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Poetry
A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe
February 1920

Smoke Nights
by Carl Sandburg
A Line-a-day for Lovers
by Helen Birch-Bartlett
Grace Fallow Norton,
David Morton, John Weaver

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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

Vol. XV
POETRY for FEBRUARY, 1920

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THE RADICAL BOOK SHOP
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SMOKE NIGHTS

SMOKE AND STEEL

SMOKE of the fields in spring is one,
Smoke of the leaves in autumn another.
Smoke of a steel-mill roof or a battleship funnel,
They all go up in a line with a smokestack,
Or they twist . . . . in the slow twist . . . . of the wind.

If the north wind comes they run to the south.
If the west wind comes they run to the east.
By this sign
all smokes
know each other.

Smoke of the fields in spring and leaves in autumn,
Smoke of the finished steel, chilled and blue,
By the oath of work they swear: "I know you."

Hunted and hissed from the center
Deep down long ago when God made us over,
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Deep down are the cinders we came from—
You and I and our heads of smoke.

Some of the smokes God dropped on the job
Cross on the sky and count our years
And sing in the secrets of our numbers;
Sing their dawns and sing their evenings,
Sing an old log-fire song:
    You may put the damper up,
    You may put the damper down,
    The smoke goes up the chimney just the same.

Smoke of a city sunset skyline,
Smoke of a country dusk horizon—
    They cross on the sky and count our years.

Smoke of a brick-red dust
    Winds on a spiral
    Out of the stacks
For a hidden and glimpsing moon.
This, said the bar-iron shed to the blooming mill,
This is the slang of coal and steel.
The day-gang hands it to the night-gang,
The night-gang hands it back.

Stammer at the slang of this—
Let us understand half of it.

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In the rolling mills and sheet mills,
In the harr and boom of the blast fires,
The smoke changes its shadow
And men change their shadow;
A nigger, a wop, a bohunk changes.
A bar of steel—it is only
Smoke at the heart of it, smoke and the blood of a man.
A runner of fire ran in it, ran out, ran somewhere else,
And left—smoke and the blood of a man
And the finished steel, chilled and blue.

So fire runs in, runs out, runs somewhere else again,
And the bar of steel is a gun, a wheel, a nail, a shovel,
A rudder under the sea, a steering-gear in the sky;
And always dark in the heart and through it,
Smoke and the blood of a man.

Pittsburg, Youngstown, Gary—they make their steel with men.

In the blood of men and the ink of chimneys
The smoke nights write their oaths:
Smoke into steel and blood into steel;
Homestead, Braddock, Birmingham, they make their steel with men.
Smoke and blood is the mix of steel.

The birdmen drone
in the blue; it is steel
a motor sings and zooms.

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Steel barb-wire around The Works.
Steel guns in the holsters of the guards at the gates of The Works.
Steel ore-boats bring the loads clawed from the earth by steel, lifted and lugged by arms of steel, sung on its way by the clanking clam-shells.
The runners now, the handlers now, are steel; they dig and clutch and haul; they hoist their automatic knuckles from job to job; they are steel making steel.

Fire and dust and air fight in the furnaces; the pour is timed, the billets wriggle; the clinkers are dumped:
Liners on the sea, skyscrapers on the land; diving steel in the sea, climbing steel in the sky.

Finders in the dark, you Steve with a dinner bucket, you Steve clumping in the dusk on the sidewalks with an evening paper for the woman and kids, you Steve with your head wondering where we all end up—
Finders in the dark, Steve: I hook my arm in cinder sleeves; we go down the street together; it is all the same to us; you Steve and the rest of us end on the same stars; we all wear a hat in hell together, in hell or heaven.

Smoke nights now, Steve.
Smoke, smoke, lost in the sieves of yesterday;
Dumped again to the scoops and hooks today.

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Smoke like the clocks and whistles, always.
Smoke nights now.
To-morrow something else.

Luck moons come and go:
Five men swim in a pot of red steel.
Their bones are kneaded into the bread of steel:
Their bones are knocked into coils and anvils
And the sucking plungers of sea-fighting turbines.
Look for them in the woven frame of a wireless station.

So ghosts hide in steel like heavy-armed men in mirrors.
Peepers, skulkers—they shadow-dance in laughing tombs.
They are always there and they never answer.

One of them said: "I like my job, the company is good to me, America is a wonderful country."
One: "Jesus, my bones ache; the company is a liar; this is a free country, like hell!"
One: "I got a girl, a peach; we save up and go on a farm and raise pigs and be the boss ourselves."
And the others were roughneck singers a long ways from home.
Look for them back of a steel vault door.

They laugh at the cost.
They lift the birdmen into the blue.
It is steel a motor sings and zooms.
In the subway plugs and drums,
In the slow hydraulic drills, in gumbo or gravel,
Under dynamo shafts in the webs of armature spiders,
They shadow-dance and laugh at the cost.

The ovens light a red dome.
Spools of fire wind and wind.
Quadrangles of crimson sputter.
The lashes of dying maroon let down.
Fire and wind wash out the slag.
Forever the slag gets washed in fire and wind.

The anthem learned by the steel is:
   Do this or go hungry.
Look for our rust on a plow.
Listen to us in a threshing-engine razz:
Look at our job in the running wagon wheat.

Fire and wind wash at the slag.
Box-cars, clocks, steam-shovels, churns, pistons, boilers,
scissors—
Oh, the sleeping slag from the mountains, the slag-heavy
pig-iron will go down many roads.
Men will stab and shoot with it, and make butter and
tunnel rivers, and mow hay in swaths, and slit hogs and
skin beeves, and steer airplanes across North America,
Europe, Asia, round the world.

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Hacked from a hard rock country, broken and baked in
mills and smelters, the rusty dust waits
Till the clean hard weave of its atoms cripples and blunts
the drills chewing a hole in it.
The steel of its plinths and flanges is reckoned, O God, in
one one-millionth of an inch.

Once when I saw the curves of fire, the rough scarf women
dancing,
Dancing out of the flues and smoke-stacks—flying hair of
fire, flying feet upside down;
Buckets and baskets of fire exploding and chortling, fire
running wild out of the steady and fastened ovens;
Sparks cracking a harr-harr-huff from a solar-plexus of
rock-ribs of the earth taking a laugh for themselves;
Ears and noses of fire, gibbering gorilla arms of fire, gold
mud-pies, gold bird-wings, red jackets riding purple
mules, scarlet autocrats tumbling from the humps of
camels, assassinated czars straddling vermillion balloons;
I saw then the fires flash one by one: good-by: then smoke,
smoke;
And in the screens the great sisters of night and cool stars,
sitting women arranging their hair,
Waiting in the sky, waiting with slow easy eyes, waiting
and half-murmuring:
"Since you know all
and I know nothing,
tell me what I dreamed last night."

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Pearl cobwebs in the windy rain,
in only a flicker of wind,
are caught and lost and never known again.

A pool of moonshine comes and waits,
but never waits long: the wind picks up
loose gold like this and is gone.

A bar of steel sleeps and looks slant-eyed
on the pearl cobwebs, the pools of moonshine;
sleeps slant-eyed a million years,
sleeps with a coat of rust, a vest of moths,
a shirt of gathering sod and loam.

The wind never bothers . . a bar of steel.
The wind picks only . . pearl cobwebs . . pools of moonshine.

*TANGIBLES*

*(Washington, August, 1918)*

I have seen this city in the day and the sun.
I have seen this city in the night and the moon.
And in the night and the moon I have seen a thing this city
gave me nothing of in the day and the sun.

The float of the dome in the day and the sun is one thing.
The float of the dome in the night and the moon is another thing.
In the night and the moon the float of the dome is a dream-
whisper, a croon of a hope: "Not today, child, not today, lover; maybe tomorrow, child, maybe tomorrow, lover."

Can a dome of iron dream deeper than living men?
Can the float of a shape hovering among tree-tops—can this speak an oratory sad, singing and red beyond the speech of the living men?

A mother of men, a sister, a lover, a woman past the dreams of the living—
Does she go sad, singing and red out of the float of this dome?

There is . . . . something . . . . here . . . . men die for.

NIGHT MOVEMENT—NEW YORK

In the night, when the sea-winds take the city in their arms,
And cool the loud streets that kept their dust noon and afternoon;
In the night, when the sea-birds call to the lights of the city,
The lights that cut on the skyline their name of a city;
In the night, when the trains and wagons start from a long way off
For the city where the people ask bread and want letters;
In the night the city lives too—the day is not all.
In the night there are dancers dancing and singers singing,
And the sailors and soldiers look for numbers on doors.
In the night the sea-winds take the city in their arms.

[241]
LOSERS

If I should pass the tomb of Jonah
I would stop there and sit for awhile;
Because I was swallowed one time deep in the dark
And came out alive after all.

If I pass the burial spot of Nero
I shall say to the wind, "Well, well!"—
I who have fiddled in a world on fire,
I who have done so many stunts not worth doing.

I am looking for the grave of Sinbad too.
I want to shake his ghost-hand and say,
"Neither of us died very early, did we?"

And the last sleeping-place of Nebuchadnezzar—
When I arrive there I shall tell the wind:
"You ate grass; I have eaten crow—
Who is better off now or next year?"

Jack Cade, John Brown, Jesse James,
There too I could sit down and stop for awhile.
I think I could tell their headstones:
"God, let me remember all good losers."

I could ask people to throw ashes on their heads
In the name of that sergeant at Belleau Woods,
Walking into the drumfires, calling his men,
"Come on, you ——! Do you want to live forever?"
ACCOMPLISHED FACTS

Every year Emily Dickinson sent one friend
the first arbutus bud in her garden.

In a last will and testament Andrew Jackson
remembered a friend with the gift of George
Washington’s pocket spy-glass.

Napoleon too, in a last testament, mentioned a silver
watch taken from the bedroom of Frederick the Great,
and passed along this trophy to a particular friend.

O. Henry took a blood carnation from his coat lapel
and handed it to a country girl starting work in a
bean bazaar, and scribbled: “Peach blossoms may or
may not stay pink in city dust.”

So it goes. Some things we buy, some not.
Tom Jefferson was proud of his radishes, and Abe Lincoln
blacked his own boots, and Bismarck called Berlin a wild-
erness of brick and newspapers.

So it goes. There are accomplished facts.
Ride, ride, ride on in the great new blimps—
Cross unheard-of oceans, circle the planet.
When you come back we may sit by five hollyhocks.
We might listen to boys fighting for marbles.
The grasshopper will look good to us.

So it goes . . . .

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PEOPLE WHO MUST

I put my easel on the roof of a skyscraper.
I painted a long while and called it a day’s work.
The people on a corner swarmed and the traffic cop’s whistle
never let up all afternoon.
They were the same as bugs, many bugs on their way—
Those people on the go or at a standstill;
And the traffic cop a spot of blue, a splinter of brass,
Where the black tides ran around him
And he kept the street. I painted a long while
And called it a day’s work.

BAS-RELIEF

Five geese deploy mysteriously.
Onward proudly with flagstaffs,
Hearses with silver bugles,
Bushels of plum-blossoms dropping
For ten mystic web-feet—
Each his own drum-major,
Each charged with the honor
Of the ancient goose nation,
Each with a nose-length surpassing
The nose-lengths of rival nations.
Somberly, slowly, unimpeachably,
Five geese deploy mysteriously.
THE LAW SAYS

The law says you and I belong to each other, George.
The law says you are mine and I am yours, George.
And there are a million miles of white snowstorms, a million
furnaces of hell,
Between the chair where you sit and the chair where I sit.
The law says two strangers shall eat breakfast together after
nights on the horn of an Arctic moon.

CALLS

Because I have called to you
as the flame flamingo calls,
or the want of a spotted hawk
is called—
    because in the dusk
the warblers shoot the running
waters of short songs to the
homecoming warblers—
    because
the cry here is wing to wing
and song to song—

    I am waiting,
waiting with the flame flamingo,
the spotted hawk, the running water
warbler—
    waiting for you.

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EVENING WATERFALL

What was the name you called me?—
And why did you go so soon?

The crows lift their caw on the wind,
And the wind changed and was lonely.

The warblers cry their sleepy-songs
Across the valley gloaming,
Across the cattle-horns of early stars.

Feathers and people in the crotch of a treetop
Throw an evening waterfall of sleepy-songs.

What was the name you called me?—
And why did you go so soon?

SEA-WASH

The sea-wash never ends.
The sea-wash repeats, repeats.
Only old songs? Is that all the sea knows?
    Only the old strong songs?
    Is that all?
The sea-wash repeats, repeats.

Carl Sandburg
WINTER WIFE

The white hills smoke with snow—
And it is well for you,
Who make so poor a lover,
Who give my hands such little tasks to do;
For, were the doorstep bare,
And the path not drifted over,
My heart would need no cover—
I should go:
Go and never care,
Fling out my arms and run;
Glad in the wakening sun,
Wild in the singing air,
Race with my blowing hair!

But the weight of the winter is on the door,
And the snow has driven me near to you.
It might be well if you'd love me more
And tell me I am dear to you,
Although it is early to understand!
For how is there any knowing
The road I will be going
When a free wind is blowing
Over the opened land?

Margery Swett
A LINE-A-DAY FOR CERTAIN LOVERS

REMEMBRANCE

I never forgot you,
And I loved your silences.
I believed in you, and yet I could not believe.

I was both constant and inconstant.
You were faithless—yet immeasurably true.

A time came
When your memory swung like a bright pendulum
Backwards and forwards in my brain,
Channeling a groove.

Even had I loved you,
I would have chosen the same way.

RE-ENCOUNTER

With your first word
You royally out-starred my sudden, blazing faith.
What you appeared to me in that instant
Will never be told.

UNDERCURRENTS

There were warnings and devious oppositions:
Frankness, simplicity,
And many, many undercurrents.
And all the while I knew that what they feared of me
I had no desire to accomplish.

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

I took as much—as little—all that I wanted, all.

I alone guessed how much it was;
But they blessed me, sighing in their relief,
For how little.

PREMONITIONS

Cloud upon cloud of mist,
Fog clouds,
And curtains of rain.

Oh, the glistening world that lay last night
Beyond the narrow and indrawing circle
Of this grey morning’s vision!

I fear some secret chemistry at work
Among these shifting shrouds,
That stir and move repulsively,
Like dank old water weeds
In an old and stagnant pond.
These dim cloud-walls may well conceal
Some darker crown
Than the pool’s white crown of fire-flies.

Have you no delicately colored words,
Does your hand possess no new grace,
Your eyes no cunning,
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

To lure away this fantasy?
Your eyes . . . .
Your eyes!

THE BRINGERS OF GIFTS

High above the city
We stood, and watched the boats upon the river.
You had your dreams . . . .
But the deeper peace that I knew at last
Was not in your eyes’ grey depths.
From the cup of my hands
You drank but the remembrance of sorrow;
I knew but the fragrance of your spirit
When the censer
Lay broken at my feet.

Above the city
We watched the life of the river.
We saw the lights appear . . . .

BELSHAZZAR

We were walled about with sinister intentions,
And the hot, sweet summer day was suddenly alive
With quickening fears.
We knew . . . . but we shut them out,
As one shuts out the unbearable sunlight of the dawn.

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DRIFT

Two hours . . . .
And the sombre, long kiss of leave-taking.

Your eyes had accepted everything.

And you sank into the long, useless future,
While the present slowly disintegrated about us.

EPILOGUE

Blue-purple,
The shadow of the earth
Circles the long horizon.

My life is circled
By the shadow of your love.

Blue-purple out there,
And over the blue
A rose-pink mist that rises—
That rising, fades.

No frail, flushed aureole
Crowns the shadow in my heart . . . .
Unless this:
That you suffer a little and are often alone
Because of your love
That breathed upon such a pale flame.

Helen Birch-Bartlett

[251]
THE BURNED HOUSE

In my house on a dry high hill
Strange things seemed stranger still:
When the windows opened each morning
Oceans entered without warning;

When the curtains closed each night,
Entered light, sweet sacred light.
Long I lived there with the weather—
(With the weather, close together).

Had no teacher save one chewink,
Scolding madly, "Make you think!"
Thinking made me almost ill,
It was so high on that dry hill!

And yet I thought three times a day
In a hilly happy harmless way:
Thought the mountains were animals,
Thought the clouds high safe stone walls;

Thought King Solomon came to call,
Climbing over the cloudy wall—
Begged him run and catch the brook
While I got my shepherd crook!

Once while I made the thick white soup,
Saint John sat upon the stoop;

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Saint John pointed out to me
Lotus-buds on my oak-tree!

And then a partridge whirred in the wood,
Fluttering lame as a partridge should.
Partridge turned to a paradise-bird,
Uttering ecstasy word by word,

Till smoke of the chimney writhed, withdrew,
And sowed a seed, and rose and flew!
(I lived in that house four years and a week;
Well I know whereof I speak.)

Smoke-seed grew to a tree of flame!
O fire-tree! Red-flowering shame!
Devouring my dear house branch and root!
Now I have eaten of one more fruit . . . .

Was it too happy, was it too high—
My little house close to the sky?
Was it too useful, was it too good—
My little house beside the wood?

OR DID YOU LOVE DEATH?

I got your love, lying
Candles at my head.
I got your love, dying,
White on my bed.
By your love gifted,
   My life saw its span.
By my love lifted,
   I rose and I ran.

I lost your love, living!
   (O stinging sunshine!)
I lost your love, striving
   For bread and for wine!

Was it love, crying
   Farewell with faint breath?
Did you love me dying?
   Or did you love death?

Grace Fallow Norton

MY YEARS

My years fall softly,
Softly,
Like petals of a rose,
And leave me
A barren withered stalk
That dangles in the winds.

Paul Eldridge
BRICK-DUST

It's just a heap of ruin,
A drunken brick carouse—
This thing my spirit grew in
That once was called a house.

An attic where I scribbled
Through baking summer days,
While street-pianos nibbled
At the patient *Marseillaise*.

The spider-landlord squatted
In a web of dinner-smells,
And people slowly rotted
In little gossip-hells.

I hated all I learned there—
And yet I could have cried
For a little oil I burned there,
A little dream that died.

*Louisa Brooke*
IN THE CEMETERY

I

I never come here but I see
This same old woman, wearing years
That bear her head and shoulders down;
Her eyes are dry of tears.

Each headstone has some tale for her,
From each to each she goes.
They tell her things she understands
About the folks she knows.

Now, living things are dumb and strange;
She turns away her head.
I think she's more at home out here
Among the speaking dead.

II

"Love of life," logicians say,
"Inherent passion of the race;"
Yet here is what I found today
Upon a woman's face:

Such longing as I have not seen
Was in her thoughtful eyes,
That watched a double bed of green
Where but one sleeper lies.

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Grave-diggers are a cheerful lot:
   "Fine mornin', sir," he said.
I fancied that a murmur waked
  Among the listening dead.

   "Fine mornin' up above," word passed
   From each to each below.
I'm glad the digger spoke out loud;
  I think they like to know.

THE CONVICT

This then was the wage of hate:
   Making shoes for men to wear—
Men still free to walk or wait
   In the sun and air.

It was hate that sent him here:
   Words . . . a knife . . . a heavy form . . .
Sudden silence . . . and a fear
   At something wet and warm.

That was all so far away—
   Strange to think that he could feel
Fear or lust or hate that day!
   Only shoes were real.
MIRAGE

A cabin, a cow and an apple-tree—
These three things petition me;
Neighborly close, and mine, all mine:
The cabin covered with eglantine,
Cow dark red with white spots over,
Up to her knees in honey clover;
Apple-tree with a bird's nest in,
Made where the sunlight faeries spin
Silks for shade and cover.

I hear them trilling—the birds—
Oh, yes—
You hear the cries of the street in stress,
And a saffron guard with a traffic star
Clutches and holds you where you are,
Or you would be in a pretty mess
Under a motor-car!

Thus my tiresome old sub-self,
Tumbling down from her closet shelf,
Packing her fardel of things forgot
Saving me whether I will or not:

"It is wiser to dream all snug in bed,
Bed-posts standing foot and head,
Roof-tree hiding the still white cry
Of a midnight moon that is going by,
Warding away the eerie spell"
From the windows close where the dreamers lie;
While the velvet tread
Of the Dark comes soft to the mimic dead,
And sweet as a sigh of Israfel.

But what can one do if the visions snare
In the market-place when the world is there?
What can one do to save her soul
When without summons the films unroll?

Cabin covered with eglantine,
Cherry red of the milken kine,
An apple-tree, and in its crest
A robin's song and a robin's nest . . . .

Eufina C. Tompkins

THE DAILY ROUND

A smooth, worn circle
On the stone floor of his cage
Told how that little park bear had missed
His ancient heritage.

Just then, in a corner,
He lolled, resigned to flies . . . .
O circle, O cage, O pestering swarm
Of trivialities!

Allan Updegraff

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THREE POEMS

CRADLE

The blue-eyed youngster
And the fat old man
Play ball in me;
And music—
The one on his penny flute,
The other on his bassoon.
Their toleration is most indulgent,
The one with grins,
The other with a smile.
When they are tired,
They go to bed together,
Though their dreams—
The one dreams of solemn white beards,
The other of twinkling white legs.
The woman,
Who looks in on them at times,
Careful not to disturb them,
Likes this time best.
She rocks their cradle for them.

TO W. C. W. M. D.

There has been
Another death.
This time
I bring it to you.
You are kind,
Brutal,
You know
How to lower
Bodies.
I ask only
That the rope
Isn’t silk,
(Silk doesn’t break)
Nor thread,
(Thread does.)
If it lifts
And lowers
Common things,
It will do.

SPIRIT

A child told me this:
“This is the garden of Eden,
And Baby
Is the spirit of the Lord
Walking in the cool morning.”
You do not have to believe it.

Alfred Kreymborg
Pardon me, lady, but I wanta ast you,
For God's sake, stop that tappin'! I'll go nuts,
Plain bug-house if I hear that tap-tap-tap
Much longer!

Now I went and used such language,
I got to tell you why . . . . Well, in the first place,
My business is all shot. Now drugs theirselves
Don't pay much, and the extra stuff, like candy,
Cigars and stationery and et cetery,
Don't make their keep. And that damn soda-fountain—
Excuse me, lady, but I just can't help it! . . . .

Some day I'm gointa catch the guy I bought it off—
I'm losin' money every day it's here.
And soda-jerkers—now I can't get none
For love or money, so myself I got to
Mess with them malted milks, banana splits,
And slop like that. And just as doggone sure
As I start workin' on some fine prescription,
The kind I love to mix—got to be careful,
The weights is hittin' on that perfect balance—
Why, then some fool wants a marshmallow sundae,
And tap-tap-tap he starts in on the show-case,
And taps and taps till I come runnin' out,
Leavin' the drugs half-done.

And that ain't all;
Here's the big trouble—I can't talk good grammar.
People don't think a man that mixes drugs
Can do it right and talk the way I do.
It makes me sick—why have I got to sound
Like a school-teacher? Why, I know my stuff:
"Registered Pharmacist"—see? I taught myself,
Workin' at night whiles I was four years clerkin';
And then I took three months down at the U,
And passed a fine exam. But here's the thing:
I quit the public school in seventh grade,
And never paid no attention to my talk.
So it's the way I tell you—they're suspicious
Because I use such slang. I try to stop,
But it's too late now. I found out too late . . . .

I got a dream of what I'll do some day:
I want to quit this drug stuff altogether,
Have a nice office, with a big oak desk,
And sell just real estate. I'd like to bet
I'd make a clean-up at it. It'd be swell,
That office . . . .

But this life is killin' me.
It's the fool questions they keep askin' me!
You see that clock there? Well, just on a guess
Three times an hour some silly fish comes in here
And calls me out, and asts me, "Is that right?—
Is your clock right?" Honest to Heaven, lady,
One day I got so sore I took a hammer
And smashed the face in. And it cost twelve dollars
To fix it. But I had peace for a week.
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Oh, gosh, my nerves! ... But that's the way it is.
I'm sorry I spoke so rough about that tappin',
But when I get to sellin' real estate,
They'll be no place where folks can take a coin
And tap, and tap, till I come runnin' out.
That's a man's business! . . .
If I ever get it . . . .

NOCTURNE

"Nothin' or everythin' it's got to be,"
You says, and hides your face down on my arm.
"If it meant nothin', 'twouldn't do no harm,
Or either everythin'—but this way—see? . . . ."

I feel your tremblin' heart against my coat,
An' the big arc-light moon grins down so cool,
"Go on!" I think it says, "you softie fool!" . . . .
I love you so it hurts me in my throat . . . .

"Don't make me kiss you; sure, I know you could,"
You're pleadin', "An' we gone too far for play;
I care a lot . . . . but yet not so's to say
I love you yet . . . . Aw, help me to be good!" . . . .

O darlin', darlin', can't you let it be
Nothin' to you, an' everythin' to me?

John V. A. Weaver
COMMENT

MR. ROBINSON'S JUBILEE

WITH deplorable forgetfulness of dates, Poetry failed last month to congratulate Edwin Arlington Robinson on his jubilee birthday, which occurred December twenty-second, just as our subscribers were opening the January number. Poets less forgetful sent many letters of felicitations, acknowledging, one and all, the debt which "the new movement" owes to the man who published The Children of the Night in 1897, and Captain Craig in 1902, two books of poems more directly inspired from common experience, and more austere in style, than anything in the earlier American tradition. I remember reading Captain Craig when it first appeared, and looking up the earlier books, absorbed by the grim, relentless simplicity of this poet's art—rocky, almost grudging its softly toned verdure, like the New England soil it sprang from. In those days the young Carl Sandburg carried stray clippings of Robinson around in his pocket, reading them an hundred times, and digging in vain for their author in small-town libraries.

However, our tardiness enables us to quote a few sentences from the appreciative birthday tributes, printed in the New York Times of Dec. 21st:

Hermann Hagedorn thinks Mr. Robinson "the greatest living American poet." Josephine Peabody calls him "a master-etcher of human portraits." Arthur Davison Ficke speaks of "his curiously penetrating insight into the laby-

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rithms of the human mind, and his scrupulous artistic integ-
rity." Vachel Lindsay calls him "the relentless seeker and
finder of human beings, a novelist distilled into a poet, the
high gossip among the more humorous angels and men." 
George Sterling thinks he is "the only poet whose truth is
always beauty and whose beauty is always truth." The
venerable Edwin Markham declares, "As psychologist he
approaches the power of Browning, yet in style he is as simple
as Whittier." Amy Lowell says: "He is a poet for poets;
his art becomes only the more interesting the more it is
studied. A realist, he is also a foe to materialism; a skeptic,
his poems are full of spirituality . . . . Strong, virile, con-
temptuous of shams, no one has voiced the contradictory
elements of the American character better than he."

And Edgar Lee Masters, who was lightly called a fol-
lower of Robinson at a time when he had not yet read his
work, now gives him this high praise:

Mr. Robinson was producing poetry of importance in one of
the most sterile periods of American poetry. It was at a time
when the Victorian era had spent itself as a creative impulse, but
when its manner and outlook controlled production without vitaliz-
ing it. He has had the good fortune to live to this day of
recognition of his work, both for its own value and as an expression
of today. As a craftsman he is a master, as a thinker he is subtle
and original, as an artist he has kept the faith. The poets of
America look to him, now that he is at the meridian of his career,
to fight on in the war of spiritualizing America, since he has
inherited this day of hope after a beginning that did not bring
adequate reward.

"As an artist he has kept the faith"—this is perhaps the
finest word in the rich sheaf of praise offered by Mr. Robin-
son’s fellow-craftsmen. Somewhat shy and aloof, haughtily austere in thought and manner of life, imaginatively observant, impassioned like tempered steel, he stands today, as in his more obscure yesterdays, adequate, uncompromising, a big man, a thorough and keen-visioned artist.

Someone has called him “the proudest figure in American letters.” At least he led the modern procession for his countrymen; wilful and self-advised, he struck his own path, and found, no doubt with surprise, that he had blazed a trail for others. And now, as they pass on, each in his own way to his own goal, he turns to the legend-encrusted past and dreams of Guinevere!

May he live several decades more, and crowd them with poems as good as Miniver Cheevy, Richard Cory or the Man from Stratford!

H, M.

CAMPION’S “OBSERVATIONS”

Dissatisfaction with rhymed accented verse is not peculiar to our time; the most robust and flourishing period of English poetry, that of the Elizabethans, is marked among other things by a distinct effort to abolish the mediaeval poetic forms which were based on somewhat cheap effects of alliteration, stress and rhyme, and to substitute a type of verse more satisfying to ears trained in music or familiar with Greek. There were two reasons why this movement was abortive: first, too slavish a regard for Greek, and especially Roman, models, with the result that pedantry, as always, dried out poetry; and, second, the rapid deterioration of the
tradition of English chamber-music, due to the Revolution and the assassination of the only art-loving monarch who ever occupied the throne of England. In the purely classic sense this verse was not really quantitative. But that, after all, is unimportant; the interesting fact is that a serious attempt was made to write verse in which the measure was regulated by the musical value of the syllables. It was worth attempting. And I believe that either our musicians must become poets, or our poets must learn music, before we get any real advance in lyric poetry. Certainly the present sort of lyric becomes every day more intolerable.

Thomas Campion, the Elizabethan musician, song-writer and poet, composed a sort of pamphlet on this subject, entitled, *Observations on the Art of English Poesy*. The diction is a little quaint and euphemistic, the Ciceronian construction of the sentences has a slight tang of pedantry, yet the “observations” are so full of good sense, the examples in many cases so brilliant, the author’s knowledge not only of poetry but of music and musical quantity is so obvious, that I recommend any young poet to study this short treatise if he is desirous—to quote Dr. Campion—of “seconding the perfection of the industrious Greeks and Romans.” My desire is not to discuss the technical questions raised, for the obvious reason that I am too ignorant of music to do so without pretension, but merely to quote from the book with the hope that it may be read by some poet-musician or musician-poet who will do for the verse of today what Campion did for that of his time.
Going over this little book one finds amusing things on rhyme. He calls rhyme a “vulgar and easy kind of poesy,” “a childish titillation,” speaks of its “fatness” and declares that the “facility and popularity (i.e. cheapness, commonplace) of rime create as many poets as a hot summer flies.” Yet he is not so perverse as to deny that in attacking rhyme he must encounter “many glorious enemies”; but adds, “All this and more cannot deter me from a lawful defence of perfection.” Yet perhaps this is his best argument:

But there is yet another fault in rime altogether intolerable, which is, that it enforceth a man oftentimes to abjure his matter, and extend a short conceit beyond all bounds of art; for in quatorzains (i.e. sonnets), methinks, the poet handles his subject as tyrannically as Procrustes the thief his prisoners.

So he disposes of all that childish mediaeval rubbish of canzons and virelays, ballades and pantoums, villanelles and rondeaux and what not, which, however beautifully they may have been used by their inventors, are merely tedious in the hands of copyists. And this is only another way of saying that the original artist creates his own form, or develops a form in a manner unforeseen by its inventor—as Shakespeare developed Marlowe’s blank verse.

The first chapter, on “numbers in general,” is worth close attention. And the chapters on the quantities of English words contain a great deal of matter interesting to those who consider poetry an art. Campion insists on pronunciation as the only infallible test of quantity; the ear, not the eye or fingers, as the sole judge of the harmony of words. His study of the verse of his time goes into close, and often

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quaint, detail, but it is in this *Elegy* that he touches poetry—its last line is worthy of Ovid:

Constant to none, but ever false to me,

   Traitor still to love through thy faint desires,
Not hope of pity now nor vain redress

   Turns my griefs to tears and renewed laments . . .

True colors deck thy cheeks, false foils thy breast,

   Trailer than thy light beauty is thy mind.

The *English Sapphics*, inevitably devoted to the queen, have a displeasingly fulsome air; but the other examples are quite lovely:

   Just beguiler,
   Kindest love, yet only chastest,
   Royal in thy smooth denials,
   Frowning or demurely smiling,
   Still my pure delight.

And this Anacreontic with its Shelleyan cadence:

   Follow, follow—
   Though, with music
   Armed, like whirlwind
   Now she flies thee.
   Time can conquer
   Love's unkindness;
   Love can alter
   Time's disgraces:
   Till death faint not
   Then, but follow.

But best of all, in spite of obvious blemishes, is *Rose-cheeked Laura*, the second example of the *English Sapphic*. This poem, so well known in Elizabethan anthologies, is, I believe, the only piece of quantitative verse which has been allowed to creep into any of the official collections of poetry; and that, no doubt, because its quaint sweet music, like that
of old wood-wind and string airs, is unnoticed. Had Cam­
pion written twenty more poems in quantitative verse as
lovely, he might have altered the form of English poetry.

Rose-cheeked Laura, come—
Sing thou smoothly with thy beauty's
Silent music, either other
   Sweetly gracing.
Lovely forms do flow
From consent divinely framed;
Heaven is music and thy beauty's
   Birth is heavenly.
These dull notes we sing
Discords need for helps to grace them;
Only beauty purely loving
   Knows no discord,
But still moves delight,
Like clear springs renewed by flowing,
Ever perfect, ever in them-
   Selves eternal.

Richard Aldington

THE SANDBURG-SARETT RECITAL

Chicago, December 21st, 1919

It was a grand show! There was something human and
healthy and never before beheld, in the way the two poets
treated the audience—gave the audience some credit for
being human too, chattered and gossiped and talked with
them, and had, themselves, as much fun as they gave to the
bewildered spectators. No evening clothes, no dissertations
on art: Carl Sandburg read, then brought forth a guitar of
his and sang, most delicately and lovably, old ballads: Jesse
James, Frankie and Albert were Sweethearts, The Boll
Weevil and This Morning, this Evening, so Soon; and Lew Sarett came out with a tom-tom (or what was it?) and shrieked and bellowed, snorted, squeaked and squawked, chirped and warbled—just like the many animals he had carefully listened to during his stay in the forests of the North-west and Canada.

Sandburg is a kingly reader. His reading is exactly as beautiful as his poetry and his person. He is one of the most completely, successfully alive human beings I ever saw: from his sturdy shoes to the tuft of hard gray hair over his granite eyes, to his voice and his words; from the majestic dignity of his voice to the dignity of his poems—Carl Sandburg is, in and out, thoroughly expressive of one beauty and one glory—himself.

Lew Sarett recited like a versatile actor—perhaps too much so—his fine Indian songs. But he certainly was unsurpassable at imitating wild animals—gave us the sadness, the horror, the weirdness, the vastness, the humor of the forest as it is expressed by its worthy and heretofore misunderstood inhabitants.

E. C.

REVIEWS

BODY AND RAIMENT

Body and Raiment, and Profiles from China (new ed.), by Eunice Tietjens. Alfred A. Knopf.

The books which are easiest to review are of two sorts—those which the reviewer likes extremely, however tempera-
mentally agreeable to him, or not, may be the method employed; and those which he does not like, but of which he finds the method, the theory, in some way provocative—in some way, either positively or negatively, of momentary value. The books which he finds hardest to review are those which, again, are neither bad enough nor good enough to compel from him a sharp reaction in taste; and, on the other hand, those which do not greatly challenge in one direction or the other his opinions as to theory. Mrs. Tietjens' new book, *Body and Raiment*, is, for the present reviewer at any rate, of the second sort. *Of Profiles from China* there is obviously more to be said: one may argue pro and con as to whether it belongs more suitably or more profitably in the category of prose or of poetry; and one has to deal, however that question is argued, with vignettes sufficiently sharp, with artistic effects which are tantalizingly of a dubiouness. "By George—this is good!" one exclaims; but the next line or stanza, with its over-emphasis, or its flatness, or its superfluousness, or its sentimentality, makes one suspect that the word of exclamatory praise was perhaps a little too quick on the wing.

*Body and Raiment* is in some respects a better book, but in many respects a less interesting one. It contains a good many things which clearly deserve, more than anything in *Profiles*, to be called "poetry." The book as a whole entitles Mrs. Tietjens to a conspicuous place among the contemporary "female poets" (Griswold) of America: If she lacks the power of Miss Lowell or her richness of mind, or

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the delicate crystalline sharpness of H. D., or the grace and gentleness of Sara Teasdale, she is, at any rate, of their company. It is only when one sets about the formulation of an opinion on the book as a whole, when one attempts to characterize it, that one perceives how singularly little, in proportion to its skill, the work of Mrs. Tietjens leaves any clear personal impress on one’s mind.

It is this fact, indeed, which constitutes one’s sharpest impression of Body and Raiment. Why is it that this book slips so soundlessly, so tracelessly, through one’s outspread senses? The work is more “interesting” than Sara Teasdale’s, more robust and varied than H. D’s, more instinctively modulated, rhythmically and in sound-color, than Amy Lowell’s: but all three are better poets. Mrs. Tietjens herself offers us a clue at which we may gratefully catch: in her Plaint of Complexity, which stands as the Proem to the book, she says:

I have too many selves to know the one,
In too complex a schooling was I bred,
Child of too many cities who have gone
Down all bright cross-roads of the world’s desires,
And at too many altars bowed my head
To light too many fires.

In this Mrs. Tietjens puts her finger on the secret. She has too many selves to know the one; she is, as Ezra Pound has excellently put it, “a broken bundle of mirrors.” It would be superficial to say that this polymorphism is due only to the fact that Mrs. Tietjens has, as in her confession, dipped herself too many times in too many dyes of culture.
This sort of environment—to use the word in its broadest sense—cannot harm what one might term the "salient" artistic temperament; it can only enrich it. Many a great artist has, in his formative years, perforce played the chameleon. The difference between the great artist, or even merely the small but none the less genuine artist, and the artist who is at bottom only derivative (lacking in personality), is simply a difference in sensibility. The former type has from the very outset, as a coefficient of the forces of heredity and infantile environment, a sensibility markedly peculiar; a sensibility which all through his life, no matter how often or how richly overlaid with knowledges and conventions, or, on the other hand, no matter how fearfully starved for food of sensation, will give him a consciousness in some slight degree unlike the consciousness of any other. No one can say, of course, whether it is from this overacuteness of sensibility that the sort of frustration arises which gives an individual that hunger, of one kind or another, which compels him forever to seek satisfaction in color, or sound, or image, or rhythm, or the ordering of masses in architecture, or of ideas in thought; but it is clear that, in whatever relation to each other, those two factors are conspicuously present; and it should be equally clear that for our immediate purpose the matter of sensibility is of paramount importance.

For what one gets back to ultimately in the case of Mrs. Tietjens is the lack of any very marked idiosyncracy of sensibility. This lack must have been present from the
outset, and it is one which she will find it difficult if not impossible to overcome. One by no means implies, in taking this position, that she lacks talent: we are involved, indeed, simply in drawing what is at best a very dubious line between talent and genius. Of talent it is evident that Mrs. Tietjens has a great deal. Her sense of rhythm is firm, rich, varied, and is combined with a well-developed sense of orotundity, the sense of sound-values as distinct from rhythm-values. In this regard her work compares very favorably with that done by any other woman now writing verse in America. But this, unfortunately, is insufficient: one demands more; one demands just that so slight amount of difference, just that personal variation on the skilful norm, which sets the true artist apart. This Mrs. Tietjens lacks, when one examines her work closely, in rhythm, and even more conspicuously in other regards. What is it that her sensibility has given her to say, what is it that her frustrations have compelled her to say? Nothing—one confesses reluctantly—very unique. The perceptions are good, normal, sometimes charming, but never very acute; the moods are recognizable, but never rich. And all this is tantamount to saying that Mrs. Tietjens seldom gets very far from a skilful rhythmical treatment of the sentimental in terms of the commonplace.

This sounds a little harsh, and one hastens to say that there is much pleasure to be derived from *To my Friend become Famous*, from a number of the shorter lyrics in the book, and from some of the paraphrases from the Japanese.
Body and Raiment

The Bacchante to her Babe is enthusiastic, but uncouthly sentimental; and, like many of Mrs. Tietjens' poems, has about it a kind of immature sententiousness: ditto The Steam Shovel and The Drug Clerk. An index to Mrs. Tietjens' incompleteness as an artist is the fact that what would otherwise be the most original and perfect thing in the book, The Tepid Hour, is robbed of its force by the repetition throughout, at the end of each stanza, of the first line. . . . At this point it is proper to observe that Mrs. Tietjens might object to this, and that she may be right: the critic, too, has his limitations.

Conrad Aiken

KIPLING TODAY

The Years Between, by Rudyard Kipling. Doubleday, Page & Co.

Every poet worth the name has of course desired to be known simply for the special beauty and truth he expresses; and not for something extraneous that can be "got up" about him. "I am that which unseen comes and sings, sings, sings," says Whitman in characterizing "the Poet."

Too long now, and for too many listeners, all Kipling's poetry has been uttered in the presence of a Doppelgänger, in the presence of his former fame. The reader who will exorcise the Doppelgänger of Kipling's fame; and sit down to listen to that which unseen comes and sings, sings, sings, in The Years Between, will be richly rewarded by the gifts of a great artist.

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You may agree with him. You may disagree with him. You probably must disagree with him in some respects. For he writes about the world today. Everybody's world. About this no two people have the same opinion.

But as a musical characterization of the wild, ordinary face of this present civilization, cruel, poor and splendid, the power and interest of the book's poetry will hold almost anyone, I believe, who ever thinks about what we are all here for, where,

Across a world where all men grieve
And grieving strive the more,
The great days range like tides, and leave
Our dead on every shore.

The sorrow of the globe pours through the book's pages.
The reminiscence of lighter, familiar hours laughs through them. Their art is free from any tone of exclusions.

And Amorite or Eremite or General Averagee,
The people, Lord, Thy people, are good enough for me!
And when they bore me over-much, I will not shake mine ears,
Recalling many thousand such whom I have bored to tears.
And when they labor to impress, I will not doubt nor scoff;
Since I myself have done no less and—sometimes pulled it off.
Yea, as we are and we are not and we pretend to be,
Thy people, Lord, Thy people, are good enough for me!

Kipling has the gift of using any form with sufficient flexibility to deprive it of the air of a literary attitude. His Epitaphs for Soldiers, Spartan in their classicism, remain marvels in the directness and conciseness of their use of English, the tragic finality of their brief sentences and sharp caesuras. Here are two of them:

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On the first hour of my first day
In the front trench I fell.
(Children in boxes at a play
Stand up to watch it well.)

My name, my speech, my self I had forgot.
My wife and children came—I knew them not.
I died. My mother followed. At her call
And on her bosom I remembered all.

The writer of this review, always Ishmaelitish in her position in the pages of PoETRY, may as well come forward boldly now, and assert that she has always believed that, as the elder Beaumont said,

Our Saxon shortness hath peculiar grace
In choice of words fit for the ending place.

In that excellent faculty of our language, Kipling has an infinite cunning. The wild rack and smother of the sea songs, the ugly creeping story of danger—these are among the musical masterpieces of the collection.

The magic of the book has many facets. On a rainy evening about two years ago someone said, "There is a poem of Kipling's in that magazine." I opened it to read the magnificent tribute to Bunyan now included in The Years Between. I shall never forget the flash and force of John Bunyan as he rose before me in Chicago on that rainy evening, in Kipling's graphic music. The real Bunyan—his achievement, his strength, his penetration—burns with life in the poem's forthright eloquence; burns with life, but the life of quiet speech, of comment forcibly unpretentious as it were, not too proud to be amusing, and with the coals all banked.

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There is something in the poem too that takes you home and comforts you for all the short-comings of your race.

A pedlar from a hovel,
The lowest of the low,
The father of the Novel,
Salvation's first Defoe—
Eight blinded generations
Ere Armageddon came,
He showed us how to meet it;
And Bunyan was his name!

Whitman, our greatest poet, wishing peculiarly, as has been said, to be known as a Bard, has pointed out that he is “not the wind nor the red sun.”

But I am that which unseen comes and sings, sings, sings,
Which babbles in brooks and scoots in showers on the land,
Which the birds know in the woods, mornings and evenings,
And the shore-sands know, and the hissing wave.

Whitman’s fame was undoubtedly somewhat obscured in his life in America by the rush and strong tide of his music, its sustained power of recognizable repetition, of flowing on and on—“Close on the wave, comes the wave behind.” The taste of our land—especially the taste of poetic culture in coteries—has always rather feared Bards, has always rather edged away from the undisguised musical enjoyment of poetry; and regarded this as a manifestation demanding some disparagement, and not quite sophisticated, nor refined. What the birds know in the woods mornings and evenings is thought to be too obvious—not subtle enough. Those who do not care for singing feel some dubiousness about the intellectuality, the greatness, the genius, of that which unseen comes and sings, sings, sings.
It would be better for all such people not to read *The Years Between*. It is all by a Bard. But if you like to hark to all its deep-rhymed subtleties and over-tones beyond prose intimations, to listen to that which unseen comes and sings in its pages, its music will tell you, I think, many tales of the fire of our world, that men will always remember.

*Edith Franklin Wyatt*

**MR. BYNNER'S PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE**


In an age of experiment it is natural to discuss matters of technique, and it is always natural to fear being taken in again by a poet who has once hoaxed his public. Yet critics of *The Beloved Stranger* have not noted that the poems in this book express a philosophy of love which invites comment rather more than their technique; or than the suggestion of Mr. Reedy, in his preface, that their author may have a double personality and be a case for psychiatry.

Mr. Bynner once wrote a poem which contained this stanza:

> Single your love, you lose your love,
> You cloak her face with clay;
> Now mine I never quite discern—
> And never look away.

In *The Beloved Stranger* we see how the passage of time affects such a way of taking love.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first, the Stranger is ideal, and his substance is indicated by verses like:

> I have ventured many people to see you,
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and

At the first footfall of an uncouth season
You migrate with a sudden wing-sweep
To Beauty.
With you there is no meantime,
You are now . . . .

After such elevated emotion, the poet—a past master in the art of relief—relaxes and grows cheerful, and indeed fantastic, in the second section of the book, called Divertissement. Here occur the phrases which have distressed reviewers, such as:

From my hearse of winter,
From my coffin of you,
I start up and wave my hand

and

The look in your eyes
Was as soft as the underside of soap . . . .
And I left before you could love me.

It may be that, as expressions of the heart's resentment at the tyranny of the ideal, and its hasty retreat in untoward circumstances to the protection of that tyranny, such phrases are too vivid. In the third division, the Beloved Stranger ceases to be ideal, for his apparition is identified with successive persons, at no small cost of bitterness for the poet:

Into me, even now as I hold you,
Roll all the waste spaces of the world,
Desert after desert.

It is hard to see how things could end otherwise, if in one's amorous progress one starts out with the ideal, only to lose it in reality. It was not so in the philosophy of Plato; but who can deny that Platonic love leaves much of the
map of emotion uncharted, and free therefore to raise distressing phantoms in the mind? From it as from other philosophies of passion, the soul will continue to make brave and romantic flights, to discover if there be regions more congenial.

The successes and failures of this particular flight should be of interest to the student of love. The general reader may feel, in its telling phrases and its fragmentary charm, that The Beloved Stranger is more a discreet lover's notebook than anything else. As such, it ought to find a welcome place in the imaginative literature of the period.

Haniel Long

CALIBAN'S LOVE-MAKING

Scepticisms, by Conrad Aiken. Alfred A. Knopf.

How much or little of a poet soever he be, Mr. Aiken is decisively a critic when he writes about poets. By critic I mean a person who, like Mr. Aiken, publishes a book of too many pages wherein neither the author nor the subject is presented. His subject and Mr. Aiken could not, somehow, get along, and they have divorced; severed, both lose their significance and physiognomy. And that should certainly suffice for me to say, if it weren't for the fact that this mimicking and swaggering scientism people reverentially call Criticism, and pay more attention to than to the works of art themselves.

Mr. Aiken, by calling his book Scepticisms, discredits it himself, and thereby thinks that it has become safer to for-
ward it. This kind of compromise with truth fails because of the claims the book makes. It is directed, obviously, to readers, and it claims some kind of recognition. But if scepticism means, as in this case, lack of faith in one's own concern, if it means demureness, if it betrays an insufficient stimulus; then its scope, and therefore its claims, can never be sufficiently limited.

In the *Apologia pro Specie sua*, which precedes the notes, the author gives us some hope, shows some virility when he threatens to appear with his prejudices, to speak as a poet of his competitors. But the very term, apology, ought to have put us on guard; and also the bashful and canting tone of such an apology. In fact, he fails to keep his promise: this is entirely, irremediably, hopelessly, only the book of a critic.

For it is all a discussion of appearances, and not a presentation of poems and poets seen and felt. The basis of such a discussion is, as usual, an obvious—borrowed—conception of the beautiful, of the musical, of the poetical, of the ugly. Now, beauty is never one and the same, and therefore one may not have a conception of it; also, beauty is always one and the same, being infinite; one has moments of knowledge of it, knows it intuitively, just as the poets know it. It cannot be measured: there are no yardsticks of infinite length.

And, besides, into the critic's own field one could bring this suggestion: that this obsolete phraseology of "technique, rhythm, method, realism, classicism, etc., etc." has been voted down a hundred times already by the aestheticians themselves. Critics ought to be more consistent, and know aesthetics more
if they cannot know art better. From Aristotle to Benedetto Croce art has bothered the philosophers. Philosophers wish to get rid by means of the intellect, of the good things of the earth, among which art is. So, several of them sat and thought till their brains were mouldy trying to figure out what was the matter with it. At any rate, whatever logic be, it has been ascertained that certain problems have been settled for good—that to scuffle about subject-matter, beauty-in-art, beautiful-art, music-in-poetry, the-seven-arts, rhythm, school, symbol, metaphor, genus and species is not to be allowed any more, not even to critics and aestheticians. These words, it has been ascertained, commit even the best aesthetician.

Instead of beautiful things to be looked at with love, or unbeautiful things to be looked at with hatred, Mr. Aiken sees in poems merely words and their array or disarray. He continually speaks of form as separate from the words themselves and their meanings. The words of a poem came to be together, they were not put together; and one cannot abstract a word from its meaning and sound any more than one can abstract the pink on the cheeks of a lovely girl from that girl’s loveliness. Mr. Aiken measures lines and finds them an inch short or an inch long: when he has measured two thousand of them he publishes a book. And how does a critic know that a line is an inch short, if he hasn’t in his heart or mind the line as it should have been? And if he has, then he is a poet: if Aiken would tell us what poetry is to him; if he would say, for instance, that the Woolworth
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Building is rendered by three trochees and five anapaests, and call the bluff of the poet who does otherwise, then his criticism would be a struggle between his personality and that of the poet he criticizes. If, instead of skipping around these dancing men, endeavoring to measure the circumference of their calves and the diameter of their knee-caps, he would stand alongside them and tell us: “See, this is the difference, they dance and I am stiff and still”—then his performance would prove at least informative. But he does that only a little, and unconsciously: his personality succeeds only in trammeling him: it doesn’t even let him be a conscientiously bad critic. Thus he apologizes for his bias, prejudices, temperament.

Bias, prejudice, temperament—these are not vices; they are a person’s constitution, they are the person. It is only the artists that trust to these forces within them—for one could say of every poem that it is a prejudice, as of every love-affair that it is the outcome of a bias. The amount of faith one gives to these supposed vices is the measure of one’s greatness: temperament, if one have faith in it, becomes whimsicality, liveliness, power, force; bias becomes will; prejudice becomes Evangel, New Word. When a man cannot give sufficient credit to these qualities in him, it is because they are scanty and weak and he is aware of their falling short. And all weakness resorts to sentimentality: thus, we see Mr. Aiken apologizing for not being an absolute judge!

The genesis and the sum of my objections is: this book is formless. Mr. Kostyleff, who gave Aiken much of his
style and many of his ideas, is partly responsible, no doubt, for Aiken’s bad writing. Here is a sample of Kostyleff’s:

...... The verbal discharge...... The emotional shock finds in the poet preformed cerebral mechanisms...... Automatic discharge of verbal reflexes, along chains of association set in motion by a chance occurrence......

See the verbal reflexes discharging by the shore of the chain, and see the chain trotting on! And they say that the symbolists use a strange language! Mr. Kostyleff is Mr. Aiken’s conscience; or, I should rather say, judging from his weird shape, he is Aiken’s nightmare.

One of the outstanding features of Scepticisms, explanatory of the title, is Mr. Aiken’s reiteration:

But why isn’t this prose instead of poetry? It is lovely prose but not poetry...... it’s only very rhythmical prose......

He says that or something like that of every major poet and of most of the minor ones: well, every poet writes prose in this country; it’s an American custom, I guess...... “Shakespeare didn’t write those plays, they were written by another man called Shakespeare.”

We have beheld another performance by Caliban: criticism is creative when it is the art of the arts—and then it is either poetry or beautiful prose, as you please to call it, but beautiful. Otherwise, criticism is an ugly soul trying to touch a beautiful one; using all the tricks, the mechanics, the devices and the deceptions of an ugly soul. It’s Caliban, and Ariel will never have anything to do with him. E. C.
FOR ARMENIAN ORPHANS

The Near-East Relief (1 Madison Avenue, New York) asks us to print the following poem in behalf of thousands of unhappy waifs of war:

DEATHS

Suffer little children to come unto me . . .
O Christ, they come,
Suffering nakedly,
Starved and dumb.

Feebly they crawl across the earth’s green breast
Seeking her grass,
Till all is brown and bleak
Where they pass.

(Earth, kind Earth, must your breasts run dry?
How can you bear
To feel the mouths close-pressing
In despair?)

Of such is the kingdom of heaven . . .
And yet they lie
Piled in the sterile fields,
Glad to die,
Glad to die.

Louise Ayres Garnett

THE LATER YEATS

The following paragraph, apropos of *A Prayer for my Daughter*, is part of a letter from a distinguished poet:

The new Yeats poem is a beauty! He is the one supreme artist writing in English today. I am always awed by the sharp perfection and immediate honesty of every poem of his. This is
especially true of his work of the last few years. It seems far finer to me than the soft gray-blue poems of the earlier Yeats. I cannot understand for the life of me why the critics have not given *The Wild Swans of Coole* a more generous reception. Not one in America really caught the full measure of its beauty. Louis Untermeyer and Marguerite Wilkinson were the most favorable, but even they were somewhat regretful and explanatory. Why? What more could you want than the perfection of music, the economy, the terrible honesty of these lyrics? They are as casual and as cruel as life itself, and if they are disillusioned they compensate us by flashes of radiant new loveliness, and a richness of experience that no other poet could share with us. Yeats doesn't write for an audience, thank heaven! He is aloof enough and arrogant enough to be able to speak of himself without remembering that we are listening. We were talking to his father recently in New York. He was giving me advice about the one needful thing for a poet. He quoted three words, I think they are from Lear: "Ripeness is all." Isn't that something that his son would have liked?

Mr. Yeats will arrive in New York this month for a brief lecture-tour, arranged by the Pond Lyceum Bureau.

NOTES

Mr. Carl Sandburg, of Chicago, has been well known to our readers since his first group, *Chicago Poems*, initiated the Levinson Prize in 1914. His two books are published by Henry Holt & Co., the second, *Cornhuskers*, in 1918.

Miss Grace Fallow Norton, of New York but now in France, has published four books of verse through the Houghton-Mifflin Co.

Mr. Alfred Kreymborg, of New York is the author of *Mushrooms* (John Marshall Co.) and *Six Plays for Poem-mimes*.

Mr. John V. A. Weaver is a Chicago poet and journalist.

Helen Birch-Bartlett (Mrs. F. C. Bartlett), is a Chicago poet and musician, resident this winter in New York.

Mr. Allan Updegraff, of New York, now with *The Literary Digest*, is the author of that witty novel, *The Revellers*.

The following poets are new to the readers of *Poetry*, and have not yet published a volume: Mr. David Morton, of Louisville, Ky.; Eufina C. Tompkins, an associate editor of the San Fran-
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cisco Star; Louisa Brooke (Mrs. T. Catesby Jones) of New York; Miss Margery Swett, a young Chicago journalist; and Mr. Paul Eldridge, of New York.

Mr. Samuel Roth announces the following awards in the Lyric Society contest, the awards carrying publication of the three books mentioned:

Five hundred dollars to Edwin Arlington Robinson, for his Lancelot.
The same to David Morton for his Ships in Harbor.
The same to Clement Wood for his Jehovah.

By a coincidence, one of these laurelled poets makes his first POETRY appearance this month—his poems had gone to the printer before the awards were published.

Willard Wattles announces that he will devote fifty dollars of his receipts from his book of war verse, The Funstan Double Track and Other Poems, to a prize for the best poem by a native Kansan submitted to him before May 1st. His address is Lawrence, Kas.

We apologize to readers of our January number for the transposition of pages 202 and 203; and to Mr. Simpson, whose group of poems was thus seriously injured—an unfortunate error of the press-men which could not be detected until the edition was complete. The mistake is so evident that we hope the pages will always be read in their proper order.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:
An Acreage of Lyric, by Dorothea Lawrance Mann. Cornhill Co.

Above list will be completed next month.
All of Kipling's verse—the songs that for decades have been the marching tunes and exhortations of all the English speaking peoples; the songs that are, according to Brander Matthews, "the greatest poetry of our generation." Among them is "Great-Heart," that magnificent tribute to Theodore Roosevelt, bringing Kipling's work down to the year 1919. This volume contains all of Kipling's published verse and a full index to titles and first lines. 800 pages. Bound in cloth, full leather, and a de luxe autographed edition.

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