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Poetry
A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe
June 1918

War Times
by John Curtis Underwood

Gold in the Desert
by Frank S. Gordon

Figs from Thistles
by Edna St. Vincent Millay

543 Cass Street, Chicago
$2.00 per Year Single Numbers 20¢
There is no magazine published in this country which has brought me such delight as your POETRY. I loved it from the beginning of its existence, and I hope that it may live forever.

A Subscriber

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**POETRY for JUNE, 1918**

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JUNE, 1918

WAR TIMES

THE SONG OF THE CHEECHAS

The Cheechas defended Chachak.
The grandfathers of Serbia’s fourth line held her third capital:
For a man is a grandfather here at forty, and a fighter at eighty until he dies.
And the Germans found it out and flinched and fled from them.

They had no uniform but their gray hair and beards, and needed none.
They had no rations but half a pound of dry bread a day, and it sufficed them.
They were armed with rifles as old and battered as themselves, and they battered the Germans back.

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Three times they drove them back, and took that shattered and exploding capital away from them.

Then in the fourth attack, when four in every five of them were down,
The rest of the oldest men who had seen free Serbia born and were seeing her die—
So they believed with the rest—went away muttering, "What do I care for myself, what do I count for? Three million people lost, nothing else matters, three million people lost, three million lost."

And many of them died by the way, where hundreds were lying starving and freezing—
Dying on high Montenegrin mountains in the wind and the snow that grew sleet,
So gray icicles grew on their beards and the sleet cut cold skin on their faces.
And the wind cut their song into shreds, the song they were singing when they died:

*The Suabas are building houses, the Serbs shall live in them.*
*The Suabas are planting corn, the Serbs shall eat it up.*
*The Suabas are pressing wine, the Serbs shall drink of it.*

And they drank to their fill of the war that the Huns and their helots had brewed.
But the Serbs and their brothers shall finish it.

[118]
Twenty-six thousand men are building at Bethlehem
Armor plates and palisades and props of steel for the peace of Christ,
That comes momentarily, by breathing spells, in a world forever at war:
Twenty-six thousand men sweating blindly to build a world forever beginning to fall;
Twenty-six thousand men are making tools for breaking, scrapping, scraping and fixing foundations anew.

For life ever fuses and glows,
Like the heart of a rose in the fire that eats up red billets of steel like raw fagots of wood.
And a war is as good as a rose in the eyes of the Watcher of Space;
A war is as brief as a rose in its growth and its death in the fire of the Forger of Stars.
And the fire ever burns out the dross in the depths of the stone and the soul,
All the fires that ape or man ever kindled on earth were lit and fused to keep these crucibles boiling.

And now they roll a loaded crucible that flames white-hot along the level rails and swinging truck-ways overhead.
And the moulds are made ready and prepared.
And they look like trenches of shadow, before the raw red tide of war pours into them.
And one half-naked foreman of his gang is a general of today's grim shaping of life.

A general who knows his job and holds it hard-fisted, holds it and sways it like a tool he beats and welds and batters with.

For the war is a job and a tool, that must be beaten out and battled with to the bitter end of the stint; and finally finished.

Ten huge trip-hammers rising and falling in cadenced choruses affirm it.

Twenty-six rolling-mills, that print a gospel new and red in steel still raw, are ready to publish it.

Twenty-six thousand men, twenty-six million men, in smoke and fumes and mud and grime, assert and by their blood and breath maintain it.

THE RED COFFINS

After the revolution in Petrograd, they made a great common grave in a vaster parade ground outside the city.

And they brought the red coffins of those who fell fighting for freedom to honor and bury them.
They piled them tier by tier while the crowd in silence watched them. 
And as the pile rose and spread, to many it seemed
Like the red blood of Russia welling from a mortal wound.
And some saw red fagots of freedom rising and kindling
a fire that would warm all the world.
But no man there could tell the truth of it.

DOWN FIFTH AVENUE

The crowd makes way for them.
The mob of motors—women in motors, footmen in motors,
Manhattan's transients in motors, life's transients in motors—has cleared and disappeared.
And their mothers and their children, their wives, their lovers and friends, are lining the curb and knitting
and whispering.
The flags are floating and beckoning to them, the breezes are beckoning and whispering their secrets,
That the city has hushed to hear, while trade and trivial things give place.

And through the crowd, that holds its breath too long, a restless stir like the starting of troubled breathing says,
"They are coming." And the distant beat of feet begins to blend with the beat of laboring hearts;

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And the emptiness that missed a beat in the heart of the city becomes the street of a prayer and a passion. This is a street of mothers and their sons—for an hour in the life of Manhattan. And today makes way for them.

The past makes way for them. This morning’s discontent, yesterday’s greed, last year’s uncertainty, are muted and transmuted to a surging urge to victory. Spirits that stood at Bunker Hill and Valley Forge, Ticonderoga, Yorktown, Lundy’s Lane, Fort Sumter, Appomatox, are resurrected here; with older fathers and mothers who farmed, and pushed frontiers and homes for freedom westward steadily; with freedom’s first grandfathers and forerunners, who grew to hold hill towers and forest fastnesses, and range the sea and all its shores and islands for the right to live for liberty. And their blood beats in these boy hearts, and their hill-bred and sea-bred strength is stirring in these feet that beat their measured cadences of courage.

For now the tide is turning eastward at last. And the sound of the fall of their feet on the asphalt is the sound of the march of the waves of a tide that is flooding—
Waves that marched to the western coast past forests and plains, mountains and deserts, and wrought their work in a world gone by.

And the ripple of the ranks of these regiments that march to suffer and to die, is the ripple of a great brown river in flood that forges seaward;

And the ripple of the light on eyes and lips that watch and work, is the swelling of a greater flood that forces them to go.

And the ripple and arrest of light on dull gun-barrels that crest their flow are runes of a ritual spelled in steel and a service enduring.

And each beat of their feet and each beat of their hearts is a word in a gospel of steel that says the nations through ruins grow one again;

When God’s drill-master War has welded nations in ranks that their children may serve Him together.

For tomorrow makes way for them.

John Curtis Underwood
THE OLD GODS

The Old Gods never die,
They only watch and wait;
They wait for a thousand years
Beside the tall church gate.

Jove and Neptune and Mars,
Tyr and Odin and Thor,
These watch with the ageless stars,
They watch forevermore.

They call with the worn bronze trumpets,
They call and all men hear.
Their voice is deeper than church bells,
Deeper than chimes rung clear.
It charms like the seraphim’s,
And is older than all the hymns.

We hear the tramp of many feet
Upon the ancient pavements of the Gods.  
We see the people hasten from the street,
Chanting their lauds.
Their fashion’s garments off they cast
And don the shag-skins of the past.

The Old Gods rule the seas,
And men are fed to the waves.
The Old Gods burn the cities;
They bind and ravish their slaves.

They ride on the storm and the lightning,
They revel in jungle and brake,
They inhabit the seats of the thunders
When the tempests in wrath awake.

A strange, strange smile
Is the Old Gods', while
They hope for the Cross to fall
And they be lords of all.

Jove and Neptune and Mars,
Tyr and Odin and Thor,
These watch with the ageless stars,
They watch forevermore.

The Old Gods never die,
They only watch and wait,
They wait for a thousand years
Beside the tall church gate.

Calvin Dill Wilson
KOL NIDRE

When twilight charms the sunset into dusk
The singer comes. I do not know his step
Nor ever have I seen the form of him.
But when through darkening window-panes I reach
My vision for that straining star whose course
Was preconceived in me, and with me
I know must pass forever, I hear his voice:
Deep rhythm circling stern creation's path
And passing far beyond it—Kol Nidre!
A little silence—all is swept away;
And there are only God and nothingness
Myself besides, I who am more than God
And less than nothingness—for it is rest.

As from dissolving mists sudden appears
The city's countenance, so from these days,
Melting like mists away, rise clear and stern
The towers of the solemn days that were:
Dread days of reckoning whose shofar blasts
Like thunder, dawns of upturned faces, pleas
Like wrath of midnight storms, sing in my blood
Wakening memories long dead, best dead . . .

Two thousand years of listless wandering!
Ages without a battle cry! Lo, he
Who sings behind the wall is meek; the words
Flow gently from his soul, and you whose song
Is light, unburdened by our Elohim,
Cannot conceive the terrible despair!
But we who sing it know, for as we sing
We suffer. Every note a lash! Each word
A lovely daughter's shame! Ay, every verse
A noble city's doom of martyrdom!
And the whole song, the story of a race
Which wrought God from itself and lost its soul.

Kol Nidre! and a hundred armies march
Retreat! A hundred armies bannerless and slow,
A far-flung shadow o'er the fields of earth,
March through my soul and will not cease. Give me
Your crucifix, children of Christendom,
The thing you hold up to the sun, and wail
And moan—your sign of suffering!
The dead have pride, and seeing it on me
Will go their way. Yet I'll not desecrate
The dead! Their pride—'twas all they had in life!

Kol Nidre! God! will this never have end?
These mighty trumpet blasts—for whom?—the dead?
They do not hear, I say.
The living? Lord! Have you no laughter left?
These living, straws out in your mighty storm,
They do not hear your storm, only the cries
Of bleeding lambs and drowning swine reach them.
But lo, the singer sings!—all I have lived
And will live yet, all that my race has lived
And will live yet. Listen! All laughter dies,
A knock upon my window-pane, fumbling
Black flapping wings, a voice wild with despair:
“Traitor!—what have you mused in Ascalon?”

*Kol Nidre!* So throughout the centuries,
Deep, beautiful and glorious to hear!
But what would you of me? Is there a path
You’d have me take? I’ve beaten every one!
A thousand roads are in my blood! What then?
Is it a call to fight? Battle with whom?
Amalak long is dead, the gentile gods
Are slain, and all their golden temples dust!
Perhaps it is a call to life? We long
Have ceased to live, wearied . . . Or is it death?
How shall we die who knew not how to live?

God! God! Save me from this despair! Hurl me,
If so you will, down the ravines of death,
Where every sunbeam is a thorn to prick,
And every flower is a wound to bear,
All loveliness a memory of wrath
And spirit madness! I’ll not care! An end
Let be to all this waste! See, if I die
There is a heaven of stars goes down with me,
And if I live on . . .
Hush! the song ceases,
The singer goes, and with him the despair!
Go singer, go! far from this land! the draught
You offer—it is much too strong! Highways
Broader than these shall hear your song. For me
The dusk deepens, deepens—there is my star!

HUMAN SPEECH

I know the shady moving of its waves
Circling old shores of thought all solemnly;
Its loves and hates; its moods storm-taught and free.
For like the sea it hides a million graves
Beneath an iron gleam that darkly braves
The sun and storm. It heaves too like the sea,
Full of its life, and flees to Memory
Even as she flees to her shaggy caves.
Three massive silences creation's Lord
Wrought in the heart of life: before the birth
The silence of the dead stirring again;
The hush of Love wielding a flaming sword
Which holds the swerving passions of the earth;
And the great silence in the speech of men.

Samuel Roth

[129]
FIGS FROM THISTLES

FIRST FIG
My candle burns at both ends;
   It will not last the night:
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
   It gives a lovely light!

SECOND FIG
Safe upon the solid rock the ugly houses stand:
Come and see my shining palace built upon the sand!

THE UNEXPLORER
There was a road ran past our house
   Too lovely to explore.
I asked my mother once—she said
That if you followed where it led
   It brought you to the milk-man’s door.
   (That’s why I have not traveled more.)

THURSDAY
And if I loved you Wednesday,
   Well, what is that to you?
I do not love you Thursday—
   So much is true.

And why you come complaining
   Is more than I can see.
I loved you Wednesday—yes—but what
   Is that to me?

[130]
THE PENITENT

I had a little Sorrow,
    Born of a little Sin,
I found a room all damp with gloom
    And shut us all within;
And, "Little Sorrow, weep," said I,
    "And, Little Sin, pray God to die,
And I upon the floor will lie
    And think how bad I've been!"

Alas for pious planning—
    It mattered not a whit!
As far as gloom went in that room,
    The lamp might have been lit!
My little Sorrow would not weep,
My little Sin would go to sleep—
To save my soul I could not keep
    My graceless mind on it!

So up I got in anger,
    And took a book I had,
And put a ribbon on my hair
    To please a passing lad.
And, "One thing there's no getting by—
I've been a wicked girl," said I;
"But if I can't be sorry, why,
    I might as well be glad!"

Edna St. Vincent Millay
DEITY

In incense before gods He rises,
In the blue smoke of cigarettes He curls.
He dwells in the eyelids of the Buddha;
He is in the lotus.

The delicate tree-tops He sways.
Over the roofs of houses He stalks.
He is in the moon mirrored in a pool;
He is in the sky.

In the tails of peacocks He is a jewel;
In the garden of sun-flowers He is a rose.
He hangs above an adoration of candles.
He is on a cross.

EARTH

The earth is a moth
Circling about a lamp;
The earth is a cemetery
Of the dead.

The earth is a mother
Rocking a cradle.
The earth is a father
Devouring his children.
The earth is a ghoul
Battening on corpses.

The earth is a garden
Of green trees.
The earth is a pillow
For the head.

PAUSE

If it were to become
Complete;

If
All of a sudden
Everything were to hold its breath:

Surely
The walls of the city
Would be cast down
With a terrible noise.
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

PASSERS-BY

I

Mostly it is eyes that find me,
And your eyes are gone.
Shoe-strings I have little need of,
So I pass on
And let you fall behind.
I too am blind.

II

And you, my little friend of the gay dress!
In a swift moment of encountered eyes
I have touched your hand and kissed your wistfulness
And looked with you upon eternities;
And I know that neither the powder on your nose,
Nor the amazing things you wear upon your feet,
Can alter the gentleness my spirit owes
To vision of you, hurrying down the street.

III

I know you. You are one of those who fear
The certain end of their uncertainties;
Who, never having had possession here,
Still seek it in such transient things as these
Bright windows looking into gaudy places
Where there are wine-lists and long bills of fare,
And leaning girls with splendid shoulders bare,
And intimate eyes, playing with passionate faces.

IV

In the concert hall
You are the musician
I the listener.
Here your fingers touch no bow,
Make no music for me.
We pass one another
Silently.

V

I do not marvel so that you can wear
A flower in your tailored button-hole,
As that the flower does not perish there
In the Winter of your soul.

VI

When you have passed and other eyes
Have found me with a new surprise,
I know I shall not call to mind
The colored hat you wore, the kind
Of dress nor anything so sure.
Only your laughter will endure
And come to me on other trips
Down other streets, from other lips.

Raymond Peckham Holden

[135]
THREE NEGRO SPIRITUALS

THE LOST LOVE

Oh, where has my honey gone?
Fly away, my Jubal, fly away!
Oh where have they laid her bones?
Fly away, my Jubal, fly away!
Conjure woman shake her head,
Preacher dumb and master sad.
Nobody knows!
Nobody knows!

Why the tears that drop all night?
Fly away, my Jubal, fly away!
Why the heart that burns like fire?
Fly away, my Jubal, fly away!
Angel close the Book of Life,
Moon goes down and stars grow cold.
Nobody knows!
Nobody knows!

HOW LONG, O LORD!

How long, O Lord, nobody knows!
My honey's resting near the brook.
How long, O Lord, nobody knows!

[136]
Fenton Johnson

How long, O Lord, nobody knows!
I pray she'll rise on Judgment Day.
How long, O Lord, nobody knows!

WHO IS THAT A-WALKING IN
THE CORN?

Who is that a-walking in the corn?
I have looked to East and looked to West
But nowhere could I find Him who walks
Master's cornfield in the morning.

Who is that a-walking in the corn?
Is it Joshua, the son of Nun?—
Or King David come to fight the giant
Near the cornfield in the morning?

Who is that a-walking in the corn?
Is it Peter jangling Heaven's keys?—
Or old Gabriel come to blow his horn
Near the cornfield in the morning?

Who is that a-walking in the corn?
I have looked to East and looked to West
But nowhere could I find Him who walks
Master's cornfield in the morning.

Fenton Johnson
HOOFs

Beware! Beware!

Hark to the beat! The trampling beat!
Of the satyrs' feet! Galloping feet!
Hark to the sound! The maddening sound!
They stamp the ground! They gash the ground!
The long grass tickles their legs, their heels!
They come in clattering swoops and reels!

Beware! Beware!

Beware their hoofs! Their pounding hoofs!
Like hail on roofs! On rickety roofs!
They scatter the flowers! The fields of flowers!
In petalling showers! Yellow-red showers!
With crashing hammer and thud and pound
The satyrs leap in a whirling bound!

Beware! Beware!

Their hoofs will shatter your garden walk!
Their pound will smother your cautious talk!
They'll batter your red-geranium pot!
They'll gut your cabbage and onion plot!

[138]
Hark from the hill! — the forest hill!
Where trees are still! . . . . !
Hark to the beat! . . . . !
The laughter beat! The echoing beat
Of hammering feet! In the after heat
Of a clattering run, through miles of sun!

Beware! . . . . . . . Beware!

SWALLOWS

White bellied swallows
Skim cañon hollows —
Veering
And sheering,
Wild criss-crossing arrows!

Your to-days curve in sweet dips;
On the tilt of your wing-tips
Sun after sun follows!
What of the blue to-morrows?

Winifred Waldron
GOLD IN THE DESERT

MORNING HYMN

To the Mountain Sisnajinni

Ho, yo, ho!
Thou holy White Shell!
The Deathless One—
He sendeth the sun's first glow,
The sun's first glow upon Thee,
His holy morning glow.
Dawn-maiden's mountain,
To thee will I go;
Morning-cloud mountain,
To thee will I go;
Holy-browed mountain,
To thee will I go.
Blessings there glow upon me—
Thither I go,
Thither, O soul,
O-ho, yo, yo!

THE SMOKE PRAYER

In the Land of the Dacotahs
The voice of a youth crying,
As it were a thin blue smoke
Ascending:

Great Mystery,
Do thou partake of this food
And still be gracious;

[140]
Frank S. Gordon

Make it unto me sinew of flesh,
Sinew of arm and the strong heart!
Thou who paintest the mountains black—
Behold, they stand as flint;
Thou who singest to the four winds—
And lo, they dancing, sing:
Partake of this food and be thou gracious!
O great sheet of blue sky,
See me standing here,
Hear me crying here!
I have heard the voice of my fathers,
I have recited the deeds of my fathers,
I have done the commands of my fathers—
Be thou gracious,
Unto me give the heart of my fathers!
My limbs—they are the deer's—
I have not smoked the fragrant plant;
My limbs—they are the brown deer's—
I have not eaten the broth of weakness;
My limbs—they are the fleet brown deer's—
I have not sung the love song.
O thou holy and great Mystery,
Be thou gracious!—
Give unto me the heart of flint—
I have spoken with the straight tongue;
Give unto me the heart of deer—
I have spoken with my timber brothers;
Give unto me the heart of flowers—

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I have spoken with the sprig of sage.
Thou who hidest the nest of the moon,
Give unto me the heart of eagle:
That my people may find me filled
In my days of fasting;
That my enemy find me valiant
In my days of combat;
That thou find me reverent
Before the east wind,
Before the south wind,
Before thee, O sheet of blue sky.
Behold, I stand,
My face uplifted,
My hands up-raised,
My soul in nakedness before thee!

As it were a smoke ascending.

I HAVE BUT ONE LOVE

Pine tree, pine hearts, sigh ye;
Pine boughs, bend low, sigh ye,
Pine tongues sigh ye with me.
Night-long, I have but one dream—
    Hear—me!
Day-long, death hunts my warrior—
    Hear—me!
Truth-tree, I have but one love—
    Hear—me!

[142]
Crouched over the war-path steals he,
Lynx on-moving steals he,
Wind words steals he from me.

Heart-tree, I have but one love—
   Hear—me!
Long the days and weary!
Restless hours and weary,
Hungered, wearied, wake me.
Listener of the maid's prayer—
   Hear—me!
Messenger of the heart-beat—
   Hear—me!
Flute-tree, I have but one call—
   Hear—me!
Long the days and dreary!
Lone tree, I have but one love—
   Hear—me, hear!

STARTLED WATERS

In the rice-field he nears thee,
Stealing to thee.
Hear the startled loon's brood—
Hide, little Four-stars!

Soft-paddling comes he singing,
Lone and singing—
This one of the moon's low glow,
This one of the flute's low singing.
O'er the wild rice his call-notes go,
O'er the startled waters, singing . . .

DIRGE FOR ONE DYING

Mourner—who?—who cries?—
Leaping, weeping, deep-voiced—cries?
Leaping waters call afar there,
Weeping rapids moan to sea-waves.
These, but waves rushing unabated—
Down they go—
Go—

In the place, the place where I sit, I am called to enter
Spirit waters.
Spirit waters call afar there,
Spirit rapids moan to sea-waves.
Rush they on, headlong, unabated—
Down they go—go. . . .

BY GENESSERET

And who is this that walks
By the sea of Genesseret,
By my heart at ebb tide,
By the surging hosts of many people?
It is He who stills,
Full-glorious in pure serenity,
The rage, the roar of lions,
The sea uplifted cloud-ward.

It is He who is
Music unto me, and sweet
As radiance planet- wafted
On the eve at eventide.

A chord I thought it was I heard;
But it was His words,
Fresh-fallen, unperturbed by
The din of centuries.

His words are notes unspent,
That hang upon the waters
When twilight-mystery walks,
Empurpled there.

A harmony that moves upon
The rage of waves—
A song unending, unbegun,
Bewitching-borne.

And I forgot that it was hunger-time—
The fawn and the timid doe,
They passed near me
Grazing, unafraid.

And they spoke of no more slaying,
Neither war nor servitude,
Since He who stills the lions
Had passed by.
AFTER-THE-WAR predictions are a temptation to the facile thinker. In the ferment of this chaotic moment the world seems in process of being made over; the imagination lightly foresees the design which the new minting will bear, and as lightly underestimates the power of forces which tend to run the molten metal back into old molds. Prophecy is never cautious; indeed, caution is an unheroic virtue, quite incapable, no doubt, of designing the new stamp. Yet a certain amount of caution may be recommended as we listen to the seers and visionaries who cry out their hopes and theories in as many tongues as once before, according to the Book of Genesis, halted a monumental effort of the race toward unity.

However, certain tendencies would seem to be inevitably accelerated by the war. The presence of many nations in the western battle-line, the union of the powerful youth of these nations in the same death-grapple with a formidable enemy, can not fail to enforce and increase international sympathies throughout that group. When peace comes our boys will come home, and poilu and Tommie and all the others will go back to their civilian jobs; but in the hearts of all, till the last aged survivor dies, these fiery years will be a memory of horror and splendor—a memory growing more romantic from year to year, until the horror fades away and only the splendor remains. Thus the men of these nations
The New Internationalism

will remain united at heart by the fierce ordeal through which they have passed together, and to a certain degree they will pass on their sense of comradeship in the stories they tell to their children and grandchildren.

The tie between this country and France must become, one would think, especially strong. Lafayette and Franklin began it long ago; and now our soldiers are dying on French soil, and their heroic blood will fertilize the new spiritual growth of a nation whose spirit has fertilized the world. And lesser agencies will contribute inevitably to this sympathy—the adopting of French war-orphans, the rehabilitation of French towns, all the numerous contributions of American money and energy to the restoration of France and its French-speaking neighbor Belgium.

Thus after the war our splendid isolation is like to disappear. Some league of nations, in all probability, will express this fact politically, and a closer interaction in the arts and literature will express it intellectually. It would seem that our educational systems should prepare for the inevitable by urging more attention to modern languages, especially French and Spanish, the languages of our nearest intellectual and political neighbors.

In the arts and literature it may be said, with a certain justice, that Americans have been too much aware, rather than too little, of influences from over-seas. We have been too colonial, too respectful of the foreign verdict; even when most arrogantly boastful, we have had too little self-confidence, too little competent and informed appreciation of
our own achievements. But this is a provincial rather than a cosmopolitan trait; and its cure is more knowledge. More knowledge of foreign art and literature on our part will mean the separation in our minds of foreign modern art from the immense over-emphasis imparted to it by the achievements of the past. If we can strip from modern foreign art this merely sentimental over-emphasis, we shall be able to compare it more justly with our own.

And in this juster estimate of our own rank we shall be aided by their more knowledge of us, as well as by our more knowledge of them. One fact against which our poets and artists have had to contend has been lack of reciprocity: it has been only too easy for reputations to cross the ocean westward, but almost impossible to cross eastward. Even England, whose language we speak, has listened with patronizing condescension to our voices; and France, though less prejudiced intellectually, has been even more isolated in national pride. The sympathies aroused by the war may change all this; indeed, already there are signs. Such a book as Pierre de Lanux's *Young France and New America* (Macmillan Co.), with its ardent acknowledgment of the debt of young France to Whitman and its warm appreciation of our note in modern art, is an eager plea for closer relations, uttered to his own countrymen and ours; and thus is an important sign.

Italy also is aware of Whitman, and possibly of a few more recent Americans. And there are signs too from the Latin-American nations to the south of us—Pan-American
magazines, poets wandering to our ports, intellectual sympathies beginning to take the hint from commerce.

When these Latin peoples are once aroused to intellectual hospitality, they may prove more freely reciprocal than the English. England has the indifference of an elder brother toward the obstreperous relative over-seas; the "There, little boy!" attitude is hardly to be disturbed from this distance by either assertion or proof of the youngster's equal or greater strength. Recently I heard two of our most famous poets express impatient regret that these United States had inherited the English language instead of growing an indigenous product—"It loads all English literature, past and present, on our backs," said one—"what chance have we of real freedom or spontaneity?"

But as the English language, for better or worse, seems to be ours for keeps, we may only hope that the deeper sympathies aroused by the war may shake the elder brother out of his insularity, and force him to accept the relationship on equal terms.

Thus in spite of reactionary and separative tendencies, which must always discount prophecies of international amity, it seems reasonable to hope, through the sorrow of these years, for a closer intellectual union among the nations, and more generous appreciation and sympathy in the arts.

H. M.
LARGE MEASURES

Toward the Gulf, by Edgar Lee Masters, Macmillan Co.

When, in the preface to this volume, Mr. Masters touches on the iambic tetrameter of the Spoon River poems, it is hard to see how the term can be of more than faint interest to him. For one thing, it belongs to a lame science, one failing to assume the twofold character of the art it analyses and take note of the large delicate measures possible to prose—the cadences of passages in the Brothers Karamazoff or Madame Bovary, to cite at random. These, if not poetry, bear the kindred marks of it, being rhythmic language that stirs the heart as wind does water. And even the most inclusive study of metre and cadence would still be coarse and approximate; since art finding its birth in the forms of life, their tone and their rhythm, the great poems can obey no easy arithmetic but only the final mathematic law, the infinite equation. Were it otherwise Traubel would count like Whitman, and an army of writers like the few who hypnotize them. Prosody at best provides the poet with but a set of diagrams more or less diverting, of which certainly a work of art, intact, complete, like the Spoon River Anthology, bears no trace. Its right to an official metric term is well enough, but less relevant than the fact that the short, fluid, fateful lines invade the ear with the terseness of the grave; that in a new fabric of words, the limbs of
life, the face, the voice, the hands, appear once more to manifest themselves. *The Great Valley*, and this new volume *Toward the Gulf*, which, to quote from the preface, "continue the attempts of *Spoon River* to mirror the age and country in which we live," often afford delight keen and painful as the anthology, but not, I think, so unbrokenly. This new book at least mingles a sprinkling of verse, wherein prosody does usurp the lines, with poems authentic as daylight, and, like the *Anthology*, freighted with the presence of reality—the cargo of great art.

To read certain of them—*Johnny Appleseed, The Lake Boats, Sir Galahad*—is to touch the soil of Illinois and the states south, to get the very voices of the mid-western country—their slight flatness of tone in contrast to the fragrance of land and water:

People were walking the decks and talking,
Children were singing.
And down on the purser's deck
A man was dancing by himself,
Whirling around like a dervish;
And this Captain said to me:
"No life is better than this.
I could live forever,
And do nothing but run this boat
From the dock at Chicago to the dock at Holland
And back again."

Then there are poems less sleepy than these that scarcely detach themselves from the landscape they celebrate. *The Eighth Crusade*, for one, lifts its characters for a minute from their rocking-chairs in Pleasant Plains into the midst of plump Swiss life; the Orient glimmers on the horizon,
and faintly about the tale hangs the ancient raillery of Venus—so deftly are these people made to take their places under the sun.

One hears too the nervous voices of the city; the prostitute and the editor at Perko’s; the sound and look of beggars and venders in “the granite ways of mad Chicago.” And there is the sharp sketch of an Indian runner and his voice saying:

It was under a sky as blue as the cup of a harebell,
It was by a red and yellow mountain,
It was by a great river
That we ran.

Besides these bas-reliefs is larger modelling—extravagant ineffectual figures emerging more dramatically from the background—their divergence and abortive return. With the enterprise and at times the elegance of a Velasquez, Mr. Masters shapes these images—the dream-ridden, the paranoiac, the spendthrift, the nymphomaniac, the dogmatist, the fanatic. Root and branch he evolves them. One group springs from parents quietly shadowed in a pair of old daguerreotypes:

They were married, you see.
The clasp on this gutta-percha case Locks them together.
They were locked together in life,
And a hasp of brass
Keeps their shadows face to face in the case.

As if to bring such lives into scale, three studies—Voltaire, Napoleon, Thomas Paine—rear themselves handsomely above the horizon. And a number of poems—Grand River
Marshes, Poor Pierrot, Song of Women among them—mirror with a most caressing music the beauties of flesh and flowers, earth, air and water. One of them, Widow La Rue, has grim terror veiled in a very skilful ballad, soft and wanton like a scarf.

Notwithstanding, there are holes, I think, in the weave of the book. Some of these very poems, for the most part green beneath the bark, contain dry twigs, dead branches. And over a number of them rhetoric reigns. Possibly Mr. Masters is a poet who looks sometimes with too dissective a mind, and losing the sense of mystery in vainly seeking the cause, now and then forsakes poetry for speculation and analysis. Not always content to witness, select and mirror the image, he seems to try going about it, back of it, into it even; till it withers and is broken and no longer is able to communicate its sap and bloom to his words. The language then becomes clever, toneless, literary, and even rattles a little at times.

Also one feels that in strange contradiction to his patrician quality of mind that directs an unflinching gaze, this book shows now and then a slight strain of idealism—the "cream tart of the bourgeois," according to Rodin. Like the Friar Yves of his own poem he weeps because

Nothing is left but life indeed.
I have burned heaven! I have quenched hell.

then, as if to console himself, he fashions sometimes utopian heavens, dreams of wholesale liberty, democracy, nobility, made almost from the butterick-patterns of poetry, and wear-

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ing a false glad air, among the strange, proud, authentic, wistful cadences of the book.

But if cleverness tarnishes these pages somewhat, as indeed it did with Byron and Browning, or sentimentality blunts them sometimes, as in the case of Whitman even, one thing is clear and refreshing: Mr. Masters never writes from a sense of chic; is afraid of no detail that happens to belong in the picture—no inelegance as of rubber heels or Christian Science. Striking almost at random, Toward the Gulf evokes a wealth of shapes and casts exciting shadows, which, though varied, seem held together by the mad idea of unity. As in the last poem, Botanical Gardens—a review of all life—a flower, a tree, a man, a woman, stand side by side in the landscape moved or warped by the same impulse of seed, root and branch. About them in this book falls frequently the relentless light of a gray day, but sometimes the brilliance of the sun or the ease of rain. In a manner more formal than is usual with Mr. Masters, and equally poignant, Poor Pierrot seems to reach the soul of rain. Here is the better half of the poem:

I have learned the secret of silence, silence long and deep. The dead know all that I know, that is why they sleep. They could do nothing with fate, or love, or fame, or strife—When life fills full the soul then life kills life.

I would glide under the earth as a shadow over a dune, Into the soul of silence, under the sun and moon. And forever, as long as the world stands or the stars flee, Be one with the sands of the shore and one with the sea.

Dorothy Dudley
Sherwood Anderson is a breaker of barriers, a builder of new bridges, a creator who, lacking the implements of song, will tear song from his bare breast, from the naked earth:

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 shall build my house with great hammers. New song is tearing the cords of my throat.

These songs represent a new plasticity in poetry. To quote from Mr. Anderson's brief preface: "Words run out beyond the power of words." And when the words run out thus, and they are given to us, the suggestions, the half-utterances prove as forceful, as direct, as the more evolved crests of expression. Of course this method is one of shifting planes, of broken images, but the truth is in the final unity of the impression received. Many of the songs are moving as music is moving; we are emotionally stirred without knowing exactly why. Does the musician know the meaning of every note that comes to him? Mr. Anderson has been content to set down chords and phrases without troubling about context or sequence, letting the compelling emotion take care of that, letting the chain of associations work out in its own way. In a sense these songs are musical improvisations, with recurring themes and motives. In the Song of Industrial America, we have the opening theme, "They tell themselves so many little lies, beloved" . . . "They tell themselves so many little lies;" and then the
recurrant, "I'm the broken end of a song myself" . . .
"I'm a song myself, the broken end of a song myself." In
the Song of the Soul of Chicago, it is "the bridges, always
the bridges," and so on.

There is indeed much more design in the songs than Mr.
Anderson would seem to indicate. Perhaps he wanted to
forestall the critics by simply making them a present of
what they might choose as their chief weapon—crudity!
And they have taken the cue. But the crudity here is a
knowing crudity, an expressive crudity. Mr. Anderson
has a sure sense of what he wants to do. He is not fum­
bling. If there is apparent groping, a choked articulateness,
it is because this is precisely the emotion to be conveyed.
And what he conveys in this book is the groping, choked
struggle of the soul in "Mid-America" towards song:

I am a little thing, a tiny little thing on the vast prairies. I
know nothing. My mouth is dirty. I cannot tell what I want.
My feet are sunk in the black swampy land, but I am a lover.
I love life. In the end love shall save me.

First there are the broken things—myself and the others. I
don't mind that—I'm gone, shot to pieces. I'm 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's nothing but shrill screams and a rattle. That
had to be—it's part of the scheme.

Little faint beginning 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?
It is the cry of the singer under the burden of industrialism, the dust of the cities against the clean green life of the corn-fields, the strident need for song above the clatter of the machines. And through it all is conveyed also a certain love of this thing that we call our civilization—the dust, the weariness, the undercurrent of remembrance of old sweet natural things; the factories, the engines, “the bridges, always the bridges”—with, somehow, a willingness to see the thing through, and the faith and the prayer that we may get back to the clean life of the growing corn at last.

Of course this “interpretation” really limits the book. It doesn’t need any interpretation, any more than music does; it is to be felt. As Mr. John Butler Yeats says: “What can be explained is not poetry.” It is significant, I think, that “Mid-America” is becoming self-conscious, is expressing itself in song in a fashion distinctive to itself. One has no wish to be partisan or sectional; but is it not through local consciousness that we shall achieve national expression? By local consciousness, of course, one does not mean anything so slight and superficial as “local color,” which is only skin-deep. Mr. George Moore has said that cosmopolitanism kills art. But art was always cosmopolitan; the barriers which he assumed to be so absolute were always transcended, there was a tremendous amount of borrowing in the antique world. What really isolated art and produced that unique flavor which we call national or racial was the artist’s attachment to place upon which his sense of identity depended; and this selection of place and atmosphere,
this orientation of the spirit for the sake of the preservation of identity, will always operate—it will never be lacking to art, however much it may be lacking to all life outside art. What is significant, then, in the work of men like Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters and Sherwood Anderson, as well as other poets that one could name, is this sense of identity with their own country-side, their own city's streets, and with the past, present and future of "Mid-America." It is from this kind of thing that national art springs. Yet the work of these men is widely divergent—another hopeful sign of vitality and fertility. One may accept one and reject another; yet they are all, one must admit, expressively "Mid-American."

The reader will no doubt be repelled as well as attracted by many of these songs. That too is one source of their strength, of their expressiveness. No one poet will tell the whole story. Both Synge and Yeats reveal the soul of Ireland.

FAR-WESTERN VERSE


*Riders of the Stars*, and *Songs of the Outlands*, by Henry Herbert Knibbs, Houghton Mifflin Co.


Boundaries have changed since Eugene Field published his poems in Chicago under the title of *A Little Book of*
Far-western Verse

Far-western Verse. Chicago is still the West for those who live there or on the Atlantic sea-coast, but for anyone living beyond the Rockies Chicago is part of the East. The books of verse which head this review are of the Far West, that God-forsaken country of whose value Daniel Webster had such slight opinion. Bret Harte, of course, opened up the West, poetically speaking. But his was the West of the gold-fevered easterners, who came in a flurry and stayed to repent, or to grow rich, as the case might be. Since that time not only the Pacific coast lands, but the far inland desert ranges, hills, pastures and purple mountains have been peopled by a new race of men, who have grown up with the land and have learned to love it in a way that an easterner sometimes finds hard to understand.

This note is struck in the familiar cowboy song:

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam
And the deer and the antelope play,
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,
And the skies are not cloudy all day!

And the reader must be prepared to find it in the work of more sophisticated western poets.

It is this sentiment, in fact, which insures the popularity of Arthur Chapman's title poem, Out Where the West Begins—a poem with good lines in it, but whose chief merit is that it expresses a popular sentiment. The other poems in the book exhibit various aspects of western life with varying degrees of success. Mr. Chapman's worst failing is a tendency to mix colloquialisms. When a cow-puncher says "old top," or a sheep-herder says that his sheep are

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“drinkin’ their bloomin’ fill,” you know that they have got store clothes on. And there is also much of the pseudo-poetic in his phrasing: “yon mesa,” for instance, or “where gleams yon gaunt peak’s snowy hood.”

Mr. Chapman is at his best in poems not in the colloquial manner—*Before the Gringo Came, Out Among the Big Things, At the Outposts,* or *In a Deserted Mining Camp* (in spite of such rhyme-words as “steed” and “mart”). *The Sheriff’s Report,* however, with its laconic note of duty done—“We just went out to git him, and we did”—is perhaps the best poem in the volume.

I don’t know why one who writes about western things should adopt a quasi-bantering tone about nature and a colloquialism that comes far more from the echoes of Service or Kipling than from the plains or desert. It is a theatricality that is put on as easily as grease paint or a wig, but is quite as obviously detected.

In suggesting that he is “the Service of Arizona,” or words to that effect, the publishers of Henry Herbert Knibbs’ two books have done the author an injustice. Three years ago, in reviewing *Songs of the Outlands,* *POETRY* called these poems “the best verse of its kind written in this century, or perhaps since Bret Harte himself.” Mr. Knibbs is much better than Service. His vocabulary is his own, or rather the western vocabulary is his own; and his verse has genuine musical quality which is not borrowed either. Mr. Knibbs is particularly good in the dramatic lyric, such as *The Shallows of the Ford* or *The Walking*
Man or The Mule Skinner. These and others of his poems are western ballads, most appreciated, it may be, by those who know the life he celebrates, even as Irish folk-song may be most at home in Ireland. The stuff his verse is made of is indigenous. I like particularly that bit of a song called Eh, Johnny-Jo which expresses his attitude towards his work:

The wind of dawn has swept the plains,
And the sun runs over the purple sage.
Gone is the rack of the winter rains,
Leaving the hill like a faery page
Of a book that is old, but is ever new,
And fresh as the wild-flowers sweet with dew . . .
Gosh! I'm ridin' close to the fence and low,
And strainin' my buttins, eh, Johnny-Jo?

It ain't no use for to talk like that;
It's second-hand scenery made to print.
Just hand me my ole gray puncher hat
And them spurs and quirt; do you get the hint?
For I got to ride easy with elbows high,
Mebby not style, but she sure has go;
We'll all git to Heaven by-and-by,
But we'll travel outdoors; eh, Johnny-Jo?

Mr. John Butler Yeats in his letters says there are no "solitaries" in America; but the "solitary" does not stand on a street corner in New York and proclaim himself.

Shall I leave the hills, the high, far hills that shadow the morning plain?
Shall I leave the desert sand and sage that gleams in the winter rain?
Shall I leave the ragged bridle-trail to ride in the city street—
To snatch a song from the printed word, or sit at a master's feet?

To barter the sting of the mountain wind for the choking fog and smoke?
To barter the song of the mountain stream for the babble of city folk?
To lose my grip on the god I know and fumble among the creeds?
O rocks and pines of the high, far hills, hear the lisp of the valley reeds!

There is a touch of the romantic in Mr. Knibbs' work which distinguishes him from other writers of western verse.
One finds it in Oliver West, in The Last of Cavaliers, in Overland the Red and other poems, and it rises to the genuinely poetic in The Far and Lonely Hill.

I'd like to quote from these and others, from the poems about horses and dogs, from The Glorious Fool, and particularly from the song about the cowboys in heaven—an idea that one meets often enough in cowboy songs, but one which has seldom been given with so much humor and swing as in Sunshine Over Yuma:

Come, my little cayuse and lope along, lope along—
Guess we got in wrong, somehow.
Don't exactly fancy just the way the folks are starin';
Can't exactly cotton to the funny clothes they're wearin';
Oh it's Heaven, but it's lonely, and we've had our little airin',
So we'll fan it back to Arizona now.

But the reader may be left to make his own selection.

If we call Mr. Knibbs a romanticist, perhaps we may say that Mr. Badger Clark, author of High Chin Bob, is a realist—that is, if the words may be taken not as a means of hard and fast classification but as denoting merely a slight distinction. In the title Sun and Saddle Leather one recognizes at once something of Mr. Clark's quality, something of that same quality that made High Chin Bob, or The Glory Trail as it is called in this book, so simple, con-
crete and explicit. Curiously enough, though we pointed out improvements made upon that poem by the cowboys, there is not another poem in the book that is not in the natural order of speech, and a part of the power of this author comes from that fact. And *High Chin Bob*, as I like to call it, is not by any means the only good poem in this book. There are poems certain to please not only the old "cow-men," but the most arrant tenderfoot who has never worn chaps or spurs; and poems such as *The Cowboy's Prayer* or *The Christmas Trail* are as good as Riley. Here are the first and last stanzas of the latter:

The wind is blowin' cold down the mountain tips of snow
And cross the ranges layin' brown and dead;
It's cryin' through the valley trees that wear the mistletoe
And mournin' with the gray clouds overhead.
Yet it's sweet with the beat of my little hawse's feet
And I whistle like the air was warm and blue;
For I'm ridin' up the Christmas trail to you,
Old Folks,
I'm a-ridin' up the Christmas trail to you.

The coyote's winter howl cuts the dusk behind the hill,
But the ranch's shinin' window I kin see;
And though I don't deserve it, and I reckon never will,
There'll be room beside the fire kep' for me.
Skimp my plate 'cause I'm late. Let me hit the old kid gait,
For tonight I'm stumblin' tired of the new.
And I'm ridin' up the Christmas trail to you,
Old Folks,
I'm a-ridin' up the Christmas trail to you.

In *God's Reserves*, *The Plainsmen* and *The Westerner* Mr. Clark proves that he writes straightforward verse as well as the colloquial, while many songs in the latter vein
have the same kind of good fun that we find in *High Chin Bob*. This is not, by the way, the only song of Mr. Clark's that the cowboys have appropriated. Mr. Lomax has a cowboy version of *Ridin'*, the first poem in this book; and when I read *A Border Affair* I recognized it as a song that I had heard sung by Orville Cox, a cowboy from Taos, New Mexico. Apparently, when the cowboys find a song they like they fit it to music that they know already or make up, adding unique phrases and quavers and cowboy yells of their own.

*Grass-grown Trails*, which is just out, does not tempt me away from the earlier volume. Perhaps its author is becoming too civilized.

I have said that Mr. Clark proves himself an equal of James Whitcomb Riley, and I don't know that any further appreciation is necessary, unless it be in the words of an old "cow-man": "You can break me if there's a dead poem in it. I read the hull twenty-two—I don't know how Clark knewed, but he knows!" And Mr. Clark knows, too, that love of the West of which I spoke in the beginning:

When the last free trail is a prim, fenced land,  
And our graves grow weeds through forgetful Mays,  
Richer and statelier then you'll reign,  
Mother of men whom the world will praise.  
And your sons will love you and sigh for you,  
Labor and battle and die for you,  
But never the fondest will understand  
The way we have loved you, young, young land!

*A. C. H.*
First Books and Others

FIRST BOOKS AND OTHERS

One might pluck a nosegay from the books of brief lyrics which come to Poetry for review. It would be a pretty nosegay too—fresh flowers, delicate fragrance, fair colors. Nothing startling in the bunch, rarely anything wild or woodsy, but mostly simple garden flowers, which have been watered and tended, and which surely deserve a place in the quiet rooms of the mind. One rarely finds passion in them, but often the beauty of quieter emotions, expressed with fit simplicity and sometimes with a certain distinction.

Airs and Ballads, by John McClure. Alfred A. Knopf.

Here, for example, is John McClure, who has a light foot and a singing voice. His attitude is in the initial poem, Apology:

I am a poetaster,
And my knee I bend
To Marlowe my master,
Villon my friend.

I am a swashbuckler,
And I break my sword
Before Blake my tutor,
Shakespeare my lord.

I should burn my song-books
This very day
If singing didn't matter
So little anyway.

I said "attitude" unconsciously, but there is too much attitude in many of the poems—in their motive and phrasing. Such a poem as Home, for example, is spoiled by the "merry mad loves" in its middle stanzas. And how can a
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poet be guilty of such triteness as To a Lady, or the Almighty God poem which follows it, when he is capable of so soft and tender a song as The Dream?

In a strange grove of poplars
In a strange far place,
She came to me between the trees
With white death on her face.

She came between the poplar trees
And wandered at my side:
It was beyond the mind of man
To think that she had died.

It was beyond the mind of man
Even to dream her dead.
I knew the music of her voice
In every word she said.


The author of this thin volume, privately printed last summer, has been in active service aboard a submarine chaser for somewhat more than a year. If a few of the lyrics miss poetry in an obvious effort at sophistication, that is a natural-enough error in the first book of a very young poet, and one that Mr. Gilbert has, no doubt, already outgrown while rubbing shoulders with reality. It is the several poems on Germany that are most appealing. In Prussians Don't Believe in Dreams, to which POETRY gave an honorable mention last November, and in Germany, is a fresh and wholly delightful naiveté of wonder that Grimm's people and Heine's should show themselves as the Germans of these years. There is light-heartedness and whimsical
humor in *Irish Kisses* and *John-a-Dreams*, and in *Wars Are for Youth to Wage* a note at once more personal and of greater universality:

Wars are for Youth to wage: not even Death
Can make of war a greater thing than Youth—
So that when It comes walking in the dawn,
Some lad will laugh, exulting to be gone,
In witness to the youngest ageless truth
That honor is more beautiful than breath.

A book of unusual promise.


A strain thin but clear may be heard in this tiny volume, like a reed-note at evening. Some of the poems are devotional—*The Trinity, Holy Cross* and *Saint John the Baptist*, for example. And there are love poems and epitaphs for soldiers, all unmistakably, even poignantly, sincere. In this one a dead sentry begins the dialogue:

"Who passeth here?"—"We of the new brigade,
Who come in aid—to take your place who fell."
"What is the countersign?" "That we have weighed
The cost ye paid, yet come!" "Pass! all is well."

And here is a singularly beautiful epitaph for an aviator:

Another one of mortal birth
Hath set his spirit free.
Lie very lightly on him, Earth,
Who did not tread on thee.

The book has a quiet distinction.

It would be interesting to trace to its sources the Pierrot legend, one of the frailest flowers of mediaevalism. These little masquers—Pierrot, Columbine, and the rest—are like to live longer in men's gratitude than many doers of great deeds. Airy symbols—puff-balls, soap-bubbles—they float on destructive winds and survive the storms.

Sometimes—not always—Mr. Griffith's touch is light enough for these fragile shades. I like especially two or three which POETRY has printed under other titles, Tryst and Pierrette in Memory.

In the later book, City Pastorals provokes too ready a comparison with John Davidson's Fleet Street Eclogues. Its rhymed dialogue, and its following the seasons with talk "about it and about," are in the same vein; but it twiddles the strings on which Davidson struck big stirring music. Among the Other Poems, in spite of their rather monotonous facility, one finds now and then a fine flower on a slender stem.

Green Fruit, by John Peale Bishop. Sherman French & Co.

Perhaps this young poet was in too much of a hurry to publish his first book—much of this fruit is indeed green. But since he is also a soldier, soon to be in France, he may be justified in taking out this spiritual insurance against the risks of war. Here is his mood—in an envoy To Townsend Martin:

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I had many things to give you—cinnabar and cassia,
    And such fruits as round and ripen in the sunnier air.
I had many songs to sing you—but I know not what they were;
Here my gifts are—take or leave them—for I go another way.

Some of the poems show more promise. There is a deli­
cate lyricism in one or two of the Elspeth series, or Music,
or The Birds of Paradise.

The Dreamers and Others Poems, by Theodosia Garrison.
Geo. H. Doran Co.
Theodosia Garrison is better known to the readers of
magazines than the poets above-mentioned. In fact, she is
in danger of standardizing her product, for the poems in
her book are mostly too easy, too much alike. I like her
best in the frankly Irish poems, a bit tender or whimsical,
at the end of the book.

H. M.

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

BAITING THE PUBLIC

The true identity of the "Spectrists" is now revealed. I
don't know how many were taken in by the hoax. I know
that Mr. William Marion Reedy devoted an apparently
serious review to Spectra when it appeared; and last sum­
mer Mr. Alfred Kreymborg, the founder of Others, as­sured
me solemnly that Emanuel Morgan and Anne Knish
were not pseudonyms, but the real names of real persons;
that he had had letters from them, and that he had actually
met, I think he said, Elijah Hay, a third Spectrist, who,
with the other two, had furnished the entire contents of
the Spectrist number of *Others* published in January, 1917. Whether he was in the secret or not I do not know; but I do know that he maintained an incredulous front when I insisted that the author of *Spectra* was none other than Mr. Witter Bynner, who was thus performing as a skilled ventriloquist with a puppet on each knee. I had not suspected the connivance of Mr. Arthur Davison Ficke. And I have not yet learned who impersonated Elijah Hay; perhaps indeed he was born of the union of Emanuel Morgan and Anne Knish. At any rate Mr. Bynner and Mr. Ficke must have had some amusement out of the joke, if it was as successful as it is said to have been—which seems incredible.

And yet there is no reason why one should not have supposed Emanuel Morgan and Anne Knish to be real persons, for the poems in *Spectra* are no worse and no better, and hardly any less intelligible, than much of the free verse which has been thrust upon us. If the joke proves anything at all, it is simply that critics are an unselective lot, particularly in the presence of the "new poetry," or "new art," about which there is a fair amount of uncertainty, and which it is better to praise slightly than to damn utterly—for one may find oneself running after the band-wagon! But would the result have been any different if one had put forth a book, say, of *Prisms and Prunes*—very charming rhymed jingles, the words making apparent sense, syntax observed, but with nothing underneath? Certainly not. For this happens every day. People who actually do not
exist are often praised for writing verse of which they furnish the mere echo; the originals being found tucked away on our library shelves.

*Spectra,* then, proves nothing against the method of free verse as such, though it may hit off very cleverly some of the practitioners thereof; but if *Prisms and Prunes* were issued, I doubt if anyone could see the point without having it explained, and perhaps not then. For one's mind is safely lulled to sleep by all that is apparently conventional and orthodox.

What satisfaction is to be had, I wonder, from thus baiting the public? Only the satisfaction of knowing that it is possible to do so—which is, after all, axiomatic.

A. C. H.

*A LATER WORD FROM DR. PATTERSON*

In an article on *New Verse and New Prose,* in the *North American Review,* Dr. William Morrison Patterson ably supplements his book, *The Rhythm of Prose,* which was discussed in *Poetry* for April, and sums up, in the following final paragraphs, the conclusions to which his researches are leading him. We rejoice that he agrees with us in linking up the present free-verse experiments with the ancient Anglo-Saxon rhythms, an authentic but long-neglected tradition to which the present editor has paid tribute in her introduction to *The New Poetry—an Anthology.*

Unitary verse, the elastic swing of which furnishes a key both to Miss Lowell's *Painter on Silk* and to the disputed rhythm of *Beowulf,*

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our most ancient epic; metrical verse, in which our later poets did their singing and conjuring; spaced prose, the oratorical and "embroidering" form of syncopating experience that characterizes so much current vers libre; and, finally, fluid or normal prose, such as we find, for example, in Addison, in Macaulay, and, with singular perfection, in Newman—these are the four major genres. Mosaics and blends, polyphonic prose and polyphonic verse—these are their permutations and combinations. It is the discussion of vers libre, however, that has led us to our attempts at an analysis which we hope possesses some practical value for literary artists. Our heart is with all poets—metrical and free; but we are particularly indebted just now to those of our contemporaries who have instinctively composed in these genres and thus helped us so materially to hear, or to think we hear, not only the music of everyday language—the rhythm of its prose—but also its ancestral cadence, the forgotten swing of "unitary verse."

This lost child of our House of Rhythm, after so long wandering unrecognized through the "mosaic" paths of the King James Version, of William Blake, of Walt Whitman, of Synge, and of Tagore's translations, is worth being rescued and presented in proper integrity. The final word as to this lies with the poets, not the critics. You have our affection—however we may glare at you in the precincts of our dungeon-laboratories. Your generation is proving its gift of fire. On the other hand, they say in France that you lack "technique" and "concentration." Isn't this partly true? Perhaps, then, you will be among the first to realize that you should feel your genres a little more distinctly, and having felt them help the rest of us, as the musical composer helps us, and as Miss Lowell in several instances has helped us, by employing a clearer notation; such as long lines for spaced prose and shorter lines for unitary verse, or any other device that will keep us straight as to our rhythmical whereabouts when we read you. If, in addition to this, both you and your friends of more strictly metrical persuasion—you of the flaming hearts, you to whom things magically "come"—will wait at times just a bit longer for the "one right word", be assured that D'Annunzio's "virgins vowed to St. Apollinaris" will "burn not with such an ardor in their heavens of gold" as we, your humble worshippers, shall burn in response to you. We believe in you younger poets particularly, and in your future; for, apart from our impressions of your vigor and sincerity, surely it is a significant thing if, in your newest songs, we hear, quite suddenly, the harp of our ancestors!
NOTES

Dr. Frank S. Gordon, of Blairstown, N. J., was introduced by POETRY in February of last year with a group of tribal songs from the Southwest, Along the South Star Trail. The present group is similarly inspired by a study of aboriginal music and admiration of “the variety and freedom of Indian rhythm.” Of the Morning Hymn the poet writes: “The mountain Sisnajinni bounds Navajo land on the east. The gods adorned it with a white shell, and fastened it to earth with a bolt of lightning. They covered it with a sheet of daylight, and put the Dawn-youth and Dawn-maiden to dwell in it.”

Miss Edna St. Vincent Millay, now a resident of New York, is the author of Renascence and Other Poems, recently published by Mitchell Kennerley.

Of the poets new to our readers:

Mr. John Curtis Underwood is well known as the author of several books of verse, the latest being War Flames (Macmillan Co.). This poet’s residence seems to be bounded only by the coast and border lines of the United States, in whose free ranges he scorns a fixed address.

Mr. Samuel Roth, of New York, is founder and editor of The Lyric, and author of First Offerings—Sonnets and Lyrics (Lyric Pub. Co.).

Mr. Fenton Johnson, a Chicago journalist, was founder and first editor of The Champion, a magazine for Negroes. Three small books of his verse have been privately printed: A little Dreaming (1913), Visions of the Dusk (1915), and Songs of the Soil (1916).

Mr. Louis Gilmore, of New Orleans, has contributed to the special magazines. Mr. Calvin Dill Wilson, of Glendale, Ohio; Mr. Raymond Peckham Holden, of New York; and Miss Winifred Waldron, of North Glendale, Cal., have published little as yet.

A. C. McClurg & Co., of Chicago, have recently published an excellent English translation of the anonymous little book, Lettres d’un Soldat, which inspired the poems by Wallace Stevens printed in POETRY for May. The title is, A Soldier of France to His Mother.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:
The Habitant and Other Typical Poems, by William Henry Drummond. G. P. Putnam’s Sons.

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POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

The Old Huntsman and Other Poems, by Siegfried Sassoon. William Heinemann, London.
Shepherd my Thoughts, by Francis P. Donnelly. P. J. Kennedy & Sons, N. Y.
Lover's Gift and Crossing, by Rabindranath Tagore. Macmillan Co.
Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses, by Thomas Hardy. Macmillan Co.
Shadows Which Haunt the Sun-Rain, by John Collier. Privately printed, N. Y.
The Collected Works of Padraic H. Pearse. Frederick A. Stokes Co.

ANTHOLOGIES AND TRANSLATIONS:
The Evening Hours, by Emile Verhaeren, translated by Charles R. Murphy. John Lane Co.

DRAMA:
Plays for Poem-mines, by Alfred Kreymborg. The Other Press, N. Y.
Thaisa—a Tragedy, by Charles V. H. Roberts. Torch Press, N. Y.
The Flying Stag Plays: No. 1—The Sandbar Queen, by George Cronyn; No. 2—Night, by James Oppenheim; No. 3—The Angel Intrudes, by Floyd Dell. Egmont Arens, N. Y.

PROSE:
Nationalism, by Rabindranath Tagore. Macmillan Co.

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