made God" the
impenetrable mystery leads on:

You are too beautiful for mortal eyes,
You the divine unapprehended soul;
The red worm in the marrow of the wise
Stirs as you pass, but never sees you whole.
Even as the watcher in the midnight tower
Knows from a change in heaven an unseen star,
So from your beauty, so from summer flower,
So from the light, one guesses what you are.
So in the darkness does the traveller come
To some lit chink, through which he cannot see
More than a light, nor hear more than a hum,
Of the great hall where kings in council be.
So, in the grave, the red and mouthless worm
Knows of the soul that held his body firm.

The tone of the book is almost despairing, as if the war's
agony, though unmentioned, were a grief too deep for words.
Sometimes one wonders if the poet does not feel a doubt of
England's future, a fear that her great days are over and
her star on the wane. The brief dialogue, The Frontier,
seems a definite expression of such feeling through an epi­
sode of the disintegrating Roman empire. This brief stark
tragedy seems to me the best thing in the book, and one of the best things the poet has done; one gets from it a startling sense of world-agony when the Roman legions fell back forever:

Chief. You see the end of things. The power of a thousand kings Helped us to this, and now the power Is so much hay that was a flower.
Lucius. We have been very great and strong.
Chief. That's over now.
Lucius. It will be long Before the world will see our like.
Chief. We've kept these thieves beyond the dyke A good long time, here on the Wall.
Lucius. Colonel, we ought to sound a call To mark the end of this.
Chief. We ought.

Look—there's the hill-top where we fought Old Foxfoot. Look—there in the whin.
Old ruffian knave. Come on. Fall in.

And so it ends. "Is it the débacle?" the poet seems to be saying.

H. M.

DREAMER AND CYNIC


Of all the poets writing in America today Arthur Davison Ficke is preeminently the poet of dreams. His early books, From the Isles, The Earth Passion and The Happy Princess showed a spirit early awake, early articulate, dominated and lit by the strange, gossamer, flame-lit dreams of youth, dreams which spin fantastic webs and know little whereof they spin, which tremble with eternal aspiration and know not
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whereeto they aspire. Mr. Ficke’s spirit, in spite of the rather debonair man of the world who walks the ways of civilization, housing it, has never lived in the world of reality. It lives in a strange half world above our ordinary consciousness, a region between men and gods, having the stability of neither, yet haunted by the beauty of both.

Of late years, though Mr. Ficke is even now only in the early thirties, there has grown up beside this dreamer, complementing him, a curiously subtle, modern and disillusioned young lawyer. This split-off bit of personality, which is in each of us moderns, which sits behind all our actions and all our dreams, commenting, discounting, mocking at us, and which we can never silence and never lose for more than a few hours at a time—this quality is particularly strong in Arthur Ficke. It is this spirit, which has produced his *Café Sketches*, which can write such almost painfully witty mockery of his dreaming self as these lines:

Presently persons will come out  
And shake legs.  
I do not want legs shaken.  
I want immortal souls shaken unreasonably.  
I want to see dawn spilled across the blackness  
Like a scrambled egg on a skillet;  
I want miracles, wonders,  
Tidings out of a deep I do not know. . . .  
But I have a horrible suspicion  
That neither you  
Nor your esteemed consort  
Nor I myself  
Can ever provide these simple things  
For which I am so patiently waiting.

These two spirits have never yet been perfectly blended in Mr. Ficke. He is tossed continually between the two, yet
he is not now content with either. Sometimes he fights upward into the dreamer again, yet the upper air of formless aspiration and shadowy beauty grows a little thin for him. Sometimes he becomes the cynical modern, yet even here he is haunted by the desire to see "immortal souls shaken unreasonably."

If Arthur Ficke ever comes to rest, if he ever succeeds in fusing his two selves into a new self which shall be neither, but something more fundamental than either, a spirit which, with his almost flawless technic, his sensitiveness to beauty, his sweep of dreams and his balance of irony, shall yet learn to face reality as it lies between his two outlooks—if this ever comes to pass then Arthur Ficke will be the biggest poet of our day. As it is, in the instance where he has come nearest to fusing his two selves, he has written one of the most beautiful sonnet sequences in English. But his *magnum opus* remains yet to be written.

The title poem of his new volume *An April Elegy* is a dramatization of this perpetual struggle in him. It is a curious, tenuous, almost over-modern thing, woven with unerring craftsmanship of gleams and flashes, of "muted notes and broken sequences and diminished chords." It tells the love story of two very modern young people, who are evidently quite familiar with Freud and live their loves in almost conscious terms of "complexes." Yet in spite of this modernity it is written essentially by the dreamer, by him "whose homeland lies past each horizon's rim." It has perhaps a certain tendency towards preciousness, but it is a
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lovely poem, more beautiful at the second or third reading than at the first.

Of the other poems in the volume the Café Sketches continue the sardonic mood of the Grotesques in The Man on the Hilltop, and are written frankly by the disillusioned young lawyer. There are a dozen miscellaneous poems in the volume, which is enticingly slender, and eight sonnets. No one in the country is a more thorough master of the modern sonnet form than Arthur Ficke, and while these eight are in a sequence and lose by being cut away from their neighbors, here is one that will perhaps stand alone:

The old? We are the old. And now we know
How the fresh mirror dims with passing time.
Not for us rise the carven gods, or blow
The haunting musics; not for us the rhyme
Of dreaming singers, nor the lights that drift
Faintly through dusks, nor hopes that once had stung.
We mumble down our pathway, making shift
To mock the unstable visions of the young.
We mock them, tell them they shall yet be wise;
We point and peer at clods and stones and trees
Beyond where Helen, living, past our eyes
Drifts white, and Jason breasts the darkening seas;
And flout our early love-songs, vain and cold
To eyes so certain and to hearts so cold.

E. T.

AN OBSERVER IN CHINA

*Profiles from China*, by Eunice Tietjens. Ralph Fletcher Seymour.

The lover of poetry is a good deal like the lover of wildflowers. One wanders in the woods hoping to find a new, rare blossom; the other wanders through the world of books hoping to find a new, unusual delight. But to both seekers
such gratification is, to say the least, infrequent. And the more one knows of either flowers or poetry, the less often does it occur. For the flower lover and the poetry lover know the common sorts to satiety, and the others—well, it was my good fortune a short time ago to light upon one of the others.

One evening I came home from a long journey to find a little package lying on the top of my mail waiting for me. But letters are usually more interesting than packages, so I read the letters through before I, somewhat listlessly, cut the string. I undid the paper, and then I received my first impression!

We all know that the protective coloring of plants and animals is not only for purposes of protection, but for reasons of seduction; and the same is true of the bindings of books. Protective coloring, indeed, did the publisher but realize it; and this one had. The first glance at this slim, black volume, with its exotic red lettering, at once intrigued interest.

I read that book through three times before I put it down, and the next day I read it again. Then I waited some weeks and read it once more; the charm remained. That charm of something new, sincere, an original thought expressed personally and vividly.

Those of us who remembered Mrs. Tietjens’ Bacchante to her Babe, which appeared some years ago, had been waiting impatiently to see what more this poet would do. But the new book marks an advance which could hardly have been predicted from that poem, delightful and poetically
true though it was. The Bacchante was gentle and tender. Profiles from China is strong and free, and is evidence of a rare psychological insight.

In the Proem, The Hand is, not the orient (we could hardly expect that), but the occidental reaction to the orient; and what a happy inspiration it was to depict China under the guise of a hand: a large man with "the hand of a woman and the paw of a chimpanzee." The passage: "The long line of your curved nail is fastidiousness made flesh" reveals the shrinking of the occidental mind in the face of the only half-apprehended East. A skilful hand; a cruel hand; and, worse than all, a voluptuous hand: "Delicately it can caress a quivering skin, softly it can glide over golden thighs . . . Bilitis had not such long nails." So full of horror is the description that we scarcely needed to have the author tell us: "I am afraid of this hand." Instantly the significance of the book stands clear. These are to be no mere imitations of Chinese effects, but a real speech sprung out of experience.

Mrs. Tietjens has lived in China, but she is not in the least of China. As interpretations of Chinese character, these poems are of only the slightest interest; it is as pictures of the fundamental antagonism of the East and the West that they are important. The poet makes no pretence at an esoteric sympathy which she does not possess. Her complete sincerity is not the least of the volume's excellencies. Only in the section, Echoes, is there the slightest preoccupation with the native point of view, and although there is here
much Chinese decoration, such as "the fifth day of the fifth month," "the tiny footfalls of the fox-maidens," and "the Hour of the Horse," still these poems remain rather as exercises in the Chinese manner, than as an intimate fusing of the author's ego with that of China.

No one can read the other sections: *From the Interior*, and *China of the Tourists*, without realizing how much magic Mrs. Tietjens has at her command. She is in a ricksha, and "the runner is young and sturdy, and his legs flash pleasantly;" she is in a chaise-à-porteurs, and

In all the world there is only my chair, with the tiny brown lantern before it.

There are also, it is true, the undersides of trees in the lantern-light and the stony path that flows past ceaselessly.

*Cormorants* is a fine picture, and here the reaction is not merely occidental; it is radical occidentalism which is called out by these poor enslaved birds. Mrs. Tietjens is past mistress of innuendo, suggestion. It makes the book. Always does strong, virile thought color fancy with her. *The Well* is an excellent example of this, as are also: *My Servant*, and *Chinese New Year*. But the innate dislike rises again and again in such poems as *The City Wall* and *Meditation*.

In this age of adulation of all things oriental, it is well to meet so fearless an observer as Mrs. Tietjens. Dirt and disease!—they worry her, and perhaps also cloud over for her something else that is also there. She sees, but only partially comprehends. *The Spirit-wall* proves this. She understands, and yet—not quite. But she can forgive; sometimes only a little, in *A Woman*, for instance; some-

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times entirely, in The Well. Then the irony flashes out again. In Interlude a half-naked coolie is sitting in the market-place.

... picking at something with the dainty hand of the Orient. If he had ever seen a zoological garden I should say he was imitating the monkeys there. As he has not, I dare say the taste is ingrained.

There is not a word too much in these poems. They are sharp and beautiful, and extraordinarily satisfying. One of the best is On a Canton River Boat. A sentry paces the deck—"He is guarding me from pirates." And the poem goes on:

Piracy! The very name is fantastic in my ears, colored like a toucan in the Zoo.

But the reality and horror of such a state of things grows and grows; the quiet fact of the sunny deck and the pacing sentry, and behind it!—

The socks of the sentry annoy me. They are too green for so hot a day. And his shoes squeak. I should feel much cooler if he wouldn't pace so.

Piracy!

Sunday in the British Empire: Hong Kong is too interknit to admit of quotation. It must be read entire for its beauty, its irony, its tragedy, to be fully felt.

Mrs. Tietjen's is more than modern or "new" (that much abused word); she is herself. Her kind of poetry is distinctly hers, a perfectly natural utterance. This book deserves high praise and is an earnest of future accomplishment.

Amy Lowell

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Belgium comes out of her brave fight wearing her wounds as flowers and with songs leaping to her lips. Of her band of war poets one of the most conspicuous is Émile Cammaerts, whose portrait shows a strong face with a young brow, yet, though he is but little past forty, the beard of an old man. He was born and educated in Brussels, served as professor of geography at the Institut Commercial of Mons, and since 1908 has been living in England and devoting himself to his pen. In 1916 he published the Chants Patriotiques, which is largely poems written before the war. As the proceeds of the first edition were to be given to the Belgian Soldiers' Fund for the purchase of tobacco, the book opens with a song of great charm, called Pour la Pipe du Soldat. Les Trois Rois et Autres Poèmes, which is entirely war poetry, followed hard upon the other volume.

Except for four poems, Mr. Cammaerts' translator is his wife, the books being printed with poem and translation on opposite pages. Though the translator has brought an eager conscience to her task, it would be better to forego these poems entirely rather than be misled by the English versions, which give none of the flavor, none of the spontaneity, of the original. Not disdaining rhyme and meter, Cammaerts is thoroughly modern; watchful for the word too many, scorn-
ful of what is hackneyed. The translator's style is traditional to awkwardness, so she makes the poet express himself in English in the very manner he would avoid in French. Poems full of subtle charm and individual beauty become in English commonplace, the thought being checked in its flow by the stiffness of its clothing. Of the four translations by other hands, those by Lord Curzon, Alfred Percival Graves and Angela Beyer are excellent.

Cammaerts' earlier poems make a strong appeal—poems of love, of children, of nature; all written at a time when Belgium was at one with all the world. With a stroke of art he can transport us to a little house set in a garden still bright with blooming trees and flowers—yet a house faded, gray with dust, heavy with silence—and make us know that love has lived in it. He is always natural, always simple, and a clear religious belief runs through all he writes.

But he has achieved distinction chiefly through his war poems. Beautiful as hope and love he can make hatred and vengeance. An instance of his implacable hate is found in Après Anvers, a stirring thing which has been set to music by Elgar. Au Grand Roi d'un Petit Pays does tender homage to Belgium's king. I do not know which is the most touching picture—that of a peasant girl who prefers death to leaving her own home and to whose voice Cammaerts has given exquisite lyrics, or that of a little Virgin of porcelain smiling up from a deserted grave near Ramscapelle, or the colorful one of an Easter day in Belgium during the war.
Emile Cammaerts


Les Trois Rois, the titular poem of the second book, is perhaps the least important of the war poems. It is in the form of a drama, and deals with Satan and his servant the German emperor, with Michael, Gabriel, Raphaël, etc., Mary and the Christchild. A ma Patrie Enchaînée is a bitter contrast of fruitful countrysides and joyful days, with devastated fields and towns, and bruised hands stretched out gropingly in the night. Only a stoic could read without tears Une Confession, and La Neige with its beauty and its terrific import.

Le Dernier Boche is a dream of hate which finds its climax in these, its last lines:

Qu'importe!
Pourvu qu'il nous soit donné de voir,
Du seuil de notre porte—
Tandis que les cloches
Sonneront l'hallali—
Le dos gris
Du dernier Boche.

And Le Tir National is a burst of ironic fury directed against the enemy, written in memory of Edith Cavell.

Cammaerts has a power found oftener in French poetry than in English—he can take an ancient nursery rhyme as motive and build around it all the environment of a modern tale. An instance of this is his Frère Jacques; the old tune beats out its childish accompaniment in our heads as we read the poet's lines. Here we have the story of a soldier who in ordinary life was a trappist monk:

Frère Jacques, frère Jacques,
Dormez-vous? dormez-vous?

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Yes, he sleeps, in his white bed in the white monastery, as the golden sun comes up over a smiling country and the time to ring matins draws near.

Frère Jacques, frère Jacques,
Dormez-vous? dormez-vous?

No, he does not sleep now. He is the army's look-out man. For three days the cannonade has isolated him from the trenches, and the stars look through the roof of his grim loft to the Yser. He is cold, hungry, thirsty, but he never loses his grip on the telephone. We can hear his prayers mingle with his directions: "Fifty yards to the right . . . Thank Thee, God, for . . . Prepare the searchlight . . . O God, remember our wives, our little ones . . . now ready . . . fire!" Then, after a thundering explosion of shell, arises the insistent refrain:

Sonnez les matines, sonnez les matines!
Bim, bam, boum! Bim, bam, boum!

It is difficult to find a poem brief enough to quote that shows characteristically Cammaerts' spirit and his lyric manner. Perhaps L'Amour de la Patrie will do it:

C'est l'accent d'une voix,
Le son d'une cloche lointaine,
Une clairière dans les bois,
Un coup de soleil sur la plaine.
C'est un certain toit, sous un certain ciel,
Et le parfum de la poussière dans la rue.
C'est une ferme à genoux devant une chapelle,
Au bord d'un chemin, où larmoient quelques cierges.
C'est la senteur des herbes, à l'entour des étangs,
Et le parfum de la poussière dans la rue.
C'est l'éclat d'un regard, la gaucherie d'un mouvement,
Une vision du passé aussitôt disparue . . .
Emile Gammaerts

C'est tout ce qu'on ne peut pas dire
Et tout ce qu'on sent,
Tout ce qu'on ne peut traduire
Qu'en le chantant.

C'est ce qu'on mange et ce qu'on voit,
Ce qu'on respire, ce qu'on entend.
C'est le goût du pain et du tabac,
L'éclat des feuilles, l'odeur du vent.
Et les bruits familiers du village:
Les chiens qui aboient, les gens qui s'appellent,
Et le joyeux tapage,
Des verres sous la tonnelle . . .
C'est tout ce qu'on ne peut pas dire
Et tout ce qu'on sent,
Tout ce qu'on ne peut traduire,
Qu'en le chantant.

C'est le meilleur de notre corps
Et le plus pur de notre sang,
C'est ce qui nous rappelle nos morts
Et nous fait souhaiter nos enfants.
C'est la couleur de notre vie
Et la saveur de nos chansons,
C'est la douce folie
De récolter ce qu'on sème,
Et l'absurde passion
De posséder ce qu'on aime . . .
C'est tout ce qu'on ne peut pas dire
Et tout ce qu'on sent,
Tout ce qu'on ne peut traduire
Qu'en le chantant.

Agnes Lee

NOTES

Sherwood Anderson, of Chicago, who appears for the first time in Poetry, is already rather widely known as a novelist and short story writer. He has only recently turned to the writing of poetry, and so far as we know has appeared as a poet only in Others. His novels like his poetry are typically American in spirit.
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

John Hall Wheelock, of *Scribner's*, New York, is too well known to our readers to need an introduction. So are Carl Sandburg and Scharmel Iris, of Chicago, and Glenn Ward Dresbach, at present of New Mexico. John Cournos of London, Richard Hunt of Boston, and Karle Wilson Baker (Mrs. Thomas E. Baker) of Texas have also appeared in these pages.

The literary biography of Harley Graves begins with the publication of his *Songs from the Woods* in this number. He is still quite young, comes from New York and is working on a farm this summer.

**BOOKS RECEIVED**

**ORIGINAL VERSE:**


*Verses*, by Elizabeth Bridges. B. H. Blackwell.

*The Call of Life, and Other Poems*, by Charles V. H. Roberts. Privately printed, St. Louis.

*The Call of the Open Fields*, by Imri Zumwalt. Privately printed, Bonner Springs, Kas.


*Pizzichi di Pepe*, by Gabriele Bellini. Privately printed.


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Errata:

Page 124, last line of second stanza should read:

Holy thoughts that star the night.

This error is corrected also on page 222, and binders will please note, following page 224, a new leaf to be inserted instead of the one in error.

Page 125, line 8 should read:

For I have good of all my pain;

(corrected also on page 223).

Ralph Fletcher Seymour
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BE GREAT AUDIENCES TOO

*Whitman*

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As the completion of Volume X marks the end of the five years for which Poetry was originally endowed, the editor desires to express thus publicly, to the ladies and gentlemen listed above, her cordial and appreciative thanks for their generous and loyal support. More than half of them have already expressed a desire to continue their subsidy for another five-year period—to these the art and the poets are doubly indebted.

With deep regret we record the death of two guarantors during the past half-year: Henry H. Walker and Katharine Porter Isham (Mrs. George S. Isham), the latter a member of the Friday Club group. Both were residents of Chicago, and always cordial and generous in support of the arts.
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To have great poets there must be great audiences too.

—Whitman.

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