Fatherland
by Eloise Robinson

Other War Poems
by Cloyd Head, Lola Ridge,
Mary Aldis, Louise Garnett

Carl Sandburg, John Cowper Powys

Editorials on Joyce Kilmer and
Other Soldier Poets

543 Cass Street, Chicago

$2.00 per Year Single Numbers 20¢
A well-known poet and journalist writes: "POETRY is one of the few magazines which everyone vitally interested in the new artistic consciousness of America must possess."

Vol. XIII

POETRY for OCTOBER, 1918

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Manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope.

Inclusive yearly subscription rates: In the United States, Mexico, Cuba and American possessions, $2.00 net; in Canada, $2.15 net; in all other countries in the Postal Union, $2.25 net. Entered as second-class matter Nov. 15, 1912, at the post-office, at Chicago, Ill., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Published monthly at 543 Cass St., Chicago, Ill.

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POETRY asks its friends to become Supporting Subscribers by paying ten dollars a year to its Fund. The magazine began under a five-year endowment which expired Sept. 30th, 1917; and although the endowment has been partly resubscribed for another period, this Fund is insufficient and expenses are constantly increasing. The art of poetry requires, if it is to advance, not only special sympathy from a discriminating public, but also endowment similar to that readily granted to the other arts. All who believe in the general purpose and policy of this magazine, and recognize the need and value of such an organ of the art, are invited to assist thus in maintaining it.
FOR what would a man die?
For what would a man be dead,
In April?—go down and lie
In a low bed,
And when spring was passing by
Pull the covers over his head?

Did he know his house would be dark,
The window curtains drawn,
When the morning star was a spark
On the ashes of the dawn?—
Chilly and very low,
With no door swinging back and forth
Where he may pass and go
Over the shining swarth,
With the winds singing to and fro
And the redbirds winging north?
Would he lie like a straight ash stick
When the roots around him stir
And the other dead are quick—
The daisy and ragweed and burr?—
Lie still, though he hear in his night
The wind blowing on to June;
The silence of ripe sunlight
Over the grass at noon;
The stars like bees overhead
In the apple trees and the plums?
For what would a man be dead
Now April comes?

Do men love Fatherland
So, that they die for these:
Night in blue valleys, and
The breakers of blue seas;
Clouds marching, caravanned,
And star-acquainted trees;
Cities time's made grey
And talkative and wise;
Hills so old they may
Watch pain with patient eyes;
Young mountan-tops that play
At touching the skies;
The heavens, like a bent hand;  
The brown earth underneath?  
Are these his Fatherland,  
For which man stops his breath,  
Takes off his body, and  
Goes down to sit with Death?

Or is it this that rouses  
His heart to go:  
Do streets of little houses  
Keep haunting him so  
With their secrets, like small caged birds  
That flutter and fly at the sill,  
And their ghosts of long-dead words  
That are walking still;  
With their cool white beds for sleep,  
And their tables spread,  
And their tented roofs that keep  
Out the curious moon overhead?

For these what man would end  
His own fire and lamp-light,  
His thought that is his friend  
And sits by his hearth at night;  
His old, acquainted clothes  
And the sweet taste of bread—  
All of the things he knows—  
Go down in the earth and be dead?
No, this is Fatherland,
For which men, lifting up
Life, toss it on the sand
Like water from a cup:
A little land that has
Truth round it like a sea,
Where dreams are many as
The leaves are on a tree,
And stars grow in the grass
For men to touch and see.
A little, holy land
Within all hearts of men
The earth holds in her hand—
There he is citizen
With high, heroic things,
With faiths and loyalties,
With deeds that put on wings,
And songs that sing of these;
With sacrifice, though it be
For a mistaken dream;
Justice and mercy
Alive with a little gleam
In the earth of men who say
They have rooted it from the sod
And taken another way
And got them another God.

From mountains of the moon
April has come once more;
But April, nor May, nor June,
Will ever find his door.
He lies so quiet now
In puzzlement how death
Can be so kind, and how
Lightly he draws his breath.
Almost afraid to stir
Lest he find his dreaming vain,
He drinks of wonder there
As green leaves drink the rain.
I think he was not sad
To feel his weight of clay,
Nor sorry that he had
Lost April's way.
He had such glory in
His closing eyes
He needs no stars to spin
And bubble in clear skies,
No young south wind that leaps
Singing, no April flowers;
Within his house he keeps
A greater spring than ours.
I thought—
Surely, of those in battle, one, bearing the impulse of the years before—the splendid sunset—would create a song, A song of war!

But none—not one has spoken. And the singers die, fighting in silence, comrade by comrade—fall, leaving above their death no Marseillaise.

I thought—
My people, finding perhaps their freedom in a war for freedom, might find also utterance, singing of the rite of hecatombs offered to greater than a god.

But none—not one has spoken . . . Over France—the voice of France is Rheims, a threnody graven in silence. Yet the song to break the anguish of that silence, the life-song uttered, not the dirge of Rheims?

THE MARNE

Within that secret place—
Waste land where the rivers run red

[6]
Bearing the blood of the dead
To the charnel sea—
They build a temple and a mystery:
A freedom such as none may ever share
Who have not lived with Death,
Who have not killed.

Untempered passion, building as earth must build
Through uttermost destruction, reaching toward new life
Blindly, as if aware that out of death may rise
Fulfilment to whatever veiled will
Created conflict—a master-soul unknown.

Such freedom has no voice: it dares not own
The abyss, the horror, of a life made free;
The grandeur which it cannot understand.

Therefore the curtain and the mystery;
Therefore the silence that is No-man’s Land.

THEY MARCH THROUGH THE STREETS OF PARIS

America . . .
Can it be, my country, that in you
The dream men dared not dream, is true?
I know not what the old men seek:
Youth!—steadily tramping, eight abreast,
The Rainbow Division, "Pershing's Crusaders"—marching
Past the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli:
They go to defense of unknown Picardy.

The black-garbed throng and the men in olive-drab, passing;
The acclaim and—deeper still for those who hear—the song
Of silent voices, rising; the birth of a new music in the world,
Brought by the men of many nations
Come from a new home wrought in a new-made land.

O France, again the debt—but this debt greater;
For to us you bring, after yourself have bled,
The will to suffering—not in a selfish cause.
I know not what the old men seek:
Never to them, always to Youth, you speak,
By being—France!
We come, youth of America, youth dedicate!—
A nation among nations, humble before the hope
Of freedom, proudly to create
Our own tradition there—in Picardy.
THE GERMAN EMPIRE—BISMARCK,
VON MOLTKE

Night, like a tempest, rends the will of earth,
Braced to a knowledge of the hate ordained
Before new brotherhood.

Welded by iron, a shackled nation, taught
The consciousness of power without freedom;
Deformed at birth, bidden to strike, enslave,
Forge chain to chain, riveting life to darkness.

Prussia!

We could not know—
Faith waits its proof, confirmed only by blood—
How deep the source, ingenerate the need
That seeks its first growth in democracy:
Not till you struck—
A hand menacing all that there was yet to gain
And all that had been gained.

"I will not fight against the youth of Germany."

Our battle is not won, yet will be won;
Not a defeat of men, but of a wrong.
Can they not hear?
Youth cries to youth, above the clash of war:
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

The old shall yield before the dream we dream.
Re-find the honor of the Fatherland!
Help us that there may rise
Out of the darkness—Peace with victory!

EPILOGUE

When all is done,
The faith unshaken;
When peace has come,
The well-gained peace:
When comes that day—
The living, lest they may forget too soon,
Shall know we fought against the bondage of our souls.
We fought as one by one,
So suffered we,
And found beneath the larger cause our own,
The unguessed depth and height . . .
Under the stars, under the sky and night,
We descried a vision of what things were true.

Backward the surge: time and the day regain
Their mastery. Yet something will remain
Of vision and the quest—the unceasing quest
Toward light, and toward the spirit that creates,
Effacing war.

Cloyd Head
PARIS, 1917

Where is the home of love so dear?
Where but here—yea, here?
Here love and danger snatch the flower
Of life perchance a single hour,
Mate and die.
Here they lie—yea, here!

Here love hath pierced each heart with grief.
Joy so brief—ah, brief!
Is paid with tears enow. They know,
Our well-beloved, an utter woe
Than death more dread;
They are wed to grief.

None weary of sweet love and dear—
Nay, not here, not here.
Black-veiled as any holy nun
The brides of love and war are done
With love's delight.
Their long, long night is here.

In those who give and those who take
Hearts must break, must break.
Yet give they of themselves twice o'er
Who give to love in time of war,
And lightly bear
Despair for dear love's sake.

Ruth Gaines
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THEIR STRANGE EYES HOLD NO VISION

Their strange eyes hold no vision, as a rule;
No dizzy glory. A still look is theirs,
But rather as one subtly vacant stares,
Watching the circling magic of a pool.

Now when the morning firing becomes tame,
Out in the warming sun he tries to guess
Which battery they’re after. “Let me see;
Which battery is there? which battery?
I wonder which. . . .” Again, again, the same
Returning question, idle, meaningless.
Startled, he sighs—or laughs—or softly swears;
Mutteringly something of dear names declares
In the bitter cruelty of tenderness.

The planes drift low, circling monotonously,
Droning like many a drowsy bumble-bee
Some summer morning. Only now and then
A whining shell, the mere formality
Of stupid war, calls back his thoughts again.

Suddenly near the unseen death swoops low,
Laughing and singing; and full pitifully
The startled eyes stare wide, but do not see
The whirling features of the genie foe,
Safe in his summoned cloud. The quiet skies
Tell not his surest comings. With waved wands
A mist springs from the earth, and swaying stands
A veiling moment . . . . sinks . . . .
And there he lies
Face down, clutching the clay with warm dead hands

Howard Buck

LITANY

Saint Genevieve, whose sleepless watch
Saved threatened France of old,
Above the ship that carries him
Your sacred vigil hold.

Where all the fair green fields you loved
Are scarred with bursting shell,
Joan the Maid who fought for France—
Oh, guard your young knight well.

But if by sea or if by land
God set death in his way—
Then, Mother of the Sacrificed,
Teach me what prayer to pray!

Allene Gregory
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

**FLOWERS OF WAR**

**THE LILIES OF FRANCE**

(J. F. S.)

France's lilies are tall and white,
Brave as the dawn, calm as the night;
And fragrantly they sway above
The quiet head of one I love.

Unceasingly these fadeless flowers
Hasten their bloom through the war-swept hours,
And many a lad shall have their foam
Washing with peace his new-found home.

O France's lilies are tall with pride,
Flooding the slopes of the western side.
It comforts me they sway above
The quiet head of one I love.

**KNOW THYSELF**

I shall not grudge the falling if I may have the fight,
For the soul of man is comfortless unless he prove his might.
Rather my body fall today unnoticed and unsought
Than I should hail tomorrow's dawn with any fight unfought.
Last night I dreamed the Cross of God
Stood rooted deep in Flanders sod,
And wide its open arms were spread
Over the fields of living dead.
Mile upon mile the crosses rose
Shepherding sleep's supreme repose,
And as I looked they seemed to be
Merged into conquering Calvary.
O Jesus—more than Savior now:
Brother, soldier, captain, Thou!—
Each of Thy comrades of the cross
Treasures the gift that man calls loss.
Oh, what an Easter lies concealed
Beneath the flowers on Flanders Field!

France counts not blasted trees among her losses,
Nor flowers torn from the valley or hill crest;
For in their stead are rows on rows of crosses—
The which she wears more proudly on her breast!

Louise Ayres Garnett

Antoinette De Coursey Patterson
THE HOPE

The hope I hold
The leering demon-days
Deride, and reason plays,
Snug as a raven on a gallows-tree,
Its ancient game with me,
Flapping its wings and lewdly gibbering,
"Life is a humorous thing!"
But on I fare, clutching—
It is not gold,
The hope I hold.

The hope I hold,
Delicate cruelty
Snatches at, passing by;
And like a vine-leaf, fallen from its place
Upon a tortured face,
Offers its fragrance to betray, sighs low,
"Life is a humorous show!"
But on I fare, clutching—
It is not gold,
The hope I hold.

The hope I hold
Nature herself with glee
Derides. And destiny
With evil goblin laughter indicates
The adamantine gates,
And with a maniac-chuckle rallies me,
"That way is closed, you see!"
But I fare on, clutching—
It is not gold,
The hope I hold.

O hope, whose face in madness I have kissed,
O hope, that art a mirage and a mist,
Shall I destroy thee now, and laugh thereat?—
It is too late for that.

THE KIND HEART

Though I go out in cold and storm
My heart shall keep my body warm.
Though I am humble, though I am poor,
The rich are begging at my door.
I am the least a man may be,
But the great come and kneel to me.
THRONES

Golden and green and blue
Is the screen of the Empress' throne;
Golden and green and blue
And the black of ebony.

Green and blue are the peacocks' plumes
Standing to right and left;
Golden and blue and green the silk
Of the high-swung canopy.
Wide and deep is the Empress' throne
Of carven ebony,
With its straight footstool
And its peacocks' fans
And its shadowing mystery.

Brown is the slope of the dust-blown hill
And brown the dust-blown plain;
Grey are the guarding dogs of stone
And grey the sentinels.

Grey are the carven shapes that lead
To a carven sepulchre,
Grey is the broken balustrade
And grey the heavy walls.

Wide and deep is the Empress' throne
On that hillside far away,
With its carven dogs
And its sentinels
And its mighty door of grey.

O BITTER DAY

O pale small face
I saw a moment in a throng of men,
    I am bereft, I am alone!
I seek, but nowhere find again
Your startled grace,
O pale, small face.

O fearful heart,
Forever questioning, forever dumb,
    I weary of your sick mistrust!
Why do you bolt the door when love would come?
    Go dwell apart,
O fearful heart!

O bitter day—
When you looked and passed, you of the pale small face,
    You of the sweet tormented eyes,
The eager tread, the startled grace!
    Yet I said no word to make you stay—
O bitter, bitter day!

EMBARCATION

Slowly the great wave of a nation's sorrow
Rises and swells and surges.

[19]
From unseen depths it comes,
From very far away.
Silently, relentlessly, it moves
Forward, forward, forward—
Until at last, with a profound reverberation,
It breaks upon the grey, inevitable rock
And falls back, broken into fragments
That seethe in restless foam.

GO FROM ME

O Pain, go from me for a little space!
Leave me to greet the sun-awakened day!
You have companioned me in every place—
Now, for an hour, I would go my way.

I would go forth with lifted eyes and heart
Hearing the blackbird’s cry, the lark’s delight.
The whole world sings—I must attune my part,
Send my voice ringing down the halls of night.

I have been patient with your dull dead clasp,
Have borne the horror of your fierce embrace;
I have not shrunk from your unceasing grasp
Nor from the lowering pallor of your face.

Now I am weary—I would go my way
One hour alone, to greet the new-born day!

Mary Aldis
THE TRENCHES

The night-fall in the trenches—
    The hungry Russian plain
Stretching its endless whiteness
    Beneath the bullet's rain.
Those flecks of black and crimson—
    Ah, God! the vultures know!—
Are hearts that beat with love and hope
    But one short hour ago.

Above the fumes of battle,
    Above the shrieks of hell,
The singing of the bullet,
    The crashing of the shell,
A dream of gold-green shadows—
    Ah, God! the wood-doves know!—
Where you and I walked hand in hand
    A thousand years ago!

    A. Alondra
FALLTIME

Gold of a ripe oat straw, gold of a southwest moon,
Canada-thistle blue and flimmering larkspur blue,
Tomatoes shining in the October sun with red hearts,
Shining five and six in a row on a wooden fence,
Why do you keep wishes shining on your faces all day long,
Wishes like women with half-forgotten lovers going to new cities?
What is there for you in the birds, the birds, the birds,
crying down on the north wind in September—acres of birds spotting the air going south?
Is there something finished? And some new beginning on the way?

AUTUMN MOVEMENT

I cried over beautiful things, knowing no beautiful thing lasts.

The field of cornflower yellow is a scarf at the neck of the copper sunburned woman, the mother of the year, the taker of seeds.

The northwest wind comes and the yellow is torn full of holes, new beautiful things come in the first spit of snow on the northwest wind, and the old things go, not one lasts.
Valley Song

Your eyes and the valley are memories—
Your eyes fire and the valley a bowl.
It was here a moonrise crept over the timberline;
It was here we turned the coffee-cups upside down.
And your eyes and the moon swept the valley.

I will see you again in a million years.
I will see you again to-morrow.
I will never know your dark eyes again.
These are three ghosts I keep;
These are three sumach-red dogs I run with.

All of it wraps and knots to a riddle:
I have the moon, the timberline, and you.
All three are gone—and I keep all three.

"Old-Fashioned Requited Love"

I have ransacked the encyclopedias,
And slid my fingers among topics and titles,
Looking for you.

And the answer comes slow.
There seems to be no answer.

I shall ask the next banana peddler the who and why of it.

Or—the iceman with his iron tongs gripping a clear cube
in summer sunlight—maybe he will know.

[23]
THE NEXT CHILD WAITS

I know the city waits . . . the next child waits . . . there is a great singing Mother.


I have listened to the tides of the sea trying to spell the word. I have walked under tall trees and heard winter winds trying to write the high sign of it. I have felt the magnet pull of it under the shoes of my feet in the dirt of a prairie road.

I know the city waits . . . the next child waits . . . there is a great singing Mother.

ASSYRIAN TABLETS
From the Fourth Millennium, B.C.—(Free translation)

ASHURNATSIRPAL THE THIRD

Three walls around the town of Tela when I came. They expected everything of those walls; nobody in the town came out to kiss my feet.

I knocked the walls down, killed three thousand soldiers, Took away cattle and sheep, took all the loot in sight, And burned special captives. 

[24]
Some of the soldiers—I cut off hands and feet.
Others—I cut off nose, ears, fingers.
Some—I put out the eyes.
I made a pyramid of heads.
I strung heads on trees circling the town.

When I got through with it
There wasn’t much left of the town of Tela.

BILBEA

Shamash,
If he knows copper hair
And blood-flower lips,
Shamash watches you
For my sake.

Bilbea, I was in Babylon on Saturday night.
I saw nothing of you anywhere.
I was at the old place and the other girls were there,
But no Bilbea.

Have you gone to another house? or city?
Why don’t you write?
I was sorry—I walked home half-sick.

Tell me how it goes.
Send me some kind of a letter.
And take care of yourself.
CHROMATICS

THE SONG

That day in the slipping of torsos and straining flanks,
On the bloodied ooze of fields, plowed by iron,
(And the smoke, bluish near earth and gold in the sunshine,
Floating like cotton down)
Do you remember how we heard
All the Red Cross bands on Fifth Avenue,
And bugles in little home towns,
And children’s harmonicas bleating
AMERICA!—
And the harsh and terrible screaming,
And that strange vibration at the roots of us—
Desire, fierce like a song?

And after . . .
Do you remember the drollery of the wind on our faces,
And horizons reeling,
And the terror of the plain, heaving like a gaunt pelvis to the sun
Over us—threshing and twanging
Torn-up roots of the song?

IRON WINE

The ore in the crucible is pungent, smelling like acrid wine.
It is dusky red like the ebb of poppies,
And purple like the blood of elderberries.
Surely it is a strong wine—juice distilled of the fierce iron.
I am drunk of its fumes;
I feel its fiery flux
Diffusing, permeating,
Working some strange alchemy . . .
So that I turn aside from the goodly board,
So that I look askance upon the common cup,
And from the mouths of crucibles
Suck forth the acrid sap.

THE FIDDLER

In a little Hungarian café
Men and women are drinking
Yellow wine in tall goblets.

Through the milky haze of the smoke,
The fiddler, undersized, blond,
Leans to his violin
As to the breast of a woman.
Red hair kindles to fire
On the black of his coat-sleeve,
Where his white, thin hand
Trembles and dives,
Like a sliver of moonlight,
When wind has broken the water.
DAWN-WIND

Wind, just arisen
(Off what cool matters of marsh-moss
In tented boughs leaf-drawn before the stars,
Or niche of cliff under the eagles?)
You of living things,
So gay and tender and full of play,
Why do you blow on my thoughts—like cut flowers
Gathered and laid to dry on this paper, rolled out of dead wood?

I see you
Shaking that flower at me with soft invitation
And frisking away,
Deliciously rumpling the grass . . .

So you fluttered the curtains about my cradle,
Prattling of fields
Before I had had my milk.
Did I stir on my pillow, making to follow you, Fleet One—I,
I, swaddled, unwinged, like a bird in the egg?

Let be
My dreams that crackle under your breath . . .
You have the dust of the world to blow on.

Do not tag me and dance away, looking back . . .
I am too old to play with you,
Eternal child.
Lola Ridge

THE EDGE

I

I thought to die that night in the solitude
where they would never find me . . .
But there was time . . .
And I lay quietly on the drawn knees of the mountain
staring into the abyss.

I do not know how long . . .
I could not count the hours, they ran so fast—
Like little bare-foot urchins—shaking my hands away.
But I remember
Somewhere water trickled like a thin severed vein . . .
And a wind came out of the grass,
Touching me gently, tentatively, like a paw.

As the night grew
The gray cloud that had covered the sky like sackcloth
Fell in ashen folds about the hills,
Like hooded virgins pulling their cloaks about them . . .
There must have been a spent moon,
For the tall one’s veil held a shimmer of silver . . .

This too I remember,
And the tenderly rocking mountain,
Silence,
And beating stars. . . .
Dawn
Lay like a waxen hand upon the world,
And folded hills
Broke into a solemn wonder of peaks stemming clear and cold,
Till the Tall One bloomed like a lily,
Flecked with sun
Fine as a golden pollen.
It seemed a wind might blow it from the snow.

I smelled the raw sweet essences of things,
And heard spiders in the leaves,
And ticking of little feet
As tiny creatures came out of their doors
To see God pouring light into his star.

It seemed life held
No future and no past for me but this.

And I too got up stiffly from the earth
And held my heart up like a cup.
COMMENT
JOYCE KILMER

POETRY'S sixth birthday finds the nations still at war, and the United States pouring her armies into the battle-fields of France. But the day is brighter than for four tragic years: the German hordes are beginning the backward sweep which will not end, we may reasonably hope, until the blood-soaked borders of France, Belgium and Italy are delivered from the invader; until—dare we hope so far?—until the Balkan states are set in order, until heroic Serbia is restored, until even chaotic Russia is offered peace to bind up her wounds, and even the German people achieve their freedom.

Our American poets are doing their share in this battle of two epochs, doing it not only with songs, their own weapon, but with guns and grenades as well. We have all read their songs of war, and some of these the future will read. But for their more active labors in the great conflict we must count the stars in their service flag.

Two gold stars shine at the top of the flag which hangs in the poets' window—one for Alan Seeger, American volunteer in the Foreign Legion, who died in France July the fourth, 1916, after nearly two years of service; and now another for Joyce Kilmer, who was killed in action at the Picardy front on August the first. Both these poets were young, though not in their first youth. Seeger, the student and rover, guest of France and her lover, entered her serv-

[31]
ice when the enemy set foot upon her soil, and died for her at twenty-eight. Kilmer, who had just passed thirty, volunteered when his country entered the war, although his responsibilities as a husband and the father of four children would have exempted him from military obligation. He was sent to France last year, and was a sergeant at the time of his death.

Death in battle is for a poet an accolade—it ennobles him, gives him a high significance. At once his songs assume a richer color from the beauty of his devotion, and the people in whose service he died cherish them like jewels. These two young American poets, dying gallantly in a great war, achieve undying fame, and lift the best of their songs toward the sun as if at the tip of a flag in the van of armies. No American can easily forget Seeger's *Rendezvous with Death*, and now Joyce Kilmer's *Trees*, his rhapsodic octave *Poets*, and the more recent *Prayer of a Soldier in France*, will also flash with glory in the eyes of his fellow countrymen.

Our acquaintance with Joyce Kilmer began with *Trees*, which *POETRY* had the honor of publishing toward the end of its first year—in August, 1913. The delicate quatrain *Easter* followed the next April, and an essay on the poetry of Gerard Hopkins in September. In March, 1917, came *The Blue Valentine*, that lovely tribute "to Aline," and *The Thorn*, a tribute to the holy warrior Saint Michael, who has nobly answered his devotee's prayer:

> The Ivory Tower is fair to see,  
> And may her walls encompass me!
But when the Devil comes with the thunder of his might,
Saint Michael, show me how to fight!

The poet had a singularly gracious and loyal character, and unusual personal charm. He was, as everyone knows, an enthusiastic convert to Roman catholicism, and his best poems are enriched with deep religious devotion. The rapturous worship of "the grandeur of God," which he praised in Gerard Hopkins, may be found in certain of his own poems—eloquently in Memorial Day, The Rosary, and the sonnet—so self-prophetic—In Memory of Rupert Brooke; more loftily in The Fourth Shepherd, Poets and the more recent Prayer. We quote today in his honor two of these poems, chosen partly because they are less familiar than the lovely Trees, but chiefly because his religion was so profoundly the central motive of his life and thought; and moreover, good devotional poetry is of all kinds the rarest nowadays, and these are aflame with the real fire. The first poem is from a recent number of Good Housekeeping, the second from Trees and Other Poems (George H. Doran Co., 1914.)

PRAYER OF A SOLDIER IN FRANCE

My shoulders ache beneath my pack:
(Lie easier, Cross, upon His back).

I march with feet that burn and smart—
(Tread, Holy Feet, upon my heart).

Men shout at me who may not speak.
(They scourged Thy back and smote Thy cheek)

I may not lift a hand to clear
My eyes of salty drops that sear.
(Then shall my fickle soul forget
Thy Agony of Bloody Sweat?)

My rifle hand is stiff and numb,
(From Thy pierced palm red rivers come).

Lord, Thou didst suffer more for me
Than all the hosts of land and sea.

So let me render back again
This millionth of Thy gift. Amen.

POETS

Vain is the chiming of forgotten bells
That the wind sways above a ruined shrine.
Vainer his voice in whom no longer dwells
Hunger that craves immortal Bread and Wine.

Light songs we breathe that perish with our breath,
Out of our lips that have not kissed the rod.
They shall not live who have not tasted death;
They only sing who are struck dumb by God.

It may be that this latter poem is his finest utterance,
finest because of all his songs—so few and brief—it burns
with the whitest heat of rapture. It is worthy to be carved
upon his tomb.  

H. M.

THE OTHER STARS IN THE POETS' FLAG

One after another our poets are sailing for France, or at
least are in camp preparing to sail. Arthur Davison Ficke,
erstwhile a lawyer in Davenport, is now a major in the
Ordnance Reserve Corps, stationed, at last accounts, in
Paris. William Rose Benét is a lieutenant in the Aviation
Section of the Signal Reserve Corps, and Kendall Banning is a major in the War Plans Division, of the General Staff, both recently, if not now, in Washington. C. J. Masseck, of St. Louis, is a Captain of Infantry O. R. C., stationed last spring at Camp Funston. Lieutenant C. L. O'Donnell, of Notre Dame University, is chaplain of the 117th Engineers, already half a year in France. Glenn Ward Dresbach, once a canal-builder at Panama and later a mining engineer at Tyrone, New Mexico, is now an officer—captain, I think—in the Medical Corps. Even Floyd Dell has graduated from The Masses into the service.

Of the younger men POETRY has printed, who, so far as we are aware, have not yet achieved shoulder-straps, the list is quite long. H. Thompson Rich, formerly editor of The Forum, is an acting sergeant of the Medical Corps, perhaps already transferred to the School of Military Psychology at Camp Greenleaf, Georgia, training in which he hopes may win him a commission. Archie Austin Coates, of New York, who has also been a magazine editor, has become Chief Yeoman in the U. S. Naval Reserve, being on duty in publicity work at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Francis Buzzell, of Chicago, author of poems and short stories, is likewise in the navy, being detailed to the congenial duty of editing the Great Lakes Recruit.

A number are in various departments of the medical and ambulance service—Cloyd Head and Willard Wattles on this side, John Black and Robert Redfield, Jr., on the other, though the latter has been invalided home. Dr. Frank S.
Gordon was rejected for this service because of two pounds underweight.

Baker Brownell, Louis Gilmore, Earl B. Marlatt, Mark Turbyfill, John Pierre Roche, and Morris Gilbert are in different camps or perhaps on their way to the front. Salomón de la Selva, the Nicaraguan poet, being refused by Uncle Sam, sailed last month for England, having succeeded in enrolling himself in the British army. John McClure wrote last spring of soon going into training, and Dean B. Lyman, Jr. was to enlist last summer.

J. E. Scruggs, of Atlanta, wrote us when on the point of going to camp, “I passed up my chance of being an officer because I wanted to feel the thrill of being a private—a conscripted private;” and he has now achieved his desire in the 52nd Infantry. John B. Weaver, of Chicago, is impatient of ordnance training, longs to “get over and be a real part in this wonderful affair—certainly, if I survive the experience, it will have been the most valuable thing that could have come into my life.” And Paul B. Sifton, of Montana, wrote from France a year ago:

At the time of taking the soldiers’ oath I thought to gain color for future writings. Now that I am here, close to the quivering, wide-gaping wound of War, I have put the thought from me, for a time at least—perhaps for good, if my life is necessary in the caging of the imperialists. If I come out—pathos, hate, lust, abnegation, I shall have known them all.

Others are in the Red Cross or the Y. M. C. A. or in work for college men in the army—William Griffith, Lee Wilson Dodd, Raymond P. Holden, perhaps more. Nor must we forget the women, at least two of whom, Miss
The Other Stars in the Poets' Flag

Gladys Cromwell of New York, and Miss Eloise Robinson of Cincinnati, are doing canteen work in France.

Of course there are soldiers also among Poetry's British contributors. Rupert Brooke and Edward Thomas head the list, having given the last proof of devotion. Ford Madox Hueffer and Richard Aldington have been at the front two or three years, also Frederic Manning and Isaac Rosenberg, all of whom have sent us war poems. A few months ago F. S. Flint was accepted and sent to Flanders, and Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, after three rejections, succeeded in getting into the ranks.

For all these, and any other poets who may take their share of the hazardous adventure, let us who write and read this record wish high service to the cause we are fighting for, and a safe return when victory is won.

H. M.

“AESTHETIC AND SOCIAL CRITICISM”

Mr. Bourne and Mr. Brooks were so polite, in their letter to the editors in our September number, that exceptions to their points seem almost a discourtesy. We are appalled at the danger of losing our equilibrium, and being once more accused of “rushing jealously and angryly to the defense of [our] contributors at the sign of any fancied slight.” (Dear readers, were we angry or jealous? and did we merely fancy a slight in Mr. Bourne's slur upon “the vogue of the little theatres and little magazines?” And
did we defend, or even mention, a single contributor in our effort to show Mr. Bourne that those *Traps for the Unwary*, which bother him so much, are not formidable?)

He now explains that “in appealing for more careful and better oriented criticism he did the new poetry and the little magazines the honor of assuming that they had arrived.” Well, we never dreamed that anyone could doubt our arrival, and were in no fear of being “destroyed by a rude touch.” What we objected to was the rudeness of the touch, its way of putting us in our place, as a critical journal, among the un-careful and un-orienting. (Again, dear readers, we will leave it to you whether POETRY has treated the art as “shut up in its own world,” or as “an expression of life, pregnant with possibilities.” Perhaps Mr. Bourne has not been one of your select company!)

As for that “developing orthodoxy of the new,” where have these two gentlemen found it in POETRY, whose critical articles have covered a wide range of opinion, from Ezra Pound to Louis Untermeyer? By way of illustrating that “better and more oriented criticism,” they solemnly inform us that “there is no way, for instance, of knowing yet where Mr. Lindsay will come out;” and ask “who, in the little circle of poetry missionaries, points out to him the dangers of mere verbality and the imperative need of growth.” Well, ask Mr. Lindsay who has been his sternest censor against verbality and other dangers. As to the imperative need of growth, probably he requires no information on that rather obvious and universal need.
"Aesthetic and Social Criticism"

But these are trifles—let us pass on to the main point of our correspondents' argument, their complaint that "this public"—the new poetry's public—"enthusiastic and hospitable, seems to be still moving hazily in a mist of values and interpretations, for it still gets aesthetic instead of social criticism." The phrase tempts one toward a subject much befogged by careless thinking and still more careless writing, that of the poet's—or, more comprehensively, the artist's—business. The subject is ancient but undying; and if our inquiry becomes platitudinous it will not be the first time, nor yet the last, that such questions have run up against the obvious.

The artist is born to express the beauty of life. The first essential in this, his business, is that he should feel this beauty—feel it perhaps more keenly, more profoundly than his fellow-creatures; the second, that he should be able to express his feeling. Now the beauty of life is a large subject, embracing not only the people now on earth—with their social frame-work, their natural environment of land, water, air, and their spiritual equipment of emotion and desire, all set in the midst of a solar system and a sidereal universe and other infinities of creative passion: embracing not only all this, but also infinities past and future, material and spiritual—mysteries which stagger the imagination. Each artist, being, like the rest of us, incapable of infinity, feels and expresses that special beauty which is most immediate to his consciousness. He has an inalienable right to his specialty, as good a right as the honey-bee or the brick-
layer; and the critic’s function is to demand of him, not some other specialty, but sincerity and achievement in the one which has chosen him.

These generalities lead to the question what Mr. Brooks and Mr. Bourne mean by “social criticism” in the arts. An artist may find his special beauty in the social movements of our time—in strikes, or war, or pacifism, or settlements, or the Bolsheviki; but has the critic any right to complain if he finds it, like Whistler, in the fall of a rocket or the turn of a girl’s figure, or, like Inness, in a sunset drift of autumnal colors? Of the lyric or the landscape painter, and to the same degree of the lyric or the landscape poet—say Orrick Johns and John Gould Fletcher—the critic has a right to measure the degree of success in expressing the vision; that is, he has a right to “aesthetic criticism.” But were he to indulge in “social criticism”—were he to rebuke, let us say, George Inness for not painting Lincoln, or H. D. for not singing the battle of the Marne—he would be uttering the too common kind of banalities which make “the public still move hazily in a mist of values.”

The artist, of course, can express only himself. If his vision is limited by the drawing-room, his utmost achievement will be a delicate miniature or a finely turned vers de société. If his vision embraces the mediaeval world and its religion, his achievement will be a Divina Commedia. The critic may rank the artist and define his work, but it is easier by thinking to find out God than by criticizing to change a poet’s scope and product. The critic may legiti-
mately indulge in "discussion of a larger scope," examine the art "in relation to the larger movement of ideas and social movements and the peculiar intellectual and spiritual color of the time;" but his discussion, if it is just, will have to estimate values at last by the strictly aesthetic standard. The poem or picture will stand by its aesthetic adequacy in the triumphant expression of the vision in the artist's soul, whether this vision be minute or cosmic. And if it is aesthetically inadequate the most illuminating social wisdom will not save it.

But "social criticism" in the arts is probably more befogging to the critic and his public than to the artist. The artist, big or little, is in his degree a seer; and it may be that he sees deeper than the critic who is obsessed by "the movements of the time." It may be that Verlaine's prison song, or a single drawing of a nude or a tree by Arthur Davies, have more importance in the eternal scheme of beauty, and are more interpretive of their age, than the most shapely revelation of contemporary movements. Movements pass, but beauty endures. Our age will endure in the beauty it creates, and in that beauty its essential movement will be expressed. It may be—as indeed I believe—that certain of our living poets will be remembered in that ultimate record; but if they fail it will be through lack of power to feel or to express, or both, and not through lack of social criticism.  

H. M.
REVIEWS

WILD SWANS

The Wild Swans at Coole, Other Verses and a Play in Verse, by W. B. Yeats. The Cuala Press, Dundrum, Ireland.

For a poet with such a personality as Yeats, it seems almost indecorous to bare it before us, in the midst of our social, political and literary lives. Yeats makes poetry out of the fact that he is a proud, sensitive, cultivated Irishman. He hardly has to make poetry—except the rhymes, which don’t matter; he just lets his heart talk, as in the poems about the dying lady.

In a despondent mood, the poet, like some of the admirers of his earlier manner, longs for the leopards of the moon, and complains of the harsh and timid sun. Whatever the lights are of Ego Dominus Tuus, Presences, Men Improve With Years, The Collarbone of a Hare, The Fisherman, The Hawk, they shine. The invading hawk too, if not indecorous, is unfair, as unfair as some similarly naive passages in the Bible are:

What tumbling cloud did you cleave,
Yellow-eyed hawk of the mind,
Last evening? that I who had sat
Dumbfounded before a knave,
Should give to my friend
A pretence of wit.

The weighing and measuring, the critical care evidently spent on this thin volume, save the reviewer most of his labor. If the longer poems seem to him, in spite of their
shrewdness and spells of passion, somewhat old-fashioned, he
is willing to bend to the opinion of the author of the others.
One can not but pay reverence to a poet who, after having
written poetry for many years, can still be read with the same
critical alertness that one would give to the best of the
younger poets. And if there is a drooping line here and
there, the author is too proud, too able, and too conscien-
tious to arouse misgivings that he will ever bank on his
reputation.

Here is Yeats in a very gentle mood:

**PRESENCES**

This night has been so strange that it seemed
As if the hair stood up on my head:
From going-down of the sun I have dreamed
That women laughing, or timid or wild,
In rustle of lace or silken stuff,
Climbed up my creaking stair. They had read
All I had rhymed of that monstrous thing
Returned and yet unrequited love.
They stood in the door and stood between
My great wood lecturn and the fire,
Till I could hear their hearts beating.
One is a harlot, and one a child
That never looked upon man with desire,
And one it may be a queen.

In *Ego Dominus Tuus*, the beautiful poetic dialogue
which appeared first in *Poetry* and is reprinted here and
in his latest prose volume, the poet would have us believe
that great poems are the result of the poet's "opposite"
image—an expression of what the poet is not. I think this
opposite, and not his little every-day thoughts and actions,
is the poet; Dowson's drunkenness, and Dante's lecherous
life, are somewhat beside the mark, as their effects on the poet's soul are mainly those of health and sickness. They are ethical and civil sins, but hardly poetic sins. Their scars on the poet are not of the same character as Turner's miserliness, or as malice, envy, etc. But even these, when present, are hardly more than masks of the poet's soul—perhaps hardly more than masks of any soul; it is in his poems that the real soul can be seen. Nor is indulgence due, as Yeats thinks, to the poet's desire to escape from himself; but rather, in so far as it is more than mere exhaustion, due to his desire to find himself. It is the disappointment with pleasure, and life's egging on.

At the Hawk's Well, beautiful as it is as poetry and as a poetic play, does not to me seem to be a Noh play in the full sense of the term. The Noh play is based on something nearer to the lives of the Japanese people than a legend. A modern Noh play, to have a similar appeal, would have to be based on something nearer the lives of the Irish people. A play based on Davitt or Parnell might come nearer the Japanese; or, perhaps best, a play based on something in modern life treated mystically. But it has the great merit of being the first attempt at a Noh play in English.

M. M.

A RHAPSODIST


This book arouses widely different feelings and opinions—a sign of vitality. Recently Mr. Marsden Hartley re-
proached me for neglecting it; so I opened the copy on our shelves and found, to my regret, that I had never actually read it—I had merely given it a glance and postponed the reading, being antagonized by pages like this, strung out without a single kindly comma:

Then I grasped the silver bowl.
Around an handle of the bowl
coiled the viper, gaping, hissing—
and the viper hissed unheard
for the music shrieked
and wailed
and groaned
and trilled
and rumbled
and crashed
and throbbed
and throbbed
and throbbed
and became a din
and again I gasped
and paused
and laughed.

Returning repentantly to the book, I found that a number of poets, looking it over, had obeyed the office rule to record their first very casual impressions. Carl Sandburg wrote: "A vast sincerity here—a beating of wings." Another poet, even better known, wrote, "Mind-wanderings." A third, Max Michelson, was more detailed, saying:

Amateurish. Indian legend poor—Longfellowish. Second rhapsody best (but hardly more than material) and cat pieces near the end. Out of season has good plot, though not new, and in places shows courageous understanding, but on the whole it is outrageous sentimentality; his sympathy for the cripple is bad as art and bad as truth; the murder in the end, and much of the rest is absolutely meaningless. But the book carries the reader—shows possibilities, glimpses. Here and there something is brooding—not brought out.
And then there is Mr. Hartley’s opinion, one not to be disregarded because the poet is his friend—since friendship sharpens, oftener than it dulls, the critical faculty. I quote fragments from his letter:

Wallace Gould is the first distinctive poet of Maine, the first to express that state; and his voice is as authentic as the life of the place itself. I can think of no one who is so engrossed with the idea of the elimination of personal interpretation. He spends most of his time pruning to the very last, and as he has scarcely ever been out of that state, his writings have the ring of absolute character. As I was also born in Maine, I know just how actual they are in their import as well as in treatment. . . . He has a striding terrific imagination. . . . Kreymborg likes his work very much, also Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank, and others who have seen it privately. He is a dramatic figure in the American literary world, and one day his story will be a telling one.

So I began at the beginning, and swung along with the poet to the end. I forgot—perhaps with some difficulty—his typographical mannerisms, and tried to attune my ear and feeling to the rhythmic effects he intends by his triple repetitions of two-word lines and other rather empirical phrasings and line-divisions.

Well, I can’t say that I get Maine from this book, or any special locale, even when the subjects are most specifically from Maine. The poet seems to me, in his degree, essentially spiritual, and remote from any locale. Ab Uno Discce Omnes, for example, has a certain spectral quality, an intensity of spiritual solitude. Its rush of repeated short lines, alternated with passages of reverberating long ones, has a strong cumulative effect, for which the analogies are closer, probably, in music—Mr. Gould is also a musician—than in poetry. I don’t feel that this cumulative effect works
A Rhapsodist

up, in this long poem, to a sufficient and justifying climax. The end trails off too much like the rest of it. The poet hasn't achieved the final stroke, it seems to me—pounded in the last nail.

In form, this poem is a brilliant étude in strongly marked and resolutely contrasted rhythms, probably the most brilliant in the book. I don't think Mr. Gould's rhythms are subtle, any more than his choice and grouping of the words which their movement carries. But they are large, sweeping, powerful; they sink their craft to a whisper and lift it to a resonant shout, and bring it to port with a possibly too obvious ease. This danger of obviousness is perhaps most evident in *The Legend*, which opens the book, whose alternations of blank verse with repetitive phrase-rhythms, if not quite "Longfellowish," are far less interpretive of the Indian, in every way more traditional and less profound, less grown-up, than Dr. Gordon's *Sa-a Narai* and *The Tom-tom*, Miss Skinner's *Songs of the Coast-dwellers*, or certain Chippewa poems by Mr. Lew Sarett, which POETRY will have the honor of presenting to its readers next month. The comparison may not be quite fair, because Mr. Gould is telling a story about the Indian while the others are uttering the Indian's own song; but the fact remains that from the aboriginal hint he draws merely a pretty story, and though he tells it with dramatic effectiveness in resonant rolling chords of sound, he does not impress upon it any very special original tang.

*Out of Season*, the story of the armless man and the friend
whose life he saved and whom he finally murders, seems to me melodrama, the least convincing section of the book and the most labored in its motive and its rhythmic treatment. It may be one of those "dark spots of Maine" which Mr. Hartley thinks his friend is revealing, but I must give it up and pass on to the final section of the book, the fifty or more short poems called Others, Nameless.

Here there is more of Maine. Also, the poems being shorter and more within the range of common experience, I can perhaps quote a few and let the poet persuade our readers so far as he is able. (I shall not venture to change his typography, much as I should like to.) We have a picture of Augusta, "city of dignity, city of old mansions;" and of the Kennebec, "famous, lovely, sensuous, immense, a bit indolent:"

I know the dreams of the Kennebec
For the forms of my fathers appear in those dreams.

The poet pictures his "wonderful garden," where "everything runs wild, and lists its flowers; but:

Today these things all drip with sounding, unceasing rain.
The leaves are all twitching, pelted with big drops—
Yes, everything runs wild
For everything I love I leave alone.

Then he gets further out into the open, hears the bobolink, "free to sing and go," and feels the wind:

—the sensual, humming, fitful wind as fitful, constant and strong as the wind of the sea,
humming like the wind of the sea,
and sensual as the wind of the sea
though smelling of apple-blossoms

[48]
and all the new things drenched with days of rain and steaming beneath a triumphant sun—
steaming and glowing
at hand and afar
for miles
and miles—
hills of glowing green,
swamps of glowing green
all swept by the wind so like the wind of the sea,
the uncommanded wind.

The poems become more personal and reminiscent—love-songs, summer-beach descriptions, songs of

—my sad old mother
hid in her chamber,
silently weeping
the last of her sorrows,
the sorrow of absence.

And he enters the house with its "dark sweet rooms," its furniture "dark and some of it old."

My mother, myself and my cat are happy there, but only when I am there.

We have a description of the garden made weird by moonlight:

Last night I went, alone, and lingered in my old, wild garden where there were scarlet poppy-women, passionate, who scorned the moon's mock potency;
where there were blue, closed cornflowers who waited for their chosen lord, in chastity;
where there were columbines who made a cuckold of the sun—accepting dew-jewels from the moon;
where there were many weeds—
and the winds which came from the somewheres of the south stirred the odors of mint and of roses
and of heliotrope
and were hot

[49]
and the moon was crossed by a smear of vapor-yellow and thin—and was as teasing as a nipple protruding through lace.

The poet celebrates swimming by moonlight, describes the "shimmering pearls and purples of winter," loves the rain "for its thousands of sounds and its liveliness in cutting the air," tells of the summer people "gibbering foolishly along the wharf," gives a story of "Madame singing," with a note like a "summer moon lolling on an ebbing tide;" gloats over his pied cat, with "white feet twinkling like stars." And he has a poem about an old woman which seems to me one of the best in the book, and one of the most characteristic. Here it is, all but the last few lines; for, like many another poet, Mr. Gould has a way of going on after his poem is finished:

She was an old free woman, forsaken.
She walked along the highroad, humming, looking below upon the Sabbath-sleepy city which glimmered in the westward light of an afternoon of September
and she saw that the world had collapsed
and she looked upon the ruins of the world
and they were yellow
and white
and brown
and she turned from the highroad into a logging-road
and began to wander
and began to murmur
and she murmured, in a kind of song,
scattering white-plumed seeds as she wandered—
"There is peace in the woods this afternoon, dear!
There is peace in the woods this afternoon, my child!
'Tis quieted!
'Tis easier to die!

"Where are you now, dear?
Where are you now, my child?

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Child, I am alone!
Child, I am wandering—alone—alone—where the weeds and vines
are broken down and entangled
and tarnished!
Child, I am weeping!
Child, I am growing old!
Oh, the dead weeds rasp
and the dead vines rattle
and I love you!
Child, I love you!
Child, I am growing old!"

There is, as Carl Sandburg says, "a vast sincerity here, a beating of wings." If only the wings would oftener carry one somewhere, if only their beating were not so often a mere ineffectual repetition of phrases and sounds, Mr. Gould would register more strongly his proud soaring spirit and his powerful baritone voice. As the book stands, it is a mixture of the prosaic, the banal, the grandiose, the sprawling, with a true poetic strain—a poetic quality of imagination, expressed, at its best, in a chanting rhythm of strong cumulative power. The poems lack architectural structure: they spread all over the ground instead of concentrating; they trail off instead of shaping to a climax. But there is a spirit in them which, if it is only capable of self-discipline, is on the way to achieve a rich and exuberant beauty.

H. M.
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

LEWISOHN ON FRENCH POETS

The Poets of Modern France, by Ludwig Lewisohn. B. W. Huebsch.

This book will be of great value to those who are eager to know more about the various movements in modern French poetry. There are few competent studies of this subject in English, and Mr. Lewisohn ranges over a wider field than Miss Lowell aimed at in her Six French Poets. He gives us an interesting introduction dealing with the struggle of man toward self-hood in art, saying:

The pang of beauty, the exaltation in truth, the vision of the tragedy of life, arise, in the fullest sense, only when the individual liberates himself from the tribe and faces the universe alone.

And, in speaking of the poet as that individual, he tells us that the very splendor of traditional associations, the throb of a thousand voices, paralyze him, that "he is like a stripling running a race in the brocades of an ancient king."

We learn to distinguish the forerunners of Symbolism. The author analyzes the Parnassien Leconte de Lisle, and the "modified Parnassien" Charles Baudelaire; and discusses Gustave Kahn, Paul Verlaine and the acknowledged founder of Symbolism, Stéphane Mallarmé. He traces with rare insight the reaction, for a long time so little understood, which brought out Emile Verhaeren and Henri de Régnier; afterwards Jean Moréas and the two Americans Francis Viélé-Griffin and Stuart Merrill; a little later Albert Samain and Rémy de Gourmont; and finally the younger poets who trail its ideals into the present time. Of the latter are Paul Fort, who acknowledges his debt to Moréas; Fran-
cis Jammes; Pierre Louys, whom the author calls a Neo-Parnassian; Edmond Rostand, "a descendant of Lamartine and Hugo;" and others. The youngest group of all—André Spire, Charles Vildrac, Georges Duhamel, etc.—have dropped tradition completely, he tells us, and are cultivating free verse. He explains that practically all of the poets of modern France (he names exceptions) have hitherto withdrawn into houses of revery, and his plea is for an awakening to more rugged realities in the French poetry to come.

After reading what Mr. Lewisohn has to say in his excellent preface relative to the translating of poetry, I hoped to find in his own interpretations of this "dusk and dawn of the mind" a fine exception to the general rule. But the old pitfalls are apparent, even in his illuminating work, though he has succeeded with many poems which have been failures in other hands. He has caught the spirit of Verhaeren, especially in The Mill, which is exceedingly well done. One might rather say that he, like Verhaeren, has caught the spirit of the mill. But in some of the renderings there is an obvious effort to "get around" a word, an expression; as in his version of that lovely thing by Moréas, A Young Girl Speaks. Apparition, one of the better known of Mallarmé's poems (one may never say popular in speaking of his work) and one of the most difficult to fit into English, has been faithfully worked out. I think I have never read a more literal translation, word for word, line for line, being amazingly there; not, however, the fresh
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music of the original. And lovers of Verlaine will hardly be satisfied with:

O you who stand here full of tears
That flow and flow,
What have you done with the lost years
Of long ago?

as an attempt to voice as pure a lyricism as was ever uttered—that piercing heart-cry:

Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voilà,
Pleurant sans cesse,
Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi que voilà,
De ta jeunesse?

But the charm of Verlaine's thought is, perhaps more than that of any other French poet, dependent for its most subtle expression upon the medium of his own language.

One wonders why Maeterlinck should be represented by two of his poorest poems when the author might have enriched this collection by choosing two of his best. The same may be said of Fernand Gregh's Doubt. Why have included this when there was at hand lavish material for beauty? Gregh is a member of the Academy, and one of the striking figures in French poetry to-day. His Maison de l'Enfance is a masterpiece and others of his poems are important and beautiful. There are poems by Francis Jammes, Paul Fort's lyric of the dead girl and his Images of Our Dreams—the latter, as in the original, in rhyme, but printed as prose. Verlaine's Song Without Words is very lovely in its English setting, and I wish I had the space to quote from some of these distinguished lyrics which have stood the test of translating.
Lewisohn on French Poets

The sketches of the thirty poets give this book an imperative claim to be on every book-shelf. If you would find out the titles of all the books a French poet who has appealed to you has written, if you would learn something definite about another of whom you have heard only vaguely, Mr. Lewisohn's carefully prepared biographies and bibliography are admirably at your service.  

Agnes Lee Freer

CORRESPONDENCE

LETTERS FROM FRANCE

We cannot forbear quoting for the benefit of our readers portions of recent letters from poets at the front. The first is from Miss Eloise Robinson, who is "on active service" in the canteen work of the Y. M. C. A. She writes, under date of August 5th:

I wish I might tell you of my visit to the French front, and how for two nights I slept in a "cave" with seven Frenchmen and had a hundred bombs dropped on top of me. Not directly on top, of course. The nearest hit just in front of the house. And for five days and nights after that I was taking chocolate to advance batteries, to men who can never leave their guns, even to come to the Foyer du Soldat. The Foyer was only a dug-out, and the air was so thick with flies and smoke that it looked like jam. Every morning when I got up I literally had to pry myself out of the mud—of course there were no beds. And at that I wanted to stay. There is a great satisfaction about actually doing something with your hands for these men. But I was long overdue in Paris, because we were not able to get through the barrage—the drive had just started. Aren't our boys doing wonderful things? At a cost, though.

I leave tonight for the Swiss border. And after that, Italy, and then the Polish-American front. It is all one mad scramble, but wonderful—simply wonderful. I cannot be too thankful I was able to come.
In an earlier letter—July 23rd—Miss Robinson tells a story:

Apropos of just nothing at all, unless it be that I am a little homesick for the last Poetry, which hasn’t reached me yet, I extracted a story from Miss Mary Lawton, who is “ever here” as one of the Y. M. C. A. entertainers.

She had given a reading before some of the soldiers, and they were buzzing around her, after it was over, as they generally do.

“I say,” one of them ventured, “that was a pretty poem you recited—that one about Verdun, you know.”

“You liked it then?” said Miss Lawton.

“Yes, ma’am, I sure did. But then, I like poetry anyway—I always did. I’m not much of a fighter. Oh, I want to help put the Kaiser out of business, all right—that’s what we’re over here for and I guess none of us are going to be satisfied till we do it. But—well, you know what I mean. I’m naturally just kind of quiet and peaceful. I like to read, and poetry is my favorite.”

“It’s my favorite too,” Miss Lawton admitted.

“Is that a fact? Maybe you’d be interested in hearing about my room at home then?”

“Indeed I should.”

“Maybe it sounds funny, but I’m going to miss that room more than most anything else. I guess there isn’t another like it anywhere. It was my own idea too. It’s a pretty good-sized room, with lots of windows. But that isn’t what I like about it best. Once when I was a little tad I saw a piece in the paper—poetry it was. I don’t ever remember reading any poetry before, but I liked that piece. It was about Lincoln. I thought I would paste it up on my wall where I could have it handy. It’s there yet—right up over my wash-stand. After that I kept on seeing things I liked and pasting them up, and now—maybe you wouldn’t believe it, but that whole wall is all covered over. I can just lie in bed, or just stand around, and read all sorts of things. When I feel one way I read one poem, and when I feel different I read another kind. There was a man came out our way—I live in Idaho—a traveling salesman he was, and he gave me a little book of poems. Maybe you’ve seen it—it’s called Poetry, a Magazine of Verse. Some of the best pieces were on the backs of each other, and I couldn’t bear to spoil them, so I just tacked the whole book up. Yes, I guess I’ll miss that room a good deal.”
Isn't that a merry tale, and wouldn't you like to know what number of *Poetry* is hanging on his wall, and what kind of a traveling salesman it was who gave it to him?

Another letter is from Malcolm W. Vaughn, a young poet to whom we had sent a copy of *The New Poetry*. He writes:

I have had very little to read since arriving in this country, yet I have needed reading more than ever before. Perhaps that is one reason why the poems in this book have so deeply entered my consciousness. Some of them were read in a ridiculously lighted cave to the other fellows in my section. Others I read to two boys in a hospital, two boys almost dying of homesickness, and the sudden thrusting of themselves from out the warm light of affection which surrounded them in civil life. Some of them I saved just for myself, and dared not read them aloud lest I might be thought an hysterical soldier. Others—like the *Choricos* of Aldington—have shuddered with me along night-roads, and through their bold beauty have saved me from terror at moments when one of the great shocks—the explosion of an enemy shell, the sudden presence of pain or awful agony, the nearness of death—fell without preface upon me.

I remember once particularly, in the drab light of a cloudy dawning, when I saw near the edge of the road a poilu quietly lying. I should have fainted, I think, from the sheer tragedy of the incident had I not heard singing in my head Aldington's invocation to Death. I went closer, stopping my ambulance; and found that the man had given himself extreme unction. For some time during that frozen night, he, mortally wounded, had caught two plain little sticks in his hand and had crossed them. Holding them thus in his stiffening fingers he had made the sign of the cross over his heart, and died in the faith.

*The Sign of the Cross!* One man had made it over himself. *The Sign of the Cross!* France has made it over the bosom of her beloved land. And America too is to make it . . .

**But I would not have it otherwise.** Too long have we received the blessings from the pyre and made no sacrifice thereon ourselves. It is the full moment, and I am glad to witness it, when we shall offer, like Abraham, whatever son is needed.
NOTES

Miss Eloise Robinson, of Cincinnati, who is now doing canteen work in France, is becoming widely known as a poet although she has not yet published a volume. Fatherland recently received one of the annual prizes given by the Poetry Society of America to the two favorite poems read at monthly meetings through the year.

Mr. Cloyd Head, of Chicago, is now in Washington, serving in the Medical Supply Depot. Mr. Head's play, Grotesques, received last year Poetry's highest award, the Helen Haire Levinson Prize.

Mr. Carl Sandburg, of Chicago, another Levinson prize-winner, will soon publish, through Henry Holt & Co., his second book of poems, Corn-huskers. Mr. Sandburg is now in New York, hoping to sail soon for Stockholm, whither he has been sent by the Newspaper Enterprise Association for the duration of the war.

Mrs. Aldis and Mrs. Garnett, of Chicago, and Mrs. Patterson, of Philadelphia, need no introduction to the readers of Poetry. Miss Ruth Gaines, of New York, who has been near the front as a member of the Smith College Relief Unit, is an earlier contributor.

Of the poets new to our readers:

Miss Lola Ridge is an Australian by birth, but has been for some years a resident of Brooklyn, N. Y. Her first book of verse will soon be published by B. W. Huebsch.

Mr. John Cowper Powys, the well-known English lecturer, is the author of Mandragora (G. Arnold Shaw, 1917).

Miss Allene Gregory, of Urbana, is an instructor in the English department of the University of Illinois. Julia Wickham Greenwood (Mrs. A. C.), born in Richmond, Va., but now a resident of Gibraltar, is the author of From Dawn to Eve (Badger). And Mr. A. Alondra lives in Madeira. Mr. Howard Buck, of New Haven, Conn., has been in active service at the front.

Books received will be listed next month.

The Director of Publicity of the Fourth Liberty Loan Campaign Committee has asked us for rhymes to promote the present drive. The Red Cross and the Y. M. C. A. have made similar requests. Therefore we notify all poets and rhymesters that this office will receive and read rhymes of not more than ten lines sent in for any of these purposes, and will pass on to the various Directors of Publicity all which seem good enough to be of use.

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