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Vol. XIV  No. VI

Poetry
A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe
September 1919

Memories, by Sara Teasdale
A Play
by Maxwell Bodenheim
A Group of Short Stories
by Amy Lowell
The Day of Summer
by Emanuel Carnevali

543 Cass Street, Chicago
$2.00 per Year  Single Numbers 20¢
POETRY has saved my life—with a check in time when all the rest of the world was unresponsive, and with a fine poem when all the rest of the world was dull.

From a young poet's letter
SEPTEMBER, 1919

MEMORIES

THE VOICE

ATOMS as old as stars,
Mutation on mutation,
 Millions and millions of cells
Dividing, yet still the same;
 From air and changing earth,
From ancient Eastern rivers,
 From turquoise tropic seas,
Unto myself I came.

My spirit, like my flesh,
Sprang from a thousand sources,
 From cave-man, hunter and shepherd,
From Karnak, Cyprus, Rome;
The living thoughts in me
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Spring from dead men and women
Forgotten time out of mind
And many as bubbles of foam.

Here for a moment’s space
Into the light out of darkness,
The many in one are mingled,
Finding words with my breath;
Like a great voice in me
I hear them shout: "Forever
Seek for Beauty—she only
Fights with man against death."

THE LONG HILL

I must have passed the crest a while ago
And now I am going down.
Strange to have crossed the crest and not to know—
But the brambles were always catching the hem of my gown.

All the morning I thought how proud it would be
To stand there straight as a queen—
Wrapped in the wind and the sun, with the world under me.
But the air was dull, there was little I could have seen.

It was nearly level along the beaten track
And the brambles caught in my gown—
But it's no use now to think of turning back,
The rest of the way will be only going down.

[292]
SPRING TORRENTS

Will it always be like this until I am dead?
Every spring must I bear it all again—
With the first red haze of the budding maple boughs,
The first sweet-smelling rain?

Oh, I am like a rock in the rising river
Where the flooded water breaks with a low call,
Like a rock that knows the cry of the waters
And can not answer at all.

WHAT DO I CARE

What do I care, in the dreams and the languor of spring,
That my songs do not show me at all?
For they are a fragrance, and I am a flint and a fire;
I am an answer, they are only a call.

What do I care—for love will be over so soon—
Let my heart have its say, and my mind stand idly by.
For my mind is proud, and strong enough to be silent—
It is my heart that makes my songs, not I.

MY HEART IS HEAVY

My heart is heavy with many a song,
Like ripe fruit bearing down the tree;
And I can never give you one—
My songs do not belong to me.

[293]
Yet in the evening, in the dusk
When moths go to and fro,
In the gray hour if the fruit has fallen,
Take it—no one will know.

IT IS NOT A WORD

It is not a word spoken—
Few words are said,
Nor even a look of the eyes,
Nor a bend of the head;
But only a hush of the heart
That has too much to keep,
Only memories waking
That sleep so light a sleep.

SONG

Let it be forgotten, as a flower is forgotten,
Forgotten as a fire that once was singing gold.
Let it be forgotten forever and ever—
Time is a kind friend, he will make us old.

If anyone asks, say it was forgotten
Long and long ago—
As a flower, as a fire, as a hushed footfall
In a long forgotten snow.

Sara Teasdale
THE CLOUD DESCENDS

[A small water-pool at the base of a hill. The pool is in the foreground, and its waters stretch out of view to left and right. Behind them is the hill, steeply sloping backward. Above the almost flat-topped hill a thin bar of bright blue sky is visible. The pool is calm, and colored a deep brownish-blue. Near its centre it bears the bluish-white reflection of an irregular oval cloud floating in the sky. It is late afternoon and softly bright dwindling light drapes the scene. Ten seconds after the curtain-rise, the Cloud drops waveringly down from the sky and alights to the extreme left of a narrow, slightly-curved stretch of ground in front of the pool. His image draws near him, to the edge of the pool; he looks down upon it for several seconds.]

Cloud. Image of me, child born of color on water, Trailing over the water's breast Like the sigh of a lover paling the breast of his love: Sigh making the water white, Sigh that I drop from the sky, Image of me, let us speak. The sighs of a lover hold meanings he does not know.

Cloud-image [A voice from the pool].
Do not call me your sighing; I am more than that. I am an image of you Straining, within the moments of life I hold, to catch the shadowed soul Whose first whisper slips into death.

[295]
I am a stranger to myself
Wakening to moments of pallid longing.

Cloud. [After a pause].
Sky is the reflection of some vast far-off smile
Making a blue breast warmer.
Sky has a lover who flings her jewels,
Fierce with the love he cannot bring.
She strings the jewels over her body—
Chained lover throwing one vast smile and trinkets
That mock the love whipping him . . . .
I love her too, but I cannot look upward,
So I am happier.
Her breath comes down, in winds,
And thrusts me along while I shake
Beneath biting hints of her that are like pale whips.

[A pause.]
Image of me, I have wondered
Whether you longed for life
To open the closed cries in your shadowed heart,
As much as I and the unseen lover
Long for sky. I wondered, and so came down
To give you a voice.

Cloud-image. Ashen regrets within me
Dwindle to even lighter ashes:
Ashes that are like dying breath
After it passes through fire.
In my moments of life, I fancied myself
A wraith-like prince standing erect a moment
Between high columns of silence that fell upon him
One by one, ever rising to fall again.
But now I know I am only light and color
Spotting the dark breasts of this pool
With stinted love that cannot form itself
Into a moment of actual touch.
I have not even a soul.

Cloud. Image of me, the milky, dishevelled shadow
Of my own soul drops on you.
Shadows are often mirrors.
I see within you parts of myself
That were too tenuous to be even haze:
Parts that I never knew.

Cloud-image. Why do you spin a rustling fairy-tale?
Tender scarves cannot make me proud.

Cloud. You are the milky, dishevelled shadow of my soul.

Cloud-image [After a pause].
I believe you, perhaps because I long to believe:
Or because your words are riotously afraid.

Cloud [After another pause].
You have an undertone of red—
Red like the color left by maiden-lips
Upon the cheeks of some memory:
Maiden lips that shrunk to dust
And were blown away, leaving red that cannot be seen
By far-away eyes.
There is no red upon me . . . . who gave you this red?

[297]
Cloud-image. I do not know; I have often felt it.
It seemed a word of love
Writhing under rancid wraiths that bound it.
I thought it the answer of this pool,
Whose love for me was chained because
I passed so quickly.

Cloud. Wisps of caresses only make love bitter and tall,
Or slay it . . . . Red . . . . can you speak to me?

Voice of the Pool [Deeper than the Cloud-image's voice
and rising from the rear edge of the pool. The Cloud starts
back as he hears it].
I am this pool: this red is mine.
Two soldiers splashed into me, long ago.
Red sprang from them in nervous trickles
Like hunted passions never dying,
Yet always seeming to take their last step.
And on the soldiers' faces, red and black
Were transfigured while wrestling to reach wild eyes.
The soldiers sank within my edge
And knowing they would die
Dragged themselves further in, preferring a quicker death.
The red of them made me feel
Like a mother forever holding a child
That perished within her, spreading over her body.
Their bones are deep in my heart: I cannot feel them.
Their bodies have faded out to uneasy memories,
So thin that they can sleep between
Folds of the red I bear.

[298]
[A short interval of silence. A Woman slowly walks out upon the narrow stretch of ground in front of the pool. She stops two paces away from the Cloud, raises an arm, as though in weary supplication, but checks herself, and slowly turns to the pool, intently gazing upon it.]

Woman. Cloud-image, are you a child, With moments of awakening sprinkled over endless sleep? And do you carry small treasures into your sleep, To gladden the sparkling shoulders of dreams? I will fling myself into this pool And so become wedded to you, and lose The sharp silence flooding my moments of sleep: The sharp silence keeping its edge Because an even sharper grief swings it into me.

[A pause.]
My husband was a soldier: he is dead. Perhaps he lies at the bottom of this pool That sways him as a tired stranger Lifts up a body he has found on the road: A body that brings him no grief. Perhaps I shall swerve against him and taste his breast Without fear, before I slip into you, Cloud-image.

Cloud-image. Why do you seek to join me? The life that humans know Is a parade of cloud-images Mantled with faintest red. Humans are deep pools crossed by cloud-figures Who mistake the red cast of the pool

[299]
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

For love words too low to be heard. . . . .
And the clouds creeping over the pools are too high to be seen.

Woman [In a louder voice, after a pause. She has seated herself, with a quick feathery movement, beside the pool].
If I could only be an actual cloud!
I would bend like a gracious priest rustling his gown of pale prayers,
And shaking his mist-ringlets, as he marries
His images with drifting gestures of death.
If I could only be a real cloud!

[The Cloud, who has been standing still and watching her, suddenly rushes forward and flings himself upon her, hiding her from view. For several seconds he holds her thus. Then he rises, lifting her in his arms.]

Cloud [With soft triumph].
I have often looked down upon this parade
Of weary cloud-images crossing the depths of humans
Who scarcely felt them; looked and longed
To swoop down, closing upon a woman or child
And gently spreading her over me.

[A pause.]
Am I happier now? . . . . It does not matter:
Happiness is the melting-clawed ghost of human-beings,
But clouds do not need it.

[He rises from the ground, as the curtain falls.]

Maxwell Bodenheim
MONODIES

MONTEZUMA

As the wind rolls across the flowing treetops, so the
Delicate haze, blue flowing into green, rolls
Over the violet and brown undulations of these mountains.
Blue mist flowing into green mist over
The violet and brown undulations of the earth. Thus
Life flows into Death above Time's translucent contours.
These mountains are the fingers of a sleeping hand. No
Jewels adorn its tawny tapering fingers. But in the silence
It moves forward through the delicate haze
(Blue flowing into green), while no one watches.
O you of the blind silent eyes, who stand
Your feet among the mountains and your head lost
Above the heavens translucent as Time's contours—
And no jewels adorn your forehead, nor do your blind eyes
Peer toward the Mystery, being themselves the Mystery—
Move you a step nearer in the silence, your feet stirring
The delicate mist like soft sand
(Blue flowing into green), while no one watches.

WILD HORSES

I am amazed at the joy of the horses.
They beat on the earth with small round sharp hoofs;
They cut the face of the earth to wrinkles,
And thunder their life and lust in God's face.
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

They sweep in a curve like smoke of a prairie fire
(So they must seem to God who watches)
Weaving a pattern of grays and browns
That shifts and swirls—a magian's carpet—
That flows and swirls like smoke in a crystal.

Above, the intent face of God who watches.

ON THE MESA

This I saw on the mesa's edge
As the sun sprang up chanting:

A squat girl,
Naked as the red rock;
Brow, face, breasts, limbs,
Square lines in red rock;
Arms reaching toward the sun;
From parted lips
A silent song, veering like a swallow's course, flying.

This I saw on the mesa's edge
As the sun sprang up chanting.

But the sun outleapt its ardor, dwindled
To a cynical blinking yellow eye,
And she drooped heavily.

And I could have fingered her naked flesh
As one might touch crumbling stone!

[302]
CONCERNING BLAKE

When Blake's mother died,
He got up out of bed
(He was an invalid)
And closed her eyes and smoothed her hair;
And took the pillow from beneath her head,
And drew the sheet across her thin clear face,
And left her there.

The little butler scudded through the gloom—
A frightened cockroach.
Blake cornered him
To give him orders. And he: "At what time did she
die?"—
The last word jerked out
With a placating pained grimace.
Great difficulty. His head jerked about
Before Blake in the dusk, febrile, dim.
Blake's small too-fragile body twitched.
His transparent feminine face
Quivered slightly, froze back into place.
His sister's sobs, half checked by the gloom,
Staggered, drunken, down the hall.
This was all.

Then Blake went back into the twilit room
Where the candles struggled vaguely with the dusk.
He drew back the white sheet from the white face.
His bathrobe fell in cerise fold on fold
Above it, fever-blotches on the shadow.
He was tired and weak and cold.
He stared at the clear face as into a mirror,
His features—a curious mirror, Death!—
Frosted and uncertain at his sudden intruding breath.

THE OLD WEEP GENTLY

These old trees
Sigh in every leaf,
Look down their trunks
As if back down the years.
Old knots stay
Where limbs were torn away—
Little fist-rubbed faces
Of gargoyles grief;
While shadows
Slip down the trunks
Like tears.

LITTLE RABBIT

He said: "Let the night
Sweep down with swirling gestures!
The nightwind leaps like a flame!"
And yet—
The firelight on the wall. . . . .

[304]
“My heart is a cry in the night,”
He said,
“And all the world’s a dream!”
And yet—
The night sighs above me
Like the branches of a tree;
And it too wears a covering,
And, should it drop that covering,
Would doubtless rattle—
A gruesome skeleton.

He said:
“You talk of peace—where is it?
The fire there
Has no peace. Now that choked sobbing—
Sobs caught low in the throat—
What does it want?”
And yet—
That is a shadowy crying
After things long forgot.
The fire moans to itself,
And leaps up without impetus,
And sinks—a spectral longing.

Or—perhaps—is it
The fluttering of frightened hearts
Afraid to go?

A. Y. Winters
THE CONQUEROR

I think the corn will conquer.
What, shall Death's black flail,
Forever swinging, lift and fall
Upon these sullen lands
That were so marvellously ripe for love?

I think the corn will conquer.
What, shall that shrill fury Fear—
Crazed, crazed, forever crazed—
Run screeching down these sober hazel lanes,
And no one bid her hush?

I think the corn will conquer.
What, shall man,
Forever wailing "God!" and "God!"
Beat like a sick child
Upon earth's patient breasts?

I think the corn will conquer;
I have seen
Green acres marching like the sea,
Climbing the ridges,
Riding the hill-tops,
Drawing strength from the warm mist
That wraps the valleys.
I have seen
The red sun lift his battered shield
From out earth's eastern thunders
And bask amid the corn-tops' gold;
Until the dawn-wind trumpets from the height
And bids each meadow fling abroad
The yellow waving banners of the corn.

I have seen
Deep in the cool green twilight of the corn
A king's sword rusting;
How the good red earth
Had sucked its venom!
How the sprawling pumpkin wrapped
The jewelled scabbard in her lewd embrace!
The while I heard
From every clod, from every stalk and blade
A myriad insect voices fifing, "Victory!"

James Rorty
WANDERINGS

IN THE MIDDLE WEST
(Suggested by an editorial of H. M.)

This land is a great sea;
Out of it me—
And into it at the end.

It is my friend,
My lover and enemy—
My mother and lover and friend;
My master and my slave.
It gave
All that I have, and it will take away
All that I have, and even my life, some day.

The ocean is a friend who, for a while,
Will talk with me, and smile;
But always with a stranger's courtesy.

The land is maker and lover and slayer of me.

SEA GULLS

"I am the white gull overhead!
To my love I said; And stretched my arms and cried
With the swift gull's cry."
But I shall have no freedom till I die;
I shall know never lift of sky
  Or sweep of sea:
I am chained cruelly by his love of me.

THE APPLE TREE SAID

My apples are heavy upon me!
  It was the spring,
And proud was I of my petals
  Nor dreamed this thing:

That joy could grow to a burden,
  Or beauty could be
Changed from snow-light to heavy
  To humble me.

I PRAY YOU

The dead make rules, and I obey.
  I, too, shall be dead some day.

Youth and maid who, past my death,
Have within your nostrils breath,

I pray you, for my own pain's sake,
Break the rules that I shall make!

Mary Carolyn Davies
Pierrot had grown old.
He wore spectacles
And kept a shop.
Opium and hellebore
He sold
Between the covers of books,
And perfumes distilled from the veins of old ivory,
And poisons drawn from lotus seeds one hundred years
withered
And thinned to the translucence of alabaster.
He sang a pale song of repeated cadenzas
In a voice cold as flutes
And shrill as desiccated violins

I stood before the shop,
Fingering the comfortable vellum of an ancient volume,
Turning over its leaves,
And the dead moon looked over my shoulder
And fell with a green smoothness upon the page.
I read:
"I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other gods
but me."

Through the door came a chuckle of laughter
Like the tapping of unstrung kettledrums,
For Pierrot has ceased singing for a moment  
To watch me reading.

**PEACH-COLOR TO A SOAP-BUBBLE**

A man made a symphony  
Out of the chords of his soul.  
The notes ran upon the air like flights of chickadees,  
They gathered together and hung  
As bees above a syringa bush,  
They crowded and clicked upon one another  
In a flurry of progression,  
And crashed in the simultaneous magnificence  
Of a grand finale.  
All this he heard,  
But the neighbors heard only the croak  
Of a wheezy, second-hand flageolet.

Forced to seek another lodging  
He took refuge under the arch of a bridge,  
For the river below him might be convenient  
Some day.

**THE ARTIST**

Why do you subdue yourself in golds and purples?  
Why do you dim yourself with folded silks?  
Do you not see that I can buy brocades in any draper's shop,  
And that I am choked in the twilight of all these colors.

[311]
How pale you would be, and startling—
How quiet;
But your curves would spring upward
Like a clear jet of flung water,
You would quiver like a shot-up spray of water,
You would waver, and relapse, and tremble.
And I too should tremble,
Watching.

Murex-dyes and tinsel—
And yet I think I could bear your beauty unshaded.

AUTUMN

They brought me a quilled, yellow dahlia,
Opulent, flaunting.
Round gold
Flung out of a pale green stalk.
Round, ripe gold
Of maturity,
Meticulously frilled and flaming,
A fire-ball of proclamation:
Fecundity decked in staring yellow
For all the world to see.
They brought a quilled, yellow dahlia,
To me who am barren.
Shall I send it to you,
You who have taken with you
All I once possessed?
BALLS

Throw the blue ball above the little twigs of the tree-tops,
And cast the yellow ball straight at the buzzing stars.

All our life is a flinging of colored balls
to impossible distances.
And in the end what have we?
A tired arm—a tip-tilted nose.

Ah! Well! Give me the purple one.
Wouldn't it be a fine thing if I could make it stick
On top of the Methodist steeple?

GOOD GRACIOUS!

They say there is a fairy in every streak'd tulip.
I have rows and rows of them beside my door.
Hoop-la! Come out, Brownie,
And I will give you an emerald ear-ring!
You had better come out,
For to-morrow may be stormy,
And I could never bring myself to part with my emerald ear-rings
Unless there was a moon.

Amy Lowell

[313]
THE DAY OF SUMMER
To Waldo Frank

MORNING

How long ago was it
The dawn pleased Homer?
And Petrarca—was it among flowers
Dew-full, tearful for the love of the dawn,
That he sang his best song
For Laura?
Did the eyes of joy of Prince Paul Fort
See it well once,
And was it then that he
"Took pleasure in being a Frenchman?"

In New York,
These summer days,
It's a swollen-faced hour,
Sick with a monstrous cold,
Gasping with the death of an expectance.
Houses there
In a thick row
Militarily shut out the sky;
Another fence
In the east;
Over this one a shameful blush
Strives upward.

Nevertheless I go to perform the ceremony
Of purification—to wash myself . . . .

[314]
Oh, dear water . . . dear, dear soap . . .

Because I am poor
No ceremony will clean me;
In this crowded room
All the things touch me,
Soil me.
To start a day
Feeling dirty
Is to go to war
Unbelievingly.

_A little happy pause here_
_For me to think of what I shall be doing in the day._

Now has the deep hot belly of the night
Given birth to noises.
The noises pass
Over me,
I lie
Insensible,
Under.
Work, milk, bread, clothes, potatoes, potatoes. . . .

This is
The big
Beauty rumbling on.
Is this
The world's
Music forevermore?

[315]
This and the irrevocable peddlers
Who will come in an hour
To hurl loose:
"Pota-a-a-a-t-o-u-s, yeh-p-l-s, waa-ry meh-l-n?"
Little apocalyptic faces,
Faces of the end of all faces—
Are these the chief musicians?
Please, listen, I have a small, dear soul, and all I want is
a noiseless beauty, any little thing, I was born for a sylvan
century, may I claim to be left alone? . . . . I will not
even expect you to understand—only . . . .
Under this, like a cold hating prostitute,
I lie
Insensible . . . .
And my face is sad because
Once
There was . . . .
Ah, there was a time. . . . .

Now go look for the mail—
Go glean the thoughts they drop before your door,
You eternal gleaner.
Love thoughts, too. . . . .?

Out in the hall
The gas jet
Doesn't give a damn that it is day already.
Stench
Of drenched clothes

[316]
Emanuel Carnevali

And snore
Of married men.
Who shall ask the furnished-room poets to write
A song for the dawn?

Oh, MAIL!

Ah, beggars:


These scanty rights to live—
A clear day, an articulate moment, may take them from us;
So we advance
At every chance
Our stuttering claim and reference.

Dragging my soul along
I go to the window.
The sun-fingers reach slowly
Over the face of the house in front.
This is the hour they go to their work
Eastward and westward—
Two processions,
Silent.
Shapeless the hats,
Too large the jackets and shoes—
Grotesques walking,
Grotesques for no one to laugh at.

[317]
Are they happy perhaps?—
For, of course . . . . but do they
Really know where they're going?
Has the first of them
Found
_Down there_
Something for his happiness?
And has he telephoned or telegraphed to the others
That they are going,
Without looking around,
Without knowing one another,
_ALL_ TOGETHER
Eastward and westward?
The world has decreed:
These men go
Acknowledged
Eastward and westward.

_Sit down and take the rest of your life,_
_"O poets!"

All my days
Are in this room
Pressing close against me.
I know what I have done, misdone, mistaken, misunderstood,
  forgotten, overlooked,
And I have lost my youth.

[318]
Everybody knows me,
No one wonders at me;
They have placed me in their minds, made me small and tied me up
To throw me in a little dusty corner of their minds.
All my days are huddled
Close against me;
My youth is but a regret and a madness—
A madness . . . . Jesus Christ! I am not old yet, never mind what I have told you, what I have been!
I have not irremediably committed myself, I am not lost—
For pity's sake
Let me go,
Let me go free!
For pity's sake
Let me go
With my youth!

Ah, the old days are huddled
So close against my chest
That no great freeing gesture
Is possible.

After the tears,
Cool, new, sensitive,
Under my body hushed and stiff,
I open the door
Quietly,
I close the door behind me
Carefully.

The street's greeting:
I'm out of work—

Damn work—to work and come home in the evening hungry
for all the things that could have been done instead!

But to go
Unemployed
Without hunger
At all!

Oh, listen, O Street,
Let your word to me be a delicate whisper:
I am young,
Nice day,
I look
Straight ahead,
Staccato steps,
Stiff and cool,
I walk.
(Sweet morning, soeur de charité!)

It is the light mood in the streets of the morning,
Bouncing on the roofs, kicked
By the rosy foot of the wind.
Ah, we—ah, we are chained to the sidewalk but we hold
our eyes upward,
Lightly, lightly.
Do blow away the dust of our dead,
And save us all from them who are smouldering inside our houses!
See the fine dust from those windows, see the dust angry at the sun!
Who threw these kids here among us, them and their fun and war, “GIMME!—GIMME!”
King of the triumphing mood, the iceman cracks easy puns with a landlady of the dust!
Kaiser of the lightness of the morning, the policeman, swinging his stick, writes sacred hieroglyphs.

Furtively I steal,
From what and whom I know,
A little youth for myself.
I know nothing,
I forget nothing,
I’m glad enough to live
In the morning.

NOON

You say yes,
And you feed it in your temples—that entity you are so divinely, mysteriously, sure of; and you call it LIFE.
You say no—
In the saloon, the wooden yellow temple,
You grunt no, and you poison that which you call LIFE.
It's noon, the whistles rattle and shriek—city Parcae, I came too.
It's noon, I am coming with you in your temples.
You say yes
And you grunt NO,
But your faces are faces of rancor:
Rancor against
Those who won't let you
**Hurl** loose your soul—(you think, you bad philosophers!)—
Which you must steadily
Throttle within you.
Imbecility is an immense maw, and at noon
It is hungry with a thousand crawling hungers.
So that happy bewildered imbecile of a sun
Looks bewildered at me,
Wondering that I am so utterly disgusted.

Not so . . . .
Not so disgusted after all.
O altars of a little comfort, altars of a dyspeptic god gone crazy in America for lack of personality (hamburger steak, Irish stew, goulash, spaghetti, chop suey and curry!) O lunch-room counters!
O tripods of a little secure religion, tripods of a little secure beauty! O kitchen fires!
O bedraggled romances, O alcoholic ladies in crimson and green mists, O women so cheap and ingratiating, O sacri-

[322]
fices for you, ladies, of all the flesh and all the brains! O saloons!

My malediction on the cowards who are afraid of the word (the word is a kind sweet child, a kind sweet child!)—Malediction on the sacrifices of the dumb and deaf!

Hesitating everywhere, hesitating fearfully,
The few poets, they who weigh with delicate hands,
Walk in the unfrequented roads,
Maundering,
Crying and laughing
Against the rest.

AFTERNOON

Over our shoulders
Your noisy anger,
O Elevated!
I walk in a fog of sleep,
Not fearing to be awakened any more.
Something queer to drink,
Or going somewhere else,
Another girl—
These are the last visions of salvation.
The dust has blinded
The trees in the park.
The gutters are loose mouths of the drunken Manhattan.
Now at last give them up, your hungry and greasy

[323]
And greedy romances.
And you snobs, damn fools, remember you are sweating too.
Now at last be all appeased
In ugliness,
Wallow in the heat,
O sacred soul of the crowd.
No one dies, don’t be
Afraid.
Some life is left.
See the will-o’-the-wisps of lewdness
Burning in all the eyes.
We are alive yet.

See me scuttle on—
Satisfied enough,
Finding with my almost eager eyes
Not-yet-known breasts and strange thighs
In your sacred crowds, O Manhattan!

EVENING

Tender and young again, feminine, sky of the evening of summer is blushing.
Round, long and soft like a draped arm, sky of the evening over the poor city resting.
Spaces of cool blue are musing—
They will hold all our sadness, O spaces of cool blue.

O city, there lived in you once, O Manhattan, a man WALT WHITMAN.
Emanuel Carnevali

Our hands are wasted already, perhaps; but enough for contribution to Beauty,
Enough for a great sadness, will be,
Evening of summer, evening of summer going to sleep
Over the purple bed, over the light flowers of the sunset.
Many other evenings have I in my heart—I have loved so much, so long and so well—don’t you remember cool blue spaces brooding?
I shall recall you,
I shall recall you if insanity comes and sits down and puts her hands in my hair.
Once I touched things with religion, once a girl loved me, once I used to go hiking with young folks over the Palisades,
Once I cried worthily.

NIGHT

Take me all,
Woman whom I know so well, every wrinkle of you—my room—
We won’t fight any more.
I have been around, and I have seen the wisdom of you
In the city.
Lay me down over the torn bedspread, let the bed-bugs keep me company—
Don’t be a prude, old lady:
Your wounds are disgusting enough,
But in the city only the syphilis blooms
And all the other

[325]
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Flowers are dead.
I will let you reach out with your smell into me.
Literature, eh?—
Blossoms of beggary, morning breath of the sick, dreams of the dead!
And I,
Devising sun-spangling images . . . at night, on your table!—
With the urge from the soiled-linen box!
Tonight the lie got drunk with sarcasm
And croaked,
Having found nowhere in the city
Self-assertion.
Put me to sleep,
Knock me to sleep;
Or keep me awake and keep a gnaw in my heart working,
If so you please.

Outside a greasy moon
Refuses to understand
How ridiculous her unesthetic weeping is.

If I kill myself . . . .
*She may* . . . .
If I kill myself . . . .
*He may* . . . .
*Would they* . . . . ?

What would you want, O Death,
Face-of-character,
With a faceless man like me!
Without you, Death,
I am dead.

So I'm going out.
There must be a comfortable little place
For me in the world—
Now I'm dead enough—
I picked it out reading the *Evening Journal Sermon on Success*.
To hell with books—I'll give my young body a chance,
Before my head gets bald.

I will walk with the marionettes
Now I'm dislocated enough and my mouth is clogged.
I'll go talk to them
Now I'm dumb enough.
But come and see me . . . .

Oh, do come and see me,
Look down upon me from your place in the sky,
O MY HIGH DREAM!

I have a brain for everything,
I shall dance their ragtime.
Will someone whisper, sometime—
"There is a man who dances
With a strange embarrassment?"

Emanuel Carnevali
It is only in midsummer that we degenerate occupants of clothes and houses may return to the original source of all life and art, and our vacations are fortunate in the direct proportion of our withdrawal to that wilderness from which we sprang. The High Sierras are best—that tramping among remote and lofty mountains where white granite props the sky and cataracts a thousand feet high stand like nude gods against the cliffs; where the rivers race foaming through V-shaped valleys, watering here and there little lost gardens full of blue-eyed flowers. The Sierras are best, because Mother Earth has played the whole scale there from tenderness to grandeur, and because man as yet has left no trace upon her.

Or, for more austere and strange, if less companionable, beauty, he who explores our desert lands in the sun-searched Southwest is fortunate. Stark sublimity of a gashed and ravaged world turned to unspeakable glory by color-magic—the body and soul of little man are swept into great spaces of freedom by contacts such as these. And among them he may find primitive life practicing primitive art in tribal islands surviving out of the past.

And there are countless lesser wildernesses in our less dramatic but infinitely various Middle West of the Mississippi River and the great and little lakes—of vast corn-laden prairies and wooded hills and wide-flung waters sparkling in
the sun. Many little wildernesses there are in every state of this continental country, places impenetrable to the slaves of civilization but open to all who have kept their freedom.

In one of them—an island in a little lake surrounded by woods or sandy slopes—my friend and I were affronting nature with a discussion of art. She set forth the natal severity of Greek myths, the austerity of Greek art in those Homeric-Aeschylean ages when it was fresh from the gods. Yes, I reflected, but for us is not Greek art a poisoned well, its living waters contaminated by the dipping of impure cups through the long procession of the Renaissance, trailing off even today into Georgian odes and Ionic-colonnaded office-buildings? Is it still possible for us to clarify that spring, and tear away the clutter of votive offerings, memorials of mistaken taste, which have gathered there through many centuries?

Will not the spiritual renewal of the race, especially of this rainbow-hearted race of ours which is forming out of the union of many strains—will not that spiritual renewal of the race, out of which great art must spring, come rather through a more direct appeal to more original sources—through the immediate contact of our people with nature in her sacred and intimate reserves? And will not the new art take its hint from aboriginal art—perhaps the art of the Aztecs and the pueblos—rather than from derivations of pseudo-classic derivations long separated from their primitive Greek source?

In the love of our people for Nature lies the highest
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

hope of the race. Out of this will develop, we may hope, spiritual freedom and an indigenous and self-expressive art. It may be that the movement for national and state and municipal parks—for the reservation of wildernesses, little and great, to the use of the people forever—is the most important, the most deeply impassioned, spiritual and aesthetic enterprise of our time.

H. M.

A NOTE ON PRIMITIVE POETRY

The first striving toward poetry, in the Occident, was in the form of narratives sung or chanted by old men, in praise or condemnation of kings or warriors, and it became the gilded and softened history of a people told to awaken love and pride in their hearts. Gradually it spread to narratives of all forms—to allegories written in praise of the morals of Christianity, to dainty love episodes recounted in songs by the troubadours, and to satirical narratives such as Chaucer’s dealing with the frailties of common people. Maxwell Bodenheim in the New Republic.

So writes an exponent of modern verse whose poetic tradition, it is easy to see, goes no farther back than the Homeric era. For the first striving toward poetry, whether in the Occident or the Orient, was—and is—a far different thing. It is not impossible to know what preceded Homer, it is not impossible to learn at first hand that symbolism has always preceded legend or narrative; and to make this discovery one need not project oneself imaginatively backward through time or immure oneself in a library: one need merely project oneself physically on a two-or-three-days’ journey from any of the principal cities of the United States, and witness a dance-drama of the south-western Indians, in order to discover at first hand what primitive poetry is like.

[330]
A Note on Primitive Poetry

It is not story-telling poetry. It is not poetry designed to please. It is designed to accomplish something. All symbols in the first place are of this kind. The poetic symbol is invocative—it is in a sense a prayer, whether consciously or unconsciously used as such; whether consciously, as in the dances, a prayer for rain, for good hunting, for food, clothes and protection against enemies (prime considerations in our own world today!); or unconsciously, as in the love songs or lullabies, prayers for requited love, or for long life and happiness for one’s own.

In the beginning therefore primitive poetry is brief, staccato, ejaculatory, like a cry or a wish or an aspiration; sometimes a mere mood of longing, or an observation whose deeper significance is felt by the singer and hearer. It is usually a single image, simple or complex, and the variations are in the nature of amplifications of this image, through re-statement with slight changes or through reiteration. As the song progresses in the dance, action accompanies this image, which seems to grow and expand with a life of its own, to be in short a symbol capable of creatively projecting that which it symbolizes.

From being but a cry of desire, or a crystallized wish, the song in the symbolic dance becomes ceremonial and allies itself to the equally symbolic action of the dancers, as in the Navajo Mountain Chant, a succession of images developing with the action, both poetry and action being co-expressive (but not, as in modern theatric art, co-illustrative, which means that either one or the other could be dispensed with!):
There lie the black mountains,
There lie the black sticks;
There lie my sacrifices.

There lie the blue mountains,
There lie the blue sticks;
There lie my sacrifices.

Or this from the same source:

Where the sun rises,
The Holy Young Man
The great plumed arrow
Has swallowed
And withdrawn it.

Where the sun sets,
The Holy Young Woman
The cliff rose arrow
Has swallowed
And withdrawn it.
The moon is satisfied.

Nor has Indian poetry ever the emptiness of the merely decorative motive—it is sufficiently decorative indeed, but always the image has been born of the emotion and so has not the still-born aspect of the purely “decorative” word-painting which exists only for and of itself and has no future.

As my eyes
Search the prairie
I feel the summer in the spring—
could never have been born save of longing and sheer sensitness to nature, the responsive quiver of a man's being to the quiver of nature itself. (Is not this intimacy lacking in much modern poetry, which feels itself to be so largely beyond nature, even as much modern art also has divorced itself from nature, and is proud of the fact?)

Indian poetry is very honest. It does not belong to the
"romantic" school. It is almost literally real. It accepts life as a whole, and puts the most concrete commonplace things on the same footing as things of the most spiritual and delicate values. And it must not be supposed that Indian song can not encompass the latter.

The Chippewas, having salt, make a song of it. And a Tlingit is able to express very subtle things through concrete means:

About himself, that thought he had died, the man thus dreams: "To my home I've got at last is how I always feel!"

And a Pawnee warrior sings in battle:

Let us see, is it real,
Let us see, is it real,
Let us see, is it real—
This life we are living?

It is easy to see why Indian poetry has a tribal value and significance, why it counts with the tribe as it does not count with us: it has the magic power of projecting physical and spiritual results—even material results. (If it has not this same power with us today, it is only because we do not realize it!) Of course this is most obviously true of the poems sung in the green-corn dance, to make the corn grow, or in the hunting dances performed to attract the game; but it is equally true, one may say, of the genesis of all Indian poetry.

Indian poetry is not for an instant regarded as an escape from life or a sedative—indeed one would think that this idea should have been discarded with the 'nineties! The notion is so far removed from the Indian's conception of art that I doubt if he could have any understanding of it.
Instead, poetry is regarded by the Indian as a heightening, an intensifying, of life.

Poetry as a criticism of life equally does not and cannot exist for the Indian, because poetry and life are not divided. Poetry is life and the only way one can know life is through poetry and the dance; it is through these that one approaches the sources of life, and that is why poetry has for the Indian the complete fulness of life and never the empty hollowness of the merely decorative phrase. As a symbol it fulfils itself.

It is true that to understand much Indian poetry one must know something of Indian life and psychology, just as one must know something of Japanese life and psychology to appreciate the finer shades of the Japanese Noh. But there are many Indian songs which need no special interpretation; they speak the universal language of poetry, the love of nature, sorrow of parting, love, friendship, war—eternal themes.

Primitive poetry, however crude, is almost always art, because it has not been made to please the public, but the poet. It is not "communicative" art, and that it is understood by another is simply due to the fact that we possess emotions and instincts in common. The song is for him who feels it. Art as communication, art as addressed to an audience, belongs to a later period. The fine thing about Indian poetry and about Indian art, including the beautifully symbolic dance-dramas, is that it is not addressed to any audience save that in the sky—it is a magic projection of the self that is beyond self, created out of distress, longing, or
A Note on Primitive Poetry

truly aesthetic aspiration; and it is out of this primitive groping toward art, through primitive graphic symbols of art and of song, that language and thought itself evolved.

If we would wish to know anything then about the genesis of poetry or art, it is thoroughly essential that we should go back to the beginnings, so far as these beginnings are available to us, and not take Homer as a starting-point. Incidentally, the “savage” peoples, as we call them, are far less crude than we imagine, far less unsophisticated. They have refinements that we have forgotten. And they are a repository of our most basic meanings. A. C. H.

REVIEWS

IN THE OLD FASHION

Motley and other Poems, by Walter de la Mare. Henry Holt & Co.

One is a bit over-informed of “magic” in opening a book by Mr. de la Mare. The critics, far and wide, have accepted the hint with gratitude, and the familiar word confronts one on the slip-cover. Like other re-asserted opinions, it becomes a challenge—one searches the book for proof of the claim. There is magic in certain lyrics by this poet: The Listeners and the “beautiful lady” song have surprises in their pattern, like waves that break into foam; and a few of the child-poems are almost as exquisitely naive as Hilda Conkling’s. But Mr. de la Mare’s style is as fragile as it is delicate, and in working out his effects he is impeded by inherited formulae.

[335]
Rarely does he free his art of a poor tradition; many of his poems are at best rococo vases of an eighteenth-century artificiality, insisted on in our strenuous age though thrones go toppling down.

I speak of such poems as *The Tryst*, *The Riddlers*, *The Blind Boy*, *The Stranger*, *Motley*—indeed, almost everything in this book—in which a theme of *Nothing-at-all* or *The Aforesaid* is set forth with all the old convolutions of diction and phrasing which poets of modern feeling have discarded. I sometimes wonder whether, for some of Mr. de la Mare's admirers, his magic consists in his flourish of clichés—the tinkle of old familiar phrases which sound sweet to their ears now that few poets indulge them: *o'er, 'mid, bloweth, perchance, fare, to watch and ward, daisied sward, golden shoon, melancholic nightingale, grief smote my heart, soft did look the nightingale*—these are but a few of the clichés and mannerisms to be found in two brief poems chosen by chance, *The Sunken Garden* and *The Riddlers*. Indeed, the magic must be largely in these somewhat frayed and faded details of pattern, for if one cuts them out of most of the poems in this book there is little left of warp or woof.

Mr. de la Mare's reputation as a lyric poet of delicate quality should not shield him from a reminder that this kind of thing is out of date. Admitting that it has a certain charm of quaintness, like the black-walnut furniture of fifty years ago, it belongs, even as that product of a machine-mad age, to a period of false design, when furbelows of ornament were set on for their own sake and not to fulfil any
In the Old Fashion

demand inherent in the structure. Mr. de la Mare's poems are much too be-furbelowed. His exceptional instinct for delicate nuances of rhythm—and few poets can vary the beat so ingeniously as he—gets lost among coloratura niceties. His artistic sincerity is tangled up in archaic affectations, and only when he cuts free of them does his truly lyric voice have a chance to function at its best.

A careful reading of this book reveals nothing of this absolute best, nothing to be set beside the two poems referred to above. But five or six songs have something of their quality, and they carry it with a simplicity not to be found in the rest of the book. Of these are The Little Salamander, Empty House, Music, The Unchanging, Vigil, and this poignant one, The Remonstrance:

I was at peace until you came
And set a careless mind aflame.
I lived in quiet; cold, content;
All longing in safe banishment;
Until your ghostly lips and eyes
Made wisdom unwise.

Naught was in me to tempt your feet
To seek a lodging. Quite forgot
Lay the sweet solitude we two
In childhood used to wander through.
Time's cold had closed my heart about,
And shut you out.

Well, and what then? . . . . O vision grave,
Take all the little all I have!
Strip me of what in voiceless thought
Life's kept of life, unhoped, unsought!—
Reverie and dream that memory must
Hide deep in dust!

This only I say: Though cold and bare
The haunted house you have chosen to share,
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Still 'neath its walls the moonbeam goes  
And trembles on the untended rose;  
Still o'er its broken roof-tree rise  
The starry arches of the skies;  
And 'neath your lightest word shall be  
The thunder of an ebbing sea.

It is a book of personal emotion, but veiled in a thin and pale old fabric alluringly soft to touch and sight. Mostly the reminiscent themes are set forth in reminiscent designs of faded color, and under the mesh hides a shy and wistful, but shadowed and prisoned soul. Mr. de la Mare can't make out the age he lives in—indeed, he gives it up without trying as he flutes his reed at the edge of the stream.

H. M.

**SOLDIER AND LOVER**

*War and Love*, by Richard Aldington. Four Seas Co.

This book was written, so the author says, "less for myself and others who are interested in subtleties, and more for the kind of men I lived with in the camp and in the line"; and the book is convincing proof that a deliberate assumption of an alien point of view destroys all that is most valuable, most poignant, in a poet's genius. Aldington is not, cannot be, of the rank and file. For him life has delicate meanings, exquisite pleasures, poignancies of feeling. He assumes that these are incomprehensible to his comrades, and seeks to "represent the inarticulate feelings of the ordinary civilized man thrust suddenly into these extraordinary and hellish circumstances". In so doing he fails both ways: he does not make great poetry, and he fails of being understood by
Soldier and Lover

the audience for which he is writing. In his own words, “That they did not understand very much is a matter for cheerful acceptance.”

A soldier writing to this magazine of Aldington’s *Choricos*, a poem on death written at about eighteen, spoke of reading it to soldiers of the line, and of hearing it recited in a dug-out by another soldier when they were under heavy shelling and in the imminent presence of death. With all its idealism it was for them a poignant and beautiful challenge to the spirit. Though written before the war and without thought of Tommy Atkins as an audience, it succeeds where “this book by a common soldier for common soldiers” cannot touch them at any point. The clearest cry of the spirit reaches ears we imagine to be deaf. But the war poems in this book are only bitter, muffled plaints of rebellion.

Here is part of one of the best of them, *Bondage*:

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I have been a spendthrift—
Dropping from lazy fingers
Quiet colored hours,
Fluttering away from me
Like oak and beech leaves in October.

I have lived keenly and wastefully,
Like a bush or a sun insect;
Lived sensually and thoughtfully,
Loving the flesh and beauty of this world—
Green ivy about ruined towers,
The outpouring of the grey sea,
And the ecstasy
Of a pale clear sky at sunset.

I long vainly for solitude
And the lapse of silent hours;
I am frantic to throw off
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[339]
My heavy cloth and leather garments,
To set free my feet and body;
And I am so far from beauty
That a yellow daisy seems to clutch my heart
With eager searching petals;
And I am grateful to humility
For the taste of pure, clean bread.

In the second part, Love, the poet has grown more sensual, less idealistic, than in Images; yet one cannot say that his art has lessened. He brings to this experience a spirit so hungry for beauty that it cannot be fed enough; the only peace he conceives is death in the arms of the beloved. It is of the flesh, yet delicate, rare, torturingly beautiful. Into physical love he pours all the pent-up streams of emotion that once found their way toward other manifestations of earth; for now his spirit is too languid, too numb with suffering, to respond to earth-beauty. The spiritual experience of war has for him been overshadowed by the shrinking of his body from dirt, evil smells, vermin, cold, fatigue. I quote a few fragments of poems, as the best ones are too long to print in their entirety:

Everlasting as the sea round the islands,
I cry at your door for love, more love;
Everlasting as the roll of the sea
My blood beats always for you, for you;
Everlasting as the unchangeable sea
I cry the infinite for space to love you!

... ...

I am insatiate, desperate—
Death, if need be, or you near me,
Loving me, beautifully piercing me to life!
But not this, not this bitterness, this grief,
This long torture of absence!

... ...

[340]
She has but to turn her head
And lay her lips to mine
For all my blood to throb tumultuously—
She is so shudderingly beautiful.

Perhaps it is more profitable for a poet to suffer in the spirit than in the body. Aldington's genius could not use the crude, painful and bitter experience he was made to undergo. Not many poets have been able to mould into beauty such material. The ones who succeed best are those more robust, coarse-fibered, those who meet the challenge and ignore, perhaps scarcely feel, the filth. They are poets of a different order from Aldington.

Marjorie Allen Seiffert

AN IRISH HARP

Songs of the Celtic Past, by Norreys Jephson O'Conor.
John Lane Co.

The title of Mr. O'Conor's book is somewhat misleading, for one would think of it as an anthology instead of a collection of original poems. Mr. O'Conor is an American of Irish descent for whom the Celtic past is very much of the present, and indeed there is no reason why it should be any less so than the Greek past. Should I dare to say that I got more pleasure from reading Mrs. Hutton's The Tain than from Homer? Well, I did; and incidentally that is a book which I think has never had its due meed of appreciation. As far as I can see there seems to be a conspiracy of silence about it even among the Irish literary men themselves. Written in verse, it is far more easy to

[341]
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

read than Lady Gregory’s prose versions of the Irish legends, and its arrangement is dramatic; it holds the interest to the end.

This is hardly a divergence from the subject of Mr. O’Conor’s poems, since they belong to the same world. In this book he re-tells the story of Ailill and Etain, and makes a mystery play called Cormac’s Christmas of another old legend. In this he has captured the simplicity and charm of the early “mystery” form very successfully. A Masque of Flowers is the third long poem in the book, and these longer contributions are interspersed with lyrics, many of which have the exact quality of old Irish poems; for instance, The Song of Angus and Caer, or In the Monastery, or The Monk Pauses in His Labor. These are as fine as anything in the volume.

A. C. H.

CAMMAERTS AGAIN

Messines et Autres Poèmes, by Emile Cammaerts. John Lane, London.

We are glad to welcome another book by Emile Cammaerts, whose previous work we reviewed in September, 1917. The dedication, bearing the title of L’Aïeule, is a touching commentary on old age. But these poems are almost all about the war. Whether a soldier speaks, or a flower, or a bird, we always hear the war-thought. Messines, the title-piece, is less fine, I think, than some of the other work. Les Jacinthes is an exquisite lyric. There is a lofty epitaph on a young soldier killed before Dixmude.
same poetic quality which distinguished *Chants Patriotiques et Autres Poèmes* is sustained in this new volume. I feared that I might not find here the equals of *L'Amour de la Patrie* and *Frère Jacques*; but *Verdun* is a spirited thing, and its martial refrain, "*Verdun tient toujours,*" conveys a real thrill.

In *Dans les Cotswolds* the author has achieved lyrically and potently an utterance of the sense of time's vastness and earth's eternity, and also of their superb insolence and unconsciousness in the overwhelming calm of a spring day. This same sense of time's immense unity is evident in the fine poem called *Le Dernier Croisé*, which was written at Easter time in 1916, after the first battle of Gaza. Tommy in his khaki watches at the base of Calvary. The breeze is blowing from Syria. How long is it since they laid Him there? How long is it since they sealed the tomb? Here are fragments of it:

Qu’attend-il, brun dans la nuit brune,
Sous la brise syrienne?
Qu’attend-il, au pied de la croix,
Sous le croissant de la lune?
Est-ce-que ses frères reviennent:
Richard, Robert, Louis, et Godefroid?

Tommy écoute une cloche qui tinte,
Tinte, tinte dans son village.
C'est Pâques ici et Pâques là-bas.
La lune soudain s'est éteinte
Derrière un nuage.
Depuis combien de temps L'ont-ils enfermé là?
Dites, Richard, Robert, Louis, et Godefroid?—
La nuit se passe et l'aube pointe,
Les merles sifflent dans les haies d'Elstree.

[343]
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Tommy veille, Tommy rêve, Tommy prie.

La brise souffle de Syrie.

Very beautiful is a *Berceuse de Guerre*, wherein a mother sings to her child while her heart voices a song for her husband far away at war: an old story, but worked out with strong originality. John Carpenter has brought out the full beauty of this poem in a wonderful musical setting.

The arrangement of the book, with its English title-page and explanations, is too suggestive of a language text-book.

*Agnes Lee Freer*

CORRESPONDENCE

CONCERNING HILDA CONKLING

The following letters ask and answer a number of questions which have been received at this office:

*Dear Poetry:* Could you not give your readers more explicit information as to just how those poems of Hilda Conkling's are done: To what extent does her mother select, rearrange and give form? Is it all actually improvised as given? Then I must make a pilgrimage to Hilda and kiss her little hands. What a delightful little genius! *For You, Mother* and *The Dew-light* are, quite without qualification, among the very best things in the July number, which is one of the most notable I have seen. Such queer little flashes of imagination! "With a curl of cloud and a feather of blue," "The white bunnies beg him for dew," "It is time for summer when the birds come back to pick up their lonesome songs," and many others!

*E. Sapir*

*Dear Miss Monroe:* I do not change words in Hilda's poems, nor alter her word-order; I write down the lines as rhythm dictates. She has made many poems which I have had to lose because I could not be certain of accurate transcription. I make notes on those I keep, to be sure I have them as she says them. I
Concerning Hilda Conkling

never tell her about this, but she does know that I like her to do it. Recently she made a song and then said, “Forget that one, Mother—it’s too rhymish.” She says she likes to talk her thoughts to me, and this is as good a description as I can think of if you ask me, “How does Hilda do it?” I do not read much verse to Hilda because I do not like to have her try to imitate it. She loves to have verse read which she cannot wholly understand, and is most fond of the odes of John Keats and Swinburne’s chorus from Atalanta beginning, “When the hounds of Spring are on Winter’s traces,” which she loves for the sound of it, for some of the nature detail, and for the presence of the great god Pan.

Grace Hazard Conkling

Dear Poetry: I have asked Mrs. Conkling to let me answer Mr. Sapir’s questions about Hilda, because I have seen her making poems all her short life. Hilda is the clearest case of inspiration I have ever known. She will be nine years old in October, and a form of chant to an imaginary comrade she called “Mary Cobweb” was her earliest expression. A bit of mosquito-netting thrown over her head, the fur collar of a visitor about her throat—any little change of dress or ornament—creates a new world for her, a complete world, full of detail; and she used to tell Mary Cobweb about it in a song. Then she learned that her mother was pleased with the songs, and now the poem has become a gift. “I have a poem for you, Mother,” is the phrase she uses, frequently offering a choice—“You may have this one or this one.” Her mother chooses one and usually manages to get the others. Sometimes Hilda will make four or five songs at once, and then there will be intervals when she will not make any for several weeks. Mrs. Conkling never changes the poems.

Hilda still has certain baby errors in speech—faint away for fade away, and some others; but she has a natural interest in words and often uses rather striking expressions, as when she recently spoke of a woman with “a slipping memory.”

An interesting phase of her creative mind is its independence of external suggestion. The cottage where we have been staying is on a hilltop in open country, and Hilda was fascinated by what she called the “orange lilies” that grew near. One evening she said, “I have made a poem today; it’s about flowers.” I rather expected to hear of “orange lilies,” but she said, “The Land of Poppies is back of the silver leaf.” This poem was not finished. There were babies in the Land of Poppies, but no birds. When
we asked why there were no birds she said, “They are afraid of going to sleep and not waking up—the babies don’t know enough to be afraid.” She is always sure of the detail.

In reading Hilda’s poems it must be remembered that she has been very carefully taught. She knows the Greek gods and the heroes of mythology as well as she does her dolls and her playmates. She is familiar with good music. She knows a good deal of good poetry. She has never heard anything else. We were speaking of daffodils a few days ago and Hilda knew what Shakespeare, Dryden and Wordsworth had said about them. When she tells us what she sees and hears in her world of dreams she has the advantage of knowing only good English to use. It is as natural for Hilda to speak of Narcissus as for some other children of the outrages in the “funny sheet” of a contemporary newspaper. She does not know that her poems are being printed, and so far she is free from self-consciousness about them. She is a normal little girl, very pretty, with a great quantity of fair hair and rather odd blue eyes—almond eyes, with the points coming well out to the temples; a quick, graceful, affectionate child, with a sure instinct for beauty and an amazing creative imagination. I hope she may never lose her sense of intimate relation with the universe.

Louise Driscoll

A POETS’ HANDBOOK

Dear POETRY: There is a crying need for a Poets’ Handbook of Science. W. R. Benét, for instance, should be informed that bats do not hang in barns at night, that they fly around at night and hang there in the day-time; Lola Ridge that palms do not grow on mesas, that jaguars do not inhabit deserts, etc., etc. I pause only because I have not now the time or energy to write the book. I strongly suspect that the time so spent would be of greater service to the muse than the perpetration of masterpieces!

A. Y. Winters

[346]
OUR MOTTO

"To have great poets there must be great audiences too."

If I desired great audiences
I should make myself a brother to the scissors-grinder,
Or provide myself with a solder iron and cob;
And my auditorium would be as wide as the country
And as high as the sky.
My songs would be for children who have time to listen,
Or men grown old and deaf;
Or maybe I should sing to a passing cloud,
Or the dusty road, or the rain.

And if I wished to be a poet,
I should get myself a little piece of ground
And raise trees and flowers and berries,
And read my poems to the birds that stole my cherries;
And perhaps I should find a maid
Who would listen lovingly to my songs.
And then I should truly be great,
And I should have great audiences too.

Raymond P. Fischer

NOTES

Sara Teasdale (Mrs. Ernst Filsinger), who now lives in New York, is well known as the author of several books of verse, of which the latest, Love Poems, took the prize of $500 awarded a year ago by the Poetry Society of America and Columbia University to "the best book of verse by an American poet published during the year 1917." Mrs. Filsinger was one of the three judges who divided the same prize this year between Carl Sandburg, for

[347]
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Cornhuskers, and Margaret Widdemer, for *The Old Road to Paradise*.

Miss Amy Lowell, of Brookline, Mass., is also too well known to our readers to require an introduction. Her new book of verse will soon be issued by the Macmillan Co.

Mr. Maxwell Bodenheim, who now lives in New York, is another of our early contributors. His first book, *Minna and Myself*, was published last year by the Pagan Publishing Co.

Mary Carolyn Davies (Mrs. Leland Davis) of New York, will soon issue, through the Macmillan Co., a new book of verse.

Mr. Emanuel Carnevali has recently removed to Chicago after living in New York since his arrival from Italy five years ago. Last year *Poetry* awarded to him the one of its prizes which was offered for the work “of a young poet.”

Two poets are new to our readers:
Mr. James Rorty, of New York, who has been in the A. E. F. during the war, has published little as yet.

Nor has Mr. A. Y. Winters, of Chicago, one of the founders of the University of Chicago Poetry Club, who is now sojourning in New Mexico.

**BOOKS RECEIVED**

**ORIGINAL VERSE:**
- *Frenzies from France, or the Nightmares of a Doughboy*, by Frank L Armstrong. Privately printed, Pittsburgh.

**ANTHOLOGIES AND TRANSLATIONS:**

**PROSE AND PLAYS:**
POETRY, a Magazine of Verse, is not a magazine. Not in the ordinary sense. It is an art gallery. The poet's gallery, where he hangs up his poems.

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Whitman

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Also a few lovers of the art who prefer to remain anonymous.

Others besides these guarantors who testify to their appreciation of the magazine by generous gifts are:

Mr. Edward L. Ryerson  
Miss Amy Lowell  
Mrs. F. C. Letts

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 service to the art.

The editor deeply regrets to announce the death, during the last half-year, of two of POETRY'S earliest and most loyal guarantors. Elizabeth Wallace Waller (Mrs. James B. Waller), who died last May in Chicago, was always ardent in her support of the arts, as in all the other activities and sympathies of a spirit both strong and delicate. Frederick Sargent, who died suddenly in July at his home in Glencoe, Illinois, was one of the foremost electrical engineers of the world, one of the epic builders of our age; yet the exacting duties of his profession did not withhold him from interest in arts less strenuous if not less important.
## CONTENTS OF VOLUME XIV

### VERSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title/Notes</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aber, Loureine</td>
<td>From Laurel Wreaths:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Fallen</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Soldier to Helen</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My Friend</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farewell</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiken, Conrad</td>
<td>Many Evenings:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melody in a Restaurant</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illicit</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haunted Chambers</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counterpoint: Two Rooms</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multitudes Turn in Darkness</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldington, Richard</td>
<td>In France (1916-1918):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insouciance</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two Impressions I-II</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loss, Beauty Unpraised</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benét, William Rose</td>
<td>Green and Gray:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solid Earth</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information, Gray</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodenheim, Maxwell</td>
<td>Songs to a Woman I-V</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Cloud Descends</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brook, Reeves</td>
<td>Shrouds</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryusov, Valéry</td>
<td>(see Abraham Yarmolinsky)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bynner, Witter</td>
<td>This Man</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnevali, Emanuel</td>
<td>Walt Whitman:</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Day of Summer:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colum, Padraic</td>
<td>Poems:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To Any Poet</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bison</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Vultures, The Wanderers</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conkling, Hilda</td>
<td>A Little Girl's Songs (sixteen poems)</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davies, Mary Carolyn</td>
<td>Wanderings:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In the Middle West, Sea Gulls</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Apple-tree Said</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I Pray You</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[ iii ]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Davis, H. L.</td>
<td>PRIMA PARA:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Sweet-tasting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Running Vines in a Field</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Field by the River</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In the Field</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Gypsy Girl</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Spirit</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My Step-grandfather</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oakland Pier: 1918</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Old Are Sleepy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flags</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Valley Harvest</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Ford, Miriam Allen</td>
<td>Faun, Wisdom Through Tears</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dresbach, Glenn Ward</td>
<td>In New Mexico</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnett, Louise Ayres</td>
<td>Arbor-vitae</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert, Morris</td>
<td>EPISODES:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Thing</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epitaph on a Madman’s Grave</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why He Cornered the Market, Disillusion</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graves, Robert</td>
<td>SONGS AND CATCHES:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dicky</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hawk and Buckle</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Cupboard</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray, Mary</td>
<td>Belleau Hill</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton, Gordon</td>
<td>In the Red Cross</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House, Roy Temple</td>
<td>To a Dead Mouse in a Trap</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence, D. H.</td>
<td>WAR FILMS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother’s Son in Salonika</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casualty</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Message to a Perfidious Soldier</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Jewess and the V. C.</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sighs</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Child and the Soldier</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zeppelin Nights</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daughter of the Great Man</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prisoner at Work in a Turkish Garden</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mourning, The Grey Nurse</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither Moth Nor Rust</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsay, Vachel</td>
<td>WHIMSEYS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kalamazoo</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Modest Jazz-bird</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Davy Jones’ Door-bell</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Conscientious Deacon</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Horrid Voice of Science</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My Lady Is Compared to a Young Tree</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lippman, Alice D.</td>
<td>Fifth Avenue Sky scrapers</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vagabonds I-III</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[ iv ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livesay, Florence Randal</td>
<td>Old Folk Songs of Ukraine: The Return of Drebenucha</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Song of the Drowning Cossack</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marusenka's Wedding</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parting</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Battlefield</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowell, Amy</td>
<td>A Group of Short Poems: The Bookshop</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peach-color to a Soap-bubble</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Artist</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balls</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good Gracious!</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian, George</td>
<td>The Home-coming</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters, Edgar Lee</td>
<td>The World's Desire</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From &quot;Domesday Book&quot;: Henry Murray</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At Fairbanks</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George Joslin on &quot;La Menken&quot;</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarthy, John Russell</td>
<td>Come Down, Walt!</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeker, Marjorie</td>
<td>At Sea: Daisies</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She Is Overheard Singing Recuerdo</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millay, Edna St. Vincent</td>
<td>She Is Overheard Singing Recuerdo</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixter, Florence Kilpatrick</td>
<td>Three Sonnets: Sanctuary</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ritual</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Death of an Artist</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muckley, Helen</td>
<td>Changes</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Deceiver</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichols, Robert</td>
<td>Two Songs of the Enigma: Modern Love Song</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Wandering Thing</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Donnell, Charles L</td>
<td>A Road of France</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On Indian Lake</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Neil, George</td>
<td>Wings of Spring: The Marvel</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Margot</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sparrow</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peyton, John R. C</td>
<td>The Censor</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phelps, Arthur L</td>
<td>You Died for Dreams</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proudfoot, Andrea Hofer</td>
<td>The Ship's Prow</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rand, Robert</td>
<td>Graves of Dreams</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed, John</td>
<td>Proud New York</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rorty, James</td>
<td>The Conqueror</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapir, Edward</td>
<td>The Soul of Summer</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mary, Mary my Love</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schaufler, Goodrich C.</td>
<td>Chalandry</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Margretta</td>
<td>SIDE-LIGHTS ON WAR:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dolly Parker</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. John Wright, Mrs. Finnigan</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>David</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergei, Roger L.</td>
<td>The Gift of Death</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpson, William H.</td>
<td>Maytime</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summers, Eve Brodique</td>
<td>Of Ruined Cities</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teasdale, Sara</td>
<td>MEMORIES:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Voice</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Long Hill</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring Torrents</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What Do I Care</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My Heart Is Heavy</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is Not a Word</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Song</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tietjens, Eunice</td>
<td>FACETS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On the Height</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parting after a Quarrel</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Praise for Him</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At the Banquet</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defeat</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Tepid Hour</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untermeyer, Louis</td>
<td>THREE POEMS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Beloved</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conquest</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End of the Comedy</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winters, A. Y.</td>
<td>MONODIES:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montesuma</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wild Horses</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On the Mesa</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerning Blake</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Old Weep Gently</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little Rabbit</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood, Charles Erskine Scott</td>
<td>POEMS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Buddha</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kitty</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Songs from &quot;The Adventurer&quot; I-II</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fuchsias and Geraniums</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarmolinsky, Abraham</td>
<td>Saint Sebastian (From the Russian of Valery Bryusov)</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[ vi ]
# PROSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Glittering Metropolis</td>
<td>H. M.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ukraine and Its Song</td>
<td>Florence Randal Livesay</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reviews:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry of the North-American Indian</td>
<td>A. C. H.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Untermeyer's Book</td>
<td>Amy Lowell</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Growing Pains,</em> by Jean Starr Untermeyer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correspondence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pegasus Impounded</td>
<td>Wm. Gardner Hale</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Waley on the T'ao Ch'Ien Poem</td>
<td>Arthur Waley</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Word of Protest</td>
<td>Royall Snow</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walt Whitman</td>
<td>H. M.</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mannerism of Free Verse</td>
<td>A. C. H.</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reviews:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Music—Old and New</td>
<td>A. C. H.</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn from Olde Fields—an Anthology of English Poems from the XIVth to the XVIIth Century, edited by Eleanor M. Brougham</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old England</td>
<td>John Gould Fletcher</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Poems, by Edward Thomas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Whitman Books</td>
<td>H. H.</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits to Walt Whitman in 1890-1891, by J. Johnston and J. W. Wallace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Letters of Anne Gilchrist and Walt Whitman, ed. by Thomas, B. Harned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriotic Poems by Walt Whitman</td>
<td>Agnes Lee Freer</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Life of Lamartine, by H. Remsen Whitehouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correspondence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the Army of Occupation</td>
<td>Rex H. Lampman</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Crane</td>
<td>H. M.</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reviews:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterpoint and implication</td>
<td>Conrad Aiken</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Charnel Rose,</em> by Conrad Aiken</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On “The Movement”</td>
<td>A. C. H.</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Era in American Poetry, by Louis Untermeyer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Advance of English Poetry in the Twentieth Century, by Wm. Lyon Phelps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Poets of Today, by Howard Willard Cook</td>
<td>Padraic Colum</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rilke's Poems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems by Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Jessie Lamont</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correspondence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Reply to A. C. H.</td>
<td>Maxwell Bodenheim</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Year After</td>
<td>H. M.</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes from a Talk on Poetry</td>
<td>William Carlos Williams</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reviews:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sassoon on the War</td>
<td>E. T.</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-attack and Other Poems, by Siegfried Sassoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Grief</td>
<td>A. C. H.</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sad Years, by Dora Sigerson (Mrs. Clement Shorter)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Poets of the War</td>
<td>H. M.</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Flanders Fields, by John McCrae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A Highland Regiment and Other Poems,</em> and <em>War the Liberator and Other Pieces,</em> by E. A. Mackintosh, M. C.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sea-dogs and Men at Arms—a Canadian Book of Songs, by Jesse Edgar Middleton

En Repos and Elsewhere Over There, by Lansing Warren and Robert A. Donaldson

The Drums in Our Street, by Mary Carolyn Davies

Forward March! by Angela Morgan

The Chosen Nation, by Irwin St. John Tucker

A Free Spirit

Twenty, by Stella Benson

A.C.H.

Our Contemporaries:

Georges Duhamel Returns

The P. S. A.-Columbia Prizes

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Editorial Amenities

Richard Aldington

Reviews:

Convention and Revolt

Convention and Revolt in Poetry, by John Livingston Lowes

A Prize-winner

The Old Road to Paradise, by Margaret Widdemer

Ironics. Light and Dark

Ironica, by Donald Evans

Journeymen Poets

The Madman, by Kahlil Gibran

Lanterns in Gethsemane, by Willard Wattles

A Family Album, by Alter Brody

Outcasts in Beulah Land, by Roy Helton

City Tides, by Archie Austin Coates

Anthologies (37 titles)

Villon Again

The Jargon of Master François Villon, by Jordan Herbert Stabler

Back to Nature

A Note on Primitive Poetry

Reviews:

In the Old Fashion

Motley and Other Poems, by Walter de la Mare

Soldier and Lover

War and Love, by Richard Aldington

An Irish Harp

Songs of the Celtic Past, by Norreys Jephson O'Conor

Cammaerts Again

Messines et Autres Poèmes, by Emile Cammaerts

Correspondence:

Concerning Hilda Conkling

Edward Sapir, Grace Hazard Conkling, Louise Driscoll

A Poet's Handbook

A. Y. Winters

Our Motto

Raymond P. Fischer

Notes

57, 115, 174, 231, 289, 347

Books Received

58, 116, 174, 232, 290, 348
To have great poets
there must be great audiences too.

—Whitman

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