

Vol. XV

No. III

# Poetry

A Magazine of Verse  
Edited by Harriet Monroe  
December, 1919

Hymen, by H. D.  
(A Marriage Pageant)  
At the Turn of the Year  
by John Gould Fletcher  
Two Christmas Poems  
by Carolyn Hillman

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Moloka

You have got all the other magazines imitating your experiments. I never miss reading POETRY. It is amazing how you keep up its interest.

H. L. Mencken

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No. III

POETRY for DECEMBER, 1919

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 **oetry**  
A Magazine of Verse

VOL. XV  
NO. III

DECEMBER, 1919

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HYMEN

*AS from a temple service, tall and dignified, with slow  
pace, each a queen, the sixteen matrons from the tem-  
ple of Hera pass before the curtain—a dark purple hung be-  
tween Ionic columns—of the porch or open hall of a palace.  
Their hair is bound as the marble hair of the temple Hera.  
Each wears a crown or diadem of gold.*

*They sing—the music is temple music, deep, simple, chant-  
ing notes:*

From the closed garden  
Where our feet pace  
Back and forth each day,  
This gladiolus white,  
This red, this purple spray—  
Gladiolus tall with dignity  
As yours, lady—we lay  
Before your feet and pray:

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Of all the blessings—  
Youth, joy, ecstasy—  
May one gift last  
(As the tall gladiolus may  
Outlast the wind-flower,  
Winter-rose or rose),  
One gift above,  
Encompassing all those;

For her, for him,  
For all within these palace walls,  
Beyond the feast,  
Beyond the cry of Hymen and the torch,  
Beyond the night and music  
Echoing through the porch till day.

*The music, with its deep chanting notes, dies away. The curtain hangs motionless in rich, full folds. Then from this background of darkness, dignity and solemn repose, a flute gradually detaches itself, becomes clearer and clearer, pipes alone one shrill, simple little melody.*

*From the distance, four children's voices blend with the flute, and four very little girls pass singly before the curtain, small maids or attendants of the sixteen matrons. Their hair is short and curls at the back of their heads like the hair of the chryselephantine Hermes. They sing:*

Where the first crocus buds unfold  
We found these petals near the cold  
Swift river-bed.

Beneath the rocks where ivy-frond  
 Puts forth new leaves to gleam beyond  
 Those lately dead:

The very smallest two or three  
 Of gold (gold pale as ivory)  
 We gatherèd.

*When the little girls have passed before the curtain, a wood-wind weaves a richer note into the flute melody; then the two blend into one song. But as the wood-wind grows in mellowness and richness, the flute gradually dies away into a secondary theme and the wood-wind alone evolves the melody of a new song.*

*Two by two—like two sets of medallions with twin profiles distinct, one head slightly higher, bent forward a little—the four figures of four slight, rather fragile taller children, are outlined with sharp white contour against the curtain.*

*The hair is smooth against the heads, falling to the shoulders but slightly waved against the nape of the neck. They are looking down, each at a spray of winter-rose. The tunics fall to the knees in sharp marble folds. They sing:*

Never more will the wind  
 Cherish you again,  
 Never more will the rain.

Never more  
 Shall we find you bright  
 In the snow and wind.

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The snow is melted,  
The snow is gone,  
And you are flown:

Like a bird out of our hand,  
Like a light out of our heart,  
You are gone.

*As the wistful notes of the wood-wind gradually die away, there comes a sudden, shrill, swift piping.*

*Free and wild, like the wood-maidens of Artemis, is this last group of four—very straight with heads tossed back. They sing in rich, free, swift notes. They move swiftly before the curtain in contrast to the slow, important pace of the first two groups. Their hair is loose and rayed out like that of the sun-god. They are boyish in shape and gesture. They carry hyacinths in baskets, strapped like quivers to their backs. They reach to draw the flower sprays from the baskets, as the Huntress her arrows.*

*As they dart swiftly to and fro before the curtain, they are youth, they are spring—they are the Chelidonia, their song is the swallow-song of joy:*

Between the hollows  
Of the little hills  
The spring spills blue—  
Turquoise, sapphire, lapis-lazuli  
On a brown cloth outspread.



Ah see,  
 How carefully we lay them now,  
 Each hyacinth spray,  
 Across the marble floor—  
 A pattern your bent eyes  
 May trace and follow  
 To the shut bridal door.

Lady, our love, our dear,  
 Our bride most fair,  
 They grew among the hollows  
 Of the hills;  
 As if the sea had spilled its blue,  
 As if the sea had risen  
 From its bed,  
 And sinking to the level of the shore,  
 Left hyacinths on the floor.

*There is a pause. Flute, pipe and wood-wind blend in a full, rich movement. There is no definite melody but full, powerful rhythm like soft but steady wind above forest trees. Into this, like rain, gradually creeps the note of strings.*

*As the strings grow stronger and finally dominate the whole, the bride-chorus passes before the curtain. There may be any number in this chorus. The figures—tall young women, clothed in long white tunics—follow one another closely, yet are all distinct like a procession of a temple frieze.*

*The bride in the center is not at first distinguishable from her maidens; but as they begin their song, the maidens draw*

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*apart into two groups, leaving the veiled symbolic figure standing alone in the center.*

*The two groups range themselves to right and left like officiating priestesses. The veiled figure stands with her back against the curtain, the others being in profile. Her head is swathed in folds of diaphanous white, through which the features are visible, like the veiled Tanagra.*

*When the song is finished, the group to the bride's left turns about; also the bride, so that all face in one direction. In processional form they pass out, the figure of the bride again merging, not distinguishable from the maidens.*

*Strophe*

But of her  
Who can say if she is fair?  
Bound with fillet,  
Bound with myrtle  
Underneath her flowing veil,  
Only the soft length  
(Beneath her dress)  
Of saffron shoe is bright  
As a great lily-heart  
In its white loveliness.

*Antistrophe*

But of her  
We can say that she is fair.  
We bleached the fillet,  
Brought the myrtle;

To us the task was set  
 Of knotting the fine threads of silk:  
 We fastened the veil,  
 And over the white foot  
 Drew on the painted shoe  
 Steeped in Illyrian crocus.

*Strophe*

But of her,  
 Who can say if she is fair?  
 For her head is covered over  
 With her mantle  
 White on white,  
 Snow on whiter amaranth,  
 Snow on hoar-frost,  
 Snow on snow,  
 Snow on whitest buds of myrrh.

*Antistrophe*

But of her,  
 We can say that she is fair;  
 For we know underneath  
 All the wanness,  
 All the heat  
 (In her blanched face)  
 Of desire  
 Is caught in her eyes as fire  
 In the dark center leaf  
 Of the white Syrian iris.

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*The rather hard, hieratic precision of the music—its stately pause and beat—is broken now into irregular lilt and rhythm of strings.*

*Four tall young women, very young matrons, enter in a group. They stand clear and fair, but this little group entirely lacks the austere precision of the procession of maidens just preceding them. They pause in the center of the stage; turn, one three-quarter, two in profile and the fourth full face; they stand, turned as if confiding in each other like a Tanagra group.*

*They sing lightly, their flower trays under their arms.*

Along the yellow sand  
Above the rocks  
The laurel-bushes stand.  
Against the shimmering heat  
Each separate leaf  
Is bright and cold,  
And through the bronze  
Of singing bark and wood  
Run the fine threads of gold.

Here in our wicker-trays,  
We bring the first faint blossoming  
Of fragrant bays:

Lady, their blushes shine  
As faint in hue  
As when through petals

Of a laurel-rose  
 The sun shines through  
 And throws a purple shadow  
 On a marble vase.

(Ah, love,  
 So her fair breasts will shine  
 With the faint shadow above.)

*The harp chords become again more regular in simple definite rhythm. The music is not so intense as the bride-chorus; and quieter, more sedate, than the notes preceding the entrance of the last group.*

*Five or six slightly older serene young women enter in processional form; each holding before her, with precise bending of arms, coverlets and linen, carefully folded, as if for the bride couch. The garments are purple, scarlet and deep blue, with edge of gold.*

*They sing to simple blending of wood-wind and harp.*

From citron-bower be her bed,  
 Cut from branch of tree a-flower,  
 Fashioned for her maidenhead.

From Lydian apples, sweet of hue,  
 Cut the width of board and lathe.  
 Carve the feet from myrtle-wood.

Let the palings of her bed  
 Be quince and box-wood overlaid

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With the scented bark of yew.

That all the wood in blossoming,  
May claim her heart and cool her blood  
For losing of her maidenhood.

*The wood-winds become more rich and resonant. A tall youth crosses the stage as if seeking the bride door. The music becomes very rich, full of color.*

*The figure itself is a flame, an exaggerated symbol; the hair a flame; the wings, deep red or purple, stand out against the curtains in a contrasting or almost clashing shade of purple. The tunic falls almost to the knees, again a rich purple or crimson. The knees are bare; the sandals elaborately strapped over and over. The curtain seems a rich purple cloud, the figure, still brighter, like a flamboyant bird, half emerged in the sunset.*

*Love pauses just outside the bride's door with his gift, a tuft of black-purple cyclamen. He sings to the accompaniment of wood-winds, in a rich, resonant voice:*

The crimson cover of her bed  
Is not so rich, nor so deeply bled  
The purple fish that dyed it red,  
As when in a hot sheltered glen  
There flowered these stalks of cyclamen:

(Purple with honey-points  
Of horns for petals;

Sweet and dark and crisp,  
As fragrant as her maiden kiss.)

There with his honey-seeking lips  
The bee clings close and warmly sips,  
And seeks with honey-thighs to sway  
And drink the very flower away.

(Ah, stern the petals drawing back;  
Ah rare, ah virginal her breath!)

Crimson, with honey-seeking lips,  
The sun lies hot across his back,  
The gold is flecked across his wings.  
Quivering he sways and quivering clings  
(Ah, rare her shoulders drawing back!)  
One moment, then the plunderer slips  
Between the purple flower-lips.

*Love passes out with a crash of cymbals. There is a momentary pause and the music falls into its calm, wave-like rhythm.*

*A band of boys passes before the curtain. They pass from side to side, crossing and re-crossing; but their figures never confuse one another, the outlines are never blurred. They stand out against the curtain with symbolic gesture, stooping as if to gather up the wreaths, or swaying with long stiff branch as if to sweep the fallen petals from the floor.*

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*There is no marked melody from the instruments, but the boys' voices, humming lightly as they enter, gradually evolve a little dance song. There are no words but the lilt up and down of the boys' tenor voices.*

*Then, as if they had finished the task of gathering up the wreaths and sweeping the petals, they stand in groups of two before the pillars where the torches have been placed. They lift the torches from the brackets. They hold them aloft between them, one torch to each two boys. Their figures are cut against the curtain like the simple, triangular design on the base of a vase or frieze—the boys' heads on a level, the torches above them.*

*They sing in clear half-subdued voices.*

Where love is king,  
Ah, there is little need  
To dance and sing,  
With bridal-torch to flare  
Amber and scatter light  
Across the purple air,  
To sing and dance  
To flute-note and to reed.

Where love is come  
(Ah, love is come indeed!)  
Our limbs are numb  
Before his fiery need;  
With all their glad  
Rapture of speech unsaid,



H. D.

Before his fiery lips  
Our lips are mute and dumb.

Ah, sound of reed,  
Ah, flute and trumpet wail,  
Ah, joy decreed—  
The fringes of her veil  
Are seared and white;  
Across the flare of light,  
Blinded the torches fail.  
(Ah, love is come indeed!)

*At the end of the song, the torches flicker out and the figures are no longer distinguishable in the darkness. They pass out like shadows. The purple curtain hangs black and heavy.*

*The music dies away and is finally cut short with a few deep, muted chords.*

H. D.

VERMILION SEALS

LIGHT OF LOVE

Nay, bury her in her cloak; she was not one  
To prison in a coffin. At her head,  
When you have strewn the earth with forest leaves,  
Pile apricots and peaches, apples red,  
Plums, oranges and grapes in one sweet heap—  
There where shall hover breathless-humming bees,  
And birds that taste, then sit and preen their wings.  
And at the foot, I ask that you leave these—  
Her slippers. Then some shepherdess may try  
In vain to put them on; or little fay,  
Knotting her long green hair, steal near to glance.  
So may she know that I forget to-day,  
And think of her as when she used to dance.

BELATED

At dusk a fox had run across my path,  
And disappeared with smiling, wicked eyes.  
It was so dark I could not see my way  
Though all the fields were filled with fireflies.  
And every tree had but one thing to breathe  
Among its leaves—the words of an old song,  
“At fifteen even a devil’s a thistle-bloom.”  
The rice was murmurous as I went along;  
Then in the darkness something brushed my sleeve,  
White hands reached out to touch me in the gloom.

Her words were like the bright quick fireflies,  
"At fifteen even a devil's a thistle-bloom."

SPRING IN CHINA

The earth's coat is the green of young willows  
Beside brown streams.  
It is embroidered over with flowering trees—  
Plum, peach and apricot.  
Her sleeves are scented wondrously;  
Her hair is unbound in the wind.  
Even the moon is so enamoured  
That ere dusk he climbs the stairs of heaven to behold her.

THE GHOULS

All day the long cold fingers of the rain  
Have pried at the gray tiles above the graves,  
Finishing the work of years in the drear fields  
Where coffins lie uncovered in the light  
Of sulphurous mustard blooms. Here by the bank  
The greedy water has uncovered bones  
Shining, blue-white, wet in the biting wind.

THE CURSE

On the cord dead hangs our sister,  
She of the wondrous lily feet.  
They have blasted our fragrant flower—

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She shall curse them as is meet!  
Hold the broom in her dead hand—  
Raise her up until she stand.  
Backward, forward, sweep the room!  
Wealth and happiness and long life  
Sweeps she with avenging broom  
From the house where she was wife.  
Backward, forward, sweep the broom  
Sweeping doom, sweeping doom!

Now the gods will surely punish—  
Surely pity the young bride.  
She was like a willow blossom,  
It was springtime when she died.  
Hold the broom in her dead hand—  
Raise her up until she stand!  
She was always flower-gay  
Till they broke her smiling heart.  
In this house she would not stay—  
Take her up—let us depart.

LOVE TOWER

Prince Sung built Tsheng-leng tower  
From which he might espy  
Dame Sik of the smoke-like hair  
And willow waist, go by.

When the moon looked full at the sun  
In the month that the asters flower,

Prince Sung bade them bring Dame Sik  
Into his gay tiled tower.

“Give thy handmaid leave to bathe  
And change her unworthy dress;  
She will serve thee with napkin and comb,  
As befits thy worshipfulness.”

She bathed and changed her robes,  
In a warm slow autumn hour.  
She smiled in the face of Prince Sung,  
And leapt from the top of the tower.

THE GATE

The dust is thick along the road;  
The fields are scorching in the sun;  
My wife has ever a bitter word  
To greet me when the day is done.

The neighbors rest beside the gate  
But half their words are high and shrill.  
My son is over-young to help;  
The fields are very hard to till.

But in the dusk I raise my eyes—  
The poet's words come back to me:  
“In the moon there is a white jade gate  
Shadowed cool by a cassia tree.”

*Elizabeth J. Coatsworth*

TWO CHRISTMAS POEMS

SUGAR MICE

The Cock crows clear  
On Christmas morn.  
"Oooo-oo-oo-oo!"  
To-day a child  
Lies in the manger,  
Where the brown ox  
Lies too.  
"Oooo-oo-oo-oo!"  
"Come and see him—  
A beggar woman  
Bore him last night."  
"Worthless brazen hussy!—  
Put her out of my barn!"  
Said Grandam;  
"Send her to the poor house."  
"Could you not keep her  
One day?" I asked.  
"No indeed!" she said;  
"This is Christmas,  
When I must serve my black pudding,  
Burning in brandy,  
And when thou  
Shalt see thy little tree,  
Sparkling with candles,  
And hung with gay sugar mice."

"But grandam,  
Was not the Christ-child  
Born in a manger too?"  
"That was a different matter,"  
She said.  
The cock crowed  
Three times,  
Loud and clear.  
"Oooo-oo-oo-oo!"  
"Bastard brat  
In our barn!"  
"Oooo-oo-oo-oo!"  
Different! Different! Different!  
But I slipped out to see him  
And take him a sugar mouse;  
And all about his head  
Was a golden glory!"

WREATHS

Red wreaths  
Hang in my neighbor's window,  
Green wreaths in my own.  
On this day I lost my husband.  
On this day you lost your boy.  
On this day  
Christ was born.  
Red wreaths,

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Green wreaths  
Hang in our windows,  
Red for a bleeding heart,  
Green for grave grass.  
Mary, mother of Jesus,  
Look down and comfort us.  
You too knew passion;  
You too knew pain.  
Comfort us,  
Who are not brides of God,  
Nor bore God.  
On Christmas day  
Hang wreaths,  
Green for spent passion,  
Red for new pain.

*Carolyn Hillman*

THE VICTORS

The day-star is painted red,  
The sun stands red on the mountain.  
They whisper our name  
In the land we are leaving.

*Sarah Unna*



## SONGS OF SILENCE

### LITTLE CHIEF

The wind is wearing moccasins,  
The wind is wearing moccasins,  
It slides along the desert  
With stealthy feet at noon.  
Upon the ditch it lightly treads,  
And scarcely stirs the cottonwoods,  
The nervous, listening cottonwoods,  
On tiptoe in the sun.

The wind is wearing moccasins,  
The wind is wearing moccasins,  
It runs with crouching shoulders,  
Its fingers sweep the ground.  
With a sigh it makes a pathway  
Through the purple-flowered alfalfa,  
As it whispers dreams half-mockingly  
To workers in the sun.

### SONG

Do you never tire, O Silence,  
And long to sing?

*Think you, because you do not hear me,  
I am not singing?*

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HOUND AT NIGHT

I did not know how brittle  
Was the silence  
Till quick, shrewd barks of a hound  
Pelted over the hills  
Breaking the stillness into fragments,  
Like slivers of bright looking-glass.

REFLECTIONS

Where do you keep the secrets,  
Mirror,  
That drop like petals on your bosom  
And drift away in silence?

OUTCAST

The waters cast him out:  
A toppled tower of ivory,  
His naked body lies upon the sands—  
Nameless,  
Beautiful,  
Unreachable.

Like a cloudy breath  
The Seeking-thing within him  
Has gone forth  
To claim identity.

I cannot weep as I see him—  
Beautiful,  
Venturesome,  
Stripped and free.

THE PRODIGAL

God has such a splendid way  
Of launching his unchallenged yea:

Of giving sphery grapes their sheen;  
Of painting trees and grasses green;

Of crooning April rains that we  
May wash us in simplicity;

Of swinging little smiling moons  
Beyond the reach of noisy noons;

Of storing in the honey bee  
The whole of life's epitome.

God has such a splendid way  
Of tempting beauty out of clay,

And from the scattered dusts that sleep  
Summoning men who laugh and weep;

And, by and by, of letting death  
Draw into space our thread of breath.

*Louise Ayres Garnett*

AN AWAKENING

Sleepy head, sleepy head!  
I believe the drowsy roses  
We have trampled so many nights  
Have got into your brain.

Do you pretend to sleep still  
Under the thinning scarf of kisses,  
And dream there is dawn and song and blossom  
For the awakening  
Of old lovers?

Let me tell you,  
A formal sheet covers us now—  
And it is time of day we changed it  
For our proper working-clothes.

*Lie quiet—listen!*  
*All night I have been hearing it.*  
*There is a gate knocking,*  
*A gate that taps against the latch.*  
*A little wind has lifted in the garden,*  
*Blowing the roses.*  
*The gate keeps tapping.*

Here is new enchantment—  
What does it say?

*Wilton Agnew Barrett*

*It is begun.*

*In the dark, in the dark.*

*There is a light lit on the desert.*

*There is a stir in the tent.*

*Goods are packed for the journey.*

*In the dark, the dark,*

*A caravan is moving.*

*The sand is broken—*

*A man is starting for birth.*

*Wilton Agnew Barrett*

#### WILD ASTER

With goldenrod now hand-in-hand,

Gay summer, rich and full of days,

Sends forth your proud and kingly band

To lead her down the silent ways.

And none that knows the path to death

Goes with a statelier, prouder tread.

Sing, Aster, with your dying breath,

The haughty paeans of the dead!

*John Russell McCarthy*

AT THE TURN OF THE YEAR

I

On the last day of the old year retreating,  
I walked upon a long flat road, apart.  
Between the gaunt trees far away the sunset  
Sent its last shaft of crimson to my heart.

To eastward, between branches blue and lifeless,  
Were clouds encircling a pale ashen stain,  
Wherein the moon peered like a sick old woman  
At a blurred window-pane.

The roadway, filled with drear grey puddles,  
Went stretching on, a smudge of dirty brown;  
Dimmer and duller every instant  
As the last daylight faded down.

Faint lights gleamed from the sombre frowning house-fronts,  
But no one passed. The roadway was quite bare.  
It seemed to me that all the lives about me  
Were flickering out before some great despair.

Horribly down the chill road the wind whistled  
As a dying man might breathe between clenched teeth.  
I did not care, I knew the New Year coming  
Would be less happy than the year beneath.

II

Long ago my life had been a great sea raging  
With furious love and hate,  
A lonely sea without a crag to break on,  
Or coast to bear its weight.

Long ago I madly longed for a settled purpose,  
For bounds to give my thought;  
And lo! the purpose and the bounds were given,  
But not the ones I sought.

Long ago I had dreamed of distant unseen islands,  
Tipped with white peaks, covered with whispering pines;  
But now I only found some straight dull mud-banks  
Empty of human signs.

Long ago I had lived as I would—the world lay open,  
There was no force to dread.  
But now I was pushed along by a steady current  
Toward the gulf of the dead.

Till at last, at the turn of the year, the banks closed inwards,  
And I found I could only go  
Whither the meaningless will of the years would take me,  
Far from the freedom of that long ago.

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III

Destiny's shadow settles on my forehead,  
It falls on me as on all men alike:  
I suddenly know that youth is taken from me,  
Its hour will never strike.

I suddenly know the old wild will that hurried me  
Onwards through joy and sorrow, now is gone.  
Under a sterner lash I drudge forever  
Toward my goal, alone.

Let other hearts enkindle every morning  
At the sun's uplifted hands.  
I must go on, alone, in treacherous twilight  
Toward the dismal lands:

Toward the kingdoms no man seeks to enter,  
While over me, each day,  
Like a grey bird of the marshes, wheels and rises  
And glides away—

Glides away leaving the old ache in me burning  
More keen, more unsubdued;  
While deeper and deeper still there spreads about me  
My final solitude.



IV

Water floats lazily through all the regions of heaven ;  
It writhes and flutters and rolls before the wind.  
It bursts from the earth in springs, it spreads in lakes and  
marshes ;  
It is unconfined.

Strike it, it does not break ; cut it, it does not alter ;  
Throw torches upon it, it yet consumes the flame.  
Pen it with mighty rocks, it rises ever higher ;  
To it mere sand or granite are the same.

It trickles from the snows upon earth's topmost summits,  
It pours in torrents through deep-wooded lands ;  
It spreads out, makes great lakes in lower valleys ;  
In deserts it flows yet beneath the sands.

My soul in me is only moving water,  
Poured out upon the black and sterile earth  
By thunder-clouds that burst and loosed their burden,  
Gathered for endless years before my birth.

My soul in me has grown a monstrous river  
That moves straight onwards towards an unseen sea ;  
Rushing and straight and turbid, never stopping,  
From long banks never free ;

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Perhaps I shall come to the desert, find about me  
Sand everywhere; no end.  
Perhaps I shall sink in the dust, and all my being  
With formless earth shall blend.

Perhaps, with my current checked in its slow falling,  
I shall spread out, a broad lake for the sun;  
Perhaps I shall wind about uneasy marshes  
For years, my task undone.

But neither desert nor lake nor marsh shall stop me  
From what I once began;  
Free as the sea, exultant in my freedom,  
The life-work of a man.

And I shall work free at last, and aloft as a leaping dragon,  
To the sky I shall take my flight,  
Flowing and reverberating through the empty halls of heaven  
Day after infinite day and night on endless night.

RAIN

Rain, rain, in the night, in the day, nothing but rain:  
Rain weaving evenly  
Its mantle of shadow,  
Rain resting tenderly  
On the dead grey corpse of the earth;

Rain whipping desperately  
The broken rocks and the blown sea-coast;  
Rain traveling high,  
With great waving banners of black,  
Over the upland fields.

Rain, rain, in the night, in the day, dark rolling rain:  
The grasses are full of it,  
The wet bracken shivers;  
The thistle-stalks, purple,  
Are gleaming with pale drops.  
The roads and the gullies  
Are filled with deep pools of it;  
It smites at the lake's face,  
And the face of the lake smites back.

Rain, rain, in the night, in the day, long hissing rain:  
The bird-flocks skim desperately  
Across the grey marshes  
To 'scape from its coming;  
The sea surges harsh  
At its white bar of sand.  
Roaring and reeling,  
It mounts from the ocean  
To strike at the earth,  
To fill all the world  
With the sorrow of autumn,  
The falling of leaves,

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The flight of the wild birds,  
The creaking of wagons, laden with harvest,  
Across the dim plain.

I have woven a garment of sorrows  
Out of its falling;  
A long loose garment of grey and shimmering sorrows  
Shot with strange shadows and old.  
All men will shake in their houses  
As I walk in the wake of the rain-cloud,  
Fluttering my gleaming garment,  
And singing a song that was taught me  
By the gulls screaming long with harsh voices  
To the dark clouds piled in the west off their coast;  
That they may come hurrying  
To bury the summer, the last of the year,  
With the wind whipping through them,  
Twisting and lashing  
The long, monotonous, dreary, unchanging, dark folds of  
the rain.

*John Gould Fletcher*

## COMMENT

### A SCIENTIST'S CHALLENGE

AS CHRISTMAS approaches, one year after the signing of the armistice, the skies are not altogether clear. International peace is officially imminent, no doubt, but unofficial and quite unauthorized battles are being fought in many a torn and starving province of distracted nations. And in our own country industrial battles of giants remind us that peace, in a modern democracy, is a spiritual achievement of the crowd—a sympathetic union of vast masses of all kinds of people, not to be attained by the proclamation of governments.

The immense reach of modern causes and issues, the interdependence of all the peoples of the earth, may well assure us that we live in a great age, an age which gives more scope than any in past history for the vision and conquest of great minds and the free action of little ones. Immersed in immediate pessimisms—war's horrors, the treaty's imperfections, the coal strike, the over-loaded opulence of our time crowding out significant living and thinking, the overstrident near noises and far cries discordantly clamoring—discouraged with all this seeming chaos, we are too prone to forget the epic immensity of its challenge. It is for the individual soul, now as always before in the history of the race, to master all this, to see through the chaos of his time, and resolve it into forms of power and beauty.

In other words, it is our job—the job of the poets, artists,

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scientists of our age—to mold the future of the world. The scientists are doing their part with sublime audacity—are the poets and other artists doing theirs?

It may be wise to search our consciences for an answer to certain accusations which I find summarized by one of the greatest constructive scientists now living, Charles P. Steinmetz, chief consulting engineer of the General Electric Company, whose demoniacal—no, god-like—turbines deal out light and power all over the world. Dr. Steinmetz contributes an introduction to a book by Charles M. Ripley, E. E., entitled *Romance of a Great Factory* and privately printed at Schenectady, New York. The introduction opens with the following quotation from some tritely palavering academician:

“We are living in an unromantic age. Before the shriek of the locomotive the wood nymphs have fled, and the factory whistle has driven away the romance of the old times. Art and poetry cannot flourish in our cold engineering age.”

Dr. Steinmetz comments as follows:

Thus says the professor of literature, dissecting the master-works of by-gone ages from Homer to Goethe, and telling us what literary art is.

Why do our literary men of today write “best sellers”—books whose only redeeming feature is that they are forgotten as quickly as sold? They fail to see the wonders of our day, the greatest in the world's history; they find nothing worthy of their literary skill, in our “cold engineering age”! But, over and again, they repeat the story of erotic sentimentalism, running up and down the scale from hysteria to pathological degeneration. Hopelessly out of touch with the world of today, they see nothing in it except sensual erotics of the more hysterical types. . . .

When Homer wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* he told us of the adventures of *his* age; the conquest of Troy; the wanderings of the

navigator through the terrors of the ocean at the dawn of history. Three thousand years later, in his autobiography, *Faust*, Goethe tells us the adventures and aspirations of *his* age; from the youthful efforts to conceive the absolute—groping after the ideal of the true and beautiful—up to the satisfaction of sedate manhood, helping mankind to conquer Nature, and make the earth a better place in which to live.

The great writers of the past wrote of the age in which they lived, but the writers of today are out of touch with the Twentieth Century. . . .

Those of us who have the education, the leisure and inclination, can put ourselves back into by-gone ages—enjoy their literary master-works, and travel with Homer through the terrors of the Mediterranean; but to most of us the only known world is the world of today—of the steam-ship and the railway train, the factory and mill, the electric light, telegraph and motor.

Is there no poetry in this world of ours? Do we really lack romance in this scientific and engineering Twentieth Century? Or is it not rather that the ignorance of the average literary man disables him to see the romance of our age!

There is more poetry, more romance, in the advances which we have seen in our life-time than ever Homer described.

We navigate not only the surface of the Mediterranean, but its very depths by submarine. We fly to the higher altitudes of the skies by aeroplane. We fling the human voice over thousands of miles, across continents and oceans, by telephone. Unborn generations will hear the living voice of our musicians, bequeathed to them by the phonograph. Our great-great-grandchildren will see in action our prominent men of today, recorded and everlastingly perpetuated by the cinematoscope, that new historian of these great times.

There is romance in the life of the vigilant mariner who listens to the wireless message from distant shores. There is tragedy in the fate of the giant battle cruiser. . . . There is romance in that mighty spinning top, the steam turbine, fed by the stored sun-light of prehistoric ages; ages when ferns were giant trees, and our ancestors were crawling things in the slime on the shores of the lagoon—not very long ago, as time is counted in the universe. . . .

In the modern factory there is far more romance and poetry than there has ever been in the history of the past; but we must be living with it to see and understand it. That is, we must be living with the men of our century, and not sheltered in the dust of past ages.

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Dr. Steinmetz, who still delights in Homer and Horace, does not believe in close specialization. Recently he said:

Tell your young engineers to read poetry and history, and study the old-fashioned humanities. The trained specialist who is nothing but a specialist is only a tool in the hands of broader-minded men, who use him and pass him by.

It is evident that the man of science is the romanticist of our age—the poet is a hard and cold seeker of truth in comparison with the modern fire-bringer. Dr. Steinmetz' challenge should prove suggestive—he raises interesting questions as to the scope and function of art. If our poets are moved to reply, POETRY would like to continue the discussion. H. M.

### THE BUSINESS OF POETRY

I am riding through Arizona in the Pullman. I am thinking of the business of poetry. Every other man attends to the details of business, if he is a good business man. A train is mostly business men. . . .

Poets must, it seems to me, learn how to use a great many words before they can know how to use a few skilfully. Journalistic verbiage is not fluency. Alfred Kreyborg agrees with me that poets do not write prose often enough. I speak mostly of the poets who do not write with the sense of volume in their brevities. Brevity of all things demands intensity, or better say tensity. Tensity comes from experience. The poet must see the space for the word, and then see to it the word occupies it. It is almost mechanical science



these days, it would seem—the fitting of parts together so the whole produces a consistent continuity. Subjects never matter, excepting when they are too conspicuously autobiographical. "*Moi-même, quand même*" is attractive enough, but there are so many attractive ways of presenting it. Personal handling counts for more than personal confessions. We can even learn to use hackneyed words, like "rose" and "lily", relieving them of Swinburnian encrustations. We can relieve imagery from this banality.

Poets cannot, as aspiring poets, depend, it seems to me, ever upon the possible natural "flow" that exists in themselves. Poets have work to do for the precision of simplicity, and for the gift of volume in simplicity. It is the business of good poetry to show natural skill as well as natural impetus. Some poets would like to say the former is more important. It surprises one a deal how much even the better poets effuse, or rely upon their momentary theories. The subject calls for handling, not for enthusiasms. Painters of this time have learned this; or ought to have learned it by now, with the excellent examples of the time. Personality is a state, it is not the consummate virtue. It begins, but it does not finish anything. We have eventually to insert in the middle spaces all we can of real ability. What is much needed is solidity, even of sentiment, combined with efficacy of form. This might be served as an injunction to some of the "girl" poets. Poets have not so much to invent themselves as to create themselves, and creation is of course a process of development.

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We are to remember that Ingres, with his impeccable line, was otherwise almost nothing else but silhouette. We cannot subsist merely upon silhouette in poetry, nor upon the pantomimic gesture only. For every lightness there must be a conscious structure. Watteau was the genius of lightness in gesture. No one will accuse him, or even his pupils, Lancret or Pater, of emptiness. A fan has structure by which it exists, a structure that calls for delicate artistry in mechanics. The aeroplane is propelled by motors weighing tons, made of solid metals; and is directed by a master mechanic. Its own notion of lightness would never get it off the ground. Poetry will never "fly" on the notion of its mere lightness, for lightness is not triviality. Francis Thompson had a wing in his brain, but he had feet also. Those men were not mere personalities. They were master mechanics in the business of poetry. A bird could never rely upon the single strong feather. Poetry might rather well take up the mania of Flaubert, if only as a stimulus to exactitude of feeling and idea. You find the best poets doing all they can of that, or else intending that.

The fierce or fiery spaciousness is the quality we look for in a real poem, and coupled with that the requisite iron work according to the personal tastes of the poet. The mere gliding of musical sequences is not sufficient. Poetry is not essentially or necessarily just vocalism. It may have plot or it may be plotless—that is for the poet to decide: what is wanted is some show of mechanistic precision such as the poet can devise. He must know his motive as well as him-

self, and to invent the process of self-creation is no little task. That is the first principle to be learned by the versifiers. Poetry is not only a tool for the graving of the emotions; nor is it an ivory trinket. It calls for an arm. We need not be afraid of muscularity or even of "brutality."

It is a refreshing omen that big poets write but little poetized autobiography. We find it so much in small poetry, poetry written behind moral arrasses, where the writer looks out upon a clear space with longing. Anyone would best set it aside, and get outside of himself and among the greater trivialities. Preoccupation, blocked introspection, are old-fashioned stimuli for modern poetry. Painting has become definitely masculine at last, in its substance, mechanistic in its purport. Delicacy and frankness are not necessarily feminine. Nor are strength and vigor necessarily muscular qualities. What Mr. Untermeyer pleases to call the "cult of brutality" does not apply to the poets he names, unless he regards all great poetry as delicate and "good." You may find the most infinite tenderness in Masters, in Wallace Gould, and in the others whom he names. He chooses to call picturing brutality. Brutality exists only in the preferential attitude. No one finds Whitman brutal. One finds him presenting the picture. Yet the effect of Whitman on the "sick soul," as William James calls it, is essentially a brutal one. His simple frankness hurts. He removes the loin-cloth because it always hints at secrecy and cheap morality. He undresses the body we are forever dressing. He thinks it handsomest so. He is right. It is a poor body that

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doesn't look best without clothes. Nature is naked, and, not to speak tritely, quite unashamed. It has no moralistic attitude. It has no attitude at all. It is therefore natural.

Frost writes of New England, and the natives say they know nothing of that New England. The native who looks in from the outside with a world vision says, "How familiar!" He doesn't say, "How cold, how forbidding!" Masters would probably not wish to live by his *Spoon River*, yet his later books are just other shades of the same powerful grey. Wallace Gould will not want to live by his "so dreadful" *Out of Season*, in *Children of the Sun*; yet his books will probably always be tense and severe. Wallace Stevens thinks, or at least says, he isn't interested in producing a book at all. Well, that is superbly encouraging. It is not therefore what the poet thinks of, that is the "delicacy" of his subject. He is looking for the mechanism by which to render "subject" with the precision called for by his feelings and attitudes toward it.

I personally would call for more humor in poetry. If it is true with poetry as with the play, that almost anyone can write a drama or a tragedy, while the comedy man is rare, this would at least account for the lack of charming humor in verse. Satire is delectable, as Henry James has shown. Even the so serious-minded Emily Dickinson had her inimitable gift of humor. She did the best kind of fooling with "God." An intellectual playfulness with great issues she certainly had to an irresistible degree.

A quotation from someone, apropos of Rainer Maria Rilke,

stating that "The poet, in order to depict life, must take no part in it," offers a fine truism. He is of necessity the looker-on. How else? He must see first and feel afterward, or perhaps not feel at all. Modern expression teaches that most noticeably. Real art comes from the brain, as we know, not from the soul. We have the excellent examples of this in Mary Garden and Mrs. Fiske—fine refutations of the attitude toward femininity. It is a geometric of self-invention art purposes to create. The poet, it seems, must learn this along with the other artists of the time. Art of the time is the art of the mechanism of the time. We must make poetry of today according to the theme of radio-telephony, and of commutation over oceans by the plane. We cannot feel as we do and attempt Keats' simplicities, or Keats' lyricism even. We have other virtues and defects. We are not melodists. Cacophonists, then? We do not concentrate on the assonant major alone. We find the entire range of dissonance valuable as well as attractive. Or is it all a fierce original harmonic we are trying to achieve?

There is no less need of organization even if we do not employ the established metre and rhyme. Likewise, if a poet must state his or her personal history, he or she may be asked to be as brief as possible. It is easier to read epigrams than to read the diary, no matter how short the latter may be. The age of confession perished with the Parnassians. We are a vastly other type of soul—if we are soul at all, which I keenly doubt. The poet's attitude then, for today, is toward the outside. This does not necessarily imply surface.

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We present ourselves in spite of ourselves. We are most original when we are most like life. Life is the natural thing. Interpretation is the factitious. Nature is always variable. To have an eye with brain in it—that is, or rather would be, the poetic millenium. We are not moonlit strummers now: we are gun-pointers and sky-climbers.

*Marsden Hartley*

### CALIFORNIA'S LAUREATE

Out on "the Coast" they are certainly loyal to their own artists. We commend the following item, taken from *The Writer*, to the attention of other states among the forty-eight starred on our flag:

California has a State Poet Laureate, made such by legislative action recorded in Chapter 61, California Statutes of 1919, p. 1537, as follows:—

Whereas, Ina Coolbrith, of San Francisco, California, has brought prominently to the attention of the world the glories and beauties of California's fruits and flowers, its climate, its scenery, its wealth and possibilities, through her many brilliant poems, and has contributed to the high standing of our literature, thereby winning the admiration and gratitude of all loyal Californians, and is truly deserving of our most favorable recognition and mention; therefore, be it

Resolved, by the senate, the assembly concurring, that Ina Coolbrith be hereby recognized, and given the honorary title of The Loved Laurel-crowned Poet of California.

Miss Coolbrith was a friend of Bret Harte, and was associated with him in the editorship of the *Overland Monthly*. Her first book of verse, *A Perfect Day and Other Poems*, was published in 1884; and *The Singer of the Sea—Songs from the Golden Gate* in 1895. When the writer made a

pilgrimage to her during the Pan-American Exposition, she found a white-haired lady of great dignity and charm living in a beautiful little house nobly placed on a high hill—a house presented to her long ago—so it was said—by admiring fellow-citizens of San Francisco. This year, unfortunately, her health has been somewhat impaired, and she has crossed the continent for a complete change of climate. She expects to spend the winter in New York, where she will bring out a new book of poems.

The act of the California legislature is a gracious and well deserved tribute.

*H. M.*

## REVIEWS

### A LINCOLN PRIMER

*Abraham Lincoln, a Play*, by John Drinkwater. Houghton Mifflin Co.

We owe Mr. Drinkwater a debt of gratitude for discovering and using the rich material of poetic drama afforded by Lincoln's public career, and for proving his point with skilful dramaturgy in the making of an actable play. We may thank him also for his simplicity and sincerity in the handling of his material. But beyond that our gratitude cannot go very far—not here in the United States, not here in Illinois.

His play uses with a certain effectiveness the primer method: only the obvious simplicities of a great character are admitted, only the most recognizable lines of the portrait

are drawn. The twice-told tales are all here, and affairs of state—the committee from a presidential convention, meetings of the cabinet, etc.—are “telescoped,” as the author puts it, into the homely talk of three or four neighbors. Strong characters like Seward, Stanton and Chase are made to toe the mark of submission, and the central figure is magnified by a process of elimination, and by a moralistic attitude of mind in presenting him.

This is all very well—there is much to be said for the primer method. In England, where little is known of Lincoln, it may have served quite effectively to introduce him. But it is not adult, and the precedent of English praise, English success, should not impose it on the American people, in whose heart that rich, humorous, melancholy, profoundly impassioned tragic figure is a most precious spiritual inheritance. It would be little short of a calamity if all our deep musing, all our imagining, all our sorrowing love of this great leader should be interfered with by this English version, made up of literary echoes and quite innocent of background.

Some critics have implied that the absence of what they call “local color” was a negligible minor fault, to be easily remedied by a few slight corrections of diction, dialect and other discrepancies. They might as well say that a lion of the jungle reveals his power as effectively in a cage. Lincoln was part of his environment: literally he grew out of the soil of Illinois; spiritually he was a son of the pioneers. Artistically he belongs deep in his own country, and probably



only a fellow-countryman poet, certainly only a vividly localizing imagination, can place him where he belongs. And the trouble is, that not local color merely, but all color, is absent from this sketch in *grisaille* of a figure whose richness only a colorist like Rembrandt could achieve.

Of course it is our intimacy with Lincoln, our intense delight in him and love of him, which has kept our literary hands off. Whitman was lifted by Lincoln's martyrdom to the sublime height of a great elegy, and many other poets have brought tributes; but only the sculptors, as yet, have tried to present him in the round. To Mr. Drinkwater, of course, he is myth—a mine of dramatic material as valuable, and almost as remote, as Charlemagne or King Arthur. But whereas Charlemagne and King Arthur are bedded deep in the rich medieval poetic tradition, populous and haunted with the peoples of a dozen worlds real and magical, Lincoln, in the mind of a modern Englishman, stands gaunt and lonely and unrooted. Mr. Drinkwater picks him up out of his own place, and sets him down in a manufactured milieu, where the people do not think his thoughts nor speak his tongue, and even the chairs don't look natural.

The dialogue is written in prose, but the key-note of poetic chronicle is struck and maintained by the choral introductions and interludes. There is much to praise in Mr. Drinkwater's revival of a form rashly pronounced obsolete, and in his structural use of it—the effectiveness of the curtains, for example. Also his attitude toward his hero is straight and simple, free of patronage on the one hand or

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subservience on the other. I would praise, too, his effective use of the one valuable trait which history has revealed in the very trying character of Mrs. Lincoln—her early-and-late faith in her husband's greatness. H. M.

THE NEW "IMAGES"

*Images* (new edition with additions), by Richard Aldington.  
The Egoist, London.

It is a pleasure to be assured that these exquisite poems have been sufficiently appreciated to demand a second edition. The personality of the book is strengthened by the addition of a few poems from magazines and the imagist anthologies, and by the deletion of two whose manner, and perhaps conception even, seemed to flutter on uncertain wings.

As the poet states in the preface to his latest work, *War and Love*, the poems in *Images* were the outcome of a "spiritual struggle." They were a sort of armor of imagined beauty which the poet drew about himself as a protection against an unlovely environment. He ventured abroad in his world of imagined beauty with sure footstep and a strong heart. But the reader who would follow him should be a robust esthete, lest he strangle in the rarity of the atmosphere.

From one point of view it is as if this book were the embodiment of that condition spoken of in Scripture as the "dividing asunder of soul and spirit." For one feels very keenly the poignant desire of the senses to be united with the spirit from which they seem to be separated forever.

Rather it would seem, curiously enough, that the longing is actually of the spirit itself. Thus a little sight of celestial loneliness comes wafted down to mortal ears:

We pluck the asphodel,  
Yet we weave no crowns  
For we have no vines;  
No one speaks here;  
No one kisses.

But the mortal who hears, even if moved by an understanding, could not give comfort any more than the senses could unite with the spirit. It is a beautiful state of mind, similar to that of some children who half expect to awaken at almost any moment and find themselves moving about in an enchanted world.

Despite the suggestions of a few words like "spirit" and "celestial" in this note, there is very little in these poems which is really metaphysical. Since the war, in which Mr. Aldington had an active part, more people know to some degree that metaphysics is going to help us think through and find out where we are. After a book like *War and Love* it would be odd to see Mr. Aldington reverting to a style and state of mind from which a good many of the *Images* were drawn.

In the book there are poems—*Choricos*, for example—which move along in measures of unforgettable music. In contrast with poems of a Greek mood and nomenclature are *The River*, *Epigrams*, *Beauty, thou hast Hurt me Overmuch*, *In the Old Garden*, which seem to interest more directly by their own virtue.

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Among those which have been newly added are *The Faun Captive*, with its especially beautiful opening lines, *Fantasy*, *R. V. and Another*, *Captive*, and this *Inarticulate Grief*, which is as fine as anything in the volume:

Let the sea beat its thin torn hands  
In anguish against the shore;  
Let it moan  
Between headland and cliff;  
Let the sea shriek out its agony  
Across waste sands and marshes,  
And clutch great ships,  
Tearing them plate from steel plate  
In reckless anger;  
Let it break the white bulwarks  
Of harbor and city;  
Let it sob and scream and laugh  
In a sharp fury,  
With white salt tears  
Wet on its writhen face;  
Ah! let the sea still be mad  
And crash in madness among the shaking rocks—  
For the sea is the cry of our sorrow.

*Mark Turbyfill*

ON THEIR WAY

*Gargoyles*, by Howard Mumford Jones. Cornhill Co.  
*Banners*, by Babette Deutch. George H. Doran Co.  
*The New Day*, by Scudder Middleton. Macmillan Co.  
*Blue Smoke*, by Karle Wilson Baker. Yale Univ. Press.

Some are born poets—may others achieve poetry? Books like those listed above tempt one to ask this question. Or perhaps the question is slightly different: may one who has a certain aptitude and love of the art win out finally, through

hard work and the sloughing off of faults, to a poetic expression of his vision which, though not magical, not a flame of divine fire, may yet glow with a certain authentic, if more earthly, beauty?

Mr. Jones, for example, comes slowly to artistic maturity; his book is almost entirely practice work, the literary exercises of a man overburdened with impedimenta, and slow and stubborn in getting rid of them. But it contains a few poems, notably *A Song of Butte*, which begin to win free.

Most of the book baffles one—so much knowledge, feeling, intuitive psychology unfused into forms of power or beauty. The author loves the Lake Michigan dunes, no doubt, but he must desecrate them with the rusty machinery of pettier spaces, unloading a whole pack of “fairy shallows,” mermaids, pixies, elves and dryads; or, when he gets nearer to his subject, as in *November* or *Night*, he is still impeded by an inherited stanza-form too trivial to relate itself to the wild spaciousness of the dunes.

In *His Mother* one grants the poet's intuition of the vampire-parent's psychology while regretting the prosiness of the sonnets which unfold it. The *University Sketches* also are true expositions of human character; *The Professor Muses*, especially, presents effectively, in blank-verse monologue, the teacher's shy sympathy with the young things who stream through his classroom. But mostly one feels the philosopher rather than the poet; one finds statement rather than song. Even a dreaming professor cannot evoke Venus herself by crying:

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Ah Aphrodite!  
Thou dead, thou deathless goddess,  
Sprung of the wind and the wave and the clean sweet foam!

And the three or four *Sketches* in poetic prose carry for me an imitative Nietzschean pose.

*A Song of Butte* seems the best thing in the book because, though still somewhat rhetorical, it conquers and carries its medium, makes a living, unified, vital portrait of a somewhat sinister modern town:

I am the city demoniac! Desolate, mournful, infernal  
Dweller apart among and upon the amazing hills.

It is a portrait with passion and beauty in it, worthy to stand beside Mary MacLane's revelation of the beauty and terror of Butte. Unfortunately it is too long to quote.

Miss Deutsch's book is of a more modern expertness; but perhaps her struggle is less severe, her vision of life less clouded with metaphysical veils. Too many of her poems are an assertion of emotion rather than the emotion itself. It is not enough, for example, to call a poem *Bacchanal* and cry:

Oh, we are mad—  
We are drunk with wine of the god,  
Our feet are athrill with the juice of the vine we have trod.

Nor does *Trails* quite persuade us, even granting its keen touch at the end.

But a few of the poems are vividly descriptive, like a good landscape of fresh color: *Ephemeris*, *Smoke*, *Genre*. In two or three—*Song*, *Walls*, *Solitude*—a real emotion is expressed with lyric brevity and directness. And once or twice deeper

feeling molds the poems into a finer beauty. In this *Death of a Child* sharp pain uses effectively the practiced hand:

Are you at ease now,  
Do you suck content  
From death's dark nipple between your wan lips—  
Now that the fever of the day is spent  
And anguish slips  
From the small limbs,  
And they lie lapped in rest,  
The young head pillowed soft upon that indurate breast?  
No, you are quiet,  
And forever;  
Though for us the silence is so loud with tears—  
Wherein we hear the dreadful-footed years  
Echoing, but your quick laughter never;  
Never your stumbling run, your sudden face  
Thrust in bright scorn upon our solemn fears.  
Now the dark mother holds you close . . . Oh, you  
We loved so,  
How you lie  
So strangely still, unmoved so utterly,  
Dear yet, but oh, a little alien too!

Mr. Middleton's book is mostly rhymed eloquence; such poems as *1919* and *The Poets* are moralistic and rhetorical, and *Children* is labored and over-expansive. It is rather the briefer poems in *The New Day* which give one a breath of hope, because of a delicate touch in them, a flavor, a perfume. One may mention especially *Interlude*, *Dream Rover*, *Burial*, and this *Carnival*:

Why do you go before the maple leaves  
Open, like little hands, to welcome spring?  
O lovely woman, is your heart afraid  
Of all the truths the trees of April bring?

Just when the carnival begins, you go.  
Alone I watch the dancing of the earth.

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Though you may raise the cloak before your face,  
You cannot hide the meaning of this mirth.

In Mrs. Baker's book one finds a slight but delicate lyric strain, impeded by difficulties and sentimentalities, but gradually gaining clarity and precision. Some of the poems date back more than a decade to the days when "Charlotte Wilson" was a familiar name in the magazines. The sonnet written in 1910 at the too-early death of William Vaughn Moody moves one, in spite of its stumbling gait, by its quiet simplicity and sincerity.

A few of the later poems show the same qualities, with a more expert handling—*Apple and Rose*, for example, or *Graves in France*, or this *Eagle Youth*:

They have taken his horse and plume,  
They have left him to plod, and fume  
For a hero's scope and room!  
They have curbed his fighting pride,  
They have bade him burrow and hide  
With a million, side by side:  
Look—into the air he springs,  
Fighting with wings!

He had found a way to be free  
Of that dun immensity  
That would swallow up such as he:  
Who would burrow when he could fly?  
He will climb up into the sky  
And the world shall watch him die!  
Only his peers may dare  
Follow him there!

H. M.



A FEW FIRST BOOKS

*Petals Blown Adrift*, by Rose Florence Freeman. Joseph Ishill Co.

Although this author issued a book of poems in 1918, we are reviewing her new one under the above heading, as most of the poems in her first book, *Rain among the Bamboos*, are to be found in the last twenty pages of this one. It is important to know that *Petals Blown Adrift* claims to be a first book, and it is only upon granting such a claim that we feel concerned in it. Bad books of poetry leave a reviewer fearing that the world has grown deaf and half-dumb, with eyes squinting. This unsatisfactory book, instead, leaves one with a certain hope, and with no unpleasant feelings towards it. It is unsatisfactory—it says nothing or nearly nothing; it is more unsatisfactory because a certain loveliness of wording, and the indubitable facility of some of the rhyme poems, lure the reader and then baffle him—lure him to baffle him. There are appearances of strength and forcefulness, but—strength about or upon what? forcefulness enforcing what? No, no strength, no vision—merely assertions such as, I have seen a vision, I am strong, I am very strong; no mood but the assurance that a mood is or was there. No actual experience, though one feels that the writer has felt. Nothing to quote—or perhaps this, which comes nearer to being a specific utterance than anything else in the book:

In the bitterest and most holy moment,  
Each stands on his own little peak crying across the hills,  
Hearing none other but Self and Echo.

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or this:

My limbs are drunk sheer through as fields with rain  
Satiated.

It is not a book, then, but a lovely voice heard from quite a distance, singing perhaps well—but one can't make out either the words or the tune. That it is a lovely voice I am sure, because these commonplaces, this impotence, are not jarring as such things usually are: the composite sound of them is an inarticulate but not unpleasant hum. That is an effect of the author's not yet fully realized, fine, sensual delight in words. If the author should ever come nearer to her own moods, and consequently to us, we should hear a good song. She has been tuning up.

*Dreams and Gibes*, by Edward Sapir. Poet Lore Co.

Here is the voice of a cynically wistful man, his struggle to express common human reactions to a common human world. One senses, through the dry and dim words of Edward Sapir, the seriousness of his task; and the lack of loveliness in the book is, to a certain extent, the aspect of the author's own soul—honesty redeems much that is ungainly in it. But, of course, the redemption is not complete—sheer honesty and stark seriousness are in themselves beautiful, and no redemption would be necessary if they were present. The exclusion of loveliness not being radical, austerity and hardness are not achieved. And such hardness and austerity as one finds here are not sufficiently mellowed by other elements, but only adulterated by them.

*The Omega and Other Poems*, by Edward Shillito. B. H. Blackwell, Oxford, Eng.

Mr. Shillito is characteristically the average good rhymers of today. Smothering under a heap of vague metaphors, old words, lines that might have been just transplanted from any book of poems of the last century or before, are the sorrow and the mysticism of a man of today—a living man of an actual today. One does not doubt his faith in Christ—most of the poems are religious—and yet one is not moved by it. Christ is in Mr. Shillito's heart, but he presents him to us with so much rhetorical trapping, reminding us of so many other Christs we have seen, that we cannot differentiate his from the others.

And yet a man of today is alive under this borrowed cloak. For a cloak it is—and it is extraneous to the body it covers. Rhymes are too often that, in our days: a borrowed cloak hiding an impotent body; or a dress covering a body which would be fine but for the fact that it needs such a dress. This last is almost exactly the case of Mr. Shillito's poems.

*Out of Doors*, and *Gods and Devils*, by John Russell McCarthy. James T. White & Co.

Puns and jokes and little witty words about trees and flowers! McCarthy's *Out of Doors* is such stuff as makes the conversation and repartee of hiking parties of gentlefolk. When it gets too strong it hurts one—looks as though the author were jeering flowers and trees to get an ingratiating smile from the rest of the hiking party. Images that so ob-

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viciously affect to be unexpected, and are so stale and literary as to make one astonished at their daring, and somewhat ashamed of their lack of self-consciousness. Faceless humor and laughter. The way flowers and trees all speak to him, and the way he so flippantly and girlishly repeats to the profane the conversation! Here are some of the stunts: he asserts that the lily of the valley is

weary of white and white and white,  
And long silk stockings of green. . . . .  
You want to be dirty and happy tonight;  
You're tired of being clean. . . . .

She wants to go fighting and scratching for blood.

And he invites some trees to

Come forth to laugh and dine like gods upon the hills.

The other book, *Gods and Devils*, is not so awful. Though I am not sure that even such a compliment should be paid to this hybrid grafting of such Oppenheimian rant as:

Come, let us make us a God!

on the idiotic naiveté of:

There is not a God in the sickly typewritten category can  
keep one small boy away from the movies.

Now, why this outpouring of viciousness over a book that doesn't even deserve that? I will tell you. Once a girl said to me: "The matter with poets is that they're all sissies!" Well, not all—but the centuries are overflowing with such poetic molasses, and when as acute a case as this comes under the eyes of a reader of poetry, he feels that he

is at last entitled to raise the dam of his ancient irritation, which has become vicious with time and repression.

E. C.

NOTES

Our readers need no introduction to H. D. (Mrs. Richard Aldington) of London, "the most imagistic of the imagists," who has been represented often in POETRY since 1912. Her book, *Sea Garden*, was published in 1916 by Constable & Co., and the Houghton Mifflin Co. Her translations from Euripides are listed on the next page among our Books Received. Mrs. Aldington was Hilda Doolittle of Philadelphia, the daughter of Dr. Charles L. Doolittle, the distinguished astronomer of the University of Pennsylvania.

Mr. John Gould Fletcher, another American imagist now resident in London, has also appeared often in POETRY. His latest books of verse are *The Tree of Life* (Chatto & Windus, London), and *Japanese Prints* (Four Seas Co.).

Louise Ayres Garnett (Mrs. Eugene H.), of Evanston, Ill., has also appeared in the magazine. She is the author of books of verse for children, and she has set to music many of her own songs, which have been published by the Oliver Ditson Co.

Mr. Wilton Agnew Barrett, of New York, is another familiar contributor. Also Mr. John Russell McCarthy, of Huntingdon, Pa., author of *Out of Doors* and *Gods and Devils* (James T. White & Co.).

Three poets appear for the first time in POETRY:

Miss Elizabeth J. Coatsworth, formerly of Pasadena and of late resident in New York and other eastern cities, spent some years in China, as the subjects of most of these poems would indicate. She wishes to acknowledge her indebtedness to Giles' *Chinese Sketches* for the material of *The Curse*.

Mrs. Carolyn Hillman, of the Wellesley faculty, is co-author, with her son, of a book of verse recently published. *Asia* has printed some of her translations from the Chinese and Persian.

Miss Sarah Unna, now a student at Berkeley, was in Witter Bynner's English class last year, and has appeared only in college publications.

Mr. Otto A. Rothert, 1321 Starks Bdg., Louisville, Ky., requests that all persons possessing letters by the late Madison Cawein, will

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lend them to him for possible use in his projected biography of the poet.

### BOOKS RECEIVED

#### ORIGINAL VERSE:

- Body and Raiment*, by Eunice Tietjens. Alfred A. Knopf.  
*Profiles from China*, by Eunice Tietjens. Alfred A. Knopf. (2nd ed.)  
*From Star to Star*, by Edith Grensted Rochester. Grafton Pub. Corp., Los Angeles.  
*Shining Fields and Dark Towers*, by John Bunker. John Lane Co.  
*Reynard the Fox or the Ghost Heath Run*, by John Masefield. Macmillan Co.  
*Hearts Awake*, by Amelia Josephine Burr. Geo. H. Doran Co.  
*Turmoil Verses Written in France, 1917-1919*, by Robert A. Donaldson. Houghton Mifflin Co.  
*Gestures in Ivory*, by Harold Hersey. Britton Pub. Co., N. Y.  
*The Ballade of the Bleve Grotto*, by Thomas Turner. Margate, Eng.  
*Poems*, by John Drinkwater. Houghton Mifflin Co.  
*Tales of the Bramleykite*, by James Lowe Pilling. Privately printed.  
*Poems*, by Edwin Curran. Four Seas Co. (2nd ed.)  
*Wonderings and Other Things*, by Edna Kingsley Wallace. E. P. Dutton & Co.

#### TRANSLATIONS, ANTHOLOGIES, PLAYS:

- Colored Stars—Versions of Fifty Asiatic Love Poems*, by Edward Powys Mathers. Houghton Mifflin Co.  
*Choruses from the Iphigenia in Aulis and the Hippolytus of Euripides*, translated by H. D. (Poets' Translation Series No. 3.) The Egoist, Ltd.  
*Latin Poems of the Renaissance*, translated by Richard Aldington. (Poets' Translation Series No. 4.) The Egoist, Ltd.  
*Tête-d'Or*, by Paul Claudel. Translated by John Strong Newberry. Yale Univ. Press.  
*The Second Book of Modern Verse—A Selection from the Work of Contemporaneous American Poets*, by Jessie B. Rittenhouse. Houghton Mifflin Co.  
*The Soothsayer—A Play in One Act*, by Verner von Heidenstam. Translated from the Swedish by Karoline Knudsen. Four Seas Co.

#### PROSE:

- Prejudices—First Series*, by H. L. Mencken. Alfred A. Knopf.

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