The Landlady of the Whinton Inn Tells a Story
by Amy Lowell

Two Poems
by F. S. Flint

Chinese Lyrics

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YES, indeed, Sir,
'Tis pretty up here this time o' year,
With the sumachs and the maples fer red,
And the birches and the oaks fer yaller,
Sometimes you'd think the sun was shinin'
When 'taint nothin' but leaves.
Ef you was to go up Tollman's hill,
You'd see the country layin' out in front o' yer
Jest like a big flower garden.
I don't wonder city folks is so partial to the mountains in the
Fall.
But they don't all care enough fer it
To come a-ridin' shanks's mare
The way you're doin'.
What was it you wanted I should tell yer?
Oh, yes, 'bout the brick house over on the Danbridge road.
I know well the one you mean.
Sort o' tumble down, ain't it?—
Run to seed?
That's the one.
The old Steele farm we call it.
It's in a dretful state.
The last folks had it was a pack o' Finns,
And I never see such a shiftless set as they be.
Don't seem to have no idea o' nothin'.
But the way they can grub a livin' outer stones
Do beat all.
There's a whole lot on 'em settled around here,
But I guess they wouldn't ha' got aholt o' the Steele place
Only fer it havin' a kind o' bad name.
Sort o' got set in a streak o' cross luck, somehow.
You hitch your chair up clost t' th' fire,
And I'll tell yer 'bout it.
It's a funny story,
And it ain't so funny neither,
Come to think of it.
I remember Tim'thy Adams well
When I was a girl.
He was innercent and feeble enough by then.
My father's told me the story often,
But it all happened long 'fore my day;
It must ha' been nigh on to eighty year ago.
Ther was two brothers livin' over to Danbridge at that time,
Amy Lowell

Name of Steele,
George and Clif Steele.
Between 'em, they owned that farm you seen,
And a hardware store to Main Street.
My father used ter say
Nobody hereabouts thought they could cut a rakeful o' hay
Or split a log,
Onless they'd bought the scythe, or the saw, or the sickle,
To Steele's.
Funny name for a hardware store, warn't it,
But them things does happen.
Well, es I said,
They owned the store and the farm, 'tween 'em,
Old Steele left it that way.
But 'twas real onhandy,
And, nat'rally, they kep a-treadin' on each other's toes.
So 'bout the time I'm speakin' of,
They made up ther minds to do the splittin' theirselves,
And they'd fixed it up that George was to have the store
And Clif was to take the farm.
Clif warn't more'n five and twenty, then,
And he warn't married,
And he seen, well as another,
That a farm without a wife's a mighty ticklish thing.
So he told his brother
He'd look around a bit,
And when he found a likely woman,
He'd marry her,
And settle right away.
I guess he warn't quite square 'bout the lookin' around,
'Cause everyone knowed he'd be'n keepin' comp'ny
Fer some time.
Mirandy Eccles, 'twas;
And Father al'ays said she was a fine, sensible girl,
And a credit to the man that chose her.
Clif used ter take her buggy-ridin'
With a fast sorrel mare he had,
Done two-thirty or somethin'
Over to the County Fair.
Clif was proud as punch of her, and of the girl too.
Father said the whole street 'ud set up to look
When they two druv along it
Like a streak o' lightnin'.
Clif thought his courtin' was goin' elegant,
And I guess 'twas,
When all of a suddint,
He was drawed for jury duty.
That put a stop to the junketin's,
And Clif was like a bear with a sore head.
'Twas a kind of a queer case.
A man called Tim'thy Adams was bein' tried
Fer 'saulting his employer and stealin' four dimonds.
I don't rec'lect the name o' the man whose store 'twas,
But he was a jeweler and watchmaker,
The only one ther was to Danbridge.
One mornin' they found him most beat to a jelly,
And bound and gagged,
And four big diamonds was missin' outer th' stock.
Ther was a candle in the store
Guttered to nothin',
And Mrs. ———— the storekeeper's wife—
Said when she last seed it,
Jest as she was goin' to bed,
It was good and long,
And would ha' burned a couple o' hours, anyway.
Tim'thy used to come mornin's and open up the store.
He had a key,
And that was the only other one ther was,
So suspicion fastened on him, good and tight.
He said he hadn't be'n ther at all
'Sence closin' time,
That he'd be'n fer a walk up the mountain.
But he hadn't be'n gunnin',
'Cause he didn't take no gun;
And he hadn't be'n fishin',
'Cause he didn't take no pole;
And nobody b'lieved a man 'ud go walkin' up the mountain
Jest fer the pleasure o' gittin' ther,
So it looked bad fer Tim'thy.
Clif set in that court-room,
And twiddled his fingers,
And thought o' Mirandy,
And never heerd so much as a haystraw o' th' evidence;
And when lockin'-up time come

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He didn't know no more about the case
Than the town pump.
In them days,
Juries was locked up for fair,
They didn't 'low 'em home nights,
And they sent their meals in,
'Stead o' marchin' 'em out to a hotel.
Clif had got awful sick o' bein' ther.
He'd cut his name on the table in the jury room
Till 'twas all pickled over with it,
(I've seed the table, with the name on, myself).
And the night after the ev'dence was in
Ther was a dance to the Town Hall,
And Clif wanted like pisen to be ther.
He set in that jury room,
Hackin' at the table,
Till he couldn't stand it another minit;
Then he jumped outer th' winder,
And shinned down a big elm-tree was outside,
And went to the party,
And the first person he run acrost when he got inter th' room
Was the Judge!
That was a awful fix fer Clif,
But the Judge had be'n young once,
And he jest turned his back and never seed a thing.
Clif didn't waste no time.
He went straight up to Mirandy and asked her to marry him,
And she'd missed him so
She said "yes" right out,
And Clif went back, and shinned up the elm agin,
And ther he was, spick and span,
When the door was unlocked next mornin'!
But he hadn't voted on the case,
And the foreman jest whispered to him, would he agree,
As they went inter court.
Clif was in such good sperrits,
He'd ha' agreed to anythin',
So he jest nodded,
And poor Tim'thy Adams was convicted o' 'sault and batt'ry,
With stealin',
And sent to States Prison fer twenty year.
I told you 'twas a queer story,
But it's a heap queerer than you've heard yit.

Clif married Mirandy,
And they went to live to the farm.
They was a well matched pair,
And everythin' went as fine as roses in July,
'Cept they didn't have no children.
But after it had all be'n goin' on like that fer most fifteen
year,
Somethin' turned Clif's mind back to that old jury case.
Bits o' things he'd heerd in the court-room
Kep a risin' up in his mind.
They must ha' be'n ther all the time,
But he'd never sensed 'em;
And now they up and slapped him in the face.
The more he thought, the more he felt
That Tim'thy couldn't ha' done it.
He was a bit of a dreamer himself,
And he knowed a man could go up a mountain,
'Ithout hankerin' to shoot or fish.
He thought and thought, Clif did,
Till he was so nervous and jumpy
He was all of a twitch from head to foot.
Then one day he druv over to Danbridge
To see Judge Proctor.
The Judge was a old man, and retired,
But Clif thought it 'ud ease him some
To see him.
He told the Judge all about it,
But the Judge said 'twas past and gone,
And he'd better lay some of his fields down to red rye,
And try replantin' his wood-lot.
But Clif didn't buy no red rye seed that day;
He went straight to the lib'ry
And read a lot o' old newspapers.
Then he ferreted out the court clerk,
And fussed and fussed,
Till he let him see the records.
He druv back and forth to Danbridge for weeks,
Readin' all the papers 'bout that trial.
And the more he read 'em, the more he knowed
Tim'thy hadn't had no head nor hand to do with it.
Clif was most beside himself with worry,
And no wonder,
He felt he'd sent a feller critter to States Prison
Who didn't b'long ther no more'n he did hisself.
He act'ally got to feelin' he was the one b'longed;
He'd committed a wicked crime,
And he'd got t' expiate it.
I guess he was most mad;
Father often said so.
He was thin as a rail,
And he couldn't eat nor sleep,
And the farm all went to smithereens
'Cause he hadn't no time to work it,
For readin' ev'dence.
He didn't know much law,
And it 'curred to him,
That ef he got all the jury that done the convictin'
To change ther minds,
That would stop the sentence right where 'twas,
And Tim'thy could walk out o' jail.
So the poor lunatic started to git aholt o' the jury.
'Twarn't no easy matter to do,
Fer some was moved away, and some was dead;
But he wrote, and he travelled,
And he run here and ther like a hen 'ithout its head,
And, in the end, he got all the livin' members o' that jury
To sign papers reversin' ther decision.
Is that very remarkable, Sir?
P’raps you’re right.
Anyhow, he done it.
When he’d got all the papers
He went back to Judge Proctor,
And asked him, would he please arrange things
So Tim’thy’d be free.
O’ course, the Judge told him ’twarn’t no manner o’ use.
That all the papers in the world wouldn’t git Tim’thy out,
Onless ther was new ev’dence,
Which, don’t you see, ther warn’t,
Not a scrap.
So Clif went home, all broke to bits,
And put his papers in the chimbly cupboard,
And Mirandy had all she could do
To git a little bacon and coffee down him.
It’s al’ays the women gits it in the end, you know, Sir?

Well, byme-bye it come time fer Tim’thy to be let out o’ jail.
He’d served his term, barrin’ what was took off fer good conduct.
The very day he stepped out o’ prison,
Standin’ d’rectly in front o’ the gate
Wher he couldn’t miss him,
Was Clif Steele.
Tim’thy was took all aback
And made to git out o’ th’ way,
But Clif up and hitched his arm inter his
And marched him off, real brotherly.
“Tim’thy Adams,” says Clif,
“I done yer a great wrong.
I know you never ’saulted nobody
And never took no dimonds,
And I come here to-day to make it up to yer best I can,” he says.

“Come to yer senses, have yer?” says Tim’thy.
“Yes, I have,” says Clif.
“An’ I’m goin’ to take yer right along home with me.”
Mebbe Tim’thy wouldn’t ha’ gone,
Only his sperrits was all squeezed to nothin’
By bein’ so long in jail.
Anyhow, Clif wouldn’t hear no.
And them two went home together
Like a pair o’ old shoes.
Folks wondered, would Mirandy like it?
All I c’n say is, ef she didn’t, she darsn’t say so.
I guess she was some feared ’bout Clif’s stayin’ in his right mind.

Whatever was th’ reason, she acted pleased as pie.
So the three on ’em lived in the brick house,
And after a little, nobody heeded ’em no more.
But Clif was all played out;
The worry’d done fer him,
And two year come the next winter
He died o’ pneumony.
Tim’thy and the widder
Stuck it out fer a bit as they was.
But tongues got to waggin'
And they must ha' heerd 'em,
Anyways, one fine day they up and got married,
And that settled the talk fer keeps.
Then the good times seemed come fer Tim'thy and Mirandy.
They warn't young no more, but they was real well suited.
Folks kind o' forgot 'bout the jail,
And Mirandy took a new lease o' life.
Why, the kitchin winders was all jammed full o' flower-pots!
You never seed sich rose-geraniums,
Everybody wanted slips from 'em.
I don't know jest how it come 'bout,
But one way or 'tother, Tim'thy took to tinkerin' clocks agin.
He had a wonderful knack at makin' 'em go.
Not the batteredest old clock es ever was, beat him.
He'd set ther in that kitchin,
Snuffin' up the smell o' them geraniums
And foolin' with little wheels and wires,
And all of a suddint he'd have the clock as good as new.
Most everybody has a broken clock;
Well, they brought 'em all to Tim'thy.
The house was full on 'em.

Now comes the queer part,
And ther ain't no explainin' it, nohow.
Many's the time I've heerd my father tell it,
But I never give over startin' when I think of it.
One day Tim’thy was overhaulin’ a fine wall clock,  
The kind with big weights hangin’ down under it,  
When he give a cry,  
So loud Mirandy heerd it out in the clothes-yard.  
She come runnin’ in  
With her heart in her mouth,  
And ther was Tim’thy,  
Starin’ as though he seed a ghost,  
And holdin’ four big dimonds in his hand.  
They was sparklin’ like icicles on a south winder,  
All green, and blue, and red.  
Father seed ’em,  
And he said they was so bright  
You could most see to read by the flashin’ they made.  
“Wher’d you git them things, Tim’thy Adams?” Mirandy hollered out.  
She was struck all of a heap  
And couldn’t scarcely fetch her breath fer wonder.  
“Out o’ the clock,” says Tim’thy, quick, as ef a bee stung him.  
“Who put ’em in?” asked Mirandy, kind o’ snappin’ out the words.  
“I ain’t no notion,” says Tim’thy.  
Now ther was a fine fix, and dimonds agin!  
Mirandy leaned up against the door-jamb to save herself from fallin’—  
“Whose clock is it?” says she.  
’Twas old man Smart’s clock, and Tim’thy telled her so.
Well, not to keep a-talkin’ all day, they sent fer old man Smart,
And showed him the dimonds.
But he said they warn’t none o’ his.
Tim’thy acted as ef he was afeared on ’em.
He’d put ’em on the chimbley,
And he wouldn’t tech ’em agin, nohow.
Mirandy said she couldn’t sleep with ’em in the house,
And ther was a fine hurrah-boys.
The neighbors got wind on it somehow,
And they all come flockin’ to ask fool questions
And git a sight o’ the dimonds.
Tim’thy seemed kind o’ crazed, all to onct.
He jest set ther, and whispered: “In the clock! In the clock!”
Nobody couldn’t git another thing out o’ him.
Mirandy’d got to cryin’ by then,
And all the women was soothin’ her,
And burnin’ feathers under her nose.
’Twas the awfullest mess ever was,
And all along o’ them pesky dimonds.
Somebody called in Lawyer Cary to Danbridge,
And he took charge o’ the dimonds,
And they got the house cleared somehow.
But nothin’ ever warn’t the same after.
Mirandy went inter a sort o’ decline,
And died ’fore Thanksgivin’.
Tim’thy didn’t die, but he didn’t git well neither.
He wouldn't tech a clock agin fer love nor money.
If anyone said: "Clock," he'd commence shiv'rin'
As though he had th' ague.
Then a nasty whisper got about,
You know how folks talk;
Well, 'twas said the dimonds warn't really in the clock at all,
That Tim'thy'd had 'em all these years,
And that he only pretended to find 'em
So's he could sell 'em at last.
Some said 'twas a trade 'twixt him and Clif.
Clif had kep' 'em for him while he was to States Prison.
I guess that was all foolishness,
But what made 'em think so
Was that old man Smart 'lowed he'd bought the clock
To a auction;
And it turned out 'twas the auction o' that jewel'ry store
Where Tim'thy worked.
The man that owned it had sold out and gone away.
Lawyer Cary tried to trace him,
But 'twarn't a mite o' use.
He'd gone to Boston, and they couldn't find out another thing.
But ther was the dimonds, and ther was poor old Tim'thy,
Half cracked with findin' 'em.
Property like that's a terrible nuisance.
Old man Smart wouldn't look at the things,
And he told how he'd burnt the clock,
Considerin' it a sort o' party.
They warn't Tim'thy's, that was sure,
And Lawyer Cary said he wouldn't keep 'em after New Years.
So the selectmen voted to sell 'em,
An' buy books for the lib'ry with the money.
You c'n see 'em now, with a card in 'em:
"Bought with the proceeds o' the sale o' four dimonds."
I must ha' be'n 'bout ten when Tim'thy died;
I mind it well, 'cause Father told the story at supper
The day they buried him,
And I ain't never forgot it.
Ther was some trouble 'bout the house too.
George Steele had moved to Boston years afore
And his daughter (he didn't have no sons) had married.
And they had a time findin' her under her new name.
Anyhow, she didn't want the farm, an' 'twas "sold."
It's be'n goin' down hill ever since.
Lor's mercy! Ain't this world a queer place!
Ther was three lives all gone to smash
Over them dimonds,
And nothin' to show fer it but a ramshackle house,
And a passel o' books in the lib'ry!
Well, that's the story,
And I must be seein' to your supper.
It's gittin' late.

Amy Lowell
POEMS OF THE HOUR

FOR PARENTS OF THE SLAIN

Weep not; they would not have us weep for them;
Weep not; for they are as the stars that shine;
Their glory spilt upon the darkened skies
Can not be dimmed by frailty, yours or mine.

They cannot die; shall not the best survive?
The flower of man too has its seed in death;
And as the Phoenix soars from ashen dust
Man's spirit from the dead draws living breath.

They live with us as they shall live with men
Throughout the ages in the times to be,
Patriots and partners in the great emprise
To make and keep their cherished England free;

(Only when foul is fair and fair is foul,
And honor fails, shall men blot out their light;
Only when men shall call their courage crime
Shall England know oblivion and the night.)

They shall not die so men be worthy them
And the high motive shining through their deed;
So men be worthy they shall never die,
But shall be spirit-warriors at our need.
THE QUESTION

You in the dark of death
    Quietly sleeping;
I in my shuttered room
    Silently weeping:

Quickens your being in God—
    You unawaking—
Or does my heart alone
    Live on—and breaking?

THE MOURNER

O sea, whose tides are as eternity,
    Whose ebb and flow survive all human pain!
O timeless sea! heal now this wound of time
    That my life-tide may flow in hope again:

But if, though willing, thou art impotent,
    Beseech in pity the bland, pain-rid moon
That she will take unto herself this heart,
    And in her bosom fashion it to stone.

THE BAYONET CHARGE

A forest of steel leaves
    Glints in the sun
And shimmers in the wind—
    The thing’s begun!
A sea of faces set  
Grimly to kill;  
A pack of wolves that rush  
To take their fill;  
A yell that rends the air  
And strikes the sky,  
And stirs the dead who low  
In silence lie;  
A sense of clashing fray,  
A bloody sun;  
A mist of reeking blades—  
And it is done!

UNDER ORDERS

No shouting heralded the word  
As through the ranks it swiftly went;  
But a low murmur such as trees  
Indulge, when grateful summer's spent.

A murmuring of seasoned wills  
Bent upon hellish wrong's redress!  
A diapason sound from deep  
To deep, presaging storm and stress.

Then each to his allotted place  
For sleep. You say your fancy heard  
The air beat by a thousand wings  
That night. I could not doubt your word.
WOLVERINE WINTER

The chickadee came in the morning:
Over the Lake hung snow-clouds—piling,
Wheeling for the signal—for the signal
Of the lake gods coming to battle!

Up and down the West Coast went the Life Guards,
Sniffing at the air and frowning at the sky;
Peering out to westward, muttering to their Pard—
To their Pard, the surf seeping high.

*While the Winter came out of the North*
*Stripped naked, cruel as a bloodless sword!*

I carried in wood and I pumped me some water;
I cleaned out the chimney and doubled my quilts.
Then I phoned in to town and bid my pals adieu.
We cursed at the weather; promised our God a prayer.

*For the Winter, the frozen Hell of the West Coast,*
*Like a weasel was sneaking down the shore.*

Like the wraith of a profaned tomb it came.
I could see it twisting and writhing round the Point,
Round Little Sauble Point, where the pines and spruces
Whine in a gale like the over-taut string of a viol.

Out among the snow-clouds swept its scythe-like breath,
Fretting the pitching waves to frothy frenzies;

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Catching their boiling crests in a creamy ice:
And where it passed the moisture was turned to snow.

At dusk, with a keening wrench and thrust, it left the Lake;
Snarled at the Land; froze the West Coast dead!

Paul F. Sifton

SEA-MUSIC

There is a place of bitter memories
Dreary and wide and lonely as the sea,
Foaming and moaning; there they come to me
Like wild gulls crying sea-taught monodies:
Iron-winged hours, heavy, heavy with dread;
Dawn after death; the sound of a shut door;
And shining love that has a withered core;
The eyes of those who fight and starve for bread.
There is doom, and change, and silence, and denying;
Memories of these pluck at the heart of me.
And over the bitter roar of the old dumb sea
The air is filled with the noise of wild gulls crying.

Babette Deutsch

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CHILDREN

These are my children, one boy, one girl.
They have the beauty all children have;
They have entered the trap all children enter—
The trap that was set by God knows who.

These are the flowers of love and spring—
The apple-blossom and daffodils,
Tulip and bluebell, lilac and hawthorn,
And the young green leaves on the trees.
But earth, the giver, is anhungered too.

They do not know, children and flowers,
That the ground beneath them is what it is.
The sun and the rain, their laughter and tears,
Are all that they know.

I watch them at play, and I know the part
I have played myself in bringing them here.
I too was once in the outer forest;
And, decoyed like them, have decoyed them in,
To be decoys in their turn, perhaps,
To my grandchildren (will they be mine?)
And so it goes on, father and son, daughter and mother.

But they look at me with their trustful eyes,
And they laugh at me in their games and graces.
They come and caress me, they love me so—
The thoughtless-treacherous, eagerly lecherous
Knave and husband whom they call father,
The man who betrayed them to certain death.

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And I am their wistful comrade and watchdog.
I go with them sometimes into the streets,
Among the crowds, and I share their wonder,
A child with my children; and my man’s form
And my man’s strength is their contrite shield,
And my heart is a pool of tenderness for them.
For they do not know what the earth is yet,
Nor what the clay can be to the body.
When they know, they will no longer be children;
They will make their link in the chain of treason,
And so it goes on, father and son, daughter and mother.

IN THE CATHEDRAL

I have not dipped my hand in the stoup,
Nor bent my knee towards the altar
Far away at the end of the nave.
The crucifix towers dimly above it.
Is this my God?

The Stations of the Cross
Are white on the dull-brown brickwork.
Poor naked cathedral!
One pillar alone is clothed
With green marble.

O gloom of the aisles,
And darkness made darker
By the candles burning in corners
Here and there
In front of the images!
Why am I moved?
Is this the house of my God?
The voices of the priests far-off
Near the altar
Have sound and no meaning as words;
But they fill the church with life
And peace and resignation.
The music of it enters my heart.

O God, you need me, I know,
Or why am I here, why am I?
You will not cast me off,
You cannot—O God, I say it
With a humble and desperate heart.
I am the least worthy atom of your Person,
But of you, or nothing at all.

And this woman,
Kneeling in her ragged clothes
Before the saint with the ten lighted candles,
Is happier than I:
Her worn and battered face
Is shining with certainty.

And yet, as I leave the cathedral,
I do not dip my hand in the stoup.

F. S. Flint
SCHOOL ROOM SKETCHES

AMERICUS

A little pulse throbbed in his throat
When he recited. Homely things,
Wee thoughts like grubs, had fairy wings
For him. His dark eyes held the sun—
Mystical; in a room unlit,
He was my taper. And the tune
Of his voice was like the laugh in June
Of a child surprised with loveliness!

RODERICK

The stripling Scot!
His cold, proud face had troubled me—
What had I known of him?

Then one day as he stood, gray-eyed, austere,
I knew.

A shining ribbon from a girl's brown hair
Had brushed his hand upon the desk—
He drew back slightly.

Cromwell—Cromwell!

I wonder if in Scotland . . .

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LUCRETIA

Your beauty is as russet fruit,
Sun-warmed, fragrant,
In a northern room.

Down in your eyes I hear the young girls sing
In Toledo's summer fields.
Your step is firm as though it trod the grape,
And your dark head is high as though you bore
To me a brimming gourd.

ISIDOR

The corner where he sat
Was gnomed with naughtiness!
His nickname was "The Sprat,"
His size was even less.

Poor wide-eared little lad,
So dirty and so bad,
Just once I found your heart
And there were aches in there;
Yet still you play your part,
Elfish and debonair.

DAVID

David, you failed—
Yet every face is dim but yours.

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Florence Ripley Mastín

David, you failed—
Yet still I see your hands.

You will always fail—
You are too big to succeed
In the swift years before death.

Florence Ripley Mastín

MINE

Sorrow is my sick child
I bear about with me.
Though I've crooned soft songs, she's never smiled,
So wan and worn is she.

She is my own, my arms are curled
To shut out loud alarms.
But oh! it's hard to work, World,
With sorrow in my arms.

Lucia Peeples
SHANG YA

Shang Ya!
I want to be your friend
For ever and ever without break or decay.
When the hills are all flat
And the rivers are all dry,
When it lightnings and thunders in winter,
When it rains and snows in summer,
When Heaven and Earth mingle—
Not till then will I part from you.

Anonymous—First Century B.C.

ON FINDING A HAIRPIN IN A DISUSED WELL

Once a girl was gathering flowers,
Gathering flowers at the well-side.
The flowers she plucked she put in her hair
And she looked at herself in the well-water.
Long she looked and couldn’t stop,
Laughing and laughing at her own beauty,
Till one of her golden pins fell out
And there in the well it has lain ever since.
Its peacock-feathers are turned to mud,
But the golden shaft is as bright as new.
The person who wore it is dead and gone;
What was the use of the thing lasting?

T’ang Seng-ch’i—Sixth Century
WHAT SHOULD A MAN WANT?

"Tell me now, what should a man want
But to sit alone sipping his cup of wine?
I should like to have visitors come to discuss philosophy
And not to have tax-collectors coming to collect taxes;
My three sons married into good families,
My five daughters provided with steady husbands;
Then I could jog through a happy five-score years,
Craving no Cloud-ascent, no Resurrection.

Wang Chi—Seventh Century

IN A JADE CUP

Business men boast of their skill and cunning
But in Philosophy they are like little children.
Bragging to each other of successful depredations,
They forget to consider the ultimate fate of the body.
What should they know of the Master of Dark Truth
Who saw the wide world in a jade cup,
By illumined conception got clear of Heaven and Earth,
On the chariot of Mutation entered the Gate of Immutability?

Ch'en Tzu-ang—Seventh Century

ON THE BIRTH OF A SON

Families when a child is born
Hope it will turn out intelligent.
I, through intelligence
Having wrecked my whole life,
Only hope that the baby will prove
Ignorant and stupid.
Then he'll be happy all his days
And grow into a Cabinet Minister.

Su Shih—Eleventh Century

THE PEDLAR OF SPELLS

An old man selling charms in a cranny of the town-wall.
He writes out spells to bless the silk-worms and spells to
protect the corn.

With the money he gets each day he only buys wine;
Nor does he worry when his legs wobble,
For he has a boy to lean on.

Lu Yu—Twelfth Century

ON SEEING SWALLOWS IN HIS PRISON-CELL

You laugh at my clumsiness in falling into the trap of
disaster.
I sigh at your thoughtlessness in entering my round window.
The falling leaves are blown and soaked by the east wind
and rain;
But you could have sheltered easily enough under the eaves
of any roof.

Wang Tzu-tuan—Thirteenth Century
Translated by Arthur Waley

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COMMENT

LITTLE THEATRES AND POETIC PLAYS

A recent visit to St. Louis enabled me to see Alfred Kreymborg's three *Plays for Poem-mimes*, which were given by the Players' Club at the theatre of the Artists' Guild on the evening of Monday, December 3d. The performance gave me quite a thrill, for the plays acted extremely well—indeed, sprang to life in the presentation with a power which proclaimed the born playwright. Two of the plays I had read, *Lima Beans* in print and *When the Willow Nods* in manuscript—read with admiration for the humane wit of the first and the searching poetic beauty of the second. But as the proof of the pudding is in the eating, so that of a play is in the acting: it required the excellent performance of the Players' Club to convince me that we have in Mr. Kreymborg a poetic and interpretive playwright of original and authentic power, a claimant for wide recognition on the American stage.

It was the first performance on any stage for *When the Willow Nods* and *Manikin and Minikin*. The former is a monologue in free verse, a running comment half-whimsical, half-pitiful, uttered, Greek-chorus fashion, by a quiet, seated, cloaked and hooded figure, while a boy and girl act and dance out their little love-affair in pantomime. It would be impossible to over-state the beauty of Orrick Johns' interpretation of the enigmatic speaker. Mr. Johns, being a poet and having a fine voice, might be expected to read the lines
simply and with full sense of rhythmic values but only a true histrionic instinct could have kept him always in the picture, always the master of the stage.

*Manikin and Minikin* is a dialogue between two Louis Quinze ornaments on a mantel-piece, the figures beautifully dressed and posed. And *Lima Beans*, which has been played a little east and west, is a more or less satiric farce conceived in the gayest possible whimsical spirit; and it was set and acted in the same mood.

Besides this Players’ Club, St. Louis has another amateur company, that of the Artists’ Guild, which this year has engaged a professional director, Irving Pichel. I was delighted to find that Mr. Pichel has designs upon the play by Wallace Stevens to which *POETRY* gave a prize over a year ago, *Three Travellers Watch a Sunrise*. If all goes well, St. Louis may get ahead of Chicago, which printed this play, and New York, the home of the poet, by producing it next February.

The advance of dramatic art in this country, especially of the poetic drama, is now the affair of the so-called “little theatres,” which have sprung up so numerously since Maurice Brown started the Chicago Little Theatre about the time *POETRY* began. In fact, Chicago’s precedence antedates even the Little Theatre, for the New Theatre started the ball rolling in the season of 1906-7, the Drama Players under Donald Robertson pushed it along in 1907-9; and the Hull House Theatre, which had been giving plays even earlier, was reorganized for progressive work under Mrs. Pelham in
The movement started by these courageous pioneers has gained such headway that now even Broadway is trembling—opening its dazed eyes to the vitality of a demand for more imaginative and beautiful work in the theatre than the typical commercial manager has believed the public would stand for. The typical commercial manager and the typical newspaper critic has spent much time and space laughing at the efforts of these amateurs, who, out of love of the art, with little thought of self or pelf, have done the pioneer experimental work which the professionals, preoccupied with self and pelf, refused to do. While the professionals have walked in their rut and stuck to the sure thing, these amateur companies have offered the new thing, the uncertain thing, have given the young playwright a chance to try out his experiments and thereby learn his trade, the young poet a chance to test his capacity for the stage. And now the professionals find, to their amazement, that the sure thing is no longer sure, and that a group of young playwrights—poets and prosers both—is springing up in whose introduction to the public they have had no share. They will have to take lessons of the little theatres—indeed, the process is beginning. And when Broadway bends a suppliant knee, may our young playwrights of the new movement accept no compromise!

It is a matter of deep regret to POETRY that the Chicago Little Theatre, whose work has been so essential in the movement, has found the financial problem too difficult and has now definitely brought its labors to a close. Since its
curtain first rose in November, 1912, its director, Maurice Browne, has given important and significant productions, and its chief scenic artist, Raymond Johnson, has introduced beautiful and original effects of line, color and lighting. As I review its five-year list of forty plays, besides nine for puppets—plays comic and tragic, old and new, foreign and native—the most important and significant of all seems to me Cloyd Head’s *Grotesques*. If I give this production precedence over Ibsen, Strindberg, Schnitzler and Andrews, over Oscar Wilde and Synge and Yeats, over Shaw and Allan Monkhouse and Leonard Merrick, over even the beautiful productions of *The Trojan Women* and *Medea*—with Mrs. Browne wonderful beyond words in the latter play—it is because the special purpose of the little theatre seems to me to produce the modern and native thing, to try the immediate experiment, rather than to present old plays or foreign plays, which, in many cases, have had other local productions.

Mr. Head’s play was a modern and native poetic interpretation of life, involving moreover a scenic scheme of great beauty and originality; and therefore the success of it, the special thrill that it gave, was of more value to the art, to “the movement,” than the success of *Medea*, of *Rosmersholm*, of *The Shadowy Waters*, or even of *Dierdre of the Sorrows*, beautiful and significant as these are. It was more valuable because it was ours, because it uttered our own immediate feeling, because the poet who wrote it was on the spot to see it and learn from it.
Little Theatres and Poetic Plays

Other plays by modern poets produced by Mr. Browne are Rupert Brooke's dark tragedy, *Lithuania*, Gibson's *Womenkind*, Lord Dunsany's *Lost Silk Hat*, Mrs. Frank's *Jael*, three short plays by Mrs. Aldis, a gay comedy by Alice Brown, and Mr. Browne's own *King of the Jews*. The list should be longer and more adventurous, perhaps, and one might wish that the curtain had rung down on a more experimental play than *Candida*. But the record of the Chicago Little Theatre is a proud one, and fundamental in any consideration of the new dramatic movement, as the authors of four recent books on the subject agree.

I intended to discuss the work in poetic drama done by some of the other little theatres, but space forbids more than a brief mention. In Chicago the Players' Workshop tried numerous experiments last year, among them *Brown*, by Maxwell Bodenheim and William Saphier, which beautifully symbolized the growth and final obliteration of life on earth; and a fanciful thing called *The Wonder-hat*, by Kenneth Goodman and Ben Hecht. This year the Workshop's successor, the Philistine Theatre, has given two poetic plays; one, *Dead Eyes*, by H. H. Ewers, being tiresomely conventional, and the other, *Lady Lotus Eyes*, by Benjamin Purrington, of San Francisco, a delicate Japanese idyl, delicately played. The Philistine hopes for a new theatre on the North Side next year, and an ambitious group on the far South Side has been given possession of a disused schoolhouse in which to develop its large plans.

In New York the Washington Square Players were, I believe, first in the field—if we except the Neighborhood [205]
Playhouse on the East Side. I saw them give a good performance of Zoë Akins' rather lyrical melodrama in verse, The Magical City, and other interesting one-acters. But this company, having gone over to Broadway, is now somewhat tempted by the fat god of commerce. To the Portmanteau Players—also of New York, though they have been lingering in Chicago with that gold-mine, Seventeen—to them and their director, Stuart Walker, we owe the adequate introduction of Lord Dunsany to this country, as well as other high services.

The Provincetown Players and the Greenwich Village Players are the latest adventurers in New York, the former in MacDougal Street, the latter in that new Montmartre, Sheridan Square. The former have given this year James Oppenheim's Night, a poetic dialogue in which Science, Religion, Poetry, and finally Love in the person of her husband, try to console a woman for the loss of her child; also two satires in poetic prose by Messrs. Bodenheim and Saphier. The Provincetown company, under the presidency of George Cram Cook, formerly of Chicago, is a true workshop, giving only first productions of native plays. We rejoice to hear that its seating capacity has been strained. The Greenwich Villagers have given one poetic play thus far, and that rather conventional—Behind the Watteau Picture, by Robert E. Rogers.

The Arts and Crafts Theatre of Detroit, under the directorate of Sam Hume, is the first theatre in America to follow consistently, perhaps too consistently, the Gordon
Craig ideas, and it has the finest modern scenic equipment, including a sky-dome. But its repertory thus far is rather conservative.

Mrs. Laura Sherry has been adventurous with the Wisconsin Players, giving this year *Carlos Among the Candles* and another by Wallace Stevens in both Wisconsin and New York. Aline Barnsdall has tried some interesting experiments in Los Angeles. Thomas Wood Stevens, formerly of Chicago, has now a great opportunity as director of the Dramatic Arts Department of the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, but a few plays by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman are the only modern experiments he has tried thus far. Baltimore, Duluth, Boston, even Philadelphia, also certain universities, are contributing more or less to the movement—it is impossible even to mention all the little companies and clubs. Let the good work go on.

H. M.

**AMERICAN VERSE AND ENGLISH CRITICS**

I wish English critics who discuss American poetry would provide themselves with the evidence. Mr. Edward Garnett, in his *Critical Notes on American Poetry* published in the *Atlantic*, makes no mention of Carl Sandburg or Vachel Lindsay, and his estimate of Ezra Pound's work is based on juvenilia—nothing later than 1911, though Mr. Pound's work is published on the other side and might easily have been obtained. Mr. Garnett has "been told" that "he is at his best in his translations from the Chinese." And with this casual remark, he rests his case against Mr. Pound.
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It would not be so bad if the English critics—Mr. Garnett is not the first of them—told us something new, something that we do not already know, or if their grasp of the subject were equal to their willingness to take long-range shots—without the assistance of a range-finder. But the chief impression gained from Mr. Garnett's article is that he is uninformed, or that he has been misinformed by mis-representative guide-books such as Mr. Braithwaite's Annual Anthology of Magazine Verse and kindred blue-books. He says some interesting things, some vital things, in connection with the poetry of what he calls the transition period following Whitman, and it is to this period that his criticism belongs. He has hardly progressed beyond it. It tempers, one feels, his reactions to contemporary American poetry.

The fact is that English critics have not glimpsed the direction in which American poetry is moving. It is creating a new diction, a new idiom, and it is going to be a much more fluid thing than they have any idea of. It is on the score of diction that the American poets are said chiefly to err, and it is on this very score that they are going to move away from their critics. Carl Sandburg uses the English language as if it were a new instrument. Vachel Lindsay and Edgar Lee Masters are not writing poems that will stack up with some already conceived model of good style or social form in English verse, but poetry that will fit and respond to the conditions of their own life and place.

When Mr. Garnett says that the American poets lack distinction of style, is he not thinking of a style with which
he is already familiar? And when he says that they lack "literary humus," must not the emphasis be placed upon "literary?"

Never, I think, have the American poets been so securely rooted in their native soil. If one examines an anthology of contemporary English poetry, the Annual of New Poetry recommended by Mr. Garnett, one finds a prevailing note of withdrawal, or of remoteness from the concerns of contemporary life. And this precisely is what is not characteristic of contemporary American poetry. Our most distinctive verse is at present so much concerned with American life and so much a part of it that it may be said to be becoming genuinely national—something that one does not find true of English poetry today; for what is national in contemporary English poetry is not of today but of a century or more ago. Whatever enrichment English poetry has had lately has been from outside sources, not from within. One does not feel the lack of "literary humus" in English poetry, but one feels sometimes that the soil is a little weary, a little sterile, from having been so many times reworked without sufficient nutriment from life.

Of course what Mr. Garnett says of the adulterate literary style of the vast majority contemporary with Whitman—and a vast majority today—is true; the combination of a borrowed literary style imported from England, and the native image, is incongruous. But, and this Mr. Garnett does not see, it is the native image that is going to win out, the native image that we are beginning to treasure. That
is why our poetry is now, for the first time, beginning to have roots.

Mr. Garnett begins his article with a very curious premise, the premise that "English poets inherit advantages denied their American brothers." He says:

The English literary soil has been fructified by the germs of poetic associations since the days of Chaucer. Indeed, not only were the Elizabethans inspired by the riches of the mediaeval world and the Renaissance, but elements of the rich compost of the buried civilizations carried into Britain by the invading Celts, Romans, and Teutonic tribes reappear in the literary magic of Shakespearian drama.

Just why this literary inheritance belongs exclusively to the English poet and not to his American brother—who lives in the backwoods and still has hand-to-hand encounters with painted savages, yet also possesses a few books—is not explained.

It is not because of a lack of background that the American poet differs from his English contemporary. Why should not the American scene and many generations of American life tend to change one's reactions to the historic literary background? When have backgrounds remained static and not receded from the middle to a possibly remote distance? Yet whenever a poet or a critic boldly emphasizes a new middle distance, say, at the expense of one that has been pushed further back, it is commonly assumed that that poet or critic has no background. It is much easier to find fault with a critic on this score than on the score of failing to appreciate the thing that is pushing back the middle distance and creating a new foreground. Thus I have had to suffer recently the implication of having no background because not suffi-
ciently responsive to the literary appeal of Ralph Hodgson's poems. Yet neither of the two critics who publicly upbraided me has noted the negative quality of Mr. Garnett's criticism of American poetry. If my reaction to English poetry is so obviously tempered by provincialism and a supposed dullness of response to the beauty of rhyme and all that is classic in English verse, why not expose the unexpansive narrowness of Mr. Garnett's vision of American poetry?

It is not that the American poet can not write like his English contemporary, but that he does not want to. It is not that one does not recognize the excellence of an achieved literary style, but that one may be more interested in a more poignant reality.

Mr. Garnett devotes more attention to the faults of Mr. Masters' least successful, obviously early, poems than he does to an appraisal of the highly original quality of the best poems in his later books. He is more interested in calling attention to certain tedious unnecessary lines in some of these poems than in proclaiming the new drift of ore. But if one turns from these to the poems of Mr. W. W. Gibson, in the recommended Annual of New Poetry, in which we find not only lines but whole poems that are tedious and unnecessary, and in which one looks in vain for that distinction of style said to be lacking in American poetry, what must one think of Mr. Garnett's comparative criticism?

And what, we may ask ourselves, is the value of criticism which tells us all that we already know of the faults of American verse but does not approximate any true under-

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standing of its unique features? If it tells us merely that American verse is different from English verse and therefore poor, can we believe it? If it tells us, after a due consideration of all the evidence, that American verse has not yet achieved its ideal or attained quite clearly to a full perception of its direction, then we may begin to listen to it. But the English critics have not looked for any direction. They have thought of Whitman as an isolated phenomenon, and have only recognized as his successors those who have borrowed his clothing and who are not really his successors at all. Unless one recognizes the new, autochthonic note in American poetry today, in the most distinctive American poetry that is, one realizes nothing of the subtle impulses and forces that are at work to create a new poetic environment for the coming generation. And if one fails to recognize this, one might just as well not write about American poetry at all.

A. C. H.

ON BEING REVIEWED

I was recently asked to review a book. I must confess this the highest compliment I ever attained to. Reviewing a book presupposes with the average American mind a clear eminence in the personality of the critic I don’t possess. He stands above the book and the hypothetical public between which and the author he suspends his opinion. Naturally, I declined the invitation.

Had my friend asked me to have the book review me, this apologia would not exist. To be reviewed by a poem,
On Being Reviewed

to be played through by a sonata, to be twisted into an arbitrary shape and burnt by symbols, it is necessary for one to be a sheet of foolscap, five veins of blood, a lump of clay. Have you ever permitted yourself to be read by Wallace Stevens' *Three Travellers*? Have you ever felt the spiritualized fingers of Robert Franz carefully trace one of his Tanagra-modelled songs over your being? Has an Indian squaw urged you blindly to her belief by dyeing your common clay to yellow or coral streaked with black signs? Do you know what it is to be as helpless before art as a cloud to a wind, or a wind to a cloud? Do you know what it is to be resurrected from the death of being wholly oneself? from the existence of being oneself to the life of being every body, spirit and thing, near or foreign? And no two the same? And no one ever resembling you? Do you know, you, for example, who aren't religious, what a faith is while you listen to Christ, Mohammed or Buddha? —you who are no poet, what a poet you are when Whitman or Nietzsche mesmerizes your every faculty—you who never attended a conservatory, what a supreme music-maker you are under Bach or Debussy—you who couldn't name the primary colors, what it is to be Botticelli or Cézanne—you who never pondered a riddle, what a philosopher and scientist you are, whether Plato or Darwin? Do you know, atom, how universal you are—mole, you can see—deaf mute, hear—dumb brute, sing?

Then you know why I cannot review a book. When I am able to say I am Rabelais, I am Schopenhauer, I am Jane
Austen, I am So-and-so, mayhap I'll try creative criticism. But as long as I have to say, Rabelais, Schopenhauer, Jane Austen, So-and-so—they are not I—I cannot even have a book review me. There is one obstacle between them and me: I still love, see, feel myself, beyond all else. I cannot review them, nor they me. Are you the fool I am? Is it possible, a poem, a song, a bowl, a human, cannot transform you from the I-am-I to an I-am-you?

Alfred Kreymborg

REVIEWS

STILL ALIVE

The Chinese Nightingale and Other Poems, by Vachel Lindsay. Macmillan Co.

This book, like others by its author, is of uneven quality. Opening it at the Epitaphs for Two Players, one wonders why the poet is satisfied with the obvious in meaning and rhythm; at The Tiger Tree, one wonders whether his fancy, his love of symbolic color and incrustation, is to lead him into mere confusion, without intelligible pattern. Simplicity becomes childish at times, and gorgeousness a bit theatrical.

One must select; one must get in ahead of Time and play his part. One must resist the seductions of the immediate moment—this volcanic moment of war; and of the subject—subjects like Mark Twain, prairies and buffaloes, Kerensky, Niagara, which move us whether the poet enriches them or not. We must search for Mr. Lindsay's peculiar and individual magic—does he still control his instrument?
Mr. Conrad Aiken, in a recent review of this book, says no. With athletic alacrity he digs Mr. Lindsay's grave and pronounces a would-be mournful *hic jacet*. "It is never pleasant," he sighs, "to have to set the seal of death on the brow that inclines for a crown," and then proceeds to show what a poor thing even at his best was the poet he has buried, how "curiously overestimated" was Booth, how "full of childish echolalia" was *The Congo*—two "declamatory and orotund" poems which—let me see—Mr. Yeats has ventured to praise. And now—alas!—even "his charm and skill as an entertainer" are denied, the new book is "only a tired and spiritless echo," etc.

Nevertheless, in spite of this nimble critic, we need not yet despair of the Springfield bard. If the new book contained only its title poem, it would still be a record of growth. *The Chinese Nightingale* has beauty of form—a certain compactness and completeness—beyond any other of its author's longer poems; and in the molding of it his rarest qualities of whimsicality, rhythmic invention, humane intuition—the very feeling of men and myths, and, best of all, a profound ecstatic love of life, are blended as happily as the colors of an old Chinese bowl. The thing is so simple and shapely that its subtle beauty escapes Mr. Aiken and critics of his calibre, even as the soft loveliness of a Sung-dynasty painting escapes an eye accustomed to the flare of Japanese prints. The poem glows in the mind and increases in beauty. No one can have read it more than I in manuscript, proof and print; but I find it finer

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now than when POETRY first offered it to the world and crowned it with the Levinson Prize.

But the title poem is not all. One feels the march of races and nations in certain poems of this book. I speak not so much of Kerensky, though there is a big blare of trumpets and rush of flags in this greeting to new Russia; still less of The Ghosts of the Buffaloes, which somehow misses its effect. But in Pocahontas and some of the negro poems there is a sweeping grandeur of design extremely rare in modern poetry. Pocahontas grows to epic stature as the source and symbol of our love of the wilds:

In Adams Street and Jefferson—
Flames coming up from the ground!

She is exalted into a myth, and becomes the common mother of our many races of pioneers.

And John Brown also, already half mythical, grows into grandeur under Mr. Lindsay's wand. Who else, with such simple motions, can create immensities?

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
Old John Brown.
Old John Brown.
And there he sits
To judge the world.
His hunting-dogs
At his feet are curled.
His eyes half closed,
But John Brown sees
The ends of the earth,
The Day of Doom.
And his shot-gun lies
Across his knees—

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Indeed, the *Booker Washington Trilogy* and *Samson* are not only extraordinarily imaginative as expressions of the art instinct of a more primitive race, but they strip us all of sophistications, bring us back to primitive simplicities. They have what the advanced modern art movement is aiming at everywhere—a bold and broadly balanced composition of rhythmic figures, done in strong lines and masses of color. And they use always our own jargon, our own gesture. Without aping any style of the past, they have style.

There is more than a Negro “poem-game” in *King Solomon*, and much more than a “Negro sermon” in *Samson*. Any one who seeks for big adventure in modern poetry should be swept along with Samson when he “felt a honey in his soul.”

For me the value of this new book is chiefly in these poems I have mentioned. However, some of the shorter poems should have a word, especially *The Flower of Mending*, as even Mr. Aiken agrees.

And I cannot close without a protest against the typography of *King Solomon*, with its quite unnecessary effect of chopped up lines. *General Booth* and *The Congo* were also battered out of shape in earlier books by similar tasteless printing.

H. M.
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

WIND IN THE CORN

The Wind in the Corn and Other Poems, by Edith Franklin Wyatt. D. Appleton & Co.

“My songs may never in the world tell to the listener the chords that I can hear them singing,” says the poet in her preface. But she is wrong, her songs do express what she hears; at least they express her rapture, her sense of sweeping rhythms in the vast open spaces of her country and in the life of its populous cities. The book, in short, expresses a personality, one of singular vividness and fire, one strong enough to draw deep breaths of joy and walk in high places without fear.

The spirit of this poet is so free that one forgives her for fettering it sometimes with too intricate rhyme-schemes. One feels this fettering a little in the title-poem, still more in Niagara, perhaps even in Winter Wheat and a few others; poems in which the pattern intervenes so as to force the reader’s attention away from its motive. Miss Wyatt loves rhyme a bit too well perhaps; at least in certain poems her plans for it are not wrought out to an effect of complete unconsciousness.

In others, however, she attains this effect. One of the most fortunate in this respect is On the Shore, in which the light fall of syllables chimes as happily as temple bells, and calls the wandering will as alluringly; in which also a refrain is used with haunting beauty. And she hears the call of the West. We feel the swift step of the roamer in On the Great Plateau, An Arizona Wind and Overland.
we feel it also in the city poems, especially *City Whistles* and the beautiful *City Afternoon*, both of which are full of wind and space. We feel it even in *An Unknown Country*, for sleep leads her into the deepest, most spacious country of all:

Where do I go
Down roads of sleep
Behind the blue-rimmed day?

A certain spaciousness is perhaps Miss Wyatt's special quality. Free winds blow through her poems, winds of the desert, of the mountains, of our cobalt skies. She goes light-footed wherever they blow, and follows them with special joy through the magic ranges of our southwestern wonderland. *On the Great Plateau* and *An Arizona Wind* both express this joy in the wilderness, and make us feel the march of day and night through its open aisles of color. Even in cities she does not get under-roof, though she is never inhuman, or cold toward fellow-mortals. But she seems most at home out in the open:

The crystal air of happiness
Flew where their voices cried—
The winds that slipped their hands in mine,
Swift running by my side.

*H. M.*

**MR. OPPENHEIM'S BOOK**


There is a kind of person in the world who has to discover everything for himself; as if he were the first one to live. He cannot take anyone's word for what is, anyone else's experience but his own. Of such is Mr. Oppenheim.
and The Book of Self recounts the author's performance of taking apart human nature; not to see the wheels go 'round for speculation or mere amusement, but to determine if they are running in the way they are supposed to be running, and to catalogue the spokes. As if life were only to be understood by analysis, and you could not be sure that you grew unless you pulled yourself up by the roots. These analyzers, these searchers and uprooters, what good have they of their search? There is one of them I have known a long time, and we often ponder the question. Refusing to walk in any footsteps but their own, traveling the road its whole length, so fearlessly and eagerly, what do they find out? What, at last, but that which everybody else knew all the while! The Book of Self discovers that human nature—the Self—is egoistic as well as altruistic; that it is subject to contradictions and to self-deception as to its aims and motives; that man may not be wholly animal nor wholly god: and it solves the problems these discoveries present to be solved by—accepting them! What has been the gain for the reader then if, after many pages, the author brings him to the place from which minds untroubled with analyzing naturally start out; to conclusions which for the rest of the world constitute the premises of life? What has been achieved? For the author, conviction and the relief of utterance; for the reader, psychology, if he likes psychology; but if he looked for poetry he will come away with hands almost empty.

Following The Book of Self is The Song of Life, an allegorical narrative poem which flows along so smoothly through
Mr. Oppenheim's Book

its fifty stanzas, in a style so admirably adjusted to narrative purpose and conditions, that one regrets the author should not be telling us a regular story in which the youth is a youth, and not Youth in the abstract, and the sweethearts are sweethearts, and the mother is not a symbol but really the mother. It is seldom one finds a pleasing narrative style in verse; the form so easily grows monotonous or sounds artificial. Mr. Oppenheim's is both varied and natural.

The second half of this volume is devoted to an allegorical work called Creation. Some readers will recall its Prologue as having first appeared in The Seven Arts: a kind of pageant of the world, from its birth out of the sun and the emergence of man from the ape, through the human dynasties and epochs, down to the present day.

So has the glimpse been given
Of all man knows of his coming hence:
That epic writ in his Earth and in his body . . .
Chasmic unorganized forces shaped into Man,
And out of it the brief canto of historic times.

The Prologue over, a series of stage scenes follows, reminiscent of the symbolism in Andreyev's Life of Man. Except for the Epilogue, and one or two other portions, Creation has very little poetic appeal. Mr. Oppenheim seems to be most fully a poet when he is writing prose. The editorials in that beautiful magazine of his, The Seven Arts, were more stirring poetry than any in this book; they made us know more of self and life and man, of ourselves and of America—and of Mr. Oppenheim. 

H. H.

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Divinations and Creation, by Horace Holley. Mitchell Kennerley.

A delicate touch upon certain elusive human relations, certain subtleties of human psychology, has this young poet and dreamer. Our readers no doubt observed this over a year ago in the tragic narrative Crosspatch, here reprinted, through the storm of which emerge two characters of high but ruined nobility. But perhaps The Meeting, which gives a situation rather than a story, is even more intuitive.

Rarely have I read a first book of poems so keen with spiritual passion. The poet feels more than he can say, perhaps, but the beauty he divines and dreams is joy and pain to him, emotion that makes life an almost impossible ecstasy.

Then I fell
Upon the knees that are no more my knees,
And with a voice that is no more my voice
I cried a cry, the single thing I am,
As one will cry whose house has fallen down
For help to raise the ruin and go free.
And like the cry I fled outside myself
And died like echo on the farthest hill.

If the poet’s art fails him often, if we have turgid lines that seem to crush the fine ones, we may reasonably hope for more assured control in his next book. Indeed, the worst failures—Ecstasy, for example—are among the Post-impressionist Poems written in 1913. The later work shows finer taste and a more stript and clarified style.

H. M.
The Yeats Letters

THE YEATS LETTERS

Passages from the Letters of John Butler Yeats, selected by Ezra Pound. Cuala Press, Dundrum, Ireland.

I make no excuse for reviewing this small book which I myself have edited. I have been through the matter more often than any other critic or reviewer is likely to go through it, and I am in at least that degree more fit to praise it. This book is priceless because for the first time a detached critic, without temper, writing not for the public but simply to a member of his own family privately, without any tinge of didacticism, without hoping or thinking to convince anyone holding hostile opinion, has defined and described America.

I know of no modern book which contains so much good sense about poetry. Good sense is perhaps too plain and prosaic a term; there is a rich humanity in this old man's writing, a freedom from the curse of Wordsworth and the Victorian era and an equal freedom from the petulance of our decade.

Poetry is the last refuge and asylum of the individual of whom oratory is the enemy.

Imagination is the faculty by which truth is made real to the sentient man.

There is no use in my excerpting definitions, for they will lose value taken apart from their context; they will become current coin, parrot phrases; they will not induce a realization of John Yeats' poetic philosophy, and there is in these letters a whole and sound poetic philosophy. There is in them a cure for our age and our country, a

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cure for all the infection left over from Wordsworth and Carlyle and Arnold; and there is in them a humanity no less rich than Remy DeGourmont's, a very different humanity.

I wonder if more of us would be as wise as this Nestor could we live so long, think so much and publish so little.

I keep reading the book backwards and forwards for the thirtieth and fortieth time, delighted with the aptness of the diagnosis, the erasing—one can not call it destruction—of literary idols and bogies which one had always known instinctively to be wrong; which had been thrust upon one ad nauseum and which had only thrown one into a temper. One's own attempts to eliminate them had been unconvincing incoherence. And yet how easy it seems, as in this passage:

The supremacy of the will-power infers the malediction of human nature that has cursed English life and English letters. Bunyan . . . foremost in the malediction movement. He would have called Hamlet Mr. Facing Both-ways, and Juliet Mistress Bold-face or Carnality, and Romeo Mr. Lovelorn, and Macbeth Mr. Henpecked, etc.; finding where he could epithets to belittle and degrade the temple of human nature and all its altars.

I am haunted by single lines, plucked here and there by infallible instinct; there is no critic like the memory.

Wordsworth would not have made the homicidal Achilles lovable.

Aeschylus' Athena is not beautiful till we see her timid with the Furies.

Because of his passion for truth the man with a poetical mind dislikes improvisation.

I might go on until I had quoted most of the book; for it is compact of such succinct formulations, each full of persuasiveness and not one strained toward an epigram.
Of course they interpret Whitman literally, as a few years ago they did the Bible; the same lunacy in another form.

And Mr. Yeats puts his finger thus on Browning's defect:
He tended away from the true mood of the whole man into the false mood of the idea.

But a stricture of this sort against Browning must be balanced by the concurrent praise of Aeschylus and Dostoievsky before it can convey all of Mr. Yeats' meaning.

The book is full of wisdom.

E. P.

A BACK NUMBER

Retrogression and Other Poems, by William Watson. John Lane Co.

Is it possible that there is any writer living in these war-vivid days who can open his book of alleged poems with bombast like this?

Our daughters flower in vernal grace;
In strength our striplings wax apace;
Our cities teem; our commerce rides
Sovereign upon the fawning tides.

A few pages further along we find this pearl of song and criticism, entitled The Sexes of Song:

First in the empire of the Muse
Are the broad athletes, the all-male,
Who from their cradles had the thews
That unwithstandably prevail.

But many a province she possesses
Rich in fair manors and proud seats,
Bestowed on such great poetesses
As Shelley and June-hearted Keats.
Mr. Watson "has it in" for modern English. He "waxes apace" throughout this slender volume, and, moved by the perfections of his own style, grows sarcastically admonitory:

Shun, if thou wouldst by men be heard,
The comely phrase, the well-born word.

Well, we are willing to pass over these "poems" to that super-critic, Time, in whom their author thus nobly expresses Confidence:

When criticasters of a day
Seem to have sneered me quite away;
When with a pontiff's frown
Some dabbler puts me down;

Then, draining mine appointed cup,
In patience do I gird me up,
   Knowing that Time, one day,
   All his arrears will pay.

Pencraft is the kind of criticism one would expect from this kind of poet. The man whose best art has been mere echoes, is always the one in despair over the art of his own time and all the influences which inspire it. To Mr. Watson Whitman is "the boisterous and shaggy barbarian of Brooklyn," Villon is "a member of the dangerous classes with a knack of writing," and Blake the wielder of "a most unsure and infirm pen." And he gently but firmly puts American literature in its place, reminding us of a time "when it saw no shame in bearing some such relation to the literature of Great Britain as that of Rome bore to that of Greece," and condoling with us because the change from this attitude of "filial piety" has produced only "verse which can perhaps be best described as an uncouth sincerity."
Why do we pause over such fulminations? Because they have been taken seriously in Britain and the States by certain readers, critics and audiences. Because Mr. Watson has toured this country lecturing and reading from his works to literary circles, women's clubs, and even colleges, who naïvely seemed to think they had captured a real poet of reputation and authority. Because—well, because platitudes are popular, and a sycophantic colonialism is not yet banished from the highways and byways of American taste.

H. M.

NOTES

Miss Amy Lowell, of Brookline, Mass, is well known to our readers. Her latest book of verse is *Men, Women and Ghosts,* and of prose is *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* (Macmillan Co.).

Mr. F. S. Flint, one of the English imagists, is also a familiar contributor.

Mr. Arthur Waley and Mr. Charles Granville are English poets new to our readers. The latter will soon publish *Poems of Nature and War* (Dryden Pub. Co. Ltd., London).


Miss Babette Deutsch, of New York, has contributed to other magazines; and Miss Lucia Peeples, of Atlanta, Ga., makes her first appearance in print.

BOOKS RECEIVED

*Original Verse:*

*Souls and Other Poems,* by Glenn Hughes. Paul Elder & Co.

*From Dawn to Eve,* by Julia Wickham Greenwood. Badger.

*With the Colors—Songs of the American Service,* by Everard Jack Appleton. Stewart & Kidd Co., Cincinnati.


*Opus I,* by Kay Monroe. Privately printed, San Francisco.

*Barbed Wire and Other Poems,* by Edwin Piper Ford. Midland Press, Moorehead, Minn.

POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

In the Garden of Life, by Josephine M. Peacock. Privately printed.
At Vesper Time, by Ruth Baldwin Chenery. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
Birth Pangs, by Margaret Adams Faulconer. Privately printed.
Grenstone Poems: A Sequence, by Witter Bynner. Frederick A. Stokes Co.
Tower of Ivory, by Archibald Macleish, Foreword by Lawrence Mason. Yale Univ. Press.

ANTHOLOGIES:
A Book of Verse of the Great War, Edited by W. Reginald Wheeler, with Foreword by Charlton M. Lewis, Ph. D. Yale Univ. Press.
Fifes and Drums: Poems of America at War. (The Vigilantes Books). George H. Doran Co.

PLAYS:

PROSE:
Studi sul Romanticismo Inglese, di Federico Olivero. Gius. Laterza & Figli, Bari, Italy.

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New York Tribune. (editorial)
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Jessie B. Rittenhouse in The Bookman.
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—Whitman.

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