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No. III

Poetry

A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe
June 1920

To the River Beach
by H. L. Davis

Three Poems
by Marjorie Seiffert

Agnes Lee, J. C. Powys,
Genevieve Taggard

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M. P. P. R.

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

Evelyn Scott

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 **oetry**
A Magazine of Verse

VOL. XVI
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JUNE 1920

TO THE RIVER BEACH

IN THIS WET ORCHARD

“**O** THERS came in this wet orchard,” I say. “Years ago

There were many like the tall woman who comes now,
Avoiding with her head the low swinging boughs;
And they kept the weeds cut better.” Noise of waves;
Wind running through the tree-tops; the speed of salt-tasting
Wind parting the boughs and the weeds about her knees.
I begin to say: “I lived in this place all one year
Before I was grown; and you were that one of them,
The girl nearly grown who stood beside the weed fire
In only a blue dress, and that dirty. The wind
Wrapped it on your body and wound it like fire,
Like a fire in grass. You were that one who cried
That she was eating wind. You had a red mouth,
You had a red mouth, your short hair wound over your face

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

As the flame did around your legs. Thin girl,
Sharp-voiced in the smoke, screaming loud as a hawk,
'The smoke follows the beauty!' There was a young man
With you, I forget his name."

"Are you that brother,
The little boy who lay bellied against the grass,
Staring and staring at us, and at the sky
Where birds climbed and looked down? When we left
the fire.
You turned your face to the wet grass in the ditch,
And whispered, 'Like, like, like.' You would take more words
Now, to describe us."

"Yes, or no words at all."

"Well. The waves yonder, the wild crabapple trees
Bring that time to mind quicker. Coarse broad-blade grass,
The cut-grass with three sides, the wild cheat-grass, white
And all broken, with its seed shelled. The tracked ground
And leaf-stems marked my hands and arms; the windfalls
From the wild crabapple trees; a young thorn-tree
Which I tasted the bark of. Taste of salt, the sun.
I could eat the wind then, and salt water. I wanted no fire,
For running in the sun warmed me. No friend need
Ever put a hand on me. I was the beauty.
The young man who is dead could have told you."

Then I:

"I remember your face better than your sisters' names.
The tall girl in the wind of that fire."

And she again:

“Yes. If I die here, and hang on a fruit-tree
To scare birds from my orchard, you’ll go under me
Thinking that girl died years ago; remember her
Thin legs, wind in her short hair, her shrill voice,
And go between these trees saying, ‘Dead so long,’
As if she had never grown, for lack of you.
Look at me. This is my orchard; and these are her hands;
My mouth is the mouth you remember, red or not red.”

Let it be, until she have gone; but I know this:
That you can come to this orchard, O thin girl!
I have seen you run here, and seen the wind burn your face
And burn your young mouth, and blow your dress like fire.
And your spirit passes me when I desire.

STALKS OF WILD HAY

I can shake the wild hay, and wet seed sticks to my hand.
The white lower stalks seem solid. Yellow flowers
Grow in the sun, with dog fennel, near apple trees.
White petals carry to this water. So plants breed.
But I, the man who would have put up his life
Against less pleasure than yours, against your black hair
And your deep mouth, ask that no man my friend
Find me in this wild hay now or tonight
To remind me how worthless this was which was so dear.
It is late for me to see grass-stalks my first time,
And for this trouble of spirit to come to an end.

BAKING BREAD

Red berries are on the bent stalks: these turn to the sky
That might be a pond of water. Geese come all day
In long squadrons which make no shadow, to the wild grass.
Silver-poplar leaf foxing in the frozen stalks,
A white blaze in this old garden, what poplar grove
Was that where the three women worked baking bread?—
Where they began at morning, by their fire under the wet
boughs
And laid the loaves in the sun?

So one of these women came
From the bread-board, and a little into the grass,
And braided her dark hair again with cold hands.
One came loaded with dead wood close to the fire
And leaned, pulling her dress tight at the breast, to warm.
One was laying out loaves—two women at the fire.
I saw between them the leaves start along the wind's lane,
And heard leaves like spray on the white trees, and saw the
stems,
And low branches, which break in winter, bend and draw
down.
Boughs drew between our eyes and the fire, eldest daughter,
That the blaze blew apart like leaves. She said: "Wind
again,
To chill us, and to shake leaf-water over our bread.
This is our third month: and what have we to show
When the men brag that they have cleared so much ground?"

The bread even tastes bitter of the poplar stems
That blow wild; look, this is spray from the river
On my hands and hair; the fire is blown out.
I am tired of cold and wind, and wild geese, and this field,
And of trimming fire and hair to suit the wind."

And said: "We'll have a house, and pleasure, when the
grain's in,
And when all this has lost me the use of my pride."
And like river waves, heavy across the frozen beach,
The hair was heavy which her hands lifted; and her mouth
Had no color; and there was spray upon her face.
By now surely that woman is either old—
Or dead, more likely. Yet in pity of her pride
The mind stirs uneasy, as if she this day
Stood by the field's edge braiding her hair, and gazed
At the fire in wind, under wet poplar boughs.

THE RAIN-CROW

While women were still talking near this dead friend,
I came out into a field where evergreen berry vines
Grew over an old fence, with rain on their leaves;
And would not have thought of her death, except for a few
Low sheltered berry leaves: I believed the rain
Could not reach them; but it rained on them every one.
So when we thought this friend safest and most kind,
Resetting young plants against winter, it was she
Must come to be a dead body. And to think

That she knew so much, and not that she would die!
Not that most simple thing—for her hands, or her eyes.

Dead. There were prints in the soft spaded ground
Which her knees made when she dug her tender plants.
Above the berry leaves the black garden and all the land
Steamed with rain like a winded horse, appeared strong.
And the rain-crow's voice, which we took for a sign of rain,
Began like a little bell striking in the leaves.
So I sat in the rain listening to this bird's voice,
And thought that our friend's mouth now, its "Dead, I am
dead,"
Was like the rain-crow sounding during the rain:
As if rain were a thing none of us had ever seen.

THE THRESHING-FLOOR

See, in a dead vine,
How many blackbirds are swinging—the lives there
In vines and in dead leaves that need no help of you.
Rein your horse into the salal, Davis, follow down
The cleared ground, this frosty day, to the threshing-floor.
Red is women close together in the broken weeds,
Watching the horses: red dresses and blue,
Thin cloth of early-day dresses spread among the burrs.

Yellow is where the threshing-floor is, and horses' hoofs
Beat the grain-heads into chaff; and cold wind
Strews chaff over the bushes and to the eyes.

Women call to the horse-driver, and laugh out
At the man behind the horses who catches the horse-droppings
With his hands to keep the grain clean.

And, crippled old man,
You shake in this cold wind, yet have come out-of-doors
To see your grain threshed again: under the sky, clearer
Than a beach, you stand shaking, and face the chaff with red
eyes.

I fork a horse on the hill above the threshing-floor.
Driver and bundle-handlers, the ones in red dresses,
I must lose none of this; because men I have known
Are less simple, or are secret as birds in vines.

FROM A VINEYARD

The bushes have borne few berries, scarcely a color
That hangs against the rocks and dips when the wind,
Aimed against the low branches, bows them to the root.
Back of this poor river country the grain is housed;
And blackbirds, going to eat a little dropped grain,
Hurry from the cold beaches. What must begin
But thoughts of my friends yonder: of such a life,
And of such a man's body. One Laura, who is my friend,
Whose throat is round without shadow, and the warmth
Is like fire upon the eyes; Italian woman, dark-haired
Worker in the bearing vines—I envy them
Who know how your breast shaped, who measured you
From little to tall woman.

Riding brings me much
Among the dead plants and through the shedding vines:
These lives I know of—the mouths underground,
Roots' mouths, that since summer are useless, and have died.
So the wild gourds turn yellow upon their black stems,
Drop, and presently that fruit opens to the seed.

Laura, Italian over whose vines the blackbirds fly,
It is longer than this knowledge is old since you came
Through the dead and frosty vineyard to my side.

THE MARKET-GARDENS

This clear day almost of winter, the wind runs
The white pigeons wild and helpless; and I go about
Alone in that flood-basin of land which families
Tend all year. Foreign women now harrow it;
All at work who turn green land under; and the furrows
Drawn and raked seem little darker than these faces.
Oh, now I pity old flesh that can not warm itself:
A tail of heavy gray hair whips across the back
Of one stooped, the oldest woman; her thin dress
Like wet cloth, sticks to back and legs in the wind.

These are they who set out wind-breaks of the rods
Of green willows; and now a few are grown branched trees,
That limber when the wind freshens, and spin leaves
Among the stiff dead rods. Pheasants, heavier-breasted
Than pigeons, live about the willows; and quail

Feed in the dead nettles; little birds pick at the grass
Or go as if lost about the white dog-fennel still;
The song of blackbirds comes occasionally from the swale.

It comes so that I remember one whose love
I could not have, and grieved for. Since her death
I have taken to desiring pride of verse instead.
But see how many birds are not yet gone,
Though the frost left them no comfort a month ago;
And the foreign women's patience, as if for a spirit
Such as my mind sees with heart and eyes and hands
Of that woman who is dead; and upon her wrists
White pigeons bow and delight her. This mind's a child
Who is whipped, and stands silent for a little while,
Near his mother, wondering if kindness still exist.

OCTOBER: "THE OLD EYES"

In these cold mornings the alders can not hold their leaves,
But in the stained pond-water drop them, broad and cold.
Days ago the willows yellowed the river's edge.
The river-breaks are stuck full of gray wild seed.
Dry and without the late hunger is every weed.

The latest-bearing tree's fruit is under roof;
Nothing we value is left, nothing is left
Except the garden Eusebia planted as she grew old.
Under the trees of her orchard the tall marigolds,

There's tree-cotton, and cold days another year
In which all her use is departed. This sad ghost
That cries for love again, even the spirit is old.
The hair which hangs against the dry breast is gray.
The old dark dress is worn thin; and, wet and cold,
She who wears it would enjoy love again, would lie
In childbed over again.

When I was her friend
I thought she had been content: and see the gray hair
Heavy and stained with water! Once she was vain,
And now leaves stick upon her dress and her arms.
Now she has left secrecy, and I am ashamed
That we were less friends than ever I had dreamed.

TO THE RIVER BEACH

Let me go now, now that from grown alders leaves
Have torn loose, and go flying close to the sand
Along the black river-water. White rye-grass bends
Under the wind, under the sky, toward water
Where the pheasants feed, hiding; and the few willows,
With dark alder leaves caught in them, join and part.
I have not seen them for so long I see dark mouths
Black with juice of berries, and I remember the children
Who ran shaking the tall rye-grass. So they run
And scatter as if caught in the wind, gathering
The last beach fruit, late ripening, which they can save.

H. L. Davis

SLEEP POEMS

OLD LIZETTE ON SLEEP

Bed is the boon for me!
It's well to bake and sweep,
But hear the word of old Lizette:
It's better than all to sleep.

Summer and flowers are gay,
And morning light and dew;
But aged eyelids love the dark
Where never a light seeps through.

What!—open-eyed, my dears,
Thinking your hearts will break?
There's nothing, nothing, nothing, I say,
That's worth the lying awake!

I learned it in my youth—
Love I was dreaming of!
I learned it from the needle-work
That took the place of love.

I learned it from the years
And what they brought about;
From song, and from the hills of joy
Where sorrow sought me out.

It's good to dream and turn,

And turn and dream, or fall
To comfort with my pack of bones,
And know of nothing at all!

Yes, never know at all
If prowlers mew or bark,
Nor wonder if it's three o'clock
Or four o'clock of the dark.

When the longer shades have fallen
And the last weariness
Has brought the sweetest gift of life,
The last forgetfulness,

If a sound as of old leaves
Stir the last bed I keep,
Then say, my dears: "It's old Lizette—
She's turning in her sleep."

THE ANCIENT SINGER

The wonder of our century!
They sing it stave on stave,
They sing it loud, they sing it long,
New voices, voices brave.

The ring of it, the thrill of it,
Is over every sea;
And some are great enough to sing,
And some have missed the key.

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But I must be content to stand
Upon an old highway,
And sing the sleeping centuries
Whose dreams are towers today.

MRS. MALOOLY

Mrs. Malooly has gone to her rest,
Who scrubbed Manhattan's marble aisles.
She has forgotten, forgotten, forgotten
The mop and broom
And the patterned tiles.

Mrs. Malooly has gone to her rest
In the smooth-dug loam, to a rest so deep
She has forgotten, forgotten, forgotten
The unmade bed
And the whiskey sleep.

THE ILEX TREE

What spirit touched the faded lambrequin,
And slept? The doorway's lintel, ambered, rosed
With age, overlooks a stunted ilex tree
Grown in the middle path. Its branches guard
The house in silence, or with green dark gesture
Spreading protection, whisper pleadingly:
"The past is asleep behind the lambrequin.
Do not go in. The door is closed."

Agnes Lee

THREE POEMS

CYTHAERA AND THE LEAVES

*Ancient, terrible tree,
You drink the light of leaves
And shed the leaves relentlessly.*

My heart is April-green,
And its belief
Is in sunlight, not in trees
Or secret roots it has not seen.
My heart is light as a leaf—
Let it go dancing down the breeze!

Withered and beaten, sodden, drowned,
It shall see faithful leaves turn red and gold,
And cling, and hold;
Until despite their gold and red
They flutter to the ground.

*Shall leaves remember flying
When they are dead?*

CYTHAERA AND THE SONG

*The narrow door
Is open to the starlight. Let us go,
Beloved, toward the night.*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

We venture into darkness—when we speak
It is like wind blowing through withered grass,
While from our hearts no word
Disturbs the silence where we pass:

And though our fingers sparkle when they touch,
Like fireflies, our fingers still are young;
Our spirits have forgotten much—
Night is a song in a forgotten tongue.

We try to fling
Our lives into the night—our bodies sway,
We gesture bravely with our hands;
Our spirits cling
To the safe nothingness of yesterday.

And so at last, unshattered as before,
Laughing, breathless, desperate, we return
To the narrow door.

CYTHAERA AND THE WORM

Silence,
Spun from what you never said,
Is but a winding-sheet
In which a worm lies dead:

The worm of love,
A-spinning its cocoon
Of silken cloth,

Marjorie Allen Seiffert

Of delicate silence, whence so soon
It should emerge, a lunar moth.

O worm,
So royally interred,
Why should I dream pale wings about my head?

Marjorie Allen Seiffert

TRANSITION

There is a little room in my heart
Where we used to live together—
A very cozy little room.

You walked out carelessly,
Leaving the door half open;
But I closed and locked it, crying.

Sometimes when I pass the door
I wish you would come back,
Throw wide the seaward windows,
Kindle the fire again;
Although I know we are both better
Out here in the changing, crowded world—
For, after all, it is a very little room.

Eleanor Hammond

SURRENDER

Love me, child of the morning!
Happy blossom in the wind, love me.
See, I am sad—I have dwelt long in chaos,
And my hands and my feet are star-pierced.
Love me

Love me.
I have won through a thousand glooms to your heart,
I have stifled in the dark of Nothingness,
I have wrestled with suns and moons.
Now love me, with laughter staunch my wounds

Road-stained, harsh and weary, hungered of joy,
Once I climbed to the end
But there was no end—there was Night.
Kiss me, blind me with the hot mercy of your lips,
God is Night only Night

I will never journey
I will forsake the flinty roads of the eternal,
I will rest here in your kindness.
I will forsake the sun and moon and stars,
And live here in your laughter.

Irwin Granich

OUT OF THE DARK

What is death to me now—
Now my beloved is gone!
A silence that cries aloud,
An emptiness filled with dreams,
An end that is but a beginning.

What is the world to me now—
Now my beloved is gone!
Noise without meaning,
Crowds without thought,
Life that has lost its vitality
And lives without love.

Let them sink their great ships,
Let them fight their dark battles,
Bring disaster and suffering and woe:
What does it mean to me now—
Now my beloved is gone!

A. N.

Paris: February, 1917

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SONGS

I

I saw a grown girl coming down
The field with water for the men.
Her hair fell golden in the wind—
She stopped and bound it up again.

Her thin dress by the wind was pressed
(Was it in passion or in play?)
Against the full growth of her breast
The men looked up. She looked away.

II

You saw me staring at the girl
And then you stared at me.
Why did you come so close and kiss
My lips so passionately?
I would not have you quite so young
Or quite so shy as she!

III

A gypsy passed me with a song
Where men went out to sow,

Glenn Ward Dresbach

And he went down the winding road
Where the maples grow.

And still his song came back to me
When he was far away:
"The Flask holds but a pint of wine—
Tomorrow is Today!

"My love has made a tent for me
From stars above the hill—
Go break your heart, and build yourself
A stone house, if you will!"

IV

I would build myself a house
On this mountain top today,
Not to shun the world, or feel
It was shutting me away,
But that I might come at times
Little things had baffled me,
And look out, at set of sun,
On immensity.

Glenn Ward Dresbach

THE RIDDLE

"Is Mary Garden or Nazimova
The greater actress?" Pardon me—both they,
And you and I, seem dreams to me today

All shapes, all forms, seem utterly
Vague images of sleep to me;
And my real self moves all alone,
Between huge pyramids of stone,
To where a crouching figure lies
With furtive-cruel, half-closed eyes.
And with that crouched thing I hold
Converse a hundred centuries old.
She asks. I answer. And not one
Of all her riddles do I shun.
I look into her half-closed eyes
And menace her with my replies.
I am alone. She is alone.
And round us pyramids of stone.
She asks—are good and ill the same?
She asks—has Nature any aim?
She asks—is God a ghost or flame?
And I—I answer; and the sun
Sinks—and a thousand years are one—
One year—one night

"Is Mary Garden or Nazimova

The greater actress?" Pardon me; both they,
And you and I, seem dreams to me today.

John Cowper Powys

THE SHEPHERD HYMN

My sheep hear my pipe-call—
To fine grass sweet with dew I lead them
 The morn-hour.
They are refreshed and strengthened and fed;
Trees thick with leaves afford them cool shade.

My sheep hear my pipe-call—
To brown depths of the stream I lead them
 The noon-hour.
On bright ripples their warm mouths are fed;
The low wind disturbs not their quiet shade.

My sheep hear my Christ-call—
Through rough world-work to life I lead them
 Till eve-hour.
Of spirit immortal they are fed;
My great wing spreads over them calm shade.

Gladys Hensel

COLD HILLS

AUSTERITY

I have lived so long
On the cold hills alone . . .
I loved the rock
And the lean pine trees,
Hated the life in the turfy meadow,
Hated the heavy, sensuous bees.
I have lived so long
Under the high monotony of starry skies,
I am so cased about
With the clean wind and the cold nights,
People will not let me in
To their warm gardens
Full of bees.

THE END OF THE AGE

With wash and ripple and with wave,
Slow moving up the long deserted sand,
The little moon went watching the white tide
Flood in and over, spread above the land,
Flood the low marshes, make a silver cover
Where the green sea-weed in a floating mist
Creeps under branch and over.
The wide water spreads, the night goes up the sky,
The era ends.

Tomorrow comes warm blood with a new race,
Warm hearts that ache for lovers and for friends,
And the pitiful grace
Of young defeated heads.
Tomorrow comes the sun, color and flush
And anguish. Now let the water wash
Out of the evening sky the lingering reds,
And spread its coolness higher than the heart
Of every silver bush.
Night circles round the sky. The era ends.

GEOLOGY

"Look," said God;
And with slow fingers
Drew away the mantle rock.
Man followed groping
To touch the flesh of his true mother;
And, standing in great valleys,
He saw the ages passing.

FOSSIL

I found a little ancient fern
Closed in a reddish shale concretion,
As neatly and as charmingly shut in
As my grandmother's face in a daguerreotype,
In a round apricot velvet case.

Janet Loxley Lewis

FROM THE FRAIL SEA

Suggested by a Hawaiian legend

Only Ka-ne could do this
After the other gods failed:
Ka-ne, the careless creator
Who looked on
Indolently
While his industrious brothers, fretting over little tasks,
Wedged bones for the wings of birds
And carved mortals of coral.

Impatiently they looked up
From their litters of shells and feathers
When Ka-ne,
With the crash of fresh thunder,
Pro-created fire.

They knew he had made the sun
When they thought he was harmlessly playing.
Under the iridescence of stars
They had shielded their heads with their arms
When he wrung,
With a great laugh,
Day from the centre-knot of night.

Now in a moment of passion
Ka-ne, brooding and lusty,

Pro-created fire
In the dim womb of water.

Green and amber flooded,
The sea lay serene,
Warm to the brim of the tide,
Her full soft bosom blossoming
In vanishing flowers
On the sands.

Foam fronds
Too frail
To uncurl their hidden yellow stamens on the sands.

Frail,
A quiet cupful of water,
Untouched by the tangles of reefs
And untorn by the violences of surfs;
With no knowledge of iron islands, or the cold harsh hands
of storms:
Serene and frail,
From the gold honey of her long undulations
To the milky tendrils
That curled and coiled and clung
Against the sands.

So brooding,
Ka-ne leaned down

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And took the sea;
And drew it, shimmering, into a single wave,
Until it touched heaven
And him.

Then, sobbing,
The sea slipped back
And spread, and became still.

A slow wavering
Went like a light
From end to end of the sea.

The sea, not the sky,
Was about to bear fire:
And the light of a drowned sun
Pushed up ridges of crystal.

Terrible gauzes of foam
Broke to its surfaces;
And the slant of great shadows blotted its round tides.

Then in agony
The sea screamed;
And fire, her enemy,
Tore her, with a long sound of rending
Like a silk garment.
Fire jumped from the wet sea,

Nimble,
Youngest of the elements.

For, like horses, had reared up
Eight slim-necked volcanoes:
Horses, stamping underneath,
And tossing manes of fire to the sun.

Then did the sea begin to learn—
After bearing Ka-ne
These eight sons, these eight frightful volcanoes—
How to make surf, like whips;
How to beat after the manner of mothers,
How to build reefs for the safety of her sons;
And how, when they threw hot stones at her who bore them,
To fling the foam of madness at their feet.

Genevieve Taggard

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

COMMENT

MEN OR WOMEN?

IS poetry a masculine, rather than a feminine art? Is it loved and practiced more by men than women? The question has often been asked, but certain incidents move us to ask it again. History, of course, gives an affirmative answer; in spite of the lyric supremacy of Sappho, men have been an immense majority in the creation of poetry, and apparently also in its appreciation. And even today, when women are becoming constantly more expressive in this art as in others, the same answer would seem to apply.

Our attention was called to the subject by an enemy-friend on the *Philadelphia Record*, who, in a recent editorial entitled *Mutterings of a Sex War*—an article devoted chiefly to a quarrel between experts in psychology—introduced the following paragraph by way of corollary:

There is evidence in Dr. Hickson's own town that the predominance of feminist influence has had a bad effect upon one factor in the world's progress whose importance has never been fully appreciated by the plain people. . . . The vigorous male note [is] now seldom heard in the land, and almost never at all in the pages of POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE, the most pretentious publication in the country devoted solely to that important branch of letters. POETRY is edited by a woman; its policy is largely dominated by another woman with radical and perverse notions of the high art of singing, and most of its contributors are feminine by accident of birth, while the majority of the male minority are but thin tenors.

To this assault the editor of POETRY replied as follows,

after quoting the above paragraph, in the *Record's* Sunday issue of April 11th:

Before indulging in self-reproach, I was led to look up the facts. I find that during the past year—April, 1919, to March, 1920, inclusive—POETRY has printed verse from 105 contributors, of whom 64 were men and 41 were women. Counting the pages of these twelve numbers, I am astonished to discover that of 373 devoted to verse, 247 were filled by men and 126 by women, the proportion being almost exactly two to one.

Among the 64 male poets liberally represented are such "sissies" as Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, William Butler Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, Edwin Ford Piper, Lew Sarett and Wallace Stevens, most of whom, even aside from their poetry, are doing a man's work in the world of affairs. If you are ignorant of their records, perhaps *Who's Who* will enlighten you. And among our younger contributors I might mention a number of soldiers straight from the A. E. F.

The facts compel me to accuse myself of injustice toward my own sex. If you still grieve that "POETRY is edited by a woman", perhaps you will be kind enough to list those "major poets" of the nobler sex whom we are neglecting. Both I and my associate, who, during half the past year, has been a man, will be grateful for the information.

The controversy is amusing, but perhaps also enlightening. The editor had suspected masculine preponderance in the magazine, but by no means to such a degree as the figures prove. They confirm her impression that more men than women find in this art—for better or worse, for joy or sorrow—their friend and confidant. It is certain that more men than women come to the POETRY office with good, bad or indifferent verse in their pockets for sale or appraisal; come with carefully concealed emotion which occasionally drops its disguise of humor or nonchalance, and breaks into smiles, or even tears.

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Of the three-thousand-or-so real or alleged poems which reach us by mail each month, men and women are about equally guilty, says the associate editor, who does the first reading; adding with conviction, "But more rotten verse comes from women than from men."

Thus, so far as POETRY'S statistics can prove anything, the modern man would seem to be holding his precedence in this art, and the modern woman has yet to prove her equality as a creative artist. POETRY receives more publishable verse, and less hopelessly bad verse, from the "vigorous male" than from the aspiring female.

There is perhaps, in women's verse today, less aping of the "vigorous male" note than formerly, a franker expression of truly feminine emotion. Women poets of our time usually seem content to be women. They recognize that masculine art, through all past ages, has held the eye and ear of the world; and that the feminine note is quite as authentic, and should be, in its own way, quite as vigorous and beautiful, as the masculine. Perhaps women are just beginning their work in the arts, and this twentieth century may witness an extraordinary development. *H. M.*

DISCOVERED IN PARIS

American poetry of the present day has become the subject of controversy in Paris. It is all due to the young French poet and critic, Jean Catel, who last summer took a Master's degree at the University of Minnesota with a

thesis on the subject entitled *The American Image*, as related in our March number. Returning to Paris full of enthusiasm, he published, in *Les Marges* of mid-January, an article on present-day American poetry, which stirred up the wrath of Vincent O'Sullivan, who had consistently neglected that subject in the *Mercure de France*. In a recent number of *Les Marges* (March 15th) appears Mr. O'Sullivan's letter of protest, and his young antagonist's categorical and most ironical answer, which withers up Mr. O'S., root, branch, blossom and all.

Better yet, Mr. Catel has broken into the *Mercure* (of March 15th) with an article, perhaps the first of a series, *Sur la poésie Américaine d'aujourd'hui*. After a brief introduction, we have a twenty-five-page appreciation of Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg, who, in the writer's opinion, "sing the American epic."

We translate a few sentences and the final paragraphs:

Robert Frost makes one think of Vergil. No cries, no explosions, a sympathy which doubles the value of the verse as a fine fabric that of a garment. One feels that he is suspicious of his heart, as a protestant is of mysticism. But we are not deceived—this puritan poet is full of tenderness. . . . His is the solitude of the puritan who does not discuss God and first principles—certainties which he respects. . . . because that which comes from the soul or from true things is sacred. This respect has bridled his imagination; . . . he thinks, like Pascal, that she is "a mistress of error." . . . Robert Frost is a great artist.

Sandburg's first book opens upon the formidable silhouette of Chicago, serene as the Sphynx, indifferent as God to the pygmies who sing or weep at her feet. But who would curse God?—and Sandburg is a believer. His indestructible faith goes to meet this force, this youth of the world, which the city represents. . . .

Chicago is at the same time veiled with smoke and dust, and

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swept by the lake wind. Carl Sandburg has no other basis and background than this soil where men have planted their dwellings, and this sea crossed by ships and sea-gulls. This is his "interior landscape"; it captures his rhythm. Rhythm large and massive sometimes as a steel-mill, again brief and delicate as a rosebush in a park.

A stern sincerity is revealed in these poems. A long cry of love and hope resounds across his pages. The ferocity of modern civilization is there, but also the pride of a man who lives among men, among those who suffer, and struggle, and die. . . .

Prairie, the magnificent symphony which opens *Cornhuskers*, expresses above all the poet's idealism. But it is more than that—it is a cosmic vision. The beginnings of the world are always the most beautiful poetry that exists. The Egyptians have their Pyramids. The Greeks have their cyclopean walls and vases of gold. The Americans have their *Prairie*. Sung by Sandburg, this *Prairie* becomes the impassive Force which has created the American people. . . .

Cornhuskers offers us an interpretation, in new terms and rhythms, of reality. Sandburg has an indigenous vocabulary; that is to say, words and arrangements of words charged with immediate associations. He loves the brutal term. He chooses the word which bites, or that which burns. His phrase is a sword, or a bullet. His verse is a spark, or a torch. . . .

Spontaneously, almost without knowing it, these two poets, and others of whom we must speak, tell us the beauty of new things, new souls. . . .

Frost is the poet of pioneers who rest from their labors, Sandburg of pioneers who follow their task. The first is the past, which persists with all its melancholy and faded charm. The second is the present, which affirms its hopes and certainties.

One should complete Frost by Sandburg, and Sandburg by Frost.

Let us be on our guard against sure and hasty judgment of the American spirit and poetry. With a little good will we shall understand better that which politics, the War, personal irritations between soldiers and others, have concealed from indifferent eyes and egotistic hearts. And because we feel in this great people an idealism which seeks a road to the light, we have given them all our confidence and much of our love.

Such work as Mr. Catel's is a re-assertion of that singular but intimate spiritual kinship between his compact nation,

and our own so much more extended and varied: a kinship which may be obscured more or less in ordinary "piping times of peace," but flames into a torch of power in times of crisis.

H. M.

REVIEWS

STARVED ROCK

Starved Rock, by Edgar Lee Masters. Macmillan Co.

Perhaps the most unfortunate thing that can happen to a poet is to have his first book a great popular success, for he can neither write the same book again, nor contrive to please his public by any departure from it. *Spoon River Anthology* has been just such a stumbling block to its author, for while it served as a stepping-stone to fame, it has to a certain extent interfered with the success of his later poetry. *Spoon River* is a sort of note-book into which Mr. Masters condensed his observations of people—a case filled with human specimens. It was read by the general public as an intimate chronicle of human lives and passions, with all the realism of whispered gossip. They were deaf to the poetry and philosophy in it.

Now, as an impassioned scientist, Mr. Masters synthesizes his material, draws deductions, infers laws, traces the course of human destiny in the abstract. His poems are longer; many of them are overweighted with philosophy. *Spoon River* is a series of direct, compact pictures of people. In his later books Mr. Masters resigns this condensation, which

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is essentially poetic, in favor of an explicitness, a wealth of detail, comment and analysis essentially philosophical. He leaves us less and less to the intuitions of our emotional reactions, preferring not to trust his readers to do any of the work.

Starved Rock is composed of unrelated poems which cohere because of the purpose underlying nearly all of them—the Will to Know. It is not because of their beauty that they will live, though some of the poems in the book are very beautiful, but because of the fierce intensity of this purpose; and since Edgar Lee Masters, passionate realist that he is, can find no unequivocal answer in the material world to the questions which perplex his spirit, there is tragedy in the tone of the book.

The title poem, *Starved Rock*, tells of this generation letting down its bucket for the water of life:

And thirsting, spurred by hope,
Kneel upon aching knees,
And with our eager hands draw up the bucketless rope.

This is not the hopeful song of those poets who go “Pollyannering” through life—and even Mr. Masters allows himself a greater optimism in certain other poems. In *Winged Victory*, for instance, he foresees the eventual freeing of the human spirit by a generation able to mingle the Oriental, Egyptian, Greek and Christian philosophies, and thus add

the final glory of wings to the soul of man
In an order of life, human but divine,
Fashioned in carefulest thought, powerful and of delicate design.

He profoundly distrusts the Hebrew system of religion as the spiritual standard for this country, and his bitter protest against the narrow bigotry of "Sabbatarians" is heard again and again. His ideal theology would embrace the best of the great religions of the world, ancient and modern. In a very beautiful Easter poem, called *The World's Desire*, he tells of the yearning of humanity for some hope of immortality, symbolized in temple rites from the time of the Pharaohs, and found in every religion, to be consummated at the coming of Christ:

For at Bethlehem the groaning world's desire
For spring, that burned from Egypt up to Tyre
And from Tyre to Athens, beheld an epiphany of fire:
The flesh fade flower-like while the soul kept breath
Beyond the body's death,
Even as nature which revives;
In consummation of the faith
That Tammuz, the soul, survives
And is not sacrificed.

Yet it seems that this poet accepts Christ and his doctrine as an anodyne for a suffering world, not as his own creed. In *Epitaph for Us* he seems to speak more authentically:

But what was love, and what was lust,
Memory, passion, pain and trust,
Returned to clay and blown in dust,
Is nature without memory—

As passionless as stars, bestow
Your glances on the world below
As a man looks at hand or knee.
What is the turf of you, what the tree?
Earth is a phantom—let it be.

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The same idea—that we merge with earth and lose our personal consciousness—is expressed again in *I shall Go Down into This Land*.

To turn from the theological aspect of the book to another side of its philosophy, one finds *Tyrannosaurus: or Burning Letters* one of the most brilliant poems of the collection. Typically Mastersesque in style, it seeks with a half-bitter, half-whimsical resignation to find a reason for the rapture and pain and final futility of human love, ending with the tentative suggestion that love may be the chlorophyll which makes our human souls "eatable, sweet and crisp" for the unseen gods, and therefore of some use in the scheme of things. It is always characteristic of this poet to seek some interpretation of present emotion, present suffering, through its relation to the universe at large. *Bonnybell the Butterfly* belongs in the same category.

Beside this cosmic philosophy there are a number of analytical poems in a style which Mr. Masters' last two books, *The Great Valley* and *Toward the Gulf*, have already made familiar to us. Best of them for its biting satire is *The Christian Statesman*, betraying the author's violent political partisanship, and his above-mentioned revolt against the bigotry which seeks to curb personal liberty (see also *O You Sabbatarians* and *Pallas Athene*); for sympathetic insight, his beautiful portrait of Roosevelt *At Sagamore Hill*. To this group belong also the interpretations of Poe and Byron in *Washington Hospital* and *Lord Byron to Dr. Polidori*. In the former poem Poe says:

And there are souls born lonely—I am one;
And gifted with the glance of looking through
The shams and opera-bouffe—and I am one.
I used to walk to High Bridge, sit and muse
Upon this monstrous world, and why it is;
And why the souls that love the beautiful
And love it only, and are doomed to speak
Its wonder and its terror, are alone. . . .

Later:

And what is life beside,
Whether with drink or whether with abstinence,
Except to sing your song and die?

There are a dozen lyrics in the book which seem almost out of place among so many narrative and philosophical poems. Though they are a by-product of Mr. Masters' spirit, as sheer poetry they outrank most of his work; and it is upon the beauty of such lyrics that one bases the assertion that he is essentially a poet, not primarily a philosopher writing in verse. It is difficult to choose among these lyrics: *By the Waters of Babylon*, *To Robert Nichols*, *Epitaph for Us*, *Sounds out of Sorrow*, *Neither Faith nor Beauty can Remain*, are all beautiful, but it is impossible to quote them all. Perhaps the first and last stanzas of *The House on the Hill* best represent this group:

Eagle, your broken wings are tangled
Among the mountain ferns
On a ledge of rock on high.
Below, a yawning chasm turns
To blackness, but the evening planet burns
Above the gulf in a gold and purple sky.

The world's wanderer finds you
As he climbs the mountains
In the unending quest.
Can you spread wings across the darkening chasm

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To the craggy nest
Where the foreboding mate lies still?
Croak for the evening star,
And beat your shattered wings against your breast!
Across the gulf the wanderer sees afar
A light in the house on the hill!

Starved Rock is a sombre book. It expresses the sufferings, the fearless revolt, of a great soul, not only against the limitations which human beings try to impose upon each other, but also against those greater limitations which have been placed between our spirits and a clear understanding of the universe, God. It is the expression of a profoundly religious soul, a keenly analytical mind, in an eager, passionate human being. Mr. Masters is not willing to take anything on faith, and yet there is a proud high-hearted optimism, an optimism stripped bare of tinsel and furbelows, expressed in *The Folding Mirror*. The wings of the mirror are conceived as time and space, between which the soul of man cowers in terror. To comfort himself, man has created a spiritual and a temporal reality. The poem ends:

God in the blackness, whirlwind, lightning;
God in the blinding fire of the sun:
Before these empty mirrors brightening,
See what we do, what we have done!
Out of an astral substance molding
Music and laws for our hearts' control,
Yes, and a hope that the mirrors' folding
Lets slip through a growing soul.

Yours and ours the consolations
In loneliness and terror wrought
Out of our spirits' desolations,
Out of our spirits' love and thought!

M. A. Seiffert

PERILOUS LEAPING

Poems, by T. S. Eliot. Alfred A. Knopf.

Mr. Eliot evidently believes that a view from a mountain cannot be appreciated unless the ascent is a perilous leaping from crag to crag. At least the first pages of his latest book (an American reprint, with a few additions, of *Prufrock and Other Observations*, published in 1917 by the London *Egoist*), are filled with intellectual curios—curios that form a prodigious array of hazards leading up to the big poems. Lovers of exercise will find their minds flexed, if not inert, after following the allusions and ellipses of *Gerontian*. It is as though, in this initial poem, Mr. Eliot went through his morning calisthenics saying: "This, my good people, is a small part of what I do to give you a poem;" or more accurately perhaps: "Come—work with me—show you deserve true beauty." And with a "Whoop-la"—for he is in beautiful condition—he swings from romance to realism, to religion, to history, to philosophy, to science, while you and I climb pantingly, wearily, after him, clinging to a few familiar words, and looking from time to time at sign-posts along the way to reassure ourselves of the fact that this does lead us to true beauty.

The poems guaranteed-to-produce-white-blood-corpuscles-in-any-brain come before page 37 (a specific hint for the faint-hearted). Fortified by a dictionary, an encyclopedia, an imagination, and a martyr's spirit, even these may be enjoyed. They are certainly remarkable for their mystifying titles, their coy complexities of content, and their line-

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consuming words. What, for instance, could be more naive than the introduction to Sweeney in *Sweeney Erect*:

Paint me a cavernous waste shore
Cast in the unstilled Cyclades,
Paint me the bold anfractuons rocks
Faced by the snarled and yelping seas.
Display me Aeolus above
Reviewing the insurgent gales
Which tangle Ariadne's hair
And swell with haste the perjured sails.

Morning stirs the feet and hands
(Nausicaa and Polypheme),
Gesture of orang-outang
Rises from the sheets in steam.

.
Sweeney addressed full length to shave.

However, in among these stepping-stones to the poems that are worth a great deal of trouble to get—though one resents being reminded of the fact by Mr. Eliot himself—are one or two resting-places, such as the whimsical pathos of *A Cooking Egg*, the gentle crudity of *Sweeney Among the Nightingales*, and the sophisticated humor of *The Hippopotamus*. And I must further acknowledge that Mr. Eliot's humor is the cultivated progeny of a teasing spirit of fun and a keen audacity—the mixture of the Zoo and the True Church in *The Hippopotamus* will tickle the palate of the most blasé epicurean.

And now, feeling that the ascent has been long and hard, we reach the summit, and are repaid by reading *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and *Portrait of a Lady*. These two poems are so far superior to the gymnastics that pre-

cede, and to the interesting versatilities that follow them, that they must be classed alone.

Prufrock, which was first published by POETRY in 1915, is a psychological study of that rather piteous figure, the faded philandering middle-aged cosmopolite; a scrupulous psychological study, for the pervasive beauty of the imagery, the rhythms used, and the nice repetitions, all emphasize the sympathetic accuracy of the context. For instance the three lines:

I grow old I grow
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?

In *Portrait of a Lady* we find a like startling acuteness for details, with a dramatic ending which is a fitting example for the definition, "*L'art est un étonnement heureux.*"

And possibly—possibly—it is wise to work up to *J. Alfred Prufrock* and *Portrait of a Lady*, and to slide pleasantly down again on the humor and ironies of the poems following; for we might become dizzy if we found ourselves on a mountain without the customary foundations.

Marion Strobel

OUT OF THE DEN

Picture-show, by Siegfried Sassoon. E. P. Dutton and Co.

There is a famous passage in Plato's *Republic* wherein he compares the world of sight to a prison, in which men are enchained, while above and behind them blazes the light

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of a fire, which is the world of spiritual realities. "And between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have before them, over which they show the puppets . . ." but the prisoners "see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave."

It is the cave of Plato's imagining, rather than the exaggerations of the cinema, that Sassoon's *Picture-show* recalls to the memory. He is like one who has been liberated from the cave of our worldly illusions, who has suffered "sharp pains" from being "compelled suddenly to go up and turn his neck round and walk and look at the light;" yet who, remembering his "old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners . . . would rather suffer anything than live after their manner." The allegory goes further than this; for Sassoon is one who has returned to the cave, and who walks ill in that unaccustomed darkness. Truly, men say of him that "Up he went and down he comes without his eyes; . . . and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender in the act, and they would put him to death."

In *Counter-attack* one felt the poet's scornful pity for his fellow-prisoners. In *Picture-show* one feels rather his awareness of the great light from which he has come. The reiterant "Have you forgotten yet?" of such a poem as *Aftermath* is fierce and hot, but there is less bitterness in

it than an intense will to keep the faith with his vision. Here, as in so many poems in this fresh volume, his anger is much less than his compassion. The earlier book seemed the work of a man who was struggling with an emotion too big for him, perhaps too big for any one man to speak out. Here, the poet's recognition of this, expressed in *Limitations* and again in the *Prelude to a Masterpiece*, seems to clarify his utterance.

There is something curiously reminiscent of Rupert Brooke in these poems. Curious, because Brooke's reaction to the war, at least as evidenced in the famous sonnets of 1914, was so utterly different. One cannot help wondering whether, if Brooke had lived, he might not have written in the mood of Sassoon. For, after all, the things that move Sassoon are those familiar and lovely things that were celebrated so perfectly in *The Great Lover*. One feels it in such lines as these: "The hollow cry of hounds like lonely bells"; or the grey-blue twilight, where "Shoals of low-jargoning men drift inward to the sound Drawn by a lamp"; as well as in that sensitive satire which watches the moon rise over an archæological dispute, and

as her whitening way aloft she took,
I thought she had a pre-dynastic look.

The difference is that Sassoon hears music and savors beauty with the intensity and acuteness of one who has walked amid the fires, and for whom all ordinary things are henceforth touched with the wounding light of his superior reality. If he adores "Winds, birds, and glittering leaves that flare

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and fall," he is as keenly aware of "corpses rotting in front of a front-line trench"; and he watches where

the troopship, in a thrill
Of fiery-chambered anguish, throbs and rolls.

There is more music in this latest book, more arresting and radiant imagery. But beyond that, there is a mellower spirit in it, drawing its power from the sheer sharpness of the poet's vision, and the heat of his bitter passion.

Babette Deutsch

BLACK AND CRIMSON

Black Branches, by Orrick Johns. Pagan Publishing Co.

Aspiring youth is so consistently barking his intellectual knees upon subtlety or realism, that one is somewhat skeptical, upon opening Mr. Johns' latest book *Black Branches*, at finding *Three Plays in Chiaroscuro*. Plays in chiaroscuro, particularly after the crystalline beauty of the dedication, sound as intangible as dreams within dreams. Yet the first speech in *Shadow*, the most completely achieved of the three plays, is convincingly reassuring:

My hands I have folded and refolded
For forty years.
My heart sings
Because it has no gestures.

Such sepia-tinted evasions continue to clarify the tragedy of the theme. There is no relief of shouting or of tears, for the phrases are heart-broken whispers re-echoing in their own tense quietude. The vivid result is seen in the lines:

The treasures of denial survive
Like empty chalices in alluvia.

A negation made her
The companion of my humility.

Death . . . centers the divergent shadows
In a spot of light.

That Mr. Johns has, by the use of a sustained indirect method, etched, rather than clouded his effect, is noteworthy.

The remainder of the book is devoted to poems which, as a whole, give a startling piebald appearance, as they are divided into groups of contrasting degrees of merit.

Songs of Deliverance is a shout of youth, youth writing of youth with bombastic simplicity. The lines swagger with assurance, and each word does a goose-step in the flaunting arrogance of the sentences. It is ego triumphant!—provoking all the egos of all the readers to defend themselves.

The faultlessly named *Tunings* would better have been left on the cuff, or wherever Mr. Johns keeps his notations; and the *New Songs of Deliverance* are no less innocuous—easy to read and to forget, this kind of *bric-à-brac*.

In direct contrast is *Kysen*: sensuous beauty done to the baking point; the beauty of tube-roses and the tropics; painting of the tiger-lily—producing a heady, sustained reaction. For instance:

Father of Smiles, Forgiver, I have read in a crimson doe-skin book, with silver sprays and an orange enamel clasp, of a bird in Afric which the Tunisians call buhabibi, meaning the bird of laughter, and which eats grain from the tongue without being trained.

Unfortunately the book does not end here; but, like some

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precocious neophyte in the art of sophistication, Mr. Johns must show off his knowledge of the wicked world. Or, more specifically, he must show T. S. Eliot that he too can weave a Rabelaisian fancy. Unhappily, however, his delving into obscenity lacks both spontaneity and naturalness. The poems are imitative of Eliot, not only in context, but in the use of the quatrain: they have not even the justification of originality. And sublimated limericks are particularly deplorable from an author who in a previous volume—*Asphalt*—used the lyric form beautifully. Perhaps lyrics would not have fitted under the title *Black Branches*; perhaps Mr. Johns wished to show his ability in plays, *vers libre*, prose poems—and he has proved his versatility. But one fears that his chasing of stars may loosen his grip on the moon.

Marion Strobel

STANDARDS OF LITERATURE

De Stéphane Mallarmé au prophète Ezéchiël, et essai d'une théorie de réalisme symbolique, par Edouard Dujardin. Mercure de France, Paris.

M. Edouard Dujardin is one of the first generation of Symbolistes; a short account of his earlier work will be found in Remy de Gourmont's *Livre des Masques*, Vol. II. M. Dujardin was the founder of *La Revue Wagnérienne* (1885), which created an appreciation for Wagner in France; from 1886 to 1888 the same poet brilliantly edited *La Revue Indépendante*—"seule revue d'art pendant deux

ans," says Remy de Gourmont. After publishing books of poetry, poems in prose and a novel, *Les Lauriers sont coupés*, M. Dujardin became interested in Semitic literature. He started, from a chance remark of Schopenhauer, to investigate Christianity; and from Christianity he was led into a profound study of oriental literature, which has occupied his energies for many years. When he became a savant, however, the poet in him was not dead but dormant. As he read the literature of the Jews, in a spirit of disinterested scientific inquiry, he found himself more and more obsessed by the poetry of what he was reading. This brought him to a consideration of the problems of modern poetry, especially in relation to the influence of Stéphane Mallarmé, the master of M. Dujardin as of all the best poets of that generation. This book is the result of his meditations on poetry.

These antecedents make M. Dujardin's opinion of value; it cannot be lightly put aside either as the ravings of a dotard or the extravagances of a young fool. It would indeed be surprising if London, sunk in a torpid acquiescence in Georgian puerilities, should realize the importance of this subtle and thoughtful essay. Perhaps America will read and profit by M. Dujardin's wisdom, though many of the things he has to say are precisely those which the Imagists have been saying for years. His "*réalisme symbolique*" is simply Imagism; the poet he desiderates is H. D.

This book is concise; M. Dujardin has compressed his statements so closely that only a reading of his book will

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prove the justice of my contentions. His theory cannot be crushed into a short review; I shall therefore content myself with giving a few translated extracts:

Art is obviously not an enterprise for after-dinner entertainments. Art is not the juggling of virtuosi or a little amusement of dilettanti. On the other hand, I do not think that the object of art is to defend ideas, however correct (*justes*), to preach a moral, to teach truths; the teaching of morality, the propagation of truths, need other disciples. The essential function of art seems rather to be, first of all, to liberate men from the servitude of selfish interests; then to bring them to a social conception—that is to say, to a superior conception of the world.

I pass over an eloquent exposition of Mallarmé's contribution to poetry, one more of influence than of achievement; and a closely reasoned defence of Symbolism. It is worth noting that among modern poets M. Dujardin cites: Mallarmé, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Laforgue, Walt Whitman (with reservations), Fort, Romains, Vildrac, Arcos, Jouve, André Spire ("the best of the new poets"), and Claudel. His analysis of the defects of the seventeenth century poets, Boileau and Racine, is clear, logical and uncomplimentary.

He continues:

An artist's first problem is sincerity. To be sincere does not mean to tell others the truth, or what a man thinks is the truth; it means, at least in art, to tell oneself the truth. What is a real writer?—let us say, what is a writer? He who employs the tool which is his—language—to express a thing he has thought. The same is said of a painter and of a musician: that he is, in every meaning of the word, a painter or a musician when he expresses by colors or by sounds the vision he has seen, the emotion he has felt. On the other hand, the bad writer, the bad painter, the bad musician, is he who uses his tool to express things which he imagines, perhaps, that he has thought, seen or felt, but which in

reality he has neither thought, seen nor felt; he is the man who is not "sincere."

That looks like nothing—to express what a man has felt. All artists believe they say what they think; in reality they only repeat and re-arrange what others have thought before them. Result: an approximate, insufficient, factitious and generally false expression.

A man only thinks well the things he thinks for himself; he only expresses well the things he has thought well. Every thought not personally thought is an approximate thought; every emotion not personally felt remains an approximate emotion; every vision which our eye has not seen is an approximate vision. That produces approximate literature. . . .

Practically, there is only one way to think well—that is to think personally; there is no way to think personally except to think really. Reciprocally, there is but one way to think one's thought really, and that is to seek for its precise expression.

Form and matter are vain words; there is only style.

Style is the concord of thought and expression.

Pas de clichés! That means: nothing but thoughts thought, emotions felt, visions seen; even if the genius be tiny, the talent humble, there is art. . . .

Supreme rule: use words according to their real meaning. . . . Words are forces, and by means of these forces the writer expresses his thoughts; his words have a value, and it is this value which gives thought the power of expression. Among writers only a small minority use the words according to their meaning; almost everything we read is an "almost" (*à-peu-près*); in nearly everything we read words have lost their power, their value, because they are not used according to their meaning.

M. Dujardin then analyzes metaphor. He takes the *cliché*, "a torrent of tears," and shows its falsity. It is not an image—"An image is the evocation of a concrete thing."

Do not confuse the image with the metaphor. . . . When a man writes to-day, "She shed a torrent of tears," is he sincere? does he have, at the moment when he writes the phrase, a vision of a mountain, of its woody or desolate landscapes, its high peaks? and does he see, through the broken rocks, this torrent falling, bounding in a clamor of sound and foam? and, in the presence of this alpine hallucination, does he exclaim in the depths of his

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artist's soul?—"This, yes, this is the flow of tears I see coming from those eyes." If he does, he is sincere, he is a writer.

Or is the metaphor he uses a vision not seen, a sensation not felt, a thought not thought? Is it a dead metaphor he has given us?

Conclusion: The writer is the man who does not use dead metaphors. . . . Young men, beware of the metaphor! The dead metaphor is a simple and certain criterion whereby one may be recognized. When you want to know if a writer is really a writer, examine his metaphors. The worst *clichés* are metaphors.

I add a few detached sentences:

The Greek and Latin classics—they are the men who wrote, they are the models. . . . The worst writers; journalists, professors, academicians. Do not be jealous, young poets, sincerity is left to you.

Precision: the sincere writer says exactly what he means.

Profundity: he must descend into himself to acquire that perfect consciousness which is true sincerity.

Concision: he will eliminate everything useless and vain to preserve this profound sincerity.

I should like to quote more. I will add only this: If poets would ruthlessly apply to their own work the standards of M. Dujardin, and refuse to accept any less exacting, then the output of poetry would be pleasantly reduced in bulk but significantly improved in quality.

Richard Aldington

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

NEW ENGLISH MAGAZINES

It is encouraging to note the after-the-War activity of English poets, as manifested not only in their new books but

also in a number of special magazines devoted wholly or partly to the art. Mr. Aldington, in his *London Letter* last January, mentioned four of these quarterlies and monthlies: of the former, *Art and Letters* and *Coterie*; of the latter, *The Chap-book* and *Voices*. Another monthly is *The London Mercury*, which began last November under the editorship of J. C. Squire, assisted by Edward Shanks—a general literary review which devotes about half its six-score pages to current comment and notices, and the other half to original contributions in prose and verse. Besides these, of course the old *Poetry Review* goes on, “the journal of the Poetry Society”—as persistent as it is misrepresentative of whatever is vital in the art in England.

All the new English magazines have a distinguished format—this without seeing *Voices*, which has not yet reached us. They are printed in larger type on better paper than most of us can afford over here, and their size ranges from the 6½ x 8¼-inch page of *The Chap-book* to the 7½ x 10-inch page of *Coterie*. None of them has a two-column page, as in our magazines of similar size; and in all the spacing is generous. It is a pleasure to handle them, and the pictures, when they have any, are well printed.

Of the four under inspection, *Coterie* is the most specialized toward the art we are interested in—in spite of futuristic title-pages and a few other not-very-exciting drawings. One English reviewer has called it “a kind of little *Yellow Book*”—a remark which sent me back to that volcanic quarterly of the nineties. No, we haven't Aubrey Beardsley to

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day, a genius who makes these little futurists scatter like withered leaves in a gale; and, it must be confessed, no poem in any of these magazines could hold up its head for the laurel beside John Davidson's *Ballad of a Nun*. Yet *Coterie* has personality; it is not stodgy, and it is on the move. It is edited by Chaman Lall, and among its thirty-or-more poets are ten of our familiar contributors: the English imagists, for example, and four Americans—Eliot, Fletcher, Conrad Aiken, Babette Deutsch. And among the poets less familiar are a number of young men and women of promise. For example:

Who could resist Herbert Read's very modern ballad, *Huskisson Sacred and Profane!* Of course there is a suggestion of Eliot in its sardonic whimsicality, but it is more barbaric, it gets further than Eliot from civilization—a wild wind blowing through the little patterned English fields.

Sacheverell Sitwell—a mere boy in his teens, they say—also has a light step and an engaging sense of humor, as is shown in *Week-ends*. Of the three Sitwells, this youngest one seems the most original and spontaneous. Edith's nursery-rhyme naiveté is less convincing, and Osbert's satirical touch strikes an American a bit heavily.

Another half-humorous, likable vagabond is Leonard A. S. Strong, whose poems, *From the Dublin Streets*, are racily and deliciously Irish.

Aldous Huxley is perhaps the most interesting of the more serious new poets in *Coterie*; even though his prose-poem, *Beauty*, is not well sustained, and his six-hundred-

line narrative in rhymed couplets, *Leda*, seems simply an excellent college exercise.

Of the poetry in *The London Mercury*, I confess that the most exciting entry thus far is Vachel Lindsay's "rhyme in the American language," *Bryan! Bryan!* But since we are not at this moment discussing our compatriot's all-conquering poetic blague—that singing, swinging march of his which is now carrying his fame in triumph through England—we may as well confess that the rest of the poetry in *Mercury* is less arresting than in *Coterie*; even though the Laureate and Thomas Hardy—and Austin Dobson, if you please—are here with brief poems. The critical articles on our subject are often scholarly, like Robert Lynd's study of John Donne; the reviews are perhaps a little too descriptive, too much cut to a pattern.

The Monthly Chap-book is Harold Monro's amusingly varied, go-as-you-please successor to his much larger and solemn before-the-war quarterly, *Poetry and Drama*. Eight numbers have appeared thus far, of which three are in our specialty: the first, which had twenty-three new poems by as many poets, most of the names being familiar, with Herbert Read and W. P. R. Kern, perhaps also Rodney Pasley, as the more interesting of the new ones; the seventh (January), which presents eight poets, all new to us except Anna Wickham, and none to give us pause; and number four, which contains F. S. Flint's latest review of recent French poetry, an excellent critical summary. The other numbers are devoted to rhymes for children, old songs

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quaintly illustrated, stage decoration, etc. The Poetry Bookshop has issued also several series of *Rhyme Sheets*—old poems with gay colored prints, each on its panel for wall decoration, like a kakimono.

Of *Art and Letters*, edited by Frank Rutter and Osbert Sitwell, only a belated summer number has reached us. Besides a few rather weak drawings, and some clever prose by Dorothy Richardson, Ezra Pound *et al*, we have two pert and prancing poems from that slim thoroughbred T. S. Eliot, and five lyrics by Isaac Rosenberg, the young London poet and art-student whose vivid *Trench Poems* were printed in POETRY in December, 1916.

The Rosenberg poems are accompanied by a memorial article, which brings us our first information of his death in action on April first, 1918. He was a Jewish boy, born of poor parents in Bristol and brought up in London. His talents brought him influential friends and instruction at the Slade School of Art. Early in 1915 he volunteered in spite of physical disability, and bravely did his part until he was killed in "the great push." The *Trench Poems* were sent to POETRY from the Front, scrawled in pencil on a torn scrap of paper. A letter written the month they were published ends thus: "We are terribly rushed—winter and wet weather in the trenches is no catch."

A volume of Mr. Rosenberg's poems, edited and arranged by Gordon Bottomley, will soon be published. *H. M.*

CORRESPONDENCE

RIDDLES AND RUNES

Dear Miss Monroe: Provided you will allow me to use small letters at the beginning of my lines, I submit the following excellent American poem to you for publication in your paying magazine:

SPIRIT OF '76

Her father
built a bridge
over
the Chicago River
but she
built a bridge
over the moon.

This, as you will at once recognize, is an excellent poem and very American. I sincerely hope that no prehistoric prosodic rules will bar it from publication. Yours,

W. C. Williams

The following communication arrives anonymously:

We sit at our desks—we three.

You with your dog-eared
Knowledge of life. . . .
Oh, be wise and giggle away
Some of your wisdom. . . .

And you with your beauty. . . .
Oh, don't cultivate it into
A starched maturity. . . .

And I
Stified by the gigantic smallness
Of your imperfections.

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NOTES

Two of POETRY's prize-winners of last year are represented in this number: Mr. H. L. Davis, of The Dalles, Oregon, whose *Primapara*, published in April, 1919, took the Helen Haire Levinson Prize of \$200; and Marjorie Allen Seiffert (Mrs. Otto S.), of Moline, Ill., whose dialogue, *The Old Woman*, received a prize of \$100. Mrs. Seiffert's first book, *A Woman of Thirty*, was published last November by Alfred A. Knopf.

Other poets familiar to our readers are:

Agnes Lee (Mrs. Otto Freer), of Chicago, whose latest book is *The Sharing* (Sherman, French & Co.).

Mr. Glenn Ward Dresbach, of Tyrone, N. M., whose third book of poems, *Morning, Noon and Night*, will be published by the Four Seas Co. in September.

Mr. John Cowper Powys, the well-known lecturer, author of *Mandragora* and *Wolf's-Bane* (G. Arnold Shaw).

The following young poets appear in POETRY for the first time:

Miss Genevieve Taggard, of Berkeley, Cal., went to the Hawaiian Islands as an infant, and remained there until she entered the U. of Cal., whence she graduated a year ago to become a reporter on a San Francisco newspaper. She writes: "My parents were teachers on the plantations, so I lived with the Hawaiians, and came to know many intimate things about them. I heard their stories, by word of mouth, from the old people. My greatest desire is to save the poetry of their temperaments and traditions from being lost with them."

Eleanor Hammond (Mrs. Earle I. H.), of Portland, Oregon, has published verse in a few magazines.

Miss Janet Lewis, of Chicago, is a student of the U. of C. and a member of its Poetry Club. Mr. Irwin Granich lives in New York, and Miss Gladys Hensel in Indiana.

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Mr. Theodore Stanton informs us that he is still conducting the *Lettres Américaines* of the *Mercure de France*, a department which he founded and has had charge of for the past dozen years. Answering criticism sometimes passed on these *chroniques*, Mr. Stanton says that his notes are "bibliographical and expository, and not critical, work of the latter kind being left to contributors of the set articles in the first part of the *Mercure*."

Books Received will be listed next month.

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there must be great audiences too.

—Whitman

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