Poetry
A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe
April 1919
Spring-time Number

Poems of the Fields by H. L. Davis
Folk-songs from the Ukraine
Proud New York by John Reed
The World’s Desire
by Edgar Lee Masters

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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

Vol. XIV

POETRY for APRIL, 1919

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APRIL, 1919

PRIMAPARA

THE SWEET-TASTING

WE rode hard, and brought the cattle from brushy springs,
From heavy dying thickets, leaves wet as snow;
From high places, white-grassed, and dry in the wind;
Draws where the quaken-asps were yellow and white,
And the leaves spun and spun like money spinning.
We poured them onto the trail, and rode for town.

Men in the fields leaned forward in the wind,
Stood in the stubble and watched the cattle passing.
The wind bowed all, the stubble shook like a shirt.
We threw the reins by the yellow and black fields, and rode,
And came, riding together, into the town
Which is by the gray bridge, where the alders are.

[1]
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

The white-barked alder trees dropping big leaves
Yellow and black, into the cold black water.
Children, little cold boys, watched after us—
The freezing wind flapped their clothes like windmill paddles.
Down the flat frosty road we crowded the herd:
High stepped the horses for us, proud riders in autumn.

RUNNING VINES IN A FIELD

Look up, you loose-haired women in the field,
From work, and thoughtless picking at the ground.
Cease for a little: pay me a little heed.

It is early: the red leaves of the blackberry vines
Are hoar with frosty dew, the ground's still wet,
There is vapor over toward the summer fallow.
And you three make a garden, being put by—
Since you are too old for love you make a garden?

It is love with me, and not these dark red frosty leaves
The vines of which you root for garden-space.
You will be concerned, you three used up and set by:
I could speak of the red vines, of pastures, of young trees;
And you would dibble at love as you do the vine-roots.

It is early, but before your backs be warmed,
And before all this dew be cleared and shed,
I shall be half among your hearts with speech:
Love, and my sorrow, the disastrous passages,
So that you'll cease all gardening, dangle dark red
Vines in your hands not knowing it, and whisper.

They forget me for a little pride of old time.

**A FIELD BY THE RIVER**

I see a white river-bird, and I see the women
Among the weeds, the light of their dresses between
Quick willow leaves; and I see that there the wind
Comes like a bird from the river, and blows their dresses.
Today their pleasure's among willows and high cold weeds
Where the flood bred pale snapdragons in the shade.

I lie in the high grass by the spring at their door
And hear them across the white stubble of their own field's
Edge: along the willows in the sand where the reaper
Has never been driven, they go. It was the flood margin.
At the flood margin which they feared their pleasure is;
Their white dresses fly where the water felt at the young grain.

It seems they are silent, looking at the white bird.
"Does it follow us here?" And one, looking to the sky: "No,
There is nothing now till spring to be anxious for;
They are through reaping, the grain is gone, and two seasons
Are to come before spring comes: so enjoy the day."
They come pleasantly through high weeds, old foam in the branches.
IN THE FIELD

The young grass burnt up, so hot the air was:
And I was lying by her knee, near the cool low
Spring branch, in sight of the green shining meadow.
How red her mouth was, how fine her hair, and so cool;
Her hair was cool as the ground; I thought how red
Her mouth was, and wondered at her white wrists.
Another would have meddled, not have let me lie;
Another would have laughed when I put in items her beauty,
But she was still, like any scene or the sky.

Her red mouth, her wrists so white. "This is cool blood,
And it is deep, since it colors your mouth only.
I wonder and wonder at you—do you seem best
Playing with your hand in the dirt, like any dumb person?
For then you are like a black river-bird at rest;
Or like a poet sitting on the stairs among
The people like yours, and talking familiarly with them.
I wonder at you moreover because of your people,
Whose daughters should not seem sweet, yet you seem to me
Pleasanter to touch than are the light breast feathers
Of a bird: and your heart plays lowers, more like wind.
It is pleasure to lie by your knee here in the fields."

I say yet, the white alders and the willows' switching,
And the weaving of thin graceful weeds, pleased me more
Than to own pastures: because of her beauty. But say
Nothing like "Come away", because her people
Work with her now where about cold low springs the smoke
From waters at morning stains the cold air all day.

**THE GYPSY GIRL**

One cherry tree beside the house in this low field
Is yellow and bright-colored now. Several weeds
Are full of brown seed, and the ground is drying out hard.
What is not picked, now, in the garden, will never be picked.
In this fall, by this garden of gray stems and seeds
I sit in what dusty grass is left, and words
Come in groups, like floss upon the pale green water.
They concern the gypsy girl, fat with child, and sickly
Complexioned, who, I think, made me offers.

Her long black hair
And yellow face above the pale green water at nightfall.

The gypsy girl was sallow, as if with nightfall,
Paler looking because of the necklace of red beads,
And because of her rings and bracelets of heavy silver.
There was a silk scarf, green and yellow, upon her hair,
Her most dark and heavy hair, bound at the back in small
Silver bands, all heavy; and light-colored and green silk
Was her bright dress, which was stretched with her young one
So that its pattern shaped into big ungodly flowers.
She came through the short willows; she came beside me
Smiling as if a crowd were watching her from the weeds.

[5]
“What is not picked, now, in the garden, will never be picked,”
I say, before this garden.

I felt her child’s heart beating,
And, for thinking of that heart and of her lover,
The “Come, there is some good place near,” and the feel of her hand,
I would not answer. This which might have dispersed
The many girls who have appeared to me sleeping,
I would not consent to.

It was that. I say to the sand,
Nevertheless, as if to one person: “Dear love, departed,
Can some season not freshen us? I am disheartened;
Are there many like the dark girl? are there many like me?”

But what is not picked now in the garden will never be picked.

THE SPIRIT

In the early spring, the fattening young weeds
Appear, all green, their veins stretched, amongst their dead.
And every sand-hill, with its bundle of willow
And young green riding the sand, is my pleasant walk.
The river, every rock there, and the wind
Molding cold waves, have seen a spirit by day
Which I would see; and now that my heart’s a poor hired one
Which owns no favor or love, but did awhile,
I walk my pleasant walks. Where the new dark red
Willows feather in sand against the sky,
I make out a spirit sitting by the new grass:
The sun shines yellow on the hair, and a wind blows
That would melt snow, but her face calls it on.
And her hands are quiet in her red sleeves all day.
"All my pleasure begins when you come to this place."
"I am sorry for it, spirit, yet I most wished it;
Has my heart commanding shamed me to your eyes?"
"Never in life shall these eyes see you shamed.
I half live, like a stalk, but no girl orders me."

MY STEP-GRANDFATHER

My step-grandfather sat during the noon spell
Against the wild crabapple tree, by the vines.
Flies about the high hot fern played, or fell
To his beard, or upon the big vein of his hand.
With their playing he seemed helpless and old, in a land
Where new stumps, piles of green brush, fresh-burnt pines,
Were young and stubborn. He mentioned the old times
As if he thought of this: "I have marched, and run
Over the old hills, old plowed land, with my gun
Bumping furrows—oh, years old. But in this new place
There is nothing I know. I ride a strange colt."

"You know old times, and have seen some big man's face:
Out of the old times, what do you remember most?"
"General Lee. Once they called us out in a cold
plowed field, to parade for him. He was old with frost.
I remember our style of dress; my dead friends last long,
(I would have thought longer); and there were peaked
women
Who watched us march, and joked with us as they were
trimming
The green shoots of wild roses to eat. But these with me
Lack what the other has—they are not so strong.
And lost battles?—I would be prouder starving in rain
And beaten and running every day, with General Lee,
Than fat and warm, winning under another man.”

Alone presently, I laid myself face down
To avoid seeing the field; and thought of how the book
Describes Esther; and imagined how that queen might look,
Preferred for beauty, in her old fields red and brown.
“I am like my step-grandfather,” I thought, “and could
Follow whatever I love, blind and bold;
Or go hungry and in great shame, and, for a cause, be
proud.”
And I came to work, sad to see him so old.

OAKLAND PIER: 1918

I had a bench in the shadow, back from the arc light
Which burnt in the engine smoke like a coal, and colored
The men's faces red, so they seemed inflamed with excitement. Sometimes all the engines would charge near me, with a noise which shook the orange-stand there, moved the piles of dark-red oranges.

I was sleepy with the cold of the winter and the past midnight; Half asleep I heard the water of the bay; and a man's voice: "I remember, in China, when this army was there, Eighteen years ago, a Captain Abel was worse. He did not die, either, but went home as you are going."

And the young soldier: "What did I say: kill?"

The sergeant seemed not to hear him, talked on as an old man will On some subject he has thought about: "I was no recruit then; I have soldiered for twenty-nine years, in every country. That is longer than you are old. You'll go home, and be like That man with the oranges. Marry, buy land, do well, And I say nothing: but do not tell me of soldiering. Talk of hog-killing, farmer. I am old now, And still quicker than your people."

"Yes, you are a sergeant, You have better treatment. It is all officers with you. You have soldiered twenty-nine years: they consider you more."
What do you know of my people? They are quick too—
What is this to talk about now? You are too old;
And I shall be home in two days, as good as any officer.”

As the men were silent I heard the gulls following a ferry-boat,
Or flying in the dark somewhere; and when they ceased crying and turned
Back into the bay, their wings sounded like leaves
Blowing from poplar trees down a road.

I thought: “Only gulls;
There are the engines, the red-faced men; this is Oakland Pier.
I am tired now, shall I ever be sorry of the quietness
Of the roads in light snow, the thin grass covered and cold?”

THE OLD ARE SLEEPY

A slow spring between two wheat-fields. High on the hill
In the straight weeds the men walk sizing the wheat,
Sweating through dry soft ground where wild sunflowers are.
The wind blows dust in the faces of these old men,
And dust is all over their faces as they ride down,
As they ride toward the poplars about the distant house.

Do I not know? They will watch the green willows between
These very fields; rest a day or two, mend roads
Against the harvesting of this high grain; and sleep.
The old men have seen it and are content with it,
Content among the women, and all content—
Women who lie uneasy at night against them.

I know of this, and of the mouth of music which said,
"A small spring between the wheat-fields."  I know the low
hair
And the beauty in which music is, as slow rain
Is in the willows when they dip over like hands.
I know her of whom you are proud, that before their sleep
They also behold her proudly—a distant spring's beauty.

Is this the distant spring's beauty?  For in the rain
It shall all be changed, and the willows about it be darkened.
The old men have put the hills in foal; yet past
Sundown, and until the morning the headed wheat
Finds me, and I feel her mouth and low hair.
Cry for their pride in her, when you lie by them at night!

FLAGS

In the wind the flags, which here are called irises,
Snap and blow ragged all along the street.
They are of three colors, yellow and white and blue.
At this I am pleased as a man who sees strange ships,
For the reason that in the country I recall
We had not heard of any but white flags.
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There the white flags grew in a damp level place
Where jonquils were, and daffodils and lilacs,
And small cool roses; and hands of locust blossoms,
And heavy-headed peonies, and a red flower
The women called red-hot poker, loud as a bull-rag.
These flowers growing together in tall strong grass.

Sometimes the swallows flying; sometimes rain
Came over the tall grass, and the small red rose
(Its flowers as yet watched for) shed off the dust.
Sometimes it was windy, and the flags blew out;
Or hot, and the jonquils under the lilac bush
Built out in beauty like a clear warm river.

My pleasant thoughts build in colors and graceful shadows
For this flower-garden: flags the color of far waters,
White locust flowers in the rain, young flowers in the grass.
Play up a tune, sing loud and handsome, O soul!
The garden abides, it is not like love, nor the song
Where some lost girl brings honey in the horn.

THE VALLEY HARVEST

Honey in the horn! I brought my horse from the water
And from the white grove of tall alders over the spring,
And brought him past a row of high hollyhocks
Which flew and tore their flowers thin as his mane.
And women there watched, with hair blown over their mouths;
Yet in watching the oat field they were quiet as the spring.

"Are the hollyhocks full bloomed? It is harvest then.
The hay falls like sand falling in a high wind
When the weeds blow and fly—but steady the sand falls.
It is harvest, harvest, and honey in the horn.
I would like to go out, in a few days, through the stubble field,
And to all the springs—yours too we have known for years—
And to the bearing vines, and clean the berries from them."

Call, women!—why do you stand if not for your pride's sake?

But the women would neither call to me nor speak,
Nor to any man not mowing during their harvest.
They watched with their hair blowing, near the stalks,
In the row of red hollyhocks.

Quiet as the spring.

What is by the spring? A bird, and a few old leaves. 

H. L. Davis
At Philae, in the temple of Isis,
The fruitful and terrible goddess,
Under a running panel of the sacred ibis,
Is pictured the dead body of Osiris
Waiting the resurrection morn.
And a priest is pouring water blue as iris
Out of a pitcher on the stalk of corn
That from the body of the god is growing,
Before the rising tides of the Nile are flowing.
And over the pictured body is this inscription
In the temple of Isis, the Egyptian:
This is the nameless one, whom Isis decrees
Not to be named, the god of life and yearning,
Osiris of the mysteries,
Who springs from the waters ever returning.

At the gate of the Lord's house,
Ezekiel, the prophet, beheld the abomination of Babylon:
Women with sorrow on their brows
In lamentation, weeping
For the bereavement of Ishtar and for Tammuz sleeping,
And for the summer gone.
Tammuz has passed below
To the house of darkness and woe,
Where dust lies on the bolt and on the floor
Behind the winter's iron door;
And Ishtar has followed him,
Leaving the meadows gray, the orchards dim
With driving rain and mist,
And winds that mourn.
Ishtar has vanished, and all life has ceased;
No flower blossoms and no child is born.

But not as Mary Magdalen came to the tomb,
The women in the gardens of Adonis,
Crying, "The winter sun is yet upon us,"
Planted in baskets seeds of various bloom,
Which sprouted like frail hopes, then wilted down
For the baskets’ shallow soil.
Then for a beauty dead, a futile toil,
For leaves that withered, yellow and brown,
From the gardens of Adonis into the sea,
They cast the baskets of their hope away:
A ritual of the things that cease to be,
Brief loveliness and swift decay.

And O ye holy women, there at Delphi
Rousing from sleep the cradled Dionysus,
Who with an April eye
Looked up at them,
Before the adorable god, the infant Jesus,
Was found at Bethlehem!

For at Bethlehem the groaning world’s desire
For spring, that burned from Egypt up to Tyre,
And from Tyre to Athens beheld an epiphany of fire:
The flesh fade flower-like while the soul kept breath
Beyond the body's death,
Even as nature which revives;
In consummation of the faith
That Tammuz, the Soul, survives,
And is not sacrificed
In the darkness where the dust
Lies on the bolt and on the floor,
And passes not behind the iron door
Save it be followed by the lover Christ,
The Ishtar of the faithful trust,
Who knocks and says: "This soul, which winter knew
In life, in death at last,
Finds spring through me, and waters fresh and blue.
For lo, the winter is past;
The rain is over and gone.
I open! It is dawn!

Edgar Lee Masters
TO A DEAD MOUSE IN A TRAP

We are born short of sight; but some of us,
Some who are human, grow to presbyopes
And set lack-lustre eyes on distant stars
And infinite impersonals: the children
Who worship gilt and sugar, break their gods
(Breaking their hearts with every bitter blow),
And pin their faith to others; till at last,
Finding this life a plated thing, they turn
To Heaven, to a listless second choice.

Happy the scattered, joyous polytheists
Who, loving God and gossip, prayers and gold,
Float smoothly here and yonder, like the bee
Who, finding that bloom dry, falls into this one.
And, failing of such versatility,
I have been tempted now and then to call
Happy a young lieutenant I have known,
Who held both arms out to the Long-desired
And clasped the bloody earth with those two arms.

Yes—as I drop you on the garbage-heap,
Tiny crushed glutton, I half envy you.

Roy Temple House
PROUD NEW YORK

(Fragment from a long poem—America: 1918)

By proud New York and its man-piled Matterhorns,
The hard blue sky overhead and the west wind blowing,
Steam-plumes waving from sun-glittering pinnacles,
And deep streets shaking to the million-river—

Manhattan, zoned with ships, the cruel
Youngest of all the world’s great towns,
Thy bodice bright with many a jewel,
Imperially crowned with crowns . . .

Who that has known thee but shall burn
In exile till he come again
To do thy bitter will, O stern
Moon of the tides of men!

John Reed
FIFTH AVENUE SKY-SCRAPERS

We are the phantoms of mortar and brick
Slapped against patches of sky,
Stretching our taut, slender bodies
Into the clouds.

Under us endless masses of people, endlessly walking
Somewhere, nowhere;
Endlessly swallowed by us
Who house them, feed them, clothe them,
Followed by masses of others, endlessly walking.

We do not walk.
We have mounted the pace of men's minds that have made us—
Made us the thing that we are,
The sphinx of a world that is new, yet blind as the old.

They do not see us—the sphinx,
The soul of themselves.

For they are aimlessly walking—
Anywhere, nowhere—
Walking to deaden the hour,
Walking toward life,
Walking toward death,

Somewhere...
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VAGABONDS

I
When you flashed
Like the sudden sun
On my blinking eyes,
Frightened little words
Scampered to my throat
And tumbled from my lips—
Strange vagabonds.

II
They envy me
When they call him mine.
My soul envies
My lips and my arms.

III
You kissed me once.
But if you kiss me again
Because you kissed me once,
I will kill you.

Alice D. Lippman
THE GIFT OF DEATH

I cannot lose you, dear, let come what may,
For you are with me as a melody
And have been through the ages. I can see
No time in all times that within me stay
When you were not the worth of every day.
The names I called you by have passed from me,
The forms I loved you in perhaps will be
Again sweet woman forms of loveliest clay.
And then, perhaps, you may be as a breath
Of rosy flame along the narrowing west;
For even now in all that I love best
Your name starts as a music—and the hue
Of beauty trembles through me. Dear, in death
I'll find, not immortality, but you.

Roger L. Sergel
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EPISODES

THE THING

I see it in the sorry gleam
That lights the far and forlorn dream;
It's in the glorious sacrifice
Made for the wry inglorious prize;
It's there to see (I cannot choose)
When men take honor to the Jews,
And in the satyr's hoofs that rave
Down the still cathedral nave;
In slender lips that twist and sing,
And curved eyes quick with revelling,
And every gesture of delight
Caught in the blue mirage of night.

It will I seize and hold some day—
But for it I must throw away
And for it I must leave behind . . .

By God, I wish that I were blind!

EPITAPH ON A MADMAN'S GRAVE

The time had come to kill himself, he said,
Because at night he couldn't run and dive
Into a pool of sleep heels over head
The way he used to do when he was five.
WHY HE CORNERED THE MARKET

There was a candy shop in Samarcand . . .
And all the other kids would come and stand
Outside the window, noses in a row
Pressed white against the glass, to see him go
And stretch up to the counter while he chose
A copper's worth of these and two of those.

DISILLUSION

You came and stood there in the failing light,
   A sorceress who told her mysteries.
At that there grew behind my eyes a sight
   More beautiful than any woman is:
And to my blood a lifting joy came in
   And warmed me; as of old I flashed to try
Swiftly what that swift thing might be . . . and then
   I saw that there was only you and I

In that small room whose fire was almost dead.
   Of course there were the chairs, a book or so,
And tea set out . . . I got my hat and said
   That it was really time for me to go.
THE RETURN OF DREBENUCHA

Oi, to war rode Drebenucha, with the nobles to battle.  
In the castle left he Katerina, its whole charge in her keeping.

Then rose up his old mother, tore her hair, wrote a letter:
"Thy great palace of brick is all ruined, all ruined thy stables!

"Thy bay horses are loose and they wander, thy goats they are scattered;
Thy wine cellars lie now all open, thy proud household's in riot."

Then the youthful Drebenucha tore his hair in his trouble;  
Saddled he his bay horse quickly, and homeward he galloped.

Oi! came then Drebenucha to his strong, lordly castle.  
Came to meet him Katerina, fair, lovely as ever.

But the young man, Drebenucha, paid no heed to her beauty:  
Swift he drew out his sharp broadsword—her fair head fell, riven.

His walled castle was not ruined—'twas as stately as ever;  
His brick stables were not fallen—they were better, were stronger.
In the stables his horses, his goats in the courtyard!
His proud household was still haughty, no disgrace had be-fallen.

And his old mother, seated, was holding his youngest,
Drebenitko, his baby—in her arms he was lying.

“If I feared not, my mother, God’s wrath from His heaven,
I would draw my sharp broadsword, thy head should be severed.”

Oi! then rode Drebenucha all up a steep mountain,
And he slew first his good steed, then fell on his broadsword.

“O thou, flinty mountain, thou hast taken my father!
Katerina is dead—take the young Drebenucha!”

SONG OF THE DROWNING COSSACK

Go, my horse, along the road, through the new gates;
And my old mother will come out to meet you.
But tell her not, little steed, that I was drowned—
Tell her, my little horse, that I have married.
Oi! my friends at the wedding are maples drooping over water,
My marriage-brokers are carpenters in the water,
My grooms men are of the drift-wood,
My kinsmen are the pike in the river,
And my bride—the still waters!
MARUSENKA’S WEDDING

The little Marusenka for water to the stone well has gone. Ere she stooped for the water—strange sounds in the distance! She drops her pails, smites her little hands, And to her home hastens.

“Oi, my father, dear soul, The great raid is coming! They will fight, they will rob us, They will take me with them— The little one, the young one, Like a red cherry.”

“Marusenka, daughter mine, Hide thyself in thy chamber Among the fair maidens.”

“And there they will know me By my head, by my hair, By my light-colored tresses. The other girls’ braids Are wreathed all with rue; But mine are unplaited, And with periwinkle crowned.”
PARTING

I shall die, my love, I shall surely die;
Then make for me, my love, a coffin of cedar.

*I cannot make thee, sweet one, a coffin of cedar!*
*Thou must lie, Mila, O my dear, in one made of fir.*

Bury me, dear one, in a grave deep in the cherry orchard;
Plant by my head a little creeping berry.

And when the one who parts us takes thee by the arm,
As thou walkest through the cherry orchard—
The one who parts us walking with thee—
Thou shalt summon me from my grave:

"Oi, arise, my dear, rise up—look around!
See thy cattle wandering through the wide world!"

"Oh, let them go; and if ever they assemble again,
They shall nevermore see the mistress they knew."

"Oi, arise, my love, arise, look round about!
Thy children already are scattered and gone to work."

"Oh, let them go!—and if ever again they meet,
Their mother indeed and indeed they shall never see."

"Oi, arise, my love, my Milasenka, arise!
For thee thy youngest child cries, for thee she weeps."
"Oh, let her cry!—she will soon cease. Whosoever once dies, does not rise from the grave."

"Oi, arise, my love, my Chornobriva, arise!
Lo, the flower I planted has bloomed at thy head!"

"Oh, let it bloom, let it bloom, let it bloom in full flower! Whosoever once dies—lo, she rests in the grave."

THE BATTLEFIELD

Black, oh, black was once the plowing—hai, hai! The black plowland they're re-plowing
And the sowing is of bullets. Harrowed by the white, white body—hai, hai!—Washed with blood now is the plowing.

On a hillock lies a warrior—hai, hai! Lies the warrior on a hillock, Red kitaika on his eyelids—Red, how red! A silken kerchief—hai, hai!—Blinds his eyes, the red kitaika.

Here's no coffin, here's no grave-hole—hai, hai! Here's no coffin, here's no grave dug; Here's no father and no mother, No one to set bells a-tolling—hai, hai!—Ne'er a one to ring the death-knell.
Florence Randal Livesay

Only hoofs of horses ringing—hai, hai!
Only hoofs of horses ringing,
    With the jingling spurs of comrades.
Only horse’s hoof a-ringing—hai, hai!—
    Only jingling spur of comrade.

From a strange land swift a crow flies—hai, hai!
From a strange land swift a crow flies—
    On the grave-hill it is sitting:
Drinking of dead eyes it sits there—hai, hai!—
    Of the dead eyes it is drinking.

And a mother walks and calls there—hai, hai!
Calling, crying, roams the mother,
    For her dead son ever looking.
"Oi, I know thy son, thy dear son—hai, hai!—
    For on him I have been feasting."

"Wilt thou tell me of thy kindness"—hai, hai!—
"Little crow, I pray thee tell me
    If my dear son be yet living?
Are his eyes as gray as ever?"—hai, hai!
    "Are his lips red as kalina?"

"Blue and cold now are his red lips—hai, hai!
Blue already are the red lips;
    Black with death his hair is lying;
On his face I have been perching—hai, hai!
    And his eyes I have been drinking!"

Translated by Florence Randal Livesay
NEW YORK, in this season of extraordinary grace, dazzles one's imagination like a futurist picture: dancing skyscrapers, shooting automobiles, theorizing poets, trotting Pekinese dogs, peering windowfuls of spring hats—all these criss-cross in lines of black, crimson and silver across a sky of blue and gold. Motion—perpetual motion; prisms all aflare; the riches of the earth and the glory thereof heaped up in formidable towers; long prancing avenues declaiming to heaven—is there any other place on earth so loud and proud? Powerful?—doubt it, and you are beaten over the head. Magnificent?—what ghost from Rome or Babylon, or jewel-encrusted Moscow of the Tzars, shall challenge this stuffed and grandiose autocrat of all the rushers?

It was a study in contrasts—on Saturday, the birthday of George Washington—to go in the morning to the Lowell Centenary, and in the evening to Alfred Kreymborg's party of the poets of Others and others. It was a dramatization of the stately past and the impertinent future—the former solemn, oratorical, affirmative, richly set forth at the Ritz-Carlton; the latter merry, quizzical, argumentative, challenging the world from a sky-parlor studio in the region whither the Village has adjourned.

The Lowell party may have lacked fire, but it was the ultimate of dignity. The semi-circle of sages on the platform needed only the robes of office to look as omniscient as the
Supreme Court of the United States, and there was no ques­tioning the eulogies of the day’s hero which, one by one, they came down stage to deliver. They did their best for the suave and brilliant Lowell—Lowell the professor, diplo­mat, man of the world, wit, essayist, orator, even poet. Prof. William Milligan Sloane, of Columbia, led the procession by bowing gracefully before him. Prof. Barrett Wendell carried his best Harvard accent for a solid hour in a loyal effort to prove him an immortal. That popular gentleman of letters, Prof. Stephen Butler Leacock, of Toronto, delivered Canada’s cheerful tribute; and the ever-lyric Alfred Noyes, tunefully representing England, digressed from the subject to celebrate the entente cordiale in a ballad of flags along Fifth Avenue. Edgar Lee Masters was the only orator who emphasized the prevailing harmony by even the slightest discord; for his smooth quatrains of rhymed eloquence led up to Whitman’s name instead of Lowell’s, and called upon the assembled frock-coated wise men to set about abolishing poverty. And at last that modern Addisonian, Samuel Mc­Chord Crothers, rounded up the Centenary by striking the final major chord. Lowell, he said, represented that later stage of American idealism when the idealist was withdraw­ing from rougher contacts; The Cathedral embodied his con­ception of America, and the Commemoration Ode was his “noblest utterance.”

And so the great occasion was over, and we proceeded to size up its hero more informally at luncheon, theorizing as to whether a “noblest utterance” may also be a poem, and
whether bard, philosopher, or even mere unillumined man, may withdraw from rougher contacts and yet save his soul and sing his song. One or two iconoclasts thought the poet in Lowell was defeated by professional blandnesses and ambassadorial elegancies. Another thought that there wasn’t much poet in Lowell, that the aforesaid blandnesses and elegancies were his proper fare. A few referred to time’s revenges à propos of Lowell’s obliteration of Poe. And quite a number wondered whether Walt Whitman’s Manahatta, having paid her tribute to the Bostonian, would also devote two or three days to honoring the greater bard’s now so imminent centenary.

Yes, this grave and reverend assemblage was a sharp contrast to the Others party. One stepped suddenly from the nineteenth century into the post-war twentieth, and from a tufted Victorian drawing-room into a bare but hospitable futuristic attic. If the former was comfortable and soothing, the latter was stimulating, even irritating. The day’s illustrious centenarian was not mentioned, but Tom, Dick and Harry of the muse’s new era were knocked about from pillar to post of bantering praise or blame.

Dr. Carlos Williams argued for fluidity of technique—an ever-changeful and episodic rhythm—as the only possible expression of an age of cataclysmic change. How absurd is a fixed poetic method, he insisted, when all the world is dashing to pieces around us! We can’t finish a poem in the mood we began it with; every sentence, every choicest phrase, is imperiled by the eruption. The poet should yield like a river
The Glittering Metropolis

to changing banks, rocks, precipices—should yield swiftly, easily, in mid-sentence if need be, taking gladly the new form, the new motion. Poetry must be a series of continually shifting experiments, a thing of changing contours, dancing lights, fluid rhythms, if it is to be true to this age of perpetual motion in which we live.

And Emanuel Carnevali took up the challenge, asserted the muse's humanism. Poetry was not a thing of changing surfaces—its currents ran deeper. The perpetual shift and sparkle of changing moods, fluid technique, were not poetry any more than reflected lights and floating driftwood were the river. Poetry was the heart of the race, moving in mass rather than in ripples; carrying lightly its reflections, experiments; essentially changeless in spite of the great variety of forms—from calm pools to torrential cataracts—in which it might express itself.

And so on, with much and varied opinionating, for various opinions were there. Lola Ridge, on the eve of departure for her readings in Chicago, came in with a tiny plant and a pretty story: some anonymous reader had sent the plant, also a note containing fifty dollars, to her door as an expression of gratitude for her poems. Why are not such incidents common, I reflected? Why do not more readers thus bestow a golden laurel-leaf upon some poet whom they admire? Alfred Kreymborg and his bride did the honors, with the aid of Michael and Daphne Carr, whose studio received us. And William and Marguerite Zorach, close partners in poetry as in painting, brought a suggestion of brown Russian
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plains. And Muna Lee, her dark eyes shining, threw a round word into the discussion now and then. And Edna St. Vincent Millay, her little head like a flaming lily on a slender stalk, flitted lightly in and out of it. Florence Mastin was there, and Louis Grudin, and Babette Deutsch, and Padraic Colum, and the cryptic Marianne Moore, who seemed less cryptic than her poetry. And others.

Another contrast—but that came the next week—was a meeting of the Poetry Society of America, at which, according to numerous informants, it happened that the worst poems of the year were read, including a Salome narrative by Lewis Worthington Smith as quaintly and pompously old-fashioned as the pin-back over-skirts of the 'seventies. The usual diversion of selecting by vote the two "best poems" of the evening starred two of a quality which served to emphasize this editor's protest against making such child's-play the basis of the society's annual award of prizes.

Poetry is a shy episode in proud New York, indeed, in all the resounding modern towns. What else may be mentioned?—chiefly a memorable talk with Wallace Stevens, as he passed through from Hartford to somewhere further west. When informed of many inquiries as to when his first book would appear, this reticent poet said he was not interested; so his admirers may be warned that there is little hope. And plays? A pretty one-acter by Mary Carolyn Davies was poorly given by the Drama Forum, after an interminable harangue in broken English by an irrepressible lady from Denmark. Dear Brutus, with Gillette in it, was charm-

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ingly Bariesque. Redemption, the much over-praised, seemed to me poor Tolstoy, poorly acted with preternatural solemnity by Jack Barrymore. Maeterlinck's Betrothal was sweetly pretty—yes, sickly sweet; a long way downward from Pelléas and Mélisande, or even from the whimsical Bluebird. Walter Hampden's once-a-week Hamlet I did not see.

The one memorable, even glorious, theatrical experience of a too brief New York visit was the Stuart Walker company's presentation of The Book of Job. I had feared to risk so prodigious a venture, but the reward was magnificent beyond words. Never a slip, never a false note, marred the sublime simplicity of the greatest drama ever written; and the Job of George Gaul was a triumph of the loftiest dramatic art. Strange that it should require an actual stage presentation to remind us that Job is not a narrative poem but a drama, its highly colored dialogue embodying action as intense as a charge from trench to trench—action of the spirit expressed in flaming words of beauty. And it is an example of perfect structure: Job and his three friends all grandly drawn and individualized, their dialogue leading to that haughty utterance, "The words of Job are ended," which falls like the tolling of a great bell; then the interlude protest of the Young Man—immortal youth against self-revering age—interrupted by the intolerably moving Voice in the Whirlwind, that Voice so difficult for mere humanity to express; and finally Job's humility beneath it.

The restoration, described by the two narrators in their
admirable statuesque niches to right and left, was soothing and beautiful; but its mood, so much lighter than the main tragedy, made one almost wish that the actors would follow the mandates of modern higher criticism, which ascribes the final chapter of Job to a later and cheaper poet and thereby decrees its omission.

From the ever-shifting, ever-glittering kaleidoscope of the brilliant ultra-modern metropolis, these few patterns of many-colored life are offered as a whispered hint, a casual suggestion.

H. M.

THE UKRAINE AND ITS SONG

In looking upon the plight of the new-old republic of Ukraina—(for, centuries ago, it was a republic; always, even when but a name, it meant heart-home to men who loved a good fight and freedom)—one thinks of the powerful lines of the national folk-poet Shevchenko, in the days of his serfdom addressed to the Ukraine:

No father to his son shall say:
"Kneel down and fold your hands and pray—
He died for our Ukraina."
I care no longer if the child
Shall pray for me, or pass me by.
One only thing I cannot bear:
To know my land, that was beguiled
Into a death-trap with a lie,
Trampled and ruined and defiled.
Ah, but I care, dear God; I care!

His "death-trap" refers to a treaty made with Muscovy. Many have thought that the Ukraine betrayed her allies in 1917, but not those who have made the closest study of her
The Ukraine and Its Song

problem, her situation and history. She had no love for Russia, which had banned her own tongue and oppressed her own people; she owed no allegiance to Austria, which yet held within her confines the Ruthenians, the Hutzuls of the Carpathians, the Bukovinians and Galicians. In her dream, the “giant enslaved” was to drop his shackles, and the world was to know the Ukraina of song and story as an entity and not as a “forgotten kingdom.”

It is hard to discuss what Kolessa calls “the national Bible” or store-house of folk-song, without stopping for many explanations; for until recently the Ukraine was only a name written on the hearts of thirty-five millions of people; the French literateurs being about the only ones interested in her artistic expression, if we except clever German and Austrian propagandists. “What blood is to the body their language is to the Southern or Little Russian, the Bukovinian, Hutzul, the Ruthenian of Galicia. . . . What will prevent the Ruthenian of the Dniester from speaking the same language as his brother of the Dnieper?” asked Kolessa in 1905.

One may not plow the depths of the sea;
One cannot bind the live spirit of the living word.

“How proud should the Ukrainian race not be of this rich treasure of song!” he cries. Bodenstedt, who translated the Ruthenian folk-songs into German, calls its medium the most melodious of all Slav languages. And the Serbian Lukshich says: “It approaches Great Russian the most nearly, but is easily understood by all other Slavs. It is recognized as the most harmonious and most easily learned of these; it is specially well adapted to music and song.” The melody
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is an inseparable part. If among a thousand airs a Ruthenian can recognize his own, it contains something that others have not. These folk melodies were known centuries back, long before the present Western-European music was composed. Kolessa says also that it differs from Eastern-European song both in structure and rhythm, that many of the songs had their origin in those of ancient Greece. The writer of The Expedition of Ihor compares a battle-ground to the plowed field of death, the Ukrainian heroes to the marriage-brokers at a wedding-feast drinking the wine of blood. And in another old song a drowning Cossack addresses his horse in nationally characteristic fashion.

It was in the eighteenth century that a learned Englishman, Macpherson, called the attention of his own people to the fascination and educational possibilities of their folk-song. After him came the German Herder, and then the Slavs. In the first half of the nineteenth century large collections of Serbian folk-songs appeared, then Bohemian, later the Ukrainian. In 1819 Prince Sertelew published a collection of Ukrainian historical songs and poems, and he was followed by many now well-known collectors such as Dra­homanov, Lysenko, Kolessa and Franko. The Ukrainians possess the greatest volume of folk-literature, next to the Serbians.

Perhaps readers of POETRY may be especially interested in an odd and more modern form of Ukrainian folk-song—The Kolomeyka. These bits of impromptu verse mostly consist of themes dealing with love or family customs. They differ
from others in their shorter form; in fourteen-syllable couplets they embody a complete thought. This is the latest-born of the Ukrainian folk-songs, and is about the only branch of the national literature still in process of creation, enriched by every generation. In Galicia it has become a very popular form, slowly crowding out others. In one village Dr. Ivan Kolessa noted down more than two thousand Kolomeyki. In these are embraced the bright and dark sides of life, from the most foolish trifles to the most important events. A large proportion are conceived in comic vein:

Oh, no more I'll stay unwedded, weary of my life!
Oi, I have a silver coin—I will take a wife!

There is a certain technique, an art which is very satisfying, in some of the best of the Kolomeyki. The first line gives a picture of nature, the second portrays the state of the individual soul.

Oi, the blooming deep-blue blossoms so blue they, all blue they—
There is no one I am loving, save that Vasylenko!

There is a close analogy between these two lines. As the Vasiliki bloom blue, so in her heart grows the love for her sweetheart. The sweet basil is here chosen—it is often planted by a maiden to ensure a lover’s coming.

As the Cuckoo mournfully calls at the cross-roads, so the maiden yearns for her lost lover:

Oi, Zazula it was cooing where the cross-roads met:
Me thou hast forgot, my lover—thee I cannot forget!

And, to give other examples:

Oi, I may not shut the gates that bar the grove so high!
Him I loved well, him I'm loving till the day I die.
By the mill there stands an ash-tree, mill turned by the wind:
You've clung to me, my own dear one, around my heart you've
twined.

By the mill there grows an ash-tree—the maple bows—'t will break:
If I can't have the one I love now, no other love I'll take.
(The Maple bending down is a symbol of a Cossack suffer­
ing or dying.)

In some more ambitious verses a close parallel and antithe­
sis is carried out:

Every green leaf, from tree falling, rots—lo, it is gone!
Every young unfaithful lover, when he falls—lives on!

First and foremost the Kolomeyka is a dance song. In it
the dancer after each turn sings a couplet; in some parts of
Galicia and Bukovina youths and sometimes women also sing
the couplets in the swift reversals of the dance, and in most
cases these are composed on the spur of the moment. It
should be remarked that the Lowland Kolomeyka is more
lively and boisterous than in the Carpathians, where it is
monotonous and slow. In some countries it is not sung
unless the dance is in progress, while in others the people
sing it in the fields and pastures.

Maidens and shepherds are the chief composers of the
songs—Corydon and Phyllis singing their catches and roun­
delays. When a youth is jealous the "blizzardy" refrain
will serve his turn:

Go not where I'm bound for now, a-wooing my sweet maid!
Else in cedar coffin thou surely shalt be laid.

Florence Randal Livesay

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REVIEWS

POETRY OF THE NORTH-AMERICAN INDIAN


The publication of this book is an event, since here for the first time the subject of Indian poetry is presented to us squarely on its own merits. Before this, if one wanted to know anything of Indian verse one had to search through the scientific and often non-literary treatises in the publications of the Bureau of Ethnology, or be content with the sort of intermittent treatment of the subject found in books devoted to a more general consideration of Indian life. But in this book, Indian poetry is presented to us as an art, rather than as an ethnological curiosity. This does not mean, of course, that the ethnologists have not performed a very great service in preserving these authentic Indian poems for us, but only that their point of view is not that of the artist or poet, and that it has remained, and still remains, for the artist and poet to interpret adequately many phases of Indian expression. The way in which this book has eventually crystallized, so to speak, is in itself indicative of a growing perception on our part of the literary and artistic value of Indian motives. Many minds, working separately, almost in the dark as it were, and along individual paths, have here come together to present what is a genuine contribution to contemporary literature.

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And contemporary the book is in every sense of the word. Not only is the American Indian a contemporary of ours—a fact too often lost sight of through the use of such terms as "the vanishing race" or that other colorless and far-distant-sounding word "aboriginal"—but his poetry is very much of our time. Whether it is the spirit of the land reacting upon our poets to make them like the earliest owners of the soil and sky, or whether it is due to some other cause, certain it is that these Indian poems are very similar in spirit and method to the poetry of our most modern American poets. Stephen Crane would have qualified as an Indian poet, and in the *Mid-American Chants* of Sherwood Anderson one finds almost precisely the mood of the songs accompanying the green corn dances of the pueblo Indians.

Another thing that gives the book its amazing freshness and contemporary feeling is the fact that many of the translators have not been "literary" (in the pseudo sense) and have not attempted to "gloss" the poems with poetic phrasing—invariably trite. The result, often enough, is far more effective for just this reason. Paradoxically, the ethnologist, who usually is not interested in the literary quality of the Indian's mind as such, has, because of the very literalness of his reaction, preserved the spirit of the original as one less disinterested in this respect could hardly have done. The translations of the Chippewa songs by Miss Frances Densmore, for instance, are notably excellent, and Miss Densmore, as a musician primarily interested in the music, was content to set down the bare image given her by
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the Indian. The result is authentic to a degree not often achieved. Also Dr. Washington Matthews' renditions of the Navajo *Mountain Chant* impress us with the same feeling of essential authenticity, and one could mention the work of other translators in which the same faculty of direct transcription is evident.

One chief danger of translation, of course, is the tendency to Europeanize the original, and against this the translator must be continuously on guard. Another danger, as noted above, is in the form given to the fluid content furnished by the Indian. When an Indian song is translated to read like an Elizabethan poem or Spenserian stanza, one instinctively feels that the essence of the original has somehow escaped, or been smothered by the translator. Of course all translation is interpretive to a certain extent, and it is only with the most scrupulous care that the translator can keep from imposing upon the song some shade of meaning not inherent in the original. Again, translation, to be vital, must be abreast of the best contemporary expression; and translations which include the many awkward inversions and trite poetic phaseology of pseudo-poetic expression, of which the Indian himself is not guilty, fall notably short in this respect. The great advantage afforded by this volume, and this has never been furnished before, is the opportunity to compare the respective merits of the translators as well as the originals, and to determine for oneself just how far each has succeeded in capturing the essence of Indian thought and inspiration.

Fortunately for one's further illumination in this direction, Mrs. Austin's introduction to the book is in itself a
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collection as important as the contents. One might have despaired of wishing for anything so adequately understanding of so much in Indian poetry that seemingly defies analysis; but the secret of Mrs. Austin's success is that she approaches the subject with the sensitive feeling of the poet combined with the lack of preconceived bias characteristic of the best scientific thought. Fortunately, too, she is not "sentimental" about the Indian. This is another danger which seems to assail the interpreter of Indian art. It is perhaps a natural reaction to the other extreme in this country, the attitude of the vast majority of our middle-class "barbarians"—including Indian agents, Indian commissioners and the like, who regard the Indian as a savage without culture, and his art a curiosity at best, and unrefined and uncivilized at worst, to be suppressed at all hazard. It is indeed hard for one who knows anything at all of the Indian's "inside" thought to speak without heat on this subject or escape the stigma of sentimentality in regard to the Indian. When one meets Comstock in the desert, the inclination to exalt the Indian by contrast is irresistible! Mrs. Austin's work, however, is characterized by moderation as well as discrimination, and she claims for the Indian only what he is. The key-note of her point of view may be found in a phrase from another article in which she says, "There is no such thing as primitive mind; there is only mind in a state of primitive limitation." I don't know just what state of limitation the mind of our Comstockian Indian officials may be in; but it is certainly not sufficiently innocent or beautiful to be called primitive!
If I have touched only upon the outskirts of this book and given nothing of the heart of it, of the Indian poems themselves, it is only that from a mass so rich it is impossible to quote with any satisfaction. A review which would do justice to the subject would be a thesis in itself. Indian poetry has never reached an artificial stage, and when one says this one realizes something of the pristine freshness of this great fund of material. Mr. Cronyn has grouped his poems by regional divisions, and this is exceedingly wise, for the poems of the woodlands differ from the poems of the desert; the first are more lyrical, the latter more rhapsodic. Again the Plains Indians and the Indians of the Northwest coast have a touch of keen humor and satire and incisive philosophy. The Indians of the Southeast, the Cherokees, have many magic formulae, recalling the voodoo of the southern Negroes. Perhaps these tendencies may be significant. Of the poetry in general one may say that it is of a very high order, exhibiting many varieties of inspiration, often symbolic to a high degree but always vital and always human. "Cut deeply into any Indian poem," Mrs. Austin says, "and it yields that profound and palpitant humanism without which no literary art can endure."

The appreciative interpretation of the poetry of another race is largely, one must believe, a gift. The whole art character of the Indian is of course more Oriental than European. Perhaps that is why we have so long failed to appreciate it. It is possible that Indian poetry may be more closely allied to Chinese poetry than to that of any other
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race; it has the same realism, the same concrete simplicity, and acceptance of the commonplace experience, as well as the exceptional, as the material of poetry. There are also many points of similarity with Japanese verse, in spirit no less than in the brevity of many songs. And Mrs. Austin points out the pure Greek mode of a poem from the tribe of Tenasa on the shore of the Missi-sippu. So the American Indian stands revealed as a poet of no mean order.

One thing is sure: whatever else may be accomplished by this book, we must discard our nursery-period Fenimore-Cooper-Hiawatha, cigar-store-Indian impression of the Indian. He is not a bit like our naïve conception of him. He is much more interesting, and his personality more richly varied. As for his art, one gets some inkling of it in this book; but not the whole story. His theatrical art, of which many of these songs are a component part, is the finest thing we have in this country without exception, the most consummate, primal art. And our government can think of nothing better to do than to try to suppress it! But for those who know this art, in its fulness, with all its rich color and poetry and amazing symbolism, this book is correspondingly richer.

As an epilogue to the poems, Miss Constance Lindsay Skinner furnishes a brief essay on The Indian as Poet, of which the most outstanding feature is her picture of an old Indian:

The Indian water-song is poetry to me because of a memory: an old chief, his hair grayed and his broad brown face deepened by a hundred and ten years, his sightless eyes—almost hidden under
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sagging crinkled lids—raised to the wet air. He sat in his doorway—a low oval entrance in the trunk of his totem pole, which towered, with its grotesque carvings of finny and winged beasts, thirty feet into the fine misty rain that dropped, silent and opaque, on the earthen cliff, the sightless sea and the blind eyelids of the old chief. He seemed to have been sitting there since the day when the first rain fell and the gray sea first flapped her wings on the shore, as her weird brood fluttered from under them to roost on the totem pole.

In addition to the direct translations composing the body of the book, Mr. Cronyn has included a section of interpretations by Constance Lindsay Skinner, Mary Austin, Frank Gordon, Alice Corbin and Pauline Johnson. (One wishes that he had included also the Cherokee poems of John Gould Fletcher.) The translators include such well known names as Natalie Curtis, Alice Fletcher, Franz Boaz, Washington Matthews, John Peabody Harrington, Jeremiah Curtin and many others. And greatest of all, of course, are the unnamed Indian poets whose work speaks for them in these pages.

Incidentally it is a matter of some pride to the editors of POETRY that the immediate inspiration for the volume came, as Mr. Cronyn says in his preface, from the Indian number of the magazine published February, 1917.

A. C. H.

JEAN UNTERMeyer'S BOOK

Growing Pains, by Jean Starr Untermeyer. B. W. Huebsch.

What the reviewers delight to call the “New Poetic Renaissance” is barely six years old, and already it contains not only matter for reflection, but food for melancholy. Ap-
parently, a number of young and enthusiastic souls have believed themselves capable of doing something striking now that the old restrictions of metrical verse have been removed. But, alas, it takes more than the mere abolishing of this or that standard to make a poet, and the man who would never have had the force, nor the industry, nor the originality, to write interesting poetry in quatrains is just as uninteresting, as unoriginal, and as lazy, in vers libre. The only difference is that we are not quite so sick of the modern conventions as we were of the old ones, yet. For, unfortunately, our movement, young as it is, has already developed conventions. In taking up most of these new volumes one can see at a glance into which of the usual modern categories they fall. And, after all, it is largely as echoes of this or that leader that they achieve even a measure of success.

Perhaps we are unreasonable to expect more really remarkable poets to be alive at one time, for we are far enough on the road now to realize that the movement, to rate it no higher, has done pretty well. But those of us who are concerned with poetry are always on the lookout for more. We read poem after poem and book after book, starting each with high expectations which are seldom fulfilled.

Tastes differ, naturally, but for me I must confess that only twice lately have I felt like flying a flag over a book by a practically unknown author and shouting to the populace that here is a valuable thing, and a poet to be most thankful for. The first of these books was Profiles from China by Eunice Tietjens; the second is Growing Pains by Jean Starr
Untermeyer. No two people could be more unlike in themselves or their work than Mrs. Tietjens and Mrs. Untermeyer, but the point is that each is indubitably herself. It is not that they dare express themselves, because everybody so dares to-day—it has become a very easy thing to do; it is that they each have something very special to express. Which is merely to say that they are poets not only because they have the faculty of expression, but because they have personalities which are peculiar and interesting. When one is young and learning how to fit words together, one thinks that it is the way one writes it that makes a poem; when one is old (or, at least, elderly) and words leap to one’s bidding, one learns that it is really what one is that does the business. It is not so difficult to learn how to write if one cares for it (which implies a measure of taste) and will work hard; but there is the Biblical remark about adding a cubit to one’s stature, and the cubit is quite as refractory when it comes to mental altitude.

Jean Starr Untermeyer is a poet by the grace of God. Which is not to imply that her poetry is not as happily contrived as good poetry always must be, but that the poetry behind the putting of it down is of the finest.

This is an exceedingly modest volume of only sixty-four pages, which means that there is no padding. As a matter of fact, there are only thirty-four poems in the book, and they are all very nearly on a level. The first poem, which gives the book its title, is the key-note to the whole:

From the bloodless battle,
From wrestling with memories—those athletic ghosts,
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From an aching reach for Beauty,
Speech has burst forth;
Not for Art's sake,
But to rid me of an ancient sorrow—
Not mine alone and yet so wholly mine.
I have left no songs for an idle lute,
No pretty tunes of coddled ills,
But the bare chart of my growing pains.

All of Mrs. Untermeyer's work springs from "an aching reach for beauty" and most certainly there are no "pretty tunes;" but the "bare chart" is really a rare austerity of expression. I think "austere" describes this verse better than any other word. As I said, some time ago, the poems are "full of a strong and almost stern sentiment." Here is no sentimentality, but a great power of emotion. The poet says:

> I would rather work in stubborn rock
> All the years of my life,
> And make one strong thing
> And set it in a high, clean place.

It is a "strong thing," this poetry; and all through the book the reader has the feeling of being himself set in "a high, clean place." The subjects are simple: love, birth, death, misunderstandings, poems to father, mother, and child. This is subjective poetry, and it does not reflect any wide knowledge of men or places, such things are outside of the author's experience. But the simple things are also the elemental things, and once again is evidenced the odd truth that nothing is too old to be new if only there is a kink of personality behind the presentation. She speaks of her love clothing her husband in a "shining and terrible garment." She looks at her life and determines to
Jean Untermeyer's Book

Cast aside my longing for romantic rôles
And accept my destiny with a wry pride.

She rejects the "luke-warm poultices of praise." These expressions have the simple completeness of originality.

Not seldom there is an ironic touch, as in Clothes, and sometimes (in Church Sociable, for instance), the irony is touched with wistfulness. But usually Mrs. Untermeyer is too strong, too passionate, in either her joy or her sorrow for such half-lights as wistfulness. She is no lover of tinted attitudes, and she scorns the queasy and careful of the world:

Sometimes when I hear people mouth the word "toleration" I am moved by a fury and a kind of pity too.

Always she prefers the "slow and rigorous pursuit of truth."

I wish I had space to quote Autumn with its delightful catalogue of fruits, and its vivid picture of the old yard and the catsup kettle bubbling in the middle of it. Verhaeren's Flemish genre pictures are no better.

As I have said, these poems maintain a singularly high level, extraordinarily so for a first book, although perhaps the few objective pieces are not quite so fine as the others.

Let us admit that this is an art of short range; it is deep, but not wide. Possibly one cannot publish many volumes of so concentrated a texture. But who wants many volumes?—Keats made his reputation with but three. The point is that here we have a poetry of absolutely direct speech, but direct speech so suffused and heightened that it attains a high distinction, is poetry almost by accident, the accident of sincere emotion and a keen and stark perception of beauty.

Amy Lowell
CORRESPONDENCE

PEGASUS IMPOUNDED

Dear Madam Editor: A Latinist must naturally be interested when a modern poet translates a Latin poet. Hence my concern in Mr. Pound’s experiment with Propertius in POETRY for March. I offer certain impressions.

Mr. Pound is often undignified or flippant, which Propertius never is. For example, “I shall have my dog’s day,” “I shall have, doubtless, a boom after my funeral,” “There will be a crowd of young women doing homage to my palaver,” “There is no hurry about it.” Such renderings pervert the flavor of a consciously artistic, almost academic, original. And what, if Mr. Pound is aiming at the colloquial, is the justification of his stilted “Her hands have no kindness me-ward”?

Mr. Pound often drags, because he pads. Thus the second line is pure addition, and pure delay, in

Though my house is not propped up by Taenarian columns
From Laconia (associated with Neptune and Cerberus).

These three Baedekeresque explanations seem to have been gathered, with a modicum of labor, from Harper’s Latin Lexicon, under the word Taenarus.

Mr. Pound is incredibly ignorant of Latin. He has of course a perfect right to be, but not if he translates from it. The result of his ignorance is that much of what he makes his author say is unintelligible. I select a few out of about three-score errors.
In II of the translations, Propertius makes Calliope bid him to refrain from writing epic poetry, and to sing only of love. Mr. Pound mistakes the verb *canes*, “thou shalt sing,” for the noun *canes* (in the nominative plural masculine) and translates by “dogs.” Looking around then for something to tack this to, he fixes upon *nocturnae* (genitive singular feminine) and gives us “night dogs”! I allow myself an exclamation point. For sheer magnificence of blundering this is unsurpassable. But other blunders are not without interest.

Where Propertius speaks of the “purple beaks” (*punica rostra*) of the doves of Venus, Mr. Pound renders by the nonsensical phrase “their Punic faces”—as if one were to translate “crockery” by “China.” He confuses the two Latin words *fugantes* and *fugientes*, and so represents the tutelary gods of Rome as fleeing from Hannibal instead of putting him to flight. Where Propertius says “I dreamed I lay . . . on Helicon,” he makes him say “I had been seen . . . recumbent on . . . Helicon.” Where Propertius says, “The Muses are my companions, and my songs are dear to the reader,” Mr. Pound translates, “Yet the companions of the Muses will keep their collective nose in my books.” Where Propertius says, “The trophies of kings, borne in the bark of Aemilius” (the Roman conqueror), Mr. Pound makes him say “Royal Aemilia, drawn on the memorial raft.” “Raft” is the school-boy stock-translation of *ratis* (a general word corresponding to our “craft”). As for “royal Aemilia,” had there ever been such a lady, Propertius could not have
meant her, since the two Latin words are in different cases. These little differences have significance in an inflected language.

Twice Mr. Pound blunders over the word *rigat*, "moistens" or "sprinkles," evidently connecting it with English "rigid," instead of with English "irrigation." Thus where Propertius says, "Calliope moistened my lips with water from the spring of Philetas" (a poet who influenced him), Mr. Pound gives us the monstrous rendering, "Stiffened our face with the backwash of Philetas." In another passage Propertius says, "I have no artificial grottoes watered from the Marcian flow" (*Marcius liquor*). The Marcian aqueduct was Rome's best water supply, recently renovated by Agrippa. Mr. Pound seems to have taken *liquor* as spirituous. He must then have thought of age as appropriate, and so have interpreted *Marcius* as referring to the legendary King Ancus Marcius; after which it was easy to add another legendary King, Numa Pompilius. The result is three lines, all wrong, and the last two pure padding:

Nor are my caverns stuffed stiff with a Marcian vintage
Nor bristle with wine jars.

Of one peculiarly unpleasant passage in Mr. Pound's translation, there is no suggestion in the original. Mr. Pound writes:

And in the meantime my songs will travel,
And the devirginated young ladies will enjoy them when they have got over the strangeness.

What Propertius says is, "Meanwhile let me resume the
wonted round of my singing; let my lady, touched (by my words), find pleasure in the familiar music.” That is all. (Gaudeat in solito tacta puella sono). Just possibly, though not probably, Propertius meant “young ladies” rather than “my lady.” But there is no hint of the decadent meaning which Mr. Pound read into the passage by misunderstanding tacta, and taking the preposition in as if it were a negativing part of an adjective insolito. His own context should have shown him the absurdity of his version.

If Mr. Pound were a professor of Latin, there would be nothing left for him but suicide. I do not counsel this. But I beg him to lay aside the mask of erudition. And, if he must deal with Latin, I suggest that he paraphrase some accurate translation, and then employ some respectable student of the language to save him from blunders which might still be possible. If he does not owe this to himself, he owes it to his author, of whose fate otherwise one must think, in Browning’s words from Sordello, as that of

Some captured creature in a pound,
Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress.

Wm. Gardner Hale

**MR. WALEY ON THE T’AO CH’IEN POEM**

*Dear Editor:* May I suggest two small emendations to Mrs. Ayscough’s interesting collection of Chinese poems in *Poetry* for February?

First, the last two lines of the T’ao Ch’ien poem mean,
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

not—

Does the Yellow Emperor regard these things
Because it is the fashion to do so
Among people of importance?

but—

It must not be left to Superior People to prize it,
For it was valued by our Yellow Emperor.

The Superior People (Chün Tzu) are the Confucianists.
The Yellow Emperor was the patron saint of Taoism, therefore T'ao Ch'ien, himself a Taoist, speaks of "our Yellow Emperor".

Second, Wang Ch'ang-ling, one of the most famous of Chinese poets, lived in the eighth, not in the tenth century.

I have not the Chinese texts of any of the other poems.

Arthur Waley

London, February 20th, 1919

A WORD OF PROTEST

The following letter comes from the editor of Youth:

Dear Editor: A short time ago POETRY announced that Youth: Poetry of Today was sponsored by the Harvard Poetry Society and since then this erroneous impression has gained ground. It is in no way true, and, while one of our avowed aims is to encourage the American undergraduate by means of our associate editors at various colleges, we are not an undergraduate publication. We aim to present also the best work of maturer American poets, such as Edwin Arlington Robinson, Amy Lowell, Conrad Aiken, Witter Bynner, John Gould Fletcher, etc., who have already appeared in Youth, and we have a board of corresponding editors designed to keep the English reader in touch with the poetry of foreign languages.

Royall Snow
NOTES

Mr. H. L. Davis, whom we have the honor of introducing in this number, is a young Far-Western poet born in 1894. For a year or so, until recently demobilized, he was in the service at Fort McDowell, Angel Island, Cal., but was disappointed of his wish to go to France. After an earlier experience as deputy sheriff, sheep-herder, range-rider, surveyor, etc., he is now working in a bank, as "chauffeur of an adding machine," at The Dalles, Oregon. However, he has found time to study certain modern French poets, and his letters express intense admiration of at least one Englishman—Ford Madox Hueffer, and one American—Wallace Stevens.

Three other poets in this number are new to our readers: Alice D. Lippman (Mrs. G. Lippman), of St. Louis; Mr. Roy Temple House, of the department of modern languages in the University of Oklahoma at Norman, Okla.; and Mr. Roger L. Sergel, of Iowa City, la.

The other contributors need little introduction to readers of POETRY: Mr. Edgar Lee Masters, of Chicago, published his latest book, Toward the Gulf (Macmillan Co.) in 1918.

Mr. John Reed has been a frequent contributor to The Masses, The Liberator and other radical publications. The long poem, America—1918, of which we print a fragment, is not yet finished.

Mr. Morris Gilbert, whose first volume, A Book of Verse, was privately printed in 1917, was a resident of Yonkers, N. Y., until he volunteered in the U. S. Navy. He is now at sea.

Florence Randal Livesay (Mrs. Fred. Livesay) is a resident of Winnipeg, Manitoba, where there are many immigrants from the Ukraine. Her excellent anthology, Songs of Ukraina (many of which first saw the light in POETRY) was published in 1916 by J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., London, and E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. The present group adds further emphasis to the beauty of this folk-poetry and the ability of the translator.

Mrs. Livesay sends the following notes in regard to two of the poems:

"Marusenka's Wedding is reminiscent of the days of marriage by capture. It is sung when the attendants of the bride hear the bridegroom coming in the evening to take her to his home. Ruta or rue is the symbol of virginity; barvinok, or periwinkle, is the marriage flower."
"The crow in Ukrainian folk-song is always a messenger of misfortune. To avert this, a peasant, if he hears one, shouts "Upon thy own head!" The Kitaika covers the eyes of the dead. Kalina, the cranberry, is the symbol of beauty."

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:
Afterglow, by James Fenimore Cooper, Jr. Yale Univ. Press.
In Flanders Fields, by John McCrae. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
The Lost Chimes and Other Poems, by Gustav Melby. Richard G. Badger.
The Tree of Life, by John Gould Fletcher. Chatto & Windus, London; Macmillan Co., N. Y.
Harp of the Heart, by A. S. Bhandarkar. Gorham Press.
Fagots by Lillian F. Lewis. Gorham Press.

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