Poetry
A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe
March 1919

Poems from Propertius
by Ezra Pound

Broken Windows, by
William Carlos Williams

Flying, by R. M. McAlmon

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POETRY
A MAGAZINE OF VERSE
VOLUME XIII
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by
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Fine Arts Bldg., Chicago
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Whitman

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Two annual prizes and one special prize will be awarded next November for good work of the current year. To the donors of these prizes, as well as to the above list of guarantors, the editor wishes to express the appreciation of the staff and the poets:

To Mr. S. O. Levinson, for the Helen Haire Levinson Prize of two hundred dollars, to be awarded for the sixth time; to the anonymous guarantor who will present, for the fifth time, a prize of one hundred dollars; and to Mr. S. King Russell, for his recent offer of a prize of one hundred dollars for poems by a young poet.

We feel that these prizes are a most valuable public service to the art.
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A MAGAZINE OF VERSE
VOLUME XIII
The darned little magazine irritates me so much that I like it. I wouldn't think half so much of POETRY if I agreed with it. Any time anybody else jumps onto POETRY just blow the bugle—I'll enlist.

Letter from a Literary Editor

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S HADES of Callimachus, Coan ghosts of Philetas,  
It is in your grove I would walk—  
I who come first from the clear font,  
Bringing the Grecian orgies into Italy,  
and the dance into Italy.  
Who hath taught you so subtle a measure,  
in what hall have you heard it;  
What foot beat out your time-bar,  
what water has mellowed your whistles?

Out-weariers of Apollo will, as we know, continue their  
Martian generalities.  
We have kept our erasers in order.
A new-fangled chariot follows the flower-hung horses;  
A young Muse, with young loves clustered about her,  
ascends with me into the ether, . . .
And there is no high road to the Muses.

[291]
Annalists will continue to record Roman reputations,
Celebrities from the Trans-Caucasus will belaud Roman
celebrities
And expound the distentions of empire.

But for something to read in normal circumstances?
For a few pages brought down from the forked hill unsullied?

I ask a wreath which will not crush my head.
And there is no hurry about it;
I shall have, doubtless, a boom after my funeral,
Seeing that long standing increases all things,
regardless of quality.
And who would have known the towers
pulled down by a deal-wood horse,
Or of Achilles withstaying waters by Simois,
Or of Hector spattering wheel-rims,
Or of Polydamas, by Scamander, or Helenus and Deiphobus?
Their door-yard would scarcely know them, or Paris;
Small talk, O Ilion, and O Troad,
twice taken by Oetæan gods,
If Homer had not stated your case!

And I also among the later nephews of this city
shall have my dog's day
With no stone upon my contemptible sepulchre,
My vote coming from the temple of Phoebus in Lycia, at Patara.
And in the mean time my songs will travel,
And the devirginated young ladies will enjoy them
when they have got over the strangeness;
For Orpheus tamed the wild beasts—
and held up the Threician river;
And Citharaon shook up the rocks by Thebes
and danced them into a bulwark at his pleasure;
And you, O Polyphemus?—did harsh Galatea almost
Turn to your dripping horses, because of a tune, under
Aetna?
We must look into the matter. Bacchus and Apollo in favor of it,
There will be a crowd of young women doing homage to
my palaver.

Though my house is not propped up by Taenarian columns
From Laconia (associated with Neptune and Cerberus),
Though it is not stretched upon gilded beams;
My orchards do not lie level and wide
as the forests of Phaeacia,
the luxurious and Ionian,
Nor are my caverns stuffed stiff with a Marcian vintage—
(my cellar does not date from Numa Pompilius,
Nor bristle with wine jars):
Yet the companions of the Muses will keep their collective
nose in my books,
And, weary with historical data, they will turn to my dance
tune.
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

Happy who are mentioned in my pamphlets;
The songs shall be a fine tomb-stone over their beauty.

But against this?
Neither expensive pyramids scraping the stars in their route,
Nor houses modelled upon that of Jove in East Elis,
Nor the monumental effigies of Mausolus,
are a complete elucidation of death.

Flame burns, rain sinks into the cracks,
And they all go to rack ruin beneath the thud of the years.

Stands Genius a deathless adornment,
a name not to be worn out with the years.

II

I had been seen in the shade, recumbent on cushioned Helicon,
The water dripping from Bellerophon’s horse.
Alba, your kings, and the realm your folk have constructed
with such industry,
Shall be yawned out on my lyre—with such industry.
My little mouth shall gobble in such great fountains
"Whereof father Ennius, sitting before I came, hath drunk."

I had rehearsed the Curian brothers, and made remarks on
the Horatian javelin
"Of" royal Aemilia, drawn on the memorial raft,
"Of" the victorious delay of Fabius, and the left-handed
battle at Cannae,
Ezra Pound

Of lares fleeing the “Roman seat” . . .
I had sung of all these
And of Hannibal,
and of Jove protected by geese.

And Phoebus, looking upon me from the Castalian tree,
Said then, “You idiot! What are you doing with that water—
Who has ordered a book about heroes?
You need, Propertius, not think
About acquiring that sort of a reputation!
Soft fields must be worn by small wheels,
Your pamphlets will be thrown, thrown often, into a chair
Where a girl waits alone for her man.
Why wrench your page out of its course?
No keel will sink with your genius—
Let another oar churn the water,
Another wheel, the arena: mid-crowd is as bad as mid-sea.”

He had spoken and pointed me a place with his plectrum.

Orgies of vintages, an earthen image of Silenus
Strengthened with rushes, Tegean Pan,
The small birds of the Cytherean mother,
their Punic faces dyed in the Gorgon’s lake;
Nine girls, from as many countrysides,
bearing her offerings in their unhardened hands:

Such my cohort and setting. And she bound ivy to his thyrsos,
Fitted songs to the strings,
   roses twined in her hands.
And one among them looked at me with face offended—
Calliope:

"Content ever to move with white swans!
Nor will the noise of high horses lead you ever to battle;
Nor will the public criers ever have your name
   in their classic horns;
Nor Mars shout you in the wood at Aeonium,
   nor where Rome ruins German riches,
Nor where the Rhine flows with barbarous blood,
   and flood carries wounded Suevi.
Obviously, crowned lovers at unknown doors,
Night dogs, the marks of a drunken scurry—
These are your images, and from you the sorcerizing
   of shut-in young ladies,
The wounding of austere men by chicane."
Thus Mistress Calliope,
   Dabbling her hands in the fount, thus she
Stiffened our face with the backwash of Philetas the Coan.

Midnight, and a letter comes to me from our mistress
   Telling me to come to Tibur "At once!"
Bright tips reach up from twin towers,
   Anienan spring-water falls into flat-spread pools.

[296]
Ezra Pound

What is to be done about it?
Shall I entrust myself to entangled shadows
Where bold hands may do violence to my person?

Yet if I postpone my obedience,
   because of this respectable terror,
I shall be prey to lamentations worse than a nocturnal as­
sailant.

And I shall be in the wrong,
   and it will last a twelve-month,
For her hands have no kindness me-ward,

Nor is there anyone to whom lovers are not sacred at mid­
night
And in the Via Sciro.

If any man would be a lover
   he may walk on the Scythian coast:
No barbarism would go to the extent of doing him harm,
The moon will carry his candle,
   the stars will point out the stumbles,
Cupid will carry lighted torches before him
   and keep mad dogs off his ankles.

Thus all roads are perfectly safe
   and at any hour;
Who so indecorous as to shed the pure gore of a suitor?
   Cypris is his cicerone.

What if undertakers follow my track—
   such a death is worth dying.

[297]
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

She would bring frankincense and wreaths to my tomb,
    She would sit like an ornament on my pyre.

Gods' aid, let not my bones lie in a public location
With crowds too assiduous in their crossing of it;
For thus are tombs of lovers most desecrated.

May a woody and sequestered place cover me with its foliage
Or may I inter beneath the hummock
    of some as yet uncatalogued sand;
At any rate I shall not have my epitaph in a high-road.

IV

When, when, and whenever death closes our eyelids,
Moving naked over Acheron
    Upon the one raft, victor and conquered together,
Marius and Jugurtha together,
    One tangle of shadows.

Caesar plots against India—
Tigris and Euphrates shall from now on flow at his bidding,
Tibet shall be full of Roman policemen,
The Parthians shall get used to our statuary
    and acquire a Roman religion:

One raft on the veiled flood of Acheron,
Marius and Jugurtha together.

[298]
Nor at my funeral either will there be any long trail, bearing ancestral lares and images; No trumpets filled with my emptiness; Nor shall it be on an Attalic bed. The perfumed cloths shall be absent. A small plebeian procession— Enough, enough, and in plenty. There will be three books at my obsequies Which I take, my not unworthy gift, to Persephone.

You will follow the bare scarified breast; Nor will you be weary of calling my name, nor too weary To place the last kiss on my lips When the Syrian onyx is broken.

"He who is now vacant dust Was once the slave of one passion"— Give that much inscription— "Death, why tardily come?"

You, sometime, will lament a lost friend, for it is a custom— This care for past men— Since Adonis was gored in Idalia, and the Cytherean Ran crying with out-spread hair. In vain you call back the shade; In vain, Cynthia, vain call to unanswering shadow— small talk comes from small bones.

Ezra Pound
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

BROKEN WINDOWS

BERKET AND THE STARS

A day on the boulevards chosen out of ten years of
Student poverty! One best day out of ten good ones.
Berket in high spirits—"Ha, oranges! Let's have one!"
And he made to snatch an orange from the vender's cart.

Now so clever was the deception, so nicely timed
To the full sweep of certain wave summits,
That the rumor of the thing has come down through
Three generations—which is relatively forever!

THE YOUNG LAUNDRYMAN

Ladies, I crave your indulgence for
My friend Wu Kee; young, agile, clear-eyed
And clean-limbed, his muscles ripple
Under the thin blue shirt; and his naked feet, in
Their straw sandals, lift at the heel, shift and
Find new postures continually.

Your husband's shirts to wash, please, for Wu Kee.

TIME THE HANGMAN

Poor old Abner, poor old white-haired nigger!
I remember when you were so strong
You hung yourself by a rope round the neck

[300]
In Doc Hollister's barn to prove you could beat
The faker in the circus—and it didn't choke you.
Now your face is in your hands, and your elbows
Are on your knees, and you are silent and broken.

COMPLETE DESTRUCTION

It was an icy day.
We buried the cat,
Then took her box
And set match to it
In the back yard.
Those fleas that escaped
Earth and fire
Died by the cold.

THE POOR

By constantly tormenting them
With reminders of the lice in
Their children's hair, the
School physician first
Brought their hatred down on him.
But by this familiarity
They grew used to him, and so,
At last,
Took him for their friend and adviser.
A FRIEND OF MINE

Well, Lizzie Anderson! seventeen men—and
The baby hard to find a father for!

What will the good father in heaven say
To the local judge if he do not solve this problem?
Does one with a little two-pointed smile
Change the law—pouff!—into a mouthful of phrases?

THE GENTLE MAN

I feel the caress of my own fingers
On my own neck as I place my collar
And think pityingly of the kind
Women I have known.

TO BE CLOSELY WRITTEN ON A SMALL PIECE OF PAPER
WHICH FOLDED INTO A TIGHT LOZENGE WILL
FIT ANY GIRL'S LOCKET

Lo the leaves
Upon the new autumn grass—
Look at them well . . . !

THE SOUGHING WIND

Some leaves hang late, and some fall
Before the first frost—so goes
The tale of winter branches and old bones.

[302]
EPITAPH

An old willow with hollow branches
Slowly swayed his few high bright tendrils
And sang:

"Love is a young green willow
Shimmering at the bare wood's edge."

SPRING

O my grey hairs!
You are truly white as plum blossoms.

STROLLER

I have seen the hills blue,
I have seen them purple;
And it is as hard to know
The words of a woman
As to straighten the crumpled branch
Of an old willow.

MEMORY OF APRIL

You say love is this, love is that:
Poplar tassels, willow tendrils
The wind and the rain comb,
Tinkle and drip, tinkle and drip—
Branches drifting apart. Hagh!
Love has not even visited this country.

[303]
PLAY

Subtle, clever brain, wiser than I am,
By what devious means do you contrive
To remain idle? Teach me, O Master.

LINES

Leaves are grey-green,
The glass broken bright green.

THE DARK DAY

A three-day-long rain from the east—
An interminable talking, talking
Of no consequence—patter, patter, patter.
Hand in hand little winds
Blow the thin streams aslant.
Warm. Distance cut off. Seclusion.
A few passers-by, drawn in upon themselves,
Hurry from one place to another.
Winds of the white poppy! there is no escape!—
An interminable talking, talking,
Talking . . . . it has happened before.
Backward, backward, backward.

THURSDAY

I have had my dream—like others—
And it has come to nothing, so that
William Carlos Williams

I remain now carelessly
With feet planted on the ground,
And look up at the sky—
Feeling my clothes about me,
The weight of my body in my shoes,
The rim of my hat, air passing in and out
At my nose—and decide to dream no more.

MAN IN A ROOM

Here, no woman, nor man besides,
Nor child, nor dog, nor bird, nor wasp,
Nor ditch pool, nor green thing. Color of flower,
Blood-bright berry none, nor flame-rust
On leaf, nor pink gall-sting on stem, nor
Staring stone. Ay de mi!
No hawthorn's white thorn-tree here, nor lawn
Of buttercups, nor any counterpart:

Bed, book-backs, walls, floor,
Flat pictures, desk, clothes-box, litter
Of paper scrawls. So sit I here,
So stand, so walk about. Beside
The flower-white tree not so lonely I:
Torn petals, dew-wet, blotched yellow my bare instep.

William Carlos Williams
Sentry [at the Front]: Halt! Who goes there?
A Little Ghost: It is only I, kind sir—you must let me through!
Sentry: Little white thing—stop!
    Where do you come from?
    These are the lines of the allied armies.
Little Ghost: Sir, I’m the ghost of a dream
    That the Prussians have murdered.
    Once my robe was so pure, soft, shining;
    Once I lived in a deep old forest;
    Once they fed me with love and with music.
    Now I must go to a far new country—
    I and these others, my little white sisters.
    Strange new soldier, give me the pass-word—
    Kind sir, let us through!
Sentry: God! but this war is a queer war!
    Look at ’em—starved white ghosties!—
    Waitin’ for me to pass ’em
    Beyond our lines!
    Me! I’m hard-headed, practical—
    I never had any traffic with dreams.
    Why, the world’s turned dippy!
    Halt, I say!
Numberless Little Ghosts [trying to pass him, wailing softly]:
    We are the ghosts of dreams
That the Prussians have murdered.
Now we must go to a far new country.
Strange new soldier, give us the password—
Kind sir, let us through!

_Sentry_: How white and shinin’ their odd wee faces!
Well then, it’s “Christ”—can ye say it, ghosties?

_All the Little Ghosts [together joyously]:_
Now we can search for our far new country!
“Christ” is the password the soldier gives us.
Thank you, thank you, kind sir.

_They flock swiftly past him; their tattered filmy rags blow
softly against him, and now and then small skeleton
hands reach out and touch him gently._

_Sentry_: Haven’t ye one that would stay for a bit with me,
Now that I’ve passed the whole lot of ye, ghosties?
Wouldn’t one stay with a dull lonely fellow
Just for the company?

_First Little Ghost_: I will stay with you, strange new
soldier,
Where you guard the walls for the world.

_Shew grows suddenly tall and very beautiful with a shining
robe and crown of stars._

_All the other Little Ghosts [calling joyfully and softly from
far away behind the lines]:_
We are the ghosts of dreams
That the Prussians have murdered.
Forbid us not, for we have the password—“Christ.”

_Louise Morey Bowman_
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

WITH THE A. E. F.

ANTE PROELIUM

In the clairvoyance of a midnight waking
I took an inventory of Myself:
A little knowledge on a dusty shelf,
A few good deeds (Fragile—Beware of Breaking),
A light heart, fissured by no hours of aching,
Scraps of old songs, fragments of childish fears,
And blowing memories of unlit years,
And litter of achievements—in the making.

"And this," I said, "is all I have to give
In the extremity of all mankind!
I give it gladly; for I do not find
It hard that this agglomerate should not live;
The only thing," I said, "about being dead,
The hard part is, I have three friends," I said.

BEFORE MY FIRE IN A FRENCH VILLAGE

Words and faces and jests and dreams all come to me again
When I give my memory leave to play; but what I see most
plain
Is the little towns that loll in the sun and shiver and crouch
in the rain.

[308]
The towns of my youth come crowding and tumbling, they will not wait for my thought:
Varna, Slaterville, Danby, Ransome, Mesnil Butte, La Motte—
The towns where I went searching and troubled, not knowing what I sought.
The towns that I saw with a young man's eyes: Grafton, Half-moon Bay, Canutillo, Whitewater, Bolton, Bolinas, Monterey. The sun was bright upon those towns the day I went away.
Now I have found a kind of peace, and long hours to beguile With thinking of the roads I've trod for many a dusty mile, And the little wayside towns where I have rested for a while.

LE PÈRE SEGRETE

He was a wise old man, the color of earth;
From long upturning the earth his back was bent. He told me how the wine was bad in the spring, How the spring turned it moody and turbulent.
He tapped his earthy finger on the glass; "The spring," he said, "the spring runs into the soil, And warms the vine, clipped to the very blood,
To bring forth buds with agony and toil.
“Not easily, as the profuse wild-vines do,
       Only a few great buds on a quaking vine;
And in the caves the old wines suffer too,
       And sour and turbulent is the spring-time wine.”

O horny old man, intimate with the earth,
   Will you not tell me yet another thing?
What is the vine to which my hot blood yearns,
   Bitter and turbulent, suffering with the spring?

THE PIKER

Youth is for madness, youth is for dreams and visions,
       Youth is for earnest folly and monstrous play:
So say the sages, so say the wise old warriors,
       And so do also the twitch-lipped satyrs say.

Youth is a thoughtless laugh in a house of mourning,
       A burst of sun on a chill rain-sodden day:
So say the gaunt-faced priests and the hooded sophists,
       So also the sidelong-beckoning satyrs say.

Youth is a rose to be plucked and crushed to the nostrils,
       For in an hour it is utterly blown away:
So say the minstrels, so say the wistful ancients,
       So too the unclean satyrs say.

Morris Bishop
SECRECY

Down the hushed corridors of your dim soul
Lonely I go, and, yearning, pause by each closed door.
They stand so blind, indifferent, while no sound,
No breath escapes to tell me of your more,

Your less; immensities or nothingness.
But there is one apart, close-barred and rusted in,
Shrouded by years, your hand has never moved
To open. Have you heaven in there, or sin?

From all the other secrecies in you,
Despairing, I return to this, and weep and lean.
Here terror of your hiding burns like fire,
The doubt of what will be—and what has been.

G. O. Warren

PINK BLOSSOMS

Pink blossoms blow against a blue spring sky;
Why must these blossoms die?

The songs of birds are pain, which once were sweet;
Was ever life complete?

Marion Ethel Hamilton
GRANDMOTHER

How can I, wordless, make you understand,
When you so gently stroke my withered hand
And ask me if I like my tea,
And if the long night rested me?
   O girl, my body, not my heart, is dead—
   Tell me, oh, tell me what your lover said!

Tell how the moonlight on the garden lay,
And what is the red flower you wear today.
   I knew it once—the memory is dead.
   Tell me, oh, tell me what your lover said!

WORLD LULLABY

My cryin' baby of a World
   I've left behind today—
I would na mither it for a'
   The red jew'ls of Cathay!

For I am breasted to the moors
   And skirted for the sea—
That cryin' baby of a World,
   It shan't come botherin' me!

I will not even stop to find
   What ye're a-cryin' for—
A-wailin' and a-scappin',
   And a-callin' of it "War."

[312]
Frances Shaw

I'm off, and breasted to the moors
  And skirted for the sea
To get a slice o' God's Peace
  And bring it home with me.

  There's somethin' tuggin' at my skirt
  Whichiver way I wind,
And somethin' cryin' in my ear
  That won't be left behind.

Oh hush ye, hush ye, darlint—
  I was foolin' of ye quite:
Yer mither's comin' back to ye
  To tuck ye in this night.

Frances Shaw

COMPENSATION

The years have taken all I had:
  Swift senses, supple grace,
Gold from my hair, light from my eyes,
  The roses from my face.

The years have taken all I had:
  Now shall they give to me,
Who from their hands in one keen breath
  Take immortality.

Anna Spencer Twitchell

[313]
MARCH IN TRYON

I

In the sweet March morning
   On the upland road
Sunshine and Blue Moth
   And I were abroad.

Like a voice the Silence
   Where old leaves lay dead:
"Make straight a highway
   For the Spring!" it said.

II

O East, there still are stars (a sign for sleep!)
   Like daffodils in a dark garden springing,
While the white moon slips down that other deep
   Of West, with low clouds clinging.
We wake for day, my armored-pine and I,
But only Watchman Wind goes lightly by,
   His "All's well!" singing.
III

I have listened, O wind—
I must go.
The valleys below
Into blossom are breaking,
But snow
I shall find
On the way I am taking,
I know.

Level lands become steep,
Rough with stone.
There goes none
On this journey uncharted,
Save one
Who will keep
To the heights joyous-hearted,
 Alone.

I have felt thee, O wind,
Out of space
Touch my face.
There shall be no returning.
New ways
Feet must find,
And the slow lips be learning
New praise.

Florence D. Snelling
DECORATION FOR VALOR

This boy, who stands so straight
While the General pins the medal on his coat,
May be thinking of a frame house
On Kelley Avenue in South Bend,
Or of the misery of having everyone look at him
While the trumpets blare.
But if I should ask him if he remembered
Curtius of Rome,
Or Childe Roland,
Or the Stainless Knight,
He would shake his head awkwardly
And say,
"No ma'am."

Hortense Flexner
FLYING

AERO-LAUGHTER

You've never laughed
Until the world
Has been beneath you
A mosaic map of lines and dots,
Called roads and mountains
By minute moving spots
Named men.
The jollity
Of this petty panorama!

When your plane,
Overcome with mirth,
Ripples in air pockets
With uncontrollable lurches,
Nosing down with a dart
To frighten the tiny earth;
Then recovers, fleeting
To heights beyond eyes' seeing,
Far from ears' hearing,
You are all tense
With the comedy of life
And the world's being.

At night the stars
Chortle gleefully with you.
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

The moon beams,
Benignly sharing your joy.
Thinking: “I laugh!
The world?—rather one world,
The buffoon of them all.”

**AERO-METRE**

In pale spaciousness
I blend with subtle infinity.
The wing wires of my plane
Whistle a monotone
That lulls my earthy unrest
To sleep.
The faint blur before me
Of whirring propellers
Soothes my eyes.
I have no objective.
The sky is bare;
The here and there
Have equal values.
There is no ultimate to strive for—
Only higher air.
Thinner and more fair.

My plane sees a star to vault,
But tediously pendulates
In measured expansion
Far below.

[318]
CONSECRATION

The achromatism of the sky
Alters the adagio tempo of my consciousness.
The avalanche of air inundating me and my plane
Goes out again from me in coruscating graciousness;
And, the dissonance of my unrest soothed,
Makes me devout before spaciousness.
There is a débacle of various egos within me,
That refractory memory thrusts before me
Knowing they will return to me with earth.
But for the now on high, all the crevices of my being,
Long filled by glutted life, are cleansed;
And I know consecration in eternal ether.

CONSUMMATION

In pursuit my plane
Penetrantly perceives
The ineffable fallacy
Of premature theories
On insurmountable space.

The litany of attack
Creatively promulgates itself
To isolated planets—
Startled spectators
Of my persistence.

[319]
Area is fuel to be consumed.  
The wilderness of sky  
Is foliaged resplendent—  
Color in permeable black.  
The center of all homage  
Alters with my plane.

**VOLPLANETOR**

Insoluble in high air's quiescence  
My plane, on earth a sophist, naively  
Reconnoitres promiscuously;  
Sinuously, nose retroussé,  
Explores thinning strata  
Of atmosphere, and, volplaning,  
Deems itself a static medium.  
How it routs pusillanimous planets  
From its path at night,  
Dazzling them pyrotechnically!  
My purposelessness is equalled  
By heterogeneous world events.  
Nevertheless the sky's oscularity  
Propitiates my primal impulses,  
And tedium is thwarted.

**PERSPICUITY**

Pirouettes  
My plane
To the moon’s
Perigee;
Papilionaceously
Lingers in its aura’s
Phosphorescency;
Then, mutable ever,
Flits to Mars’ perihelion.
O plane polytheistic!

Atavistic
In etherealism,
Seeking planets
Phantasmagorical,
Into pellucid
Pleonasm of space
I float
Evanescently.

Near the sheer blaze
Of the sun,
The translucent phlegm
Of my being
Reveals that I
Am the penumbra
Of the universe.
MAX EASTMAN speaks up again for exact metrics and against the freer forms which he once called "lazy verse." This time his argument—American Ideals of Poetry he calls it—forms the preface to his new book of delicately wrought "poems and songs and sonnets," entitled Colors of Life (Alfred A. Knopf). In this thirty-page article he sums up his case, the case of a man whose lingering conservatism, chased out of other departments of his mind, finds a last refuge in art.

Why not admit that Max Eastman is one of the most vivid and exuberant of human souls—an ardent creature who works, as he lives, with passion, convinced that he would not cringe before the white light of truth? The truth—he finds it in the old pagan clarity, uniting, across the Christian centuries, with the pitiless searching breath of modern science to bear away speculative fogs and aristocratic snobberies and humilities of faith. Like Rupert Brooke, he gives his ardor to a cause, and would die for it in glamorous ecstasy if need were. And, again like Brooke, he sees the figure of Beauty not quite lithe and nude, as Blake saw it, or—let us venture to say—as H. D. sees it today, but decorously draped in the sheerest and most softly colored of veils—silken chiffons that fall, almost without effort, into rhythmic folds, into wistful modern reminders of the austere Greek line.

But, in presenting the fine brief sonnets and other lyrics
which are the result of his prayerful communings with Beauty, he is not sure enough of them to offer them without preliminary theory, without a plea. His plea takes the form of a contrast between Whitman and Poe, and an indictment of free verse as necessarily disrespectful of the line and therefore unstructural and formless. He quotes from Whitman’s proud invitation to the poets of the future—that assertion that “there is something inevitably comic in rhyme,” and that “the truest and greatest poetry, while subtly and necessarily always rhythmic and distinguishable easily enough, can never again, in the English language, be expressed in arbitrary and rhyming metre;” and over against this he sets certain “icy” admonitions from Poe’s *Philosophy of Composition* which he thinks assert that poet’s “preoccupation with ‘verbal melody’” and his point that “beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem.” And Mr. Eastman adds: “The details of this difference are fascinating, but the generalization of it is what will illumine the modern problems about poetry.”

Well, in Mr. Eastman’s generalization one gets indeed his point of view, the clever argument of a special pleader, but not much illumination. He says, “The opposition of these two characters and attitudes is complete;” when, in fact, however the personal characters of Poe and Whitman may be in contrast, their aesthetic principles are far from irreconcilable. Does Mr. Eastman seriously ascribe to Whitman “a grand contempt for beauty?” or think that Poe, in asserting, “beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem,” means by beauty merely “verbal melody”—indeed, a metri-
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cally restricted verbal melody at that—and does not include spiritual motive? Does Mr. Eastman mean to imply that iambic metrics, rhyme, the pentameter line, or any other familiar instruments of English poetry, are anything but tools and aids, are in themselves structure? Does he find more “form” (much abused word!), more sheerly structural modelling, in The Raven than in that glorious elegy When lilacs last in the door-yard bloomed, even though the former poem is in the school, let us say, of Houdon and the latter in that of Rodin?

To come down to our own immediate moment, does Mr. Eastman find more form—a more severely modelled classic shape—in Witter Bynner’s fine Celia lyrics, or his own purely carved love sonnets in this volume, than in Carl Sandburg’s Lost or The Great Hunt, H. D.’s Oread or The Shrine, Aldington’s Choricos, Amy Lowell’s Venus Transiens, or Ezra Pound’s Dance Figure and certain other lyrics? Mr. Eastman may prefer strictly measured iambics to free verse—no one will deny him a right to his preference; but when he tries to ascribe to these all the architectonics of the poetic art he is treading on shoals and quicksands.

Mr. Eastman complains that the line-divisions of free verse are arbitrary, that if they were once scrambled together in any poem even the author could hardly unscramble them. But may one ask him what that alleged fact has to do with the case? If this scrambling makes prose of any piece, then it was always prose—as indeed much verse is, both bond and free. Would Hamlet’s soliloquy or Antony’s death-speech be
any the less poetry if written out as prose, or if scrambled into irregular lines? Is Lincoln's Gettysburg speech any the less essentially poetry, in rhythm, structure, and spiritual motive, because it happens to be printed without line-divisions?

If the eye-test shatters Mr. Eastman's arguments, the ear-test is similarly destructive. He says: if "two or three of the most free and subtle" of the vers-librists were "to read one of their favorite passages into the ear of an instrument, it is safe to assert that there would be less identity in the actual pulsations recorded than if the same two or three were reading a passage of highly wrought English prose." Possibly; but if these same two or three were to read *Paradise Lost* or the *Ode to the West Wind*, or any other poem of subtle or sweeping cadences, there would be still less identity. Such investigations as Dr. Patterson's (sensibly approved by Mr. Eastman and thoughtlessly disapproved, in a recent *Dial*, by John Gould Fletcher) will turn the pitiless light of science upon the empiricism of prosody, and upon the unrhythmic misinterpretations of poetry which most readers are guilty of. A life-time of theatre-going, including more Shakespeare and other poet-playwrights than may be found on the stage today, has convinced me that ninety-nine per-cent of actors deliberately hash poetic lines into prose so that even Mr. Eastman could hardly unscramble them. And few poets, whatever their rhythmic instinct, may be trusted to read their own poems.

In short, Mr. Eastman's argument will not hold water. It
is a wistful effort to give the sanctity of unalterable law to merely individual theories and preferences. Mr. Eastman wants poetry as a refuge from life’s passion and turmoil, and he uses the great name of Poe as his authority—Poe, to whom “a poem was an objective thing,” Poe, who “would take sounds and melodies of words almost actually into his hands, and carve and model them until he had formed a beautiful vessel.” Ah, but Poe’s passion was beauty, especially beauty as it is found in poetry, whereas Mr. Eastman’s passion is life, and its enhancement through social revolution. In politics and social ethics he is a radical; but shocked conservatism must take refuge in some sacred corner of one’s being, and in his case the muse presides there with draped and decorous dignity.

H. M.

A GOLD STAR FOR GLADYS CROMWELL

Died January 19th, 1919

The toll of our heroic soldier dead does not complete the list of those who have given their lives in the cause of liberty. The friends and fellow-artists of Gladys Cromwell may well display in her honor the service star of gold, tempering their grief for her untimely death with the thought of her service, even as though she had fallen in battle.

Many sensitive youths, unnerved by the agonies of war, have been removed from “the horrid bitter game” by the nervous disability known as shell-shock. The self-drowning of the twin sisters Gladys and Dorothea Cromwell should
A Gold Star for Gladys Cromwell

not be called suicide, but the tragic result of over-strain due to months of contact with the dark realities of war. Delicately reared, protected always from the common rough-and-tumble of life, they must have over-estimated their strength and power of resistance when they volunteered as canteen workers and went to France a year ago.

We do not know the exact history of their service, beyond the fact that for some weeks or months they were working near the Front. No doubt they came into immediate contact with wounds and death, with the devastation of homes and the pathetic misery of refugees. For a creature so keenly sensitive as Gladys Cromwell's poetry shows her to have been, the experience was too keen, too poignant. Over-wrought nerves led her toward melancholia, a pathological condition which time would have remedied but which her inexperience did not recognize. That tragic leap into dark waters was, in all probability, the result of illness contracted in service.

Thus her fellow-poets of America are entitled to inscribe the name of Gladys Cromwell on their honor-roll, just under those of Alan Seeger, Joyce Kilmer and the other poet-heroes who died in battle. Like them she was not afraid of death, even though like them she felt to the finest fibres of her being the exquisite beauty of life.

Her expression of this beauty was, in her best verse, of a sculpturesque austerity. There was "folded power" in those Songs of the Dust which appeared in Poetry exactly a year ago, a severe modelling of spiritual fabric into rhythmic form. For these poems Mr. Braithwaite, in his annual Boston

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Transcript review, placed Miss Cromwell’s name, with one other, at the head of his list for the year 1918. Their marble beauty, recording a sure advance over the earlier work in her volume Gates of Utterance, may well make her friends and fellow-craftsmen both proud and sorrowful—proud of her high service to the art and the cause of human liberty, and sorrowful that too-eager death has stiffened her limbs in youth and sealed her lips.

She waves us a fine farewell in her poem The Mould:

No doubt this active will,
So bravely steeped in sun,
This will has vanquished Death
And foiled oblivion.

But this indifferent clay,
This fine experienced hand,
So quiet, and these thoughts
That all unfinished stand,

Feel death as though it were
A shadowy caress;
And win and wear a frail
Archaic wistfulness.

H. M.

Note.—While the above was in proof, the writer met Miss Anna Ryan, whose valuable service in the Smith College Relief Unit is a matter of record. Miss Ryan said: “The Cromwell sisters were working devotedly at Chalons-sur-Marne for weeks while I was there—a particularly trying post, as the town was then under bombardment from earth or air almost every day; and from there they went directly to another post of duty at Verdun. Although even robust soldiers must be relieved after six weeks at the Front, no one seems to have ordered these girls to take a rest. At the end they were undoubtedly suffering from what the French call cafard, a condition of abysmal depression resulting from nerve-exhaustion. Unquestionably they deserve to be honored among those who have died for their country and the cause.”
REVIEWS

A DOUGHBOY ANTHOLOGY

Yanks—A Book of A. E. F. Verse. Published in France by The Stars and Stripes.

No other book has stirred me so much as Yanks since The Spoon River Anthology. It is a collection of poems from Stars and Stripes, the doughboy paper published in France, and your soldier boy should send you one. While this book has by no means the artistic weight and finish of Spoon River, it is full of suggestion and the sense of Tomorrow. From end to end it records the moods of the private soldier, and absolutely refuses to be heroic, though some of the amateur versifiers are now dead on the field. The whole book has an atmosphere of improvisation, yet one-third of the poems show a reasonable economy of language. Yeats said, "rhetoric is heard, poetry overheard." Almost this whole book is "overheard."

It is written in the American language. It is colloquial, without too much slang, the easy American dialect of college boys and farm-hands alike. This is a step toward the future idiom for our informal verse; far from the shackles of Riley, and equi-distant from the Brobdignagian tyrannies and over-distensions of Whitman. It has not the least notion it is poetry. It is all an embarrassed refusal to be aesthetic, heroic or stoical.

There are a few Kipling imitations, but I do not put them on the honor roll. There is much eighteen-year-old
humor, and America going to war is not much more than a clean eighteen-year-old boy with a gigantic power suddenly placed in his hands. I have known college freshmen to be just this funny and fine and poetical when they were least aware of it.

The book is a history of war for any man. Though at first it has the casual aspect of an old shoe, an old hat, yet the cheapest poem has at least one line of beauty una­wares. But the whole book is far more precious than any one poem. Rereading it the fourth time, it grows and clari­fies. It is indeed news from the front. It finally takes on the colossal simplicity of a gigantic dam of spring water, and I prophesy for the work an enormous popularity.

While we are reading it, it delivers us from Whitman, thank God! If you really want AMERICAN poetry, I sug­gest that you forget Whitman a moment, and read Yanks. It contains an invisible writing which appears on the fourth reading, and which was never in Whitman, even on the tenth reading.

Here are two poems complete, and following them some lines and phrases, and one complete humoresque:

THE NEW ARMY

Who are those soldiers
Who go marching down?
They're the young fellows
Of your old home town.

The butcher's son, the baker's,
His Honor's lad, too;
The old casual mixture
Of Gentile and Jew.

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Don't they march manly!
  Ay, they step light;
And soon by the papers
  Ye'll see they can fight!

R. R. Kirk, S. S. U.

LINES ON LEAVING A LITTLE TOWN
WHERE WE RESTED

We with the war ahead,
  You who have held the line,
Laughing, have broken bread
  And taken wine.

We cannot speak your tongue,
  We cannot fully know
Things hid beneath your smile
  Four years ago.

Things which have given us,
  Grimly, a common debt,
Now that we take the field,
  We won't forget!

Russell Lord, Corp., F. A.

Oh, the Bishop in his mitre, pacin' up the aisle,
The Governor, frock-coated, with a votes-for-women smile,
The Congressman, the Mayor, aren't in it, I opine,
With a newly minted corp'ral comin' down the line!

If quartered in city or country,
  The cook never misses his aim;
If messing in swamp or on mountain,
  Two things will remain quite the same;
Though it may cause a row,
  We get bosom of sow,
And beans—beans—beans.

They tell us tales of camouflage,
The art of hiding things;

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Of painted forts and bowered guns
Invisible to wings.
    Well, it's nothing new to us,
    To us, the rank and file;
    We understand this camouflage—
    We left home with a smile.

The mud that lies in No Man's Land
    Is as thick on the other side,
And where the Germans take their stand
    Is where we'll make them slide;
For our hob-nailed shoes will force a way,
And we'll knock them cold—for the U. S. A.

We've slept with all the gander's flock,
    By waddling duck we've slumbered on—
In fact, we've slept with all the stock,
    And they will miss us when we're gone.
We've seen at times the nocturne eyes
    Of playful Mouse on evening spree,
And the coastwise trade at night he plies
    With Brother Louse on a jamboree.
We've scratched and fought with foe unseen,
    And with the candle hunted wide
For the bug that thrives on Paris green,
    But cashes in on bichloride.

Perchance may come a night of stars,
    Perchance the snow drift through the tile,
Perchance the evil face of Mars
    Peeks in and shows his wicked smile;
'Tis then we dream of other days
    When we were free and in the dance,
And followed all the old-time ways,
    Far from the stable-barns of France.

It's no cinch for you, Buddy,
When the dreams with which you came
    Melt into naught
As you are taught
The horrid, bitter game.

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We're going out to God knows what,
We'll be back God knows when.

The old home State is drier now
Than forty-seven clucks
Of forty-seven desert hens
'A-chewin' peanut shucks.

“Oh, gee whiz, I'd give my mess kit
And the barrel off my gat
Just to take a stroll up Main Street
In a new Fedora hat!”

These are tawdry thoughts in an epic time
For martial souls to own?
They are thoughts, my friend, that we would not mend,
That are bred of our blood and bone.
A mustard shell it is very well,
And an egg grenade's O. K.,
But we get our steam from our little dream
Of the good old U. S. A.

All th' peepul started clappin'
When his talk kum to a close,
An' a purty little lassie
Offered him a dandy rose.

I watched you leap to the big advance,
With a smile for Fate and its fighting chance,
Sweeping on till the charge was done;
I saw your grave on a slope of France
Where you fell asleep when the fight was won.
Just a kid, who had earned his rest
With a rifle and helmet above his breast,
Who proved, in answer to German jeers,
That a kid can charge a machine-gun nest
Without the training of forty years.
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They're jumpin' an' they're humpin' through the inky gloom o' night,
'N' I wonder how them drivers see without a glim o' light;
I c'n hear the clutches roarin' as they throw the gears in high,
An' the radiators boilin' as the trucks go rollin' by.

There's some a-draggin' cannons, you c'n spot the sound all right—
The rumblin' ones is heavies, an' the rattly ones is light;
The clinkin' shells is pointin' up their noses at the sky—
Oh, you c'n tell what's passin' as the trucks go rollin' by.

But most of 'em is packin' loads o' human Yankee freight
That'll slam the ol' soft pedal on 'hue Heinie's hymn o' hate;
You c'n hear 'em singin' *Dixie*, and the *Sweet Bye 'n' Bye,*
'N' *Where do We Go from Here, Boys?* as the trucks go rollin' by.

Finally, one complete grotesque, which is unsigned:

"HOMMES 40, CHEVAUX 8"

Roll, roll, roll, over the rails of France,
See the world and its map unfurled, five centimes in your pants.
What a noble trip, jolt and jog and jar,
Forty we, with Equipment C in one flat-wheeled box-car.

    We are packed by hand,
    Shoved aboard in 'teens,
    Pour a little oil on us
    And we would be sardines.

Rations? Oo-la-la! and how we love the man
Who learned how to intern our chow in a cold and clammy can.
Beans and beef and beans, beef and beans and beef,
Willie raw, he will win the war, take in your belt a reef.

    Mess kits flown the coop,
    Cups gone up the spout;
    Use your thumbs for issue forks,
    And pass the bull about.

Hit the floor for bunk, six homines to one homme's place;
It's no fair to the bottom layer to kick 'em in the face.
A Doughboy Anthology

Move the corp'ral's feet out of my left ear;
Lay off, sarge, you are much too large, I'm not a bedsack, dear.

Lift my head up, please,
From this bag of bread;
Put it on somebody's chest
Then I'll sleep like the dead.

Roll, roll, roll, yammer and snore and fight,
Traveling zoo the whole day through and bedlam all the night.
Four days in the cage, going from hither hence;
Ain't it great to ride by freight at good old Unc's expense?

Vachel Lindsay

A POET IN ARMS


This book is dedicated, in an introductory poem, To The American People. In order to appreciate fully the challenge of its seven lines, one should know that Lola Ridge is Australian by birth. She came to this country fourteen years ago.

Will you feast with me, American people?
But what have I that shall seem good to you!
On my board are bitter apples
And honey served on thorns,
And in my flagons fluid iron
Hot from the crucibles.
How shall such fare entice you!

Indeed, this small book holds little which could entice average American gentlefolk who are so content with conditions as they are that they never disturb themselves as to their composition or de-composition. These conditions are
subjected to the most uncompromising excoriation I’ve ever seen between two American bookboards, through the twin media of conditions as they aren’t and as they should be. In other words, Lola Ridge is a revolutionist. She is a prototype of the artist rebels of Russia, Germany and Austro-Hungary who were the forerunners of the present régime over there—men like Dostoievsky, Gorky, Moussorgsky, Beethoven, Heine, Hauptmann, Schnitzler. I don’t mean that Lola Ridge is that horrific creature, a masquerading propagandist. She is first and always an artist. In trumpeting for freedom, going to blows for it, housing it in an art form, one unconsciously destroys its opposite. Love destroys hate and convention; libertarians, demi-gods; artists, shackling traditions; form, formalism. Beethoven hammered out nine symphonies, at least five of which were revolutionary. Back in Waterloo time, he was denounced as a noisy lunatic, a savage smashing old forms. On the contrary, he created Beethoven without destroying Mozart, for Mozart was himself a revolutionary. Without hinting at comparison, I’d like to predict that Lola Ridge will be charged with lunacy, incendiarism, nihilism, by the average American who reads her book. The everlasting minority will proclaim her another free singer, another creator of free form.

The Ghetto is a magnificent pageant of the Jewish race in nine chapters. In this single work the poet surpasses the dramatist, David Pinski, who is, in my opinion, easily the leading figure among the Jews themselves over here, and perhaps the foremost writer for the theatre regardless of race
or language. Her uncanny range of knowledge of the Jew and her realistic presentation of his lives are heightened and made plastic by the magic of the detached imagination which hovers always a little above realism and formulates its relative compositional values. Philosophically, she is more robust than Pinski. In the final analysis, she doesn't see the Jew as a tragic type.

Bartering, changing, extorting,
Dreaming, debating, aspiring,
Astounding, indestructible
Life of the Ghetto. . . . .
Strong flux of life,
Like a bitter wine
Out of the bloody stills of the world. . . . .
Out of the Passion eternal.

She sees the future of the race more clearly than the Jews themselves. She prognosticates the Jew as one of the leaders in the new world, and her vision is borne out by even a casual perusal of the present-day names of men who are re-moulding Europe. For sheer passion, deadly accuracy of versatile images, beauty, richness and incisiveness of epithet, unfolding of adventures, portraiture of emotion and thought, pageantry of push-carts—the whole lifting, falling, stumbling, mounting to a broad, symphonic rhythm, interrupted by occasional elfin scherzi—well, The Ghetto was felt by a saint who wasn't afraid to mix with the earth, and recorded by a devil who must inevitably return to heaven. Perhaps Lola Ridge is only another Babushka released from exile to a place of leadership among her contemporaries.
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There are a number of long poems, the best being Flotsam, Faces, The Song of Iron, Frank Little at Calvary, The Everlasting Return and The Edge. Poe’s sentimental tirade against the long poem is refuted here. There’s only room for a few lines from Flotsam, but they give you the plot of the poem, and a reminiscence of a Rembrandt etching.

This old man’s head
Has found a woman’s shoulder.
The wind juggles with her shawl
That flaps about them like a sail,
And splashes her red faded hair
Over the salt stubble of his chin.
A light foam is on his lips,
As though dreams surged in him
Breaking and ebbing away.
And the bare boughs shuffle above him
And the twigs rattle like dice.
She—diffused like a broken beetle—
Sprawls without grace,
Her face gray as asphalt,
Her jaws sagging as on loosened hinges.
Shadows ply about her mouth—
Nimble shadows out of the jigging tree,
That dances above her its dance of dry bones.

The Song of Iron is an exhortation to labor swinging to the rhythm of a paean, and a warning to “Dictators—late Lords of the Iron.” It recalls the exultation of the last movement of Beethoven’s dance symphony, the Seventh. Underneath the hammering rhythm, as relentless as a machine and as primatively nude as the animal, surges the call of mate to mate. It is my favorite poem in the book. Frank Little at Calvary is more than a fictitious rendering of the last moments of the I. W. W. leader, and suggests the part his execution may play in the future. The Edge—

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And I lay quietly on the drawn knees of the mountain, staring into the abyss—
is an ecstatic nature lyric closing on the serene cadence,

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

In some of her short poems, Lola Ridge participates in the crystallization of concentrated strength achieved by Emily Dickinson, Adelaide Crapsey and H. D. There are, particularly, three in seven lines—Débris, Spires and Palestine—which hark back in form and spirit to the seven-line dedication. This is Débris:

I love those spirits
That men stand off and point at,
Or shudder and hood up their souls—
Those ruined ones,
Where Liberty has lodged an hour
And passed like flame,
Bursting asunder the too small house.

And this is Palestine:

Old plant of Asia—
Mutilated vine
Holding earth's leaping sap
In every stem and shoot
That lopped off, sprouts again—
Why should you seek a plateau walled about,
Whose garden is the world?

In these reconstructive days, liberty is being re-defined, nationalism is approximating internationalism, the personal is trying to approach the impersonal. For myself, I must say that I cannot feel that liberty, internationalism and the impersonal will ever be realized. But for every attempt made, however unsuccessful of accomplishment, all the blood-
drops in me are grateful and sing hosannas. They respond to Lola Ridge.

Alfred Kreymborg

TWO BOOKS BY FLETCHER


The reader who makes his first acquaintance with Mr. Fletcher's work through these two volumes will have a very unfair impression of the author's real worth; for these in no sense compare with his best work as it is revealed in *Irradiations: Sand and Spray* or in *Goblins and Pagodas*. The brevity of the small poems in *Japanese Prints*, and possibly their subject matter, are the only points of similarity with Japanese poetry; they are decorative in phrasing, but perhaps because of this very "decorative" element, they seem to escape that union of spiritual delicacy and profundity which is characteristic of even the slightest Japanese verse. We, as westerners, are too prone to overlook the underlying humanism of Japanese or Oriental art and to get only the outward appearance. Of course the outward mask is in itself wonderful, and "decorative" in truth, but this is not all; and when one in turn undertakes to create another mask, one must not forget that there should be a face underneath it. Otherwise the mask will be empty. Masks that only imitate other masks eventually become lifeless.

That is, I think, why these small poems by Mr. Fletcher do not move us, either as art or life. They appeal rather
as a sort of literary bric-à-brac. This is perhaps too harsh for their intention, which is relatively slight. Nevertheless, unless interpretation really adds something, it is better discarded, and these poems which continually suggest, not the author, but the double art from which they are derived, do not after all do justice to the original. For Japanese poetry, however brief, is not slight, and it does not pose or attitudinize as these poems often seem to do. If, forgetting Japanese prints and Japanese tankas, Mr. Fletcher had written a series of small poems independently of Japanese models, the spirit, one believes, would have been much closer to that of Japanese poetry.

*The Tree of Life* represents a completely different phase of art from that exemplified in *Japanese Prints*. In these love poems, emotion has completely run away with the author. It is impossible to retain any definite impression of the book or of single poems—only a confused, vague tangle of shifting moods and images, none with enough contour to stay fixed even for a moment. The book is a welter of emotion, but it remains chaotic and without form. All poets have lapses. Only a comparatively small proportion of the work of the biggest men is retained and treasured. So there is no reason to be too despairing because these two books do not come up to Mr. Fletcher's already achieved level. But any man who has the *Ghosts of an Old House*, the *Blue Symphony* and some of the poems in *Irradiations* to his credit need not expect us to be satisfied with anything less.

*A. C. H.*

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This is not a negligible book. You may like it or you may not; but you will read it, and then find that you have many things to say: reasons for having liked, and possibly even enjoyed, Bodenheim and his peculiar, visionary word-forms, or reasons for having felt irritated and displeased by his eccentricities.

For simplicity's sake one may record a contrast or two. For instance, whereas his aesthetic color-sense is clear, his aesthetic sound-sense is faulty; and although he takes his words with a rare and delicate sense of their meaning, he is apparently unconscious or uncaring of their oftentimes lumpy, jerky ugliness of sound. I think it is a matter of unfortunate consonants breaking too harshly into an otherwise harmonious enough tonal silhouette. Such a line as "Picking up forgotten hints of its heart" is a strange amalgamation of jumps; also this:

The sea is pregnant with gracious discords  
That falteringly shroud the sleep-rhythmed breasts of winds.

Even at a Thanksgiving feast one does not wish for too thick a slice of turkey on one's plate! On the other hand, a line full of beauty, but with an uncertain content is: "Upon an arched sarcophagus of pain."

All through the book one is conscious of a strong technique not yet quite fully mastered—a technique that does surprising things with the poet. For instance, although he shows
in many poems a real appreciation of the idea of “silence” he seems unable because of his multitudinous technique to avail himself of its curious values. A little silence somewhere in this line would have been truly golden:

Shaking nights, noons tame and dust-quiet, and wind-broken days.

The poems To Minna contain many obvious and hidden beauties, although they seem hardly the kind of things to be inspired by a young girl of eighteen, suggesting always a more mature personality. Of the Myself portion of the book, Death is very beautiful, and both soft and sharp:

I shall walk down the road.
I shall turn and feel upon my feet
The kisses of Death, like scented rain.
For Death is a black slave with little silver birds
Perched in a sleeping wreath upon his head.
He will tell me, his voice like jewels
Dropped into a satin bag,
How he has tip-toed after me down the road,
His heart made a dark whirlpool with longing for me.
Then he will graze me with his hands
And I shall be one of the sleeping, silver birds
Between the cold waves of his hair, as he tip-toes on.

And another Death has a fine beginning:

A fan of smoke in the long, green-white revery of the sky,
Slowly curls apart.
So shall we rise and widen out in the silence of air.

The last lines of Poet Vagabond Grown Old may also be quoted:

But now I walk on, alone.
And only after watching many evenings,
Do I dance a bit with dying wisps of moonlight,
To persuade myself that I am young.
The two plays at the end of the book, one written in collaboration with Ben Hecht, are less interesting, surely less Bodenheim, than the short poems. Bodenheim knows, however, what he means when he writes, and this colossal virtue can hardly be over-praised. And whether you read to praise or blame you had better read him.

I feel Greenwich Village in the repeated use of the word “pale.” The pallor of Greenwich Village is a pallor too profound for light discussion, but my respect for Bodenheim and his finer work is such that I would object less to these “pale flowers,” these “pale wearinesses,” “pale purple lanterns,” and “pale purple breaths,” if I felt them to be not Greenwich Village, but Bodenheim himself. He may find it, being such a color-lover, a more stimulating atmosphere than that of his earlier dwelling-place; but if a poet must have a favorite cliché, of the two it is far better to be stamped with something like the big, common clichés of Chicago, or even New York (in the larger sense of course), than with the little, pale purple ones of Greenwich Village.

Helen Birch

SWINBURNE'S BABY POEMS


Those who have loved Swinburne's love of babyhood will find his testimony gathered together at last, and adorned by
Swinburne's Baby Poems

Arthur Rackham with pretty, if rather conventional, drawings in color, and less adequate pen-and-ink decorations.

The book gives one a chance to review fading impressions—for none of Swinburne's baby poems absolutely compels remembrance, as does Blake's adorable song for an infant two days old. Compared with that, the poems in this book are made; fashioned with exquisite delicacy and grace, it is true, but lacking the butterfly birth, full-grown and winged.

The subject tempted the poet to a flowery interweaving of rhymes in forms old and new. We have the series of *Cradle-Songs* rhyming in triplets thus:

Baby, baby bright,
Sleep can steal from sight
Little of your light:

Soft as fire in dew,
Still the life in you
Lights your slumber through.

Four white eyelids keep
Fast the seal of sleep
Deep as love is deep:

Yet, though closed it lies,
Love behind them spies
Heaven in two blue eyes.

There are of course many roundels—the charming ones on a baby's feet, his hands, his eyes, his *First Footsteps*. But no amount of graceful manipulation can quite make us forget the essential artificiality of this form. One likes better the interweaving of flowery rhymes in *A Baby's Epitaph*—here is one stanza:

April made me: Winter laid me here away asleep.

[345]
Bright as Maytime was my daytime; night is soft and deep:  
Though the morrow bring forth sorrow, well are ye that weep.

And this stanza-form, from *In a Garden*, has an exquisitely appropriate grace and lightness:

```
Baby, see the flowers!
—Baby sees
Fairer things than these,
Fairer though they be than dreams of ours.
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One may suggest the flavor, but not the richness, of Swinburne's prodigality in this garden of babyhood—the reader must look for himself. The book closes with that thirty-poem lament for "a house without children," *A Dark Month*, poems which are spun out too thin quite to deserve Mr. Gosse's adjective, "impassioned."

H. M.

CORRESPONDENCE

SERVING IN THE A. E. F.

The following letter from one of this month's contributors, a First Lieutenant in the 330th Infantry, is dated Paris, Jan. 8th, 1919:

DEAR POETRY: I am revelling in your bunch of back numbers as in a first taste of chocolate after months deprived of luxuries.

I finally managed to give up being a liaison officer—a piffling kind of job. I got myself transferred to Aeroplane Observation, which, next to being a pilot is the nearest approach to deification possible to man. And just as I was about to begin my flying Peace broke out and I came down to earth with a crash. I was thrown into a Classification Camp and thence into the Railroad Transportation Service, since I know as much about Railroad Transportation as I do about the weaning of infants. Just at present I am R. T. O. at Chartres, in command of one enlisted man, and with a rank be-
Serving in the A. E. F.

tween the Baggage-man and the Assistant Station-master. It sometimes seems to me curious that when I order some seventy hard-bit veterans into a freight-car, where they are to live during a two- or three-day trip, they obey me without question; it seems funny that they don’t say, “Where were you when we were in the Argonne?” and refuse to ride in anything but first-class coaches.

It is a pleasant kind of life, though; the life of a railroad station is changeful and vivid (did you ever read Zola’s La Bête Humaine?) And it gives me a thrill to wave my hand to the engineer and see a gigantic locomotive go heaving and spitting out of the station as if I had kicked it out. There’s not much sense in grumbling because I haven’t had a bloody job in the war, because nobody would believe me anyhow.

Is there anything in French you want? Most modern French poetry is mannered and bloodless, I think, but I gather that Professor Pound does not.

NOTES

Mr. Ezra Pound’s free translation of a series of Latin poems by Propertius, of which we offer numbers I, II, III, and VI, will be included in his new book to be published in May or June in London. It is understood that Mr. Pound will soon issue, in the same capital, the first number of a new magazine to be called The Criterion.

A distinguished Latinist of the University of Chicago says: “Mr. Pound’s poems are, in the main, free translations, with excisions here and additions there. Most of them are from the third book, the first as here given being made up of the first and second of the original. The one numbered IV is mainly based on the thirteenth poem of book two with considerable building-up from elsewhere.”

Dr. William Carlos Williams, of Rutherford, N. J., was another of Poetry’s earliest contributors. His latest book, Al Que Quiere (Four Seas Co.), was reviewed last April.

Ditto Frances Shaw (Mrs. Howard Shaw), of Chicago, whose latest book is Songs of a Baby’s Day (A. C. McClurg). G. O. Warren (Mrs. Fiske Warren), of Boston, author of Trackless Regions (Blackwell); Miss Hortense Flexner, of Louisville, Ky.; and Miss Anna Spencer Twitchell, now of Los Angeles, have also appeared in Poetry.
The other poets of this number are new to our readers. Mr. Robert M. McAlmon, who was born in Kansas in 1896 and is now a student in the Los Angeles University, has just been demobilized from Battery C, N. A. R. D. He has published prose articles, but as a poet his “only indiscretion,” up to the present time, was in a camp paper, *Flight*.

Lt. Morris Bishop is another young soldier, as his letter from France (above) shows. He has had one poem in *The Century*.

Louise Morey Bowman (Mrs. A. A. B.), of Toronto, has recently appeared in Canadian and New York papers.

Mrs. Florence D. Snelling is a Boston poet. And Marion Ethel Hamilton (Mrs. F. M. Hinkle) lives in Albany.

**BOOKS RECEIVED**

**ORIGINAL VERSE:**

*From the Heart of a Folk*, by Waverley Turner Carmichael. Cornhill Co.

*The Band of Gideon and Other Lyrics*, by Joseph S. Cotter, Jr. Cornhill Co.

*Songs of My People*, by Charles Bertram Johnson. Cornhill Co.


*Songs of a Miner*, by James C. Welsh. G. P. Putnam’s Sons.

*Counter-attack and Other Poems*, by Siegfried Sassoon. E. P. Dutton & Co.


**ANTHOLOGIES:**

*Humanity or Hate—Which?*, by Harvey Carson Grumbine. Cornhill Co.


*The Book of Lincoln*, compiled by Mary Wright-Davis. George H. Doran Co.

**PROSE:**

*La Mêlée Symboliste*, by Ernest Raynaud. La Renaissance du Livre, Paris.

*Sœur Véronique*, by Annie de Pène. La Renaissance du Livre.
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