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No. I

# Poetry

A Magazine of Verse  
Edited by Harriet Monroe  
April 1920

The Curtains

by Cloyd Head & Mary Gavin

A Man Walks in the Wind

by Maurice Leemann

Songs from a Book of Airs

by Alice Corbin

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Your magazine is admirably American in spirit—modern cosmopolitan America, not the insular America of bygone days.

*Evelyn Scott*

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No. I

POETRY for APRIL, 1920

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APRIL 1920

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THE CURTAINS\*

*A Theme in Dramatic Rhythms*

*The curtain rises upon a darkened stage. After a moment, during which the eyes become less blind, it is possible to distinguish a vague suggestion of figures, moving.*

*A Man's Voice, in affirmation. Light! . . . . My life yet beats against . . . . darkness! . . . .*

*A Second Voice, after an interval. Failure . . . .*

*A Voice, answering. And I, brother?*

*The Second Voice. Brother . . . .*

*A Voice, distant. Here, afar off . . . . in the desert, my voice calls back—echoes. I break beneath the silence, asking.*

*A Woman's Voice. Together we may understand: press your lips closer.*

\* The attention of the reader is called to a brief note on this play on page 39. Right of representation is reserved by the authors.

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*A pause, sustained. Then far back on the stage, as if parting heavy draperies, a pure white light divides the darkness. It illuminates for an instant a strange boy-like figure seated in front of the draperies on steps which seem to continue upward into the light an immeasurable distance. Slowly the curtains come together. The harsh voice of a Priest breaks the silence.*

*Priest.* I render praise unto God, who hath instructed mine eyes so that I do not behold darkness.

*A Woman's Voice.* Lonely . . .

*The stage becomes visible. In front of a background of tall neutral-toned draperies which meet, closing, at the center, three unequal steps extend across the stage. From these steps run two parallel black lines a short distance apart to the foreground, forming a path. At either side of the stage is a conventionalized suggestion of a realistic setting, clearly indicated but semi-transparent and without reality.*

*The boy-like figure in white, whose name may be called Ralfar, remains seated on the steps. Nearer the front is the Priest and to the right an Old Man, blind. The chief masculine character of the play stands at the extreme right.*

*A Mother, crossing from the left.* I am weary: if there be a search, the child I bore—let him seek in my stead the dream—

*Old Man, crossing.* I have lost . . . the rest of me, my youth; the woman whom I loved is dead; if I had chil-

*Cloyd Head and Mary Gavin*

dren, they are long since parted from me. I am but a husk, with life to feel the presence of the wind.

*Ralfar.* When all is taken, then, it might be . . .

*The Old Man continues to the left, and exit.*

*Priest.* . . . . Not until death be passed is life made sure.

*Ralfar, standing erect.* Once I remember . . . . naked voices that strove, crossing black lines. Is this the light, light bent from streets, which has power to withdraw the hunger, groping with blind courage, the hunger which was darkness?

*A Young Girl, entering from the right.* I go, to give—him . . . . all that I am.

*Ralfar looks towards her with a gesture as if of completeness, broken instantly by half-gestures from the Mother and Priest.*

*Mother.* Stay. Unless . . . . from love, to keep its beauty after love is gone, a child.

*Girl.* I am so young.

*Priest, as the Girl pauses irresolutely; beckoning her.* Kneel . . . . first.

*Girl.* . . . I cannot. . . . We will return together . . . . afterward. . . .

*As she crosses the stage, she becomes aware of Ralfar and stops abruptly, with a quick indrawn breath.*

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*Ralfar.* I did not call.

*Girl.* Perhaps it was his voice . . . . I heard.

*She leaves the stage slowly.*

*Mother, to Ralfar.* You smile . . . strangely; there is strength—disdain . . .

*Ralfar.* Of me is borne no child.

*Mother, drawing back instinctively, frightened.* What are you?

*For a long time Ralfar does not answer, and then only by extending the arms sideways, raising them slightly, as if a veil were lifting from the background.*

*Ralfar.* They only see . . . . streets, houses, nothing that here is—the curtains and the reaching steps—

*Mother, scornfully, to the Priest.* She speaks of mystery.

*Exit, right.*

*Ralfar, looking in the direction that the Girl passed.* I felt . . . . the passionate search of half-things—

*Priest.* I know not you nor who you are. You come, breaking altars.

*Ralfar, quietly.* Why must there be an altar?

*Priest.* There must be altars. And you too will need—

*Ralfar.* Perhaps I . . . . too.

*The Priest turns and goes off, left.*



*Ralfar.* Their heavy voices, stifled by dead light. The darkness had gone from them.

*The Man, who has stood silently at the right.* Darkness?

*Ralfar, turning towards him with reluctance.* And you?

*Man.* And I?—am one of them. If you have seen—

*Ralfar.* Yes . . . . clearly.

*Man.* They have no longer hope.

*Ralfar.* If from their eyes the sense of earth could even for a moment vanish—

*An instant of suspended rhythm.*

Why have we loved? . . . .

You wait: (shadows of time and space

Yet darken on the mountain-top).

Do you not feel the path between black lines?

Do you not see the steps and, just beyond,

The mystery of light the curtains shield?

These are the heights where you and I have met:

It is but a little distance . . . . further—

*Man.* You, reaching out beyond the world,

Frighten my strength. . . .

It is not the woman that I fear in you:

Something . . . . I know not what,

As one fears . . . . flowing water.

*Ralfar sinks to the floor with hands extended toward him in surrender that is also a challenge. The vitality of this*

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*gesture draws the Man into a position suggesting love. The pose gradually becomes dynamic.*

*Ralfar.* It would not matter if I met you now,  
Or if we met after a thousand years.  
We have loved always; always we shall love:  
It is the meeting that keeps us from each other.

*Man.* The yielding glory of you streams upward,  
Streams like the vapor of a cloud. . . .

*Ralfar.* Your breath . . . . Life concentrates . . . . tenses  
. . . . burning.

A moment; ecstasy . . . . and then

I shall pass . . . . on. . . .

*Light, different in quality, resurges upon the stage. Ralfar rises very quietly.*

*Man.* You saw . . . . too far.

*Ralfar.* Do not speak: watch.

Light reawakens, gathered like a mist.

I am glad that we forgot . . . . a thousand years.

*A long interval. From the left the Girl re-enters.*

*Ralfar.* The colors that we watch are blurred.—

A boy came with me who had gone away,

Whom also I must bring when you and I

Meet . . . . again. . . .

*With a gesture as of seeking freedom, Ralfar turns and goes directly to the Girl.*

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*Girl.* I loved him.

*Ralfar.* Yet?

*Girl.* I came.

*Ralfar makes a gesture of acceptance.*

*Girl.* You will not ever let me go from you?

I love you, as one loves a boy.

*Ralfar, meeting the eyes of the Man.* I am a boy.

*Mother, who has entered, to the Girl.* Go from her . . . .  
quickly.

*Ralfar.* No! . . . . I love her also.

*Girl.* Also? . . . .

*She sees the Man.*

*Mother, to Ralfar.* You clutch at too much life: you grasp  
at life both ways!

*Ralfar, with a growing consciousness of freedom and of iso-  
lation.* Not you alone speak: they, the world of half-  
things—. I too have known what causes them to hate  
that which I am.

*Girl, to the Man.* Is it you that have power to kill the boy  
I love in him?

*Ralfar.* You would be better free.

*Mother, of the Girl.* Let her go back.

*Ralfar, after a pause.* And there were flowers trembling in  
my hands, flowers it had been wonderful to give.

*Mother.* How can you give, having no need?

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*Ralfar, with hands drawn down, unconsciously crosses to the space midway between the black lines. The Girl follows. A pause. The light alters.*

*Ralfar.* I would not willingly have left them—not so soon.

*No longer aware of those on the stage, Ralfar takes the hands of the Girl and turns her gently aside.*

*Girl.* Where can I go?

*She crosses from the stage. A long silence.*

*Ralfar.* Behind black curtains the light . . . breathes.

*Ralfar turns abruptly, and is facing the curtains with hands stretched upward and outward.*

*Ralfar.* The path calls back my footsteps whence they came.

*The Mother recoils, as if frightened, glancing at the Man, who stands motionless. She goes off. Ralfar moves towards the curtains. A pause. Out of the silence are heard, at first distant, then nearer, heavy sounds, dull and in repetition.*

*A Voice.* Brother, the chain with which you bind me hurts.

*A Second Voice.* I do not touch you. Brother, the chain with which you bind me hurts.

*A Third Voice.* I do not touch you. Brother—

*Ralfar, hearing the voices: to the curtains, in agony.*

Drag me from them. I have gone. . . .

*A pause; then, as if the word were forced into utterance.*

Brother—

*The Priest has re-entered. Ralfar, unable to complete the struggle between the light and the earth-rhythm, goes to him and kneels.*

*Ralfar.* Listen—I saw—

*Priest.* What did you see?

*A Voice.* Brother, the chain with which you bind me hurts.

*Ralfar.* I saw—

*A Voice.* The life I builded prisons me, and yet—

*Another Voice.* Together we may understand.

*Another Voice.* Lonely . . .

*Priest.* What did you see?

*Ralfar.* Nothing!

*Priest, after an interval.* An altar will bring God more near.

*Man.* Their chains have brought them God more near.

*Ralfar, rising and speaking involuntarily.* Brother—

*Then, holding the white light like a sword, Ralfar cuts their chains. The sounds begin to disintegrate.*

*Man.* Their chains are fallen.

*Ralfar, aware of the disintegration.* One of them . . . .  
may . . . . find!

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*During what follows, discordant lights, irregular in contour, appear, and cross and re-cross, developing intensity as the stage grows darker to receive them. Various figures enter, scattered. Exit the Priest.*

*A Voice, off stage.* Our hands grow mad without a god.  
*One of those on the stage.* Why have you hid our chains?

*Ralfar.* That slaves might not seek God.

*Another.* Find him!

*Ralfar, groping out.* The colors. . . . tear—!

*Another.* Show us the way!

*Ralfar.* I cannot: I would create only myself in you.

*The Girl.* There was love between us— . . . .

*Ralfar.* I have forgotten. . . .

*Another.* I will take the sounds in my hands, and gather them with the lights, and mould them.

*Another.* The sounds reach further than your hands can grasp.

*Another, at the extreme right.* I am dying . . . .

*Ralfar.* Earth builds . . . .

*Another.* Have pity!

*Ralfar.* Pity?

*The rhythm is obstructed. Ralfar sinks down on the steps, and speaks to the curtains.*

Take me; lest I re-find their chains!

*An interval. The white light parts the curtains, coming like a wind. The colors have vanished, and all who were*

*Cloyd Head and Mary Gavin*

*on the stage except the Man. Presently the curtains close once more.*

*Ralfar, rising.* Surely earth used me as it closed the path  
Step after step behind. . . .  
So far off is the sea I cannot hear it;  
Even the sky I cannot remember;  
And tall trees are not.

*Man.* If you could hear me, I would take you in my arms.

*Ralfar makes an involuntary gesture, as if sometime he might be heard.*

*Man.* And if I stay, you might hear. . . . My life has  
been . . . . deflected to vast spaces leading toward you.

*The curtains become visible to the Man. He walks slowly from the stage.*

*Ralfar.* He dies.

*Ralfar moves backward toward the curtains, suddenly touching them with raised hand.*

*Priest, crossing from the left.* Upon my altar the fire no  
longer burns.

*Cloyd Head and Mary Gavin*

A MAN WALKS IN THE WIND

Being so tired, it is hard to hide from you;  
It is hard to walk any longer in the night and the wind.  
I have gone among brown trees, I have crunched the blue  
Frost-bitten grass under my feet, I have stood  
In parted thickets, caught in the crackling leaves,  
I have seen the brushpiles on the ridges fired,  
I have watched the twisted smoke that weaves  
Blue strands in the black branches of the wood;  
And now, being tired,  
Being tired now and worn enough for rest,  
Would it not be safe, would it not be very good  
Tonight, to find it in your breast,  
In your wise breast where this is understood?

Do you remember another night of wind,  
Moonlight and wind, when it was all  
The sky could do to keep from reeling upon us in shame,  
When, breathless, we held it there  
From slipping down about us with your hair?  
Do you remember a night last fall  
When the wind whirled us and whetted us to flame,  
And whirled the leaves and whetted us to flame,  
Whipped out your dress and would not let us be,  
And drove us along the prairie, two shadows clinging,  
And dropped us at the foot of a tree?

That was September before the frost:



In the morning the prairie was gray with mist  
And the grass was matted white where we had lain.  
And the arms of the elm, the grizzled arms of the elm,  
Pawed at the wind for something that was lost,  
And knotted up with pain.

Fall comes to fall again,  
And I walk alone, I walk alone in the wind . . . .  
I cannot master the beauty of the night.  
I walk alone. The poplar fingers rise  
Tall and awful among white glittering stars.  
Surely this is the most sorrowful delight  
Of any man, to walk alone with a dream.  
Do you hear the ripple singing in the stream?  
The beauty of the poplars strikes me down.  
The wind over the grass—I had not known  
The wind was such a lonely thing.  
The wind cleaves me with beauty to the bone,  
And the gray clouds that brush the fields and fling  
Gray darkness on to the driven prairie, and fold  
Their lonely silence around the hills, and fly  
On to the upper night, to the upper air—  
They have beat me clean, they have beat my body cold  
With beauty. Do you hear the wild geese cry?

And now the dark is heavy in my head,  
And in my heart all the sorrows have come home.  
I am tired—you do not know how tired I come.  
You would not care tonight? You would not care,

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But let your hand wander through my hair?  
There would be no hurt now, we are both too tired.  
I would finger the soft silk of your dress the same  
As long ago, when you were first desired,  
As long ago when the wind whirled us to flame.

For we know the bitter tune the wind sings;  
There will be silence now, there will be rest,  
And eyes will heal after the wind stings,  
And I shall hear your heart under your breast  
Moving across time with a great flow.  
And we shall hear no more the wind's calling,  
But only the silence of it falling and falling,  
And always the room will throb quietly and slow.

BRUSHWOOD

TO HIMSELF IN AUTUMN

Take bitterness into your wailing;  
Be like the rock, the hard gray stone;  
See there is hunger in your ailing,  
Walk scornfully and alone.  
Walk scornfully on the fall-brown hills;  
And maybe where the wind heaves  
And scatters the littered poplar leaves,  
Releasing tardy ones to the ground,  
You will hear the faint authentic sound  
And remember why the wind grieves.

THE CRYING CRANES

Wounded black eyes in a white, dead-lily face,  
And black hair streaming like a river at night,  
She stands in the rain at the high desolate place,  
Watching till the gray ship shall pass from sight.

Below, the wet black rocks, the Crying Cranes,  
Scream with white water, the reef sputters and booms;  
And above her black hair the gray sky heavy with rains  
Cracks white and thunders to the dark sea that looms

Before that still face. She raises to wild skies  
Black torrents of hair. The salt wind whips her shawl,  
Bruised the scared grass. She watches with still eyes  
The glittering spume-showers burst white and fall.

Burst and cry and fall: there is no end to the crying,  
Lonely and gray as a bitter wave long tossed.  
Under the torn edge of night the mist is flying  
And folding down till the gray ship is lost.

TRAMPS

Muffled in his shabby black clothes  
With crab-apple cheeks the wind made ripe—  
I wonder where each vagabond goes,  
Smoking wise thoughts out of his pipe.

Like a wet blackbird in the rain or  
Flapping across the prairie in wind,

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I wonder if it's the devil's gain or  
His, since first he sang and sinned.

APPOINTMENT

I come from many hours of lonely  
Laughter with my friend, and from many  
Hours of whispering at the knees  
Of a dark scornful girl I know.  
I come from a swamp where gray rain glistens,  
From headlands bleak under the blow;  
And to any lonely man who listens  
I will speak quietly of these  
Before I light my pipe and go.

NO POEM

I read my poem over again and threw it away  
In the park where the elms brood.  
The old man who spears old papers on a spit  
And tucks them into his brown gunny-sack,  
Will make an end of it.

Then, after he has stood  
Awhile, he will go off, shouldering his brown  
Bag, and shuffle out of sight;  
A brown leaf drifting into the gray twilight  
That the bushes make about him, folding down—  
A better poem than I can hope to write.

*Maurice Lesemann*

## AFTER FEVER

There is a singing that is everywhere:  
Waves of a sea that washes in my head—  
The shoreless sea that roars inside a shell;  
Blurred ringing of a distant drowsy bell;  
Clamor of fairy festival, or fair.  
But for the iron of this featherbed,  
I should float into places thin and far,  
And like a bubble pricked against a star,  
Die in a trail of iridescent air.

## A SHY CHILD

They coax and beguile,  
As though teasingly  
A squirrel in a tree.  
You do not speak or smile.

In your eyes flit wise  
Thoughts that wonder weaves  
Of their silly words;  
Safe in your grave eyes,  
Safe as little birds  
Busy behind leaves.

*Louise Redfield*

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NEEDLEWORK

I

Lengths of lawn, and dimities,  
Dainty, smooth and cool—  
In their possibilities  
Beautiful—

Stretch beneath my hand in sheets,  
Fragrant from the loom,  
Like a field of marguerites  
All in bloom.

Where my scissors' footsteps pass  
Fluttering furrows break,  
As the scythe trails through the grass  
Its deep wake.

All my stitches, running fleet,  
Cannot match the tread  
Of my thoughts whose wingèd feet  
Race ahead.

They are gathering imagery  
Out of time and space,  
That a needle's artistry  
May embrace.

Hints of dawn and thin blue sky,  
Breaths the breezes bear,

Wispy-waspy things that fly  
In warm air.

Bolts of dimity I take,  
Muslin smooth and cool;  
These my fingers love to make  
Beautiful.

II

Crowds are passing on the street—  
Tuck on tuck and pleat on pleat  
Of people hurrying along,  
Homeward bound—throng on throng.  
Their work is finished, mine undone;  
Still my stitches run.

I cannot watch the people go—  
Fold on fold and row on row;  
But I know each pulsing tread  
Is spinning out a life's fine thread;  
I know the stars, like needle-gleams,  
Are pricking through the sky's wide seams;  
And soon the moon must show its face,  
Like a pearl button stitched in place.  
All the long hours of the day  
Are finished now and folded away;  
Yet the hem is still undone  
Where my stitches run.

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HAND ON A HARP

Like the rose-breasted swallows at sunset  
That glide and skim in the twilight  
Above the pale gold of the river,  
Touching the surface so lightly  
That the smooth glints of the little ringlets  
Might elude me—  
Except that I love them . . .

Ay, even as the swallows,  
Her hands,  
All shadow and rose in the flickering light of the fire,  
Flit dream-like over the golden strings,  
Dipping with exquisite faintness  
Till the circles of sound  
Would filter away to the heavy darkness—  
Except that I love them.

PILGRIMAGE

I traced the comet's tail of his renown  
To Faure's *rotisserie* somewhere up town.

Yes, he had hands and feet about like mine.  
He didn't mention winds and worlds and stars,  
But subjugated poetry to wine  
And burnt up time and money in cigars.



But I, young I, saw but the quick hot coals  
Purging their fiery passion on the grate.  
I thought: Beloved gossip of souls,  
If only I could be insatiate  
As you could be, and scourge you fiercely on—  
Leaping from dawn to dawn,  
Your unstopped pipes forever at your lips  
In free, untrammeled quest!

Instead I watched his drumming finger-tips  
And heard his laughter at some still-born jest,  
And wondered if this were the great, strange child  
Who dreamt our dreams for us who only slept;  
If this were he who wept when others smiled  
And, further visioned, smiled when others wept.

How bitterly I rose and looked him through!  
Then suddenly my pulses throbbed anew,  
I could have howled for joy!—sure enough  
He'd bent and scribbled something on his cuff!  
The kind of soup, perhaps—but for myself  
The toppling Joss was back upon its shelf!

*Ellwood Colahan*

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THREE POEMS

HER DEATH

*From the Other Side*

The silence sobbed  
Like a bird's throat,  
Clear as a star.  
Yes, in the gathering twilight throbbed  
A liquid note,  
A breath!  
It drew me far . . . .  
Over my room's inscrutable shade  
A Brightness leaned,  
A sun, a cloud.  
I sang aloud—  
Yet no one heard, no mortal heard—  
"Who hasteneth?  
Yea, I am ready, ready, Death!  
My Death, dear Death my life!"  
The step, the word—  
Ah, he has heard!  
He came, I kissed the great white blade.  
I lived—and I was not afraid.

THE HOPE OF HEAVEN

I shall tell thee some day, thou little wild god,  
Of the pains I suffered for thee.

*Florence Wilkinson*

Thou wilt laugh a great laugh of diviner knowledge,  
And sweep me up high beside thee.

Then I shall forget the dark travail-pains,  
The blood-crimsoned trail, the lair, the long rains,

Up there in the light beside thee.

No longer a sullen beast-mother, I,  
With suspicious furred ears and a fierce agate eye,

But winged and mighty like thee.

SPEECH

Words, words, words,

Like starry flies on the sleeper's brain.

Listen, all over the roads of earth

You can hear our steps like rain!

We are loud, ephemeral, vain,

Motes in the sunlight stirred;

Yet blazoned with ancestry,

For God himself is a Word.

Words, words, words,

Nought may put us to scorn!

*Yea, the unanswering dead,*

*And the mouth of the newly born.*

*Florence Wilkinson*

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A RUSSIAN EASTER

In the great cathedral with blue windows,  
In the great cathedral of Moscow,  
They will kneel before the holy ikons.

The Mother is dressed in blue and gold,  
And the Child's eyes are of blue jewels;  
And golden and blue are the robes of the high priest.

Nataska will be there in a scarlet cloak,  
And Irena's gown will be embroidered in crimson.  
Sergei will be there, and Igor  
Will gaze with mystic Slav-eyes at the gold altar.

They will weep before the altar for their sins;  
They will beat their breasts and pray for pardon;  
They will arise shrived and forgiven!

When the priest unlooses the tiny white doves—  
They will weep for joy.

All will arise and embrace one another,  
Crying, "Hail, brother, hail!"—  
Crying, "Hail, sister, hail!"

*Christ is arisen, Christ is arisen! Christ  
Has arisen from his grave!*

Igor will chant sonorously,  
"Peace and brotherhood and love  
Have arisen with the white Christ!"

All will take up the cry  
Peace and brotherhood and love!

Let there be peace and love  
*Since Christ is arisen, Christ is arisen,  
Christ is arisen from the dead!*

Irena's lover will kiss her on the lips,  
Wild with the love of God.  
Natasha's lover will kiss her forehead  
Reverently as the hands of the high priest.

But I shall be alone weeping:  
I shall weep remembering the blue cathedral;  
I shall be sad in a strange country,  
Thinking of Igor, Natasha and Sergei,  
Irena, and the singing multitude.

## RUSSIAN PEASANTS

They dance wildly today at the village of Czernoff—  
The men and women and little children.  
They dance wildly before the great lord's castle,

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Snapping their heels, cracking their fingers and sobbing,  
In hilarious passionate abandon.

Wilder and wilder shriek the cymbals and violins,  
Wilder and wilder arise the cries of the dancers,  
And wilder the songs and the mad laughter.

Their faces are aglow, their eyes are shining  
Radiant with vision and joy and splendor.  
Lithe are the bodies of the young women,  
Marvelous the grace of the young men,  
And strangely beautiful the wild chant of the old men and  
women.

They pass in a scarlet maze, singing, laughing, weeping:  
Scarlet the embroidered bodices and petticoats,  
Scarlet the blouses of the men,  
And scarlet and riotous the exhilarating air.

Tomorrow we shall see them reaping,  
Backs bowed, and eyes apathetic with labor.  
They will speak to you sorrowfully, hopelessly:  
"There is no joy in life," they will say;  
"Only with God is our great gladness—  
His peace and his light be with you, brother."

*Marya Zaturensky*

## DAYS

### KINSHIP

White gull—flying, flying,  
White wave—cresting, cresting,  
Eager I go, and crying,  
To the goal you seek unresting.

### PASTEL

Now with soft shadow filled, my room  
Becomes a place of lovely gloom,  
Except where silver moonlight falls  
In squares on counterpane and walls.

### A LETTER

You smile perhaps when I write "Spring" to you,  
Who know so well my window but reveals  
A space of factory walls, and smoke-soiled blue—  
That square of sky above. But here one feels  
April in March, and prescience of the May.  
Spring's not a matter just of birds or trees;  
It's something subtler, unheard, unseen—a way  
Joy surges up in every face one sees.  
Shut me from sky or light, I'm sure I'd know  
The day that Spring first breathed across the snow,  
Even as now I sense it everywhere  
And find my window's grimy picture fair.

*Harold Holston Wright*

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"SONGS FROM A BOOK OF AIRS"

GO TOUCH THE SILENT STRINGS

Go touch the silent strings  
That long in sleep have lain,  
Music that knows no past  
Or future pain.  
Sing for the moment's joy!  
And when the echoes fade,  
Nothing will last but the song  
That your hands have made.  
Nothing will last but song,  
Though the music die,  
And when this brain is dust,  
That too will die—

*And when this brain is dust,*

*That too will die.*

THE STORM BIRD

All day a storm bird in my breast  
Had struggled to be free,  
And I who never sought such guest  
Endured in agony.

At last in pain I tore my breast  
To set the wild thing free;



"Now you who came unasked, unsought,  
I pray you, let me be!"

But at this word my stormy guest  
Grew quieter, serene;  
And rings of light dropped softly down  
From sun-tipped clouds unseen.

SONG

I know you beautiful and fair  
Beyond delight;  
I know our bodies bare  
In love unite,  
Yet weep for passion's flight.

I weep because the rose  
Must fade away;  
I weep because of words  
That lead astray;  
I weep that passion never tells  
What it longs to say.

Though your breast lie on my breast,  
Still in vain the lover's quest;  
Like the dryads in the woods  
Powerless to tell their moods—  
In a world of forest spells  
Never half the lover tells.

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I SAW THE WORLD GO BY

- I saw the world go by:  
    With crimson banners flying,  
    And loud bugles crying,  
    The young world went by.
- I saw the world go by:  
    Footsore and weary,  
    Banners torn and dreary,  
    The old world went by.
- I saw the world go by—  
    And laughed to see it going,  
    And cried to see it going,  
    And while I watched it going,  
    The world went by!

SUMMONS

Then, as the summons came,  
I felt my name  
Roll out in flame  
Along the midnight's black and baseless floor.

My life grew hour by hour—  
Bud, stalk, and flower:  
How slight a thing hath power  
On life Time's everlasting light to pour!

*Alice Corbin*

Yet, for that moment brief,  
I was myself; the chief  
Actor; Time's thief:  
Time that steals all things gilds ere it takes the leaf.

Yet even this went by:  
Too late! I could but cry  
This was that I  
I only came to know when it was time to die!

EPITAPH

Earth, draw thy coverlet over my face,  
For I am weary and would rest a space.  
I've played at hide-and-seek among thy flowers,  
And thou hast kindled me with sun and showers,  
Hast fed and held me happy on thy knee,  
And like a mother thou hast played with me:  
Now I would sink upon thy breast—  
Lift up thy coverlet and let me rest.

*Alice Corbin*

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### COMMENT

#### MR. YEATS AND THE POETIC DRAMA

ONE prehisoric evening before the War—on the first of March, 1914—POETRY gave its first party, the guest of honor being Mr. William Butler Yeats: a party which became a date in American literary history because of the Irish poet's gracious compliment to Vachel Lindsay, who was then little known outside our pages, and who responded by reading, for the first time, his newly finished poem, *The Congo*.

Six years later almost to a day—on Wednesday, the third of March, 1920—the editor of POETRY, and its contributors and guarantors, gave a second banquet to the most distinguished of modern poets; and this time to Mrs. Yeats as well. The occasion tempts one to reminiscence and contrast. POETRY, in 1914 a war-cry, a roaring radical, a turbulent bolshevist in a placid and peace-loving world, has become in 1920 (at least the rising generation so informs us with nobly violent gestures) a placid and peace-loving institution in a world still heroically at war. The young rhymes-for-bread troubadour of our first banquet now sings for the rich and great of New York, Philadelphia, soon even London; and the Imagists, who were then a wee small voice in POETRY, have since been heard above the noise of battle in all the four corners of the earth.

Neither Edgar Lee Masters nor Carl Sandburg was present at that first dinner-party; *Spoon River* was not yet on

*Mr. Yeats and the Poetic Drama*

the map, and the early group of *Chicago Poems* was just making its first appearance in POETRY that very month. Cloyd Head was another absentee—his *Grotesques* was not to appear on the stage until the autumn of 1915, or in print until October, 1916. And Eunice Tietjens, now Mrs. Head, was still lingering in New York and experimenting with the *Lyric Year*.

In short, although Vachel Lindsay and Arthur Ficke read poems to us, and Alice Corbin made a vivid little speech; and although Edith Wyatt and Frances Shaw and Agnes Lee were among the hostesses, the New Movement, in March, 1914, was just gathering headway in Chicago, and further east as well. A few months later the world war threatened to engulf it, but it survived and moved on—to what final accounting who knows, when “foreign nations and the next age” shall run up the sum of it?

Mr. Yeats, in his brief address at the banquet, took the Poetic Drama for his subject, and told of the little theatre and the small audience which he and other poets are conspiring for in Dublin: the aristocratic theatre in which from a dozen to fifty of the elect shall see plays worthy of spirits highly attuned and keyed, and shall pass them on authoritatively to the next age; a theatre modeled on the Noh drama of Japan, whose playwrights and players were always blissfully absorbed in their art and royally unconscious of the crowd.

Without venturing to question this aesthetic authority of

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the elect in our unimperial age, I was reminded of a dramatic exhibition which I had attended in New York two or three weeks before, one which fulfilled Mr. Yeats' conditions as closely as any little-theatre enterprise is like to do in our time and country. The distinguished Irish poet, unfortunately, was not there, and it is only too probable that less important engagements kept him away during the entire week or two that the Provincetown Players were giving *Three Travellers Watch a Sunrise*; so that we are forever prevented from knowing whether the performance was in line with his desire. But there was the small audience (over fifty, perhaps, but under one hundred) of the presumably elect—for who but the elect would venture down past Washington Square through slushy snow-drifts too mountainous for taxis? There also was the small stage, almost as informal as a drawing-room, upon which artists had thought out a not too elaborate setting. And there, in Wallace Stevens' play, was the Poetic Drama.

I had almost forgotten how beautiful this brief play is; even though I had read it twenty times, more or less, in manuscript and proof, when it took POETRY'S play-contest prize and appeared in the July, 1916, issue of the magazine. But the "three travellers"—were they from Provincetown or China?—appearing with their candle in the dark wood and vesting themselves in gorgeous robes for the ritual of the sunrise, took me back to those "windless pavilions" of Mr. Stevens' magic country, and asserted with unimpeachable validity the high audacity of the poet's imagination.

*Mr. Yeats and the Poetic Drama*

The girl was not so adequate. It is her province to enforce the tragedy by bringing the three dreamers face to face with the grim realities of agony and death. With hardly a dozen lines to speak, she would need be a Duse to give them their due effect. As she seemed merely a high-school amateur, the elect audience had to imagine nobly during the tragic climax of the play; the more because the sunrise, instead of approaching slowly, with gradual revelation of the dead figure among the branches, appeared with the sudden flare of an electric light. However, for at least one auditor, the three travellers, uttering their beautiful lines, had woven a spell which no later inadequacy could destroy: the brief tragedy was complete and wonderful, as perfect as a Greek vase in its assertion of beauty.

It would be too much for even the elect to expect the other plays of the evening to be in tune. But Alfred Kreymborg's *Vote the New Moon* was a screaming satire on political methods in our democracy: done, perhaps, with too much emphasis on color and too little on rhythm; but on the whole effectively and wittily grotesque. And *Pie*, by Lawrence Langner, which finished the program, was an amusing farce, making excellent fun of marital misfits and interior-decorative aesthetics.

And *Abraham Lincoln?*—was that the Poetic Drama? Perhaps not, but it proved a skilfully constructed, cleverly actable, dramatic chronicle. A certain toastmaster, in introducing Mr. Drinkwater at a luncheon, said that this English poet had "interpreted Lincoln for us Americans."

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The compliment was too sweeping: the play does not interpret Lincoln—it merely presents with fair accuracy the salient facts of his dramatic political career; reducing them, even as Shakespeare did, to a presentable minimum of time, number of persons involved, etc. But whereas Shakespeare *was* an interpreter of historic characters for his countrymen, making them live again with all their imperfections and idiosyncracies on their heads, Mr. Drinkwater does not venture beyond the most obvious historic data—he misses the soul of his hero, its depths and heights of sombre melancholy and Rabelaisian humor. One can't help resenting the plausibility of the portrait—a portrait painted by Pacheco when only Velasquez could have done it to the life. And Mr. McGlynn, though admirably simple and well-intentioned in his presentation of the rôle, is not temperamentally adequate, not rich or profound enough.

The most unpoetic moments of the play are the alleged poetic interludes. The Greek chorus has been sadly maltreated by the efforts of later playwrights to pay tribute to the classic tradition. Shakespeare himself did not succeed very well with it, and Mr. Drinkwater's reminiscent figure, mouthing metrical platitudes in front of the curtain, is not only an insufferable bore, but a public libel on the art of poetry, which he misrepresents to the bewildered and impatient audience.

However, everyone should see this modern chronicle play—indeed, everyone *is* seeing it to such a degree that it will probably start a fashion. The misadventures in dialect,



which marred the printed version, have been taken in hand by some expert and are not heard on the stage. The stage-settings and costumes are quaintly 1860, and the difficult theatre scene, behind the boxes, is managed with consummate skill.

And what about that other popular success—Zoë Akins' *Déclassée*? Is this drama by a poet the Poetic Drama? All the storehouses of romance are despoiled to make it: the lordling and his faithless lady; her lover cheating at cards and denouncing when he is denounced; she adrift in a cold world and selling pearl after pearl to give bohemian parties to unworthy vaudevillians; a Hebraic billionaire, who woos and almost wins her, but magnanimously gives way before the returning lover, redeemed by Kimberley diamonds—all this leading up to a slow death to slow music, the lady having been opportunely run over by a taxicab! Could an accommodating poet do more to please the public? And poor Ethel Barrymore gilds her goldenest voice with pathos to be worthy of the rôle.

Then there was Tolstoi's realistic near-tragedy, *The Power of Darkness*, excellently given by the Theatre Guild but missing the magic touch which would have made of it the Poetic Drama. And there was that fine comedy, *Clarence*, by Booth Tarkington, which the Poetic Drama might be proud to claim, so light and keen, so sadly true, is its laughing revelation of a too typical slam-bang American family.

One may find the Poetic Drama at the opera these days,

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set out with color and music, and sometimes bereft of words. John Carpenter's ballet, *The Birthday of the Infanta*, scarcely missed Oscar Wilde's delicate dialogue, so eloquent was its pantomime, so gorgeously interpretive were its scenic colors and costumes. Indeed, the Poetic Drama is in danger of getting along without poetry! In *Le Coq d'Or* at the Metropolitan the gorgeous and whimsical pageantry of color and music was voice-accompanied, but no one cared in what incomprehensible tongue the words were uttered by those singers behind the scenes. Poetry was achieved by song and color—the imagination responded to beauty and carried the drama. These experiments by the Chicago and New York opera companies in scenic art, pantomime and the dance are revealing new phases of the Poetic Drama, leading all the arts together, poetry no doubt with the others, toward new triumphs.

It may be that the Poetic Drama will demand, in the not distant future, a wider scenic range than in any previous period of artistic history: from the small stage and intimate audience advocated by the Irish poet, to the out-door vastness of the Greek Theatre at Berkeley. "Endow your man of genius," says Mr. Yeats, "and leave it all to him." Let each community find its man of genius, and give his plays fit actors, theatre and audience!

H. M.

NOTE ON "THE CURTAINS"

The play which opens this number is essentially designed for the theatre, a pantomime through which words are interwoven. To neutralize the disadvantage of the reader, who must substitute imagination for the more precise clarity of the theatre, a brief note may be of value.

The authors have assumed as their premise that a character in whom were combined the masculine and feminine psychology might catch a nearer glimpse of whatever spiritual verities exist than is possible to ourselves. This spiritual environment—since the play is seen through the eyes of the central character, Ralfar—is therefore the dominant motive. The curtains, with white light beyond them; the steps; darkness: these are symbols to which long usage has given fixed values. They are symbols merely; yet what they imply is to Ralfar much more immediate than the materialistic environment which for that reason must be represented as semi-transparent and without reality. To none of the other characters, until the end of the play, does the spiritual background become visible.

The story is concerned with the progress of the central character, and the reactions to that progress. It leads through experience, threatening to divide a completeness at the first unstable but afterwards confirmed by the attainment of impersonality. Thenceforth no other search is possible save toward the infinite. There comes a last call of earth seeking to drag the central figure downward to meet its need. Above that call await the last stages of mysticism.

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The play has no ending; the moment after the final curtain perhaps—one does not know—completes a circle.

*C. H. and M. G.*

EMILIO DE MENEZES

Somewhat over a year ago the Brazilian Academy, and that small minority of Brazilians for whom the Academy exists, suffered, in the death of Emilio de Menezes, a loss which many of his compatriots find it hard to overestimate. A native of Brazil, "he was one of the greatest poets of the Portuguese tongue," to quote a Brazilian critic; and, while the individual may make reservations to an unrelieved eulogy of the dead poet, it is certain that much of cultured Latin America reaffirms this opinion.

The difficulty which confronts the foreign commentator who would sum up his achievements is inherent in the inadequacy of all translation, but especially marked when the translator's subject is the work of an artist so fastidious in the use of his native tongue as was de Menezes. Like Raymundo de Correio, he showed strongly the reaction of his generation against the bombastic sentiment of the pioneer poets of Brazil, and this reaction evidenced itself in an aristocratic attitude toward his calling, expressed by the art-for-art's-sake slogan of Parnassianism. As Edna Worthley Underwood states in a recent letter to *POETRY*, de Menezes is often compared to Baudelaire, and I would add that the comparison particularly applies to the ease and apparent spontaneity with which he handles the unusual rhyme. In

further discussion of the technique of de Menezes, his alexandrines are considered of the most perfect in the Portuguese tongue. A parallel is also drawn between his first books, *Funeral March* and *Funereal Eyes*, and the work of J. M. Heredia, whose single volume opened the doors of the French Academy to its author.

The final volume of poems by de Menezes had the prophetic title *Last Rhymes*. Such delicate disparagement expresses something of the sentimental irony of the verses so indicated. Here is a book of middle age (de Menezes was fifty when he died) written with restraint but with a dauntless vanity which enjoys, rather mercilessly, the contemplation of the pathos of its own futility. The spirit is perfectly expressed in a little song, the words by de Menezes, the music by Alberto Nepomuceno, which ends,

Lilies from Earth's strong breast  
Conquer the pomegranate's red:  
Onward we go to death,  
As to a bridal bed.

And the same quietly triumphant resignation, with that taint of insincerity which gives it its artificial grace, is echoed in the sonnet, *Afternoon by the Sea*, in which the poet recalls an exultant youth, and closes with the capitulating lines:

Say to this glittering eternity,  
Beholding in the foam my own white hair,  
The old, old sea grows old with me.

One of the sonnets, *The Dead Tower*, is dedicated to Coelho Netto, which suggests that one compare the rococo imagination of this most popular and characteristic Brazilian author with the deliberately subdued fancy of de Menezes.

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Coelho Netto, it is true, had at that time come no nearer the poetic form than a volume of prose poems called *Rhapsodias*; but his fecund inventiveness, which nurtures metaphor as the tropical soil nurtures vegetation, tends toward the popular and vulgar ornate in a way to emphasize the discrimination of his one-time contemporary. It is to be hoped that the spirit of de Menezes may in time be seen to have affected Brazilian art to a further extent than is now apparent. Here is a country far behind our own in popular enlightenment, and yet a country in which one prays for a genius who has never read a book, above all a genius without a classical education. One prays especially for a writer who will lay the fleshly ghosts of Cleopatra and Salome, for these departed heroines appear to Brazilian poets with as successful a determination to be written about as that astonishing head of King Charles which so annoyed Dickens' Mr. Dick. De Menezes had that sophisticated artistic simplicity which finds its practical counterpart in good breeding, and it may be said for him that in his last volume these traditional female symbols of inspiration receive no mention, and that Astarte and Phryne are banished with them. The very positive effect of the negative virtues can only be appreciated through a general perusal of Brazilian poetry.

It will interest Americans particularly to know that *Last Rhymes* includes the dead man's unsuccessful translation of Poe's *Raven*. Poe has been translated into Portuguese several times, but *The Raven* is the only one of Poe's works generally known and quoted in Brazil.

The career of the dead poet was also noteworthy as it embraced interests so little related to his art. Born in Curityba in the State of Paraná, he entered early into public life, where he reached his highest ascendant in the final phase of the government of Marechal Deodoro. His essays in the stock market met with as much success as his writing. Among other interesting incidents concerning him which his death recalled was his founding of the once popular but now extinct literary journal, *A Folha*.

*Evelyn Scott*

## REVIEWS

THOMAS HARDY'S POETRY

*An American View*

*Collected Poems*, by Thomas Hardy. Macmillan Co.

The nineteenth century in England produced two groups of poets. The first, at its outset, was the brilliant romantic cluster of Coleridge, Keats, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron. A little before them, somewhat outshadowed by the late-comers' magnificence, but yet revealing a polished glow of their own, was another group consisting of Landor, Crabbe, and the strange erratic star of Blake. Both of these groups came to an end in about 1830, and it was not till mid-century that another group of widely contrasted poets appeared—a group including Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Patmore, Swinburne, Rossetti, Morris and Meredith. Many

of these were still living when the young Thomas Hardy became fired with ambition to be a poet.

That ambition was destined to be postponed twenty years—for Hardy was forced to the writing of novels by the necessity of earning a living. It was not until he had passed Shakespeare's fifty-two years that he achieved, or at least began to publish, the earliest of the poems which are here collected.

Hardy is the one great poet of the twentieth century in England. Scan we the skies never so closely, there is none to set beside him. Even those who dislike his work, and they have been not a few or they would never have succeeded in delaying his triumph as a poet for twenty years, are forced to admit that he stands alone. He not only stands alone, but he stands in the sharpest possible contrast to the romantics, or to the Victorians. Where the romantics pressed forward in their zeal for liberty and truth, he stands still, counselling that liberty is an impossible dream and man a mere puppet of the gods, while truth wears an ugly face. Where the Victorians, with the possible exception of Swinburne, traced a world of orderly progress and increasing enlightenment, he sees only a dark anarchic welter of fate, with no gleams of hope for the future, and nothing but resignation to destiny possible to helpless mankind. And he has illustrated his vision to the world by writing poetry so beautiful, so weighty with idea and expression, that to turn to it from the rhymes of the Georgians, or from the versibrastic efforts of more futuristic singers, is like turning to



Bach or Beethoven from the efforts of a rag-time band. We rub our eyes and wonder how such poetry ever could have come to be written in our age. It seems remote to us; so remote in fact that verse after verse of it comes to our mind, not as something near to us, but as a familiar quotation. Here are a few of them, taken from as many poems:

At last one pays the penalty—  
The woman—women always do!

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse out-leant.

Leave the door unbarred,  
The clock unwound,  
Make my lone bed hard—  
Would 'twere underground!

At whiles or short or long  
May be divined a wrong  
Dying as of self-slaughter.

I speak as one who sounds  
Life's dim profound;  
One who at length can sound  
Clear views and certain:  
But—after love what comes?  
A scene that lowers,  
A few sad vacant hours,  
And then the curtain.

By briefest meeting something sure is won;  
It will have been:  
Nor God nor demon can undo the done,  
Unseen the seen,  
Make muted music be as unbegun.

Your face, and a God-curst sun, and a tree,  
And a pond edged with greyish leaves.

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When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous  
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings.  
<sup>stay,</sup>

One wonders how such a poet came to be our contemporary, and not the contemporary of Shakespeare. And the astonishing fact that, of the last two quotations, the first dates from 1867 and the second from fifty years later, leads me to make another observation.

Hardy is the most homogeneous of all English poets. Anyone who has read his work steadily through—and unless we do so, we are not in a position to judge of his importance—will be struck with amazement at the fact that the poet of the early poems is essentially the same as the poet who but the other day was writing *Moments of Vision*. Practically alone among the major poets of England, Hardy has seen no reason to alter his technique, his attitude, or his philosophy of life for half-a-century. What he was at the beginning, he is now—a poet with certain definite views on mankind, on God and the world, which admit of neither correction nor amendment.

The view of the world which he chooses to illustrate, or perhaps I should rather say, illuminate, is one of the truths of which he himself is certain and has always been certain. It is a view of a sphere which has lost faith in God's special providence for man, in His mercy, in His justice, and which is only guided in its toilsome struggles by its own conscience, feeble as this is, and by its sense of some blind overpowering destiny working out unconsciously its plan in despite of mortals who must, however groaningly, submit unquestion-

ingly to Fate. This view of the macrocosm, the world, is tinged by influences emanating from the microcosm, that part of the world which Hardy inhabits, which is England. Thus he is at once the most universal and the most local and personal of poets. As in his novels, one is amazed at the wealth of observation he has drawn from a narrow range of familiar scenes and faces, then at the universal application of these scenes and faces, lastly at the way in which all these depict essentially one man—Thomas Hardy. For though he has assured us that his poems are largely dramatic or personative in intention, yet the fact remains that under whatever dramatic disguise there is always Thomas Hardy looking at life. This is even more true in his case than in the case of Browning, who declared, with no more reason, that he did not put himself in his work. All of Hardy's poems are Hardy himself; and to read them is to know the man more clearly than those who see him in the flesh.

Another curious point is the extraordinary range in the subjects of these poems. Hardy apparently can write on anything, from a milliner's circular, or a fly walking across the table, to the funeral of God Almighty Himself. And each one of these poems illustrates the same view: a world left without faith, without grounds for hope, and with Christian charity expressing itself in mutual slaughter, or worse. This one logical central conception is radiated in endless multiplicity throughout his work. Each poem is a facet, endlessly reflecting the primal unity of Hardy's thought. This is so much the case, that it is impossible to

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conceive of any poet following upon Hardy. He has so completely covered the ground of his own mind, so logically stitched in every thread of the canvas, that he has left nothing for any disciple to do.

This thought leads me to make one final, even though perilous, attempt to sum up his position, not as regards the present day, but in regard to the future of English poetry. As I have said, Hardy is the only poet living today in England who can be called, without any stretch of the imagination, great. So great in fact is he that one is unable to trace any literary influence upon his work, except the influence of the two supreme monuments of English literature, Shakespeare and the authorized version of the Scriptures. But—the question may be perhaps excused if coming from an American—does this greatness which has expressed itself in ruthlessly stripping off the last fragments of Victorian illusion, contain elements that, given time, will project English poetry one stage further? Does it contain in itself the promise of work equally great or greater, as does, say, the poetry of Marlowe, Keats, Blake, Shelley? Or does it leave us with the conviction that poetry of purely insular English origin, has in a sense completed itself and passed away with Hardy?

This question needs to be asked, for it is important as regards the future status of colonial and American poetry not only at home, but—more important still—in England itself. Time will doubtless supply the answer. Meanwhile time has supplied English poetry with Thomas Hardy, who

at least makes another Victorian era utterly impossible. And it suffices to say that of all the poets who have written and are writing in our own times, he alone seems of stature sufficiently large to form a landmark in these dark years of war and change through which England is passing and yet must pass.

*John Gould Fletcher*

AN ORTHODOX PREACHER

*The Solitary*, by James Oppenheim. B. W. Huebsch.

If a man believes himself a prophet, it is an impertinence to inform him that he is not; but as reviewers are an impertinent lot, and as I number myself among them temporarily, I must even do my duty.

Whitman tried hard to be a preacher, and was a poet every so often simply because he could not help himself. If Mr. Oppenheim should try very hard to be a poet there is just a faint possibility that he might succeed, but up to date he has striven only to be a preacher, and his success has been almost flawless. Perhaps I should say he has striven to be a prophet and has succeeded in being a preacher—there is, of course, a difference.

One emerges at the latter end of this book with a sick headache, and mixed impressions of bad dreams of Whitman, Sandburg, and the collected platitudes of the world. There are interminable passages shameless in their imitation of Whitman, many that barely escape—if they do escape—plagiarism. Thus:

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I hear the war-guns thunder and the clear-voiced choirs  
singing . . . . .  
I step in a house where a tired mother croons to her sleepy child,  
I walk along the shore in the gleaming summer night, and hear the  
babble of lovers. . . . .

The murderer walks side by side with the saint.

And so on for many, many pages. This is the predominant note of the book, but occasionally there are echoes of Sandburg's less fortunate manifestations:

The Baltimore trolley cars go jammed with summer fluff and straw  
hats  
Out to Electric City. . . . .  
(Trolleys along the Atlantic coast,  
Trolleys in the Alleghenies,  
Trolleys making the loop in soot-soft Pittsburgh . . . . .)

Sometimes Mr. Oppenheim writes a line that is almost good, and then moralizes about it for ten pages. Here are examples of the best work to be found in the volume:

A woman leans from a window,  
And is a silver shower  
On my heart beneath  
. . . . .  
Night grows vaster  
With simulation of intense death.

Perhaps these lines have a certain hint of beauty, or perhaps one is merely surprised to see an attempt at creating beauty in this mass of second-hand gestures; but one is, temporarily at least, startled at coming upon these passages on page fifty-seven. On a fairly close scrutiny, however, one finds in these and like passages old tricks applied anew, or general echoes. But occasionally something emerges

which one cannot trace to other sources and so suspects of being Mr. Oppenheim himself:

The ironic spirit  
Was our wet nurse,  
And we milked her in the soft latitudes of the equator of dreams.

Comment is an anti-climax.

I am aware that certain persons admire Mr. Oppenheim's work. It is my own theory, however, that whether or not Whitman's philosophy had, of itself, any particular value or originality, it is not improved by repetitions, and restirring with alien platitudes. The belief that The People read poetry of whatever sort and can be aided and abetted thereby, and the other belief that those who do read poetry are in serious need of philosophical text-books, comfort and advice, are discarded conventions of the nineties. To those whose ears are refined by much music this pompous nothingness is an intrusion and an insult. We have heard broken echoes of the thin silver Christ who has lost his way in the mountains.

*A. Y. W.*

AN AMERICAN GEORGIAN

*Poems About God*, by John Crowe Ransom. Henry Holt & Co.

Mr. Ransom would be a good, if he were not quite so brittle, a poet. He would shine, although he is an American, among the English Georgians, with whom indeed he seems to have a sort of kinship, on account of his deliberately child-like method of presentation; but he suggests

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greater possibilities—possibilities which he may attain if he deserts what seems a studied attitude and writes with a real instead of a strained sincerity.

The first three stanzas of the first poem illustrate sufficiently well the sophisticated-naive insouciance of the Georgian temper:

In dog-days plowmen quit their toil,  
And frog-ponds in the meadows boil,  
And grasses on the upland broil,  
And all the coiling things uncoil,  
And eggs and meats and Christians spoil.

A mile away the valley breaks  
(So all good valleys do), and makes  
A cool green water for hot heads' sakes,  
And sundry, sullen dog-days' aches.

The swimmer's body is white and clean,  
Is washed by a water of deepest green  
The color of leaves in a starlight scene;  
And it is as white as the stars between.

The poem called *Sunset* (apart from the line containing the word *adjectival*), and possibly *The Ingrate*, exhibit his skill at its best. In these he captures the sense of a scene, his *own* scene, with no small degree of individuality; and one admires his terse phrasing, as well as his sensitive perception of the psychology of a mood.

A second book by Mr. Ransom will tip the balance one way or the other. Either he will repeat the present vein, which will hardly be worth while, or he will do something different, and better. Either he will not count, or he will count quite significantly.

A. C. H.



A ROMANTICIST

*Young Adventure*, by Stephen Vincent Benét. Yale Univ. Press.

Mr. Benét is a young poet of fervid and romantic temperament. He fishes in the well of his own personality, and brings up for our inspection various scaly specimens which have lurked in semi-obscurity. He casts his line deep, and there is something not quite healthy and robust in the fish he offers us.

To break away from metaphor, most of Mr. Benét's poetry is either too fantastic, too highly-colored—a fault of youth; or too melodramatic, too morbid—youth again to blame. For instance, in the poem *The Lover in Hell*, the first half is cheaply gruesome, insincere, no more convincing than a small boy playing bogey-man; but when the theme turns to heaven Mr. Benét achieves some lines of clear beauty.

The eloquent thunder  
Of new, glad suns, shouting aloud for joy  
Over fresh worlds and clean. . . . .  
And she is the low lake, drowsy and gentle,  
And good words spoken from the tongues of friends  
And calmness in the evening.

Briefly, there is too much poison, blood, hell, death and damnation in the book. Perhaps this has been Mr. Benét's armor against the charge of sentimentalism made against so many young poets. There are too many loud-sounding, highly-colored adjectives to snare a beauty ever escaping such devices. But sometimes, when his voice is less clamor-

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ous, beauty peeps at us from between his words. Here and there throughout his verse one finds beautiful, imaginative lines, and there is at least one good poem, *Love in Twilight*, which I quote in part:

There is a darkness behind the light—and the pale light drips  
Cold on vague shapes and figures, that half-seen loom  
Like the carven prows of proud, far-triumphing ships;  
And the firelight wavers and changes about the room.

. . . . .

Gently she breathes—and the long limbs lie at ease,  
And the rise and fall of the young, slim, virginal breast  
Is as certain-sweet as the march of slow wind through trees,  
Or the great soft passage of clouds in the sky at rest.

. . . . .

One shaking and fragile moment of ecstasy,  
While the grey gloom flutters and beats like an owl above.  
And I would not move or speak for the sea or the sky  
Or the flame-bright wings of the miraculous Dove!

M. A. S.

## OUR CONTEMPORARIES

### CONTINENTAL MAGAZINES

The famous old *Mercure de France* is a leisurely journal: it analyzes and anatomizes, vivisects and pries into and comments upon every subject in existence and out. However, Theodore Stanton, their former American correspondent, and Vincent O'Sullivan, their present one, are not at all too informed or precise. And the famous old magazine has become too secure, too steady—it has all the

appearances of stagnancy. It "knows too much," like Sandburg's lawyers:

Too many slippery ifs and buts and howevers;  
Too much hereinbefore, provided, whereas;  
Too many doors to go in and out.

It is a pity that *La Vie des Lettres* has not resumed since the war. The five volumes of it that were sent us are as interesting today as they were at the time of publication, in 1913 and '14, and probably they can still be bought. Among the poets included, one finds such names as Verhaeren, Mistral, Jammes, de Régnier, Gide, Vielé-Griffin; also beautiful translations from Whitman, Browning, Keats, Byron, Kipling, Aharonian, Dehmel and Poushkin.

*Dada* is the beautiful name of the organ of *Dadaism*, a more elusive and less deliberate sort of futurism. It's edited in Zurich by Tristan Tzara, it's indiscriminately international and is all stained and bespattered by supernatural woodcuts, nameless and invisible; it is printed vertically, diagonally, upside down and crookedly—all for the Cause!

*Atys*, published in Rome, is also somewhat international. Such good things as one finds there are out of place (Fernand Divoire, Trilussa) and it seems to be the organ of Moscardelli, a poet who has more of fame than he deserves and who was defined by a critic of the famous *La Voce* as, Palazzeschi minus Palazzeschi.

*La Vraie Italie*, "organe de liaison intellectuelle entre l'Italie et les autres pays," although, in what concerns pol-

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itics, it seems to be more of a trouble than a liaison-maker, contains articles of information on Italy's men of today that are really informatory and well written. Among the artists, here are some that *La Vraie Italie* introduces to the world: Soffici, Savinio, Palazzeschi, Verga, Panzini, Carrá, Oriani, Fucini. They are all men that the world wants to know, and, for that reason, this paper is the best for foreigners who are interested in contemporary Italy. Incidentally, it is perhaps the fifth or sixth periodical which the inexhaustible poet, writer, editor and philosopher, Giovanni Papini, has founded and edited.

*La Revista*, published at Barcelona, Catalunya, is a fine, serious magazine. Catalunya is one more of the suppressed nations, and this paper, on the strong background of nationalism and of a pure and healthy patriotism that upholds the teaching of Catalan instead of Spanish in Catalan schools, has wide human interests and is edited with magnificence. It is, I suppose, a kind of *New Republic* of Catalunya, only much better. Discussion about, and translations from foreign poets, such as Verhaeren, Papini, Ady, and several others that America never heard of, is so wide and intelligent—it makes me wonder whether there is more to a little review edited by a bunch of patriotic young fellows of an almost-nation than to each and all of our expensive, ugly-garbed, talkative and non-constructive magazines.

E. C.

## NOTES

Mr. Cloyd Head, of Chicago, received the Levinson Prize from POETRY for his one-act tragedy, *Grotesques*, which had appeared in the number for October, 1916, and had been presented at the Chicago Little Theatre the previous season by Mr. Maurice Browne and his company. Mr. Head has not yet published a volume.

Miss Mary Gavin, of Indianapolis, Mr. Head's collaborator, was for two or three years a member of the Little Theatre company. Since the close of that organization she has studied and taught dancing as a member of the "Noyes Group" in New York. Miss Gavin has published little as yet.

Alice Corbin (Mrs. W. P. Henderson), now resident in Santa Fe, N. M., who has been one of POETRY's associate editors since the beginning of the magazine, needs no introduction. Her book, *The Spinning Woman of the Sky*, is published by Ralph Fletcher Seymour.

Florence Wilkinson (Mrs. Wilfrid Muir Evans), of New York, is another familiar contributor. Her latest book of verse is *The Ride Home* (Houghton, Mifflin Co.)

Mr. Ellwood Colahan, of New York, and Miss Hazel Hall, of Portland, Oregon, have also appeared before in POETRY, as well as in other magazines.

The other three poets are new to our readers:

Mr. Maurice Lesemann, of Chicago, has been for two or three years a member of the students' Poetry Club at the University of Chicago.

Miss Louise Redfield is also a young Chicago poet.

Miss Marya Zaturensky, who was born in Moscow, came to America in childhood, and now lives in New York.

. . . . .

Mr. Emanuel Carnevali having resigned as one of the associate editors of POETRY, Miss Marion Strobel has accepted the position. Miss Strobel is the young Chicago poet whose group of poems, *Perennials*, appeared in our March issue.

Mr. Richard Aldington, having returned to England and to literary work after his arduous war experience in the British infantry, has consented to act as London correspondent of POETRY. Mr. Aldington has been a frequent contributor since the second number of the magazine, when the first "imagist" poems appeared over his signature.

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### BOOKS RECEIVED

#### ORIGINAL VERSE:

- Poems*, by T. S. Eliot. Alfred A. Knopf.  
*Argonaut and Juggernaut*, by Osbert Sitwell. Alfred A. Knopf.  
*Santa Barbara Days and Other Poems*, by Edwin Arthur Hunt.  
Privately printed, Cal.  
*American Nights*, by William Kimberly Palmer and Ernest Fanos.  
New Era Publishing Co., Springfield, Mass.  
*In Conclusion*, by Carlyle C. McIntyre. Privately printed, Sierra Madre, Cal.  
*The Dark Wind*, by W. J. Turner. E. P. Dutton & Co.  
*Rhymes of a Homesteader*, by Elliott C. Lincoln. Houghton Mifflin Co.  
*Poems*, by Cecil Roberts. Frederick A. Stokes Co.  
*Picture-show*, by Siegfried Sassoon. E. P. Dutton & Co.

#### ANTHOLOGIES AND TRANSLATIONS:

- A Miscellany of British Poetry (1919)*, edited by W. Kean Seymour. Harcourt, Brace & Howe.  
*Japanese Poetry: The "Uta,"* by Arthur Waley. Clarendon Press, Oxford, Eng.  
*Three Poems of the War*, by Paul Claudel. Translated into English Verse by Edward J. O'Brien. With the French Text. Introduction by Pierre Chavannes. Yale University Press.

#### PROSE AND PLAYS:

- What Did Jesus Teach?* by Frank Pierrepont Graves. Macmillan Co.  
*Snickerty Nick*, by Julia Ellsworth Ford; with verses by Witter Bynner. Illus. by Arthur Rackham. Moffat Yard & Co.  
*Rip Van Winkle—Folk-opera in Three Acts*, by Percy Mackaye. Alfred A. Knopf.  
*The Power of a God and Other One-act Plays*, by Thacher Howland Guild. Univ. of Ill. Press, Urbana, Ill.  
*Stuff o' Dreams and Other Plays*, by Rex Hunter. T. S. Denison & Co., Chicago.

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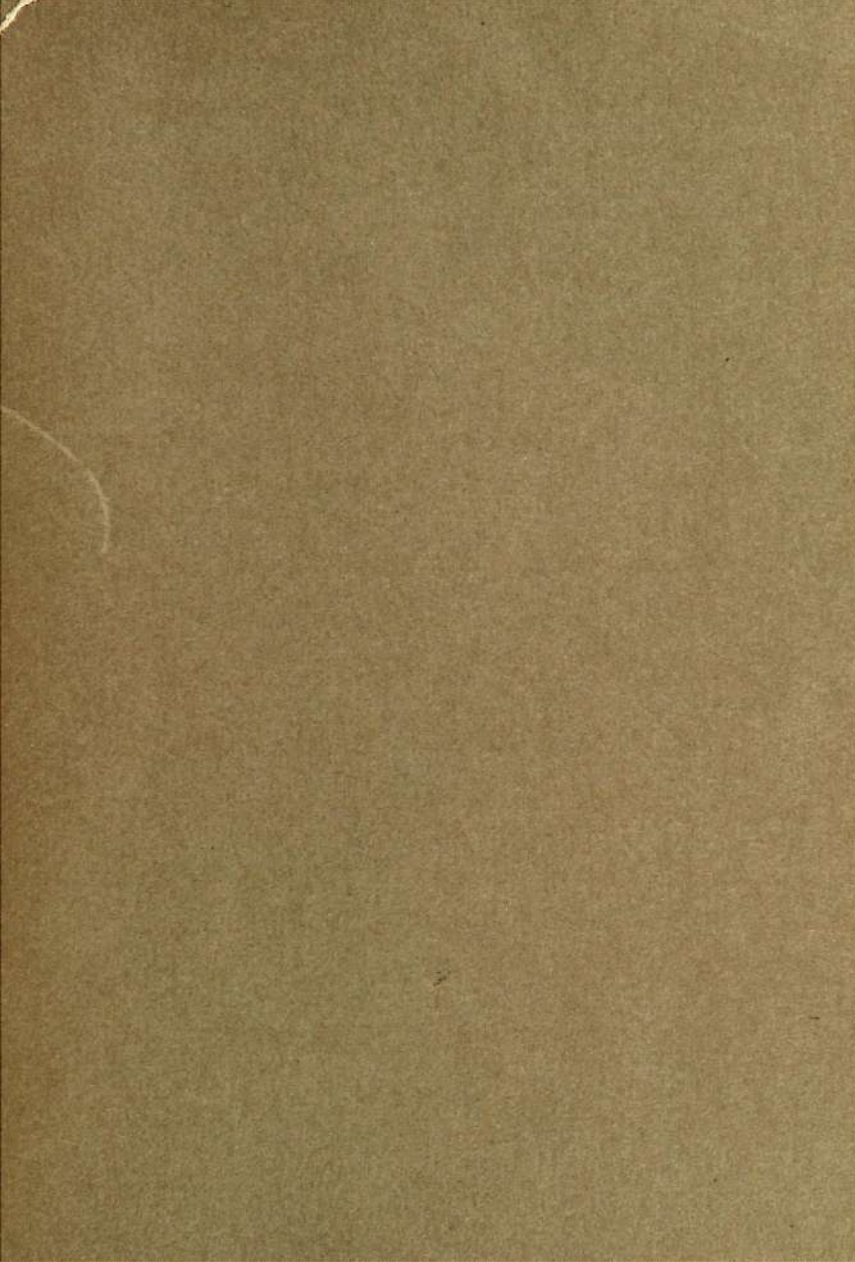
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