Splendidly edited. Invaluable to those who would keep in touch with modern poetry. "Point of departure from conservatism may be dated from the establishment of POETRY" (Braithwaite).

From Classified List of Contemporary Poets compiled for libraries by Anne Morris Boyd, A. B., B. L. S.

Vol. XVII  
POETRY for OCTOBER, 1920 
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THREE DOLLARS A YEAR

Beginning with the October number, the subscription price of POETRY will be three dollars, and the price of single numbers twenty-five cents.

We hope that our subscribers will show their approval of this change, which is required if the magazine is to survive. For paper, printing, rent—almost everything except salaries and rates to contributors—we shall have to pay from seventy-five to ninety per cent more next year, beginning October first, than this year, which this number closes.

If you wish to take advantage of our present rate, renew now. All subscriptions and renewals received before October first will be at the old rate of two dollars a year.

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DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI
August 22-27, 1915

EMBARKATION

Dull masses of dense green,
The forests range their sombre platforms.
Between them silently, like a spirit,
The river finds its own mysterious path.

Loosely the river sways out, backward, forward,
Always fretting the outer side;
Shunning the invisible focus of each crescent,
Seeking to spread into shining loops over fields:

Like an enormous serpent, dilating, uncoiling,
Displaying a broad scaly back of earth-smeared gold;
Swaying out sinuously between the dull motionless forests,
As molten metal might glide down the lip of a vase of dark bronze.
While this, the steamboat slowly drifting out upon it,
Seems now to be floating not only outwards but upwards—
In the flight of a petal detached and gradually moving skyward
Above the pink explosion of the calyx of the dawn.

HEAT

As if the sun had trodden down the sky,
Until no more it holds air for us, but only humid vapor,
The heat, pressing upon earth with irresistible languor,
Turns all the solid forest into half-liquid smudge.

The heavy clouds, like cargo-boats, strain slowly up 'gainst its current;
And the flickering of the heat haze is like the churning of ten thousand paddles
Against the heavy horizon, pale blue and utterly windless,
Whereon the sun hangs motionless, a brassy disk of flame.

FULL MOON

Flinging its arc of silver bubbles, quickly shifts the moon
From side to side of us as we go down its path;
I sit on the deck at midnight, and watch it slipping and sidling,
Under my tilted chair, like a thin film of spilt water.

It is weaving a river of light to take the place of this river—

[2]
A river where we shall drift all night, then come to rest in its shallows.
And then I shall wake from my drowsiness and look down from some dim tree-top
Over white lakes of cotton, like moon-fields on every side.

THE MOON'S ORCHESTRA

When the moon lights up
Its dull red camp-fire through the trees;
And floats out, like a white balloon,
Into the blue cup of the night, borne by a casual breeze;
The moon-orchestra then begins to stir:
Jiggle of fiddles commence their crazy dance in the darkness;
Crickets churr
Against the stark reiteration of the rusty flutes which frogs puff at from rotted logs
In the swamp.
And the moon begins her dance of frozen pomp
Over the lightly quivering floor of the flat and mournful river.
Her white feet slightly twist and swirl—
She is a mad girl
In an old unlit ball-room,
Whose walls, half-guessed-at through the gloom,
Are hung with the rusty crape of stark black cypresses,
Which show, through gaps and tatters, red stains half hidden away.
THE STEVEDORES

Frieze of warm bronze that glides with cat-like movements
Over the gang-plank poised and yet awaiting,
The sinewy thudding rhythms of forty shuffling feet
Falling like muffled drum-beats on the stillness:

Oh, roll the cotton down—
Roll, roll, the cotton down!
From the further side of Jordan,
Oh, roll the cotton down!

And the river waits,
The river listens,
Chuckling with little banjo-notes that break with a plop
on the stillness.
And by the low dark shed that holds the heavy freights,
Two lonely cypress trees stand up and point with stiffened
fingers
Far southward where a single chimney stands aloof in
the sky.

NIGHT LANDING

After the whistle's roar has bellowed and shuddered,
Shaking the sleeping town and the somnolent river,
The deep-toned floating of the pilot's bell
Suddenly warns the engines.

They pause like heart-beats that abruptly stop:
The shore glides to us, in a wide low curve.
And then—supreme revelation of the river—
The tackle is loosed, the long gang-plank swings outwards;
And poised at the end of it, half naked beneath the search-light,
A blue-black negro with gleaming teeth waits for his chance to leap.

THE SILENCE

There is a silence which I carry about with me always—
A silence perpetual, for it is self-created;
A silence of heat, of water, of unchecked fruitfulness,
Through which each year the heavy harvests bloom, and burst, and fall.

Deep, matted green silence of my South,
Often, within the push and the scorn of great cities,
I have seen that mile-wide waste of water swaying out to you,
And on its current glimmering I am going to the sea.

There is a silence I have achieved—I have walked beyond its threshold.
I know it is without horizons, boundless, fathomless, perfect.
And some day maybe, far away,
I shall curl up in it at last and sleep an endless sleep.
A TOWN ON THE RIVER

MY TOWN

I know a town all through
Better than I know myself.
Sometimes I think perhaps it is myself.
I know this little town lives unproclaimed
On the banks of a rushing river.
I know that it is there,
And it rests me to know.
In the quiet of this town
There is something living greatly—
I know that too.
When I was little I knew it.

We played, we always played.
The out-of-doors was ours.
The town, the prairie, the hills and the river
Given with God's prodigality.
We made new games to fit the great playground.
We played, we always played;
Old and young played.

We didn't take God on faith—
There he stood out in the open
And we worshipped him,
Our hearts bursting with the full-blooded joy of it.
We worshipped him
In the rain and the snow and the sun.
In the summer
A lavender lady-slipper,
Suddenly come upon in the hills,
Was an adventure.
The rock-hung coulees;
The rainbow pearls locked in the flesh of the river clams;
The unkempt shaggy sloughs hiding away from the enterprising river;
In retiring distances, muffled echoes of steamboat whistles;
The silent voices of the trees in the great log-rafts travelling from Minnesota woods to St. Louis;
The season when the hills rang with the songs of the nut-gatherers;
A flock of wild geese flying south;
The Indians' hot palette splashed on the October hills—All, all were adventures.

And when their brothers called from Picardy,
Old and young came from the hills, the fields, the mills,
To fight, as they played, for the full-blooded joy of it.
In shell-torn trenches,
Above the cries of the battle,
My people could laugh, and shout:
"There's nothing to worry about!
In the hills by a rushing river
A lavender lady-slipper blows.
I know that it is there—
It rests me to know.
I like to think about it."
ON OUR FARM

Indian Bruce and Big Charlie and Bohemian John have gone,
And boys with white tender hands and weak backs
Are cleaning the cow-sheds and tossing the hay.
I wonder—over there—
If Big Charlie still wears a sprig of green in his hat,
If Bohemian John's pipe has been shot away,
And if Indian Bruce sings his weird lullabies
Coming home in the twilight.

THE HUNTER

The lumber jacks called him Pine-tree Parker.
He was long and lean and straight and lovely.
He hunted big game—moose and caribou.
One year, under the north star,
He got a shot at a polar bear,
And carried the glistening white hide to the door of the
woman he loved.
His step was as light as a child's
And padded like an animal's;
But the hard knuckles of his fist split the panel of the door
When the woman he loved locked it against him.
"All right, girl—all right!"
And his light step again sought the woods
And big game—
Moose and caribou.
A WOODSMAN

Yes, I know—
I’m tryin’ to hog these woods.
I’m worse than any capitalist or corporation judge or profiteer.
But, damn it!—
I couldn’t live in one o’ them neat little cities—
I’d smother.
I like to live in a lean-to tent,
Its peak against the air,
With the flap up so’s I can breathe;
And in the winter, jest outside for company,
A big fire burnin’.
No, I ain’t advertisin’ anythin’ around here.
It’s for them to come who has the eyes to see.
And—sufferin’ Moses!—
I ain’t prayin’ God to give ’em eyes.
Can’t everybody live in the woods—it ain’t big enough.
Some have got to live in the city.

JEAN JOSEPH ROLETTE

Jean Joseph Rolette,
Captain of the fortress of Prairie du Chien,
Envoy extraordinary from John Jacob Astor, New York,
Owner of pelts of the Northwest.

Jean Joseph Rolette,
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

Your tomb stands high on the bluff
Commanding the river, the Northwest and your widow.
You tamed the blood of the red Indian;
Made a fortune in furs;
Captured in St. Louis the most beautiful woman in the Mississippi valley.
Your passionate blood, on that adventurous honeymoon,
Sang lustily
As your paddle cut into the strong current;
And your canoe, with its precious voyager,
Shot through the waves three hundred miles up the great river.

Under an arrogant stone on the hill
Your humble ashes rest.
Peace lies on the valley.

But there is adventure in barter,
And the blood of swift spirits is on the scent.
Your rival has captured the fur-trading post,
Built a fine house boldly facing the hill,
Defying your arrogant tomb;
And married your widow.

LOUIS DES CHIENS

The ground under the apple-trees is flat,
Like any other ground.
Louis des Chiens, as he sits in his doorway,
Laura Sherry

Feels a difference between it and the rest of the garden.
Old Henri des Chiens,
And his Indian wife Evening Sun,
Lie under the apple-trees.
Apple-trees planted by two young gods building a new world.
Old Henri des Chiens,
And his Indian wife Evening Sun,
Lie under the apple-trees—
The new world and the apple-trees
They left in trust to their son.

Louis des Chiens sits restlessly in his doorway,
Watching the neglected trees shrivel and die.
The blood of the half-breed has fought long—
"I am so fatigué," he mumbles.
The white boys from the village,
Ruthless on sacred ground,
Strip his apple-trees and run away laughing.
They fling at him,
"Dog from a family of dogs!"

Old Louis sees his red ancestors counting with pride
The scalps of white men dangling from their belts.
Old Louis sees his white ancestors tomahawked
Defending white women and little white boys.
Old Louis sits in his doorway and mumbles,
"It is you who are dog—puppy-dog!—
Two—three—four-time puppy-dog."

[11]
BOHEMIAN TOWN

An army of geese cross the prairie by day.  
At sun-down they stream in grey and white processionals 
through the streets;
Bohemian Joe sits on his stoop
Dreaming into the smoke of his pipe,
Dreaming of a boy in Bohemia.
Back of him lies a settlement of squat houses,
And women with flowered shawls are calling the geese.
The gleaming coaches of the Burlington express
Flash through the street in front of him.
Beyond the railroad track lives another race.
Bohemian Joe has not learned the new language and the 
new ways,
But his children have crossed the track
And are teaching American in the public schools.

Laura Sherry
THE CORN-FIELD

Five stacks of fodder are waiting in my corn-field,
The last for my barn. I shall watch in the weak sunlight
A little while, though warmth is in the houses
Unneeded till now, and the drift of the chill of autumn
Is falling swiftly to cover my field with silence.
Soon its unkempt bareness shall be uncovered
Completely and its pebbly ground shall tighten
In the first frost; and no man be there to witness
Its lonely withered stubble, and at its sky-line
Smoke of gray sky and delicate twigs of bushes.

I have gathered, yet await a subtler harvest
As others have waited through long years of labor
In other fields—to find not, though the corn’s returning
Be sure as the quiet and sting of coming winter.
I have gathered, and for my finer harvest
Now are waiting but these five stacks of fodder,
And my love out-given at last to my lonely corn-field,
And the planting of love for a distant other reaping,
Where perhaps my yield shall be garnered with the corn.

Charles R. Murphy
TOSTI’S GOODBYE

In a Southern Garden

Very still she has stood by the stucco wall,
In the fine dust, in the piccaninnies' tracks.
Now that she is going—does no one see her, no one care?

“Indian summer still is here!” cry the virgins on the walks,
In their old tight muslins and cashmere shawls.

But freer than wood-smoke she steals from the yard
When the last leaves go,
Dropping one by one on her moving head,
On her hair as soft as cotton when the bolls are bursting open
In November, in the fall:
Dead leaves that touch the maidens—forty-one and thirty-nine—
Rousing in their hearts all the sharp sweet cries
Their mouths have never said;
Till the held-down sighs go flying on before,
Small faint flutters in the thin gold air
Blown like feathers to that gleaming head.

And lo, blackbirds are there, feet and wings in her hair!

“How they swirl against the sun,” says Josephine to Rose.

Walter McClellan
FANTASY

My heart is a valley of black tulips,
Blue-black tulips
That are sorrow.

Your smiles are cool white moonbeams,
Faint white moonbeams
Of childish laughter.

Moonbeams among black tulips
Are silver kisses
Caressing sorrow.

A. A. Rosenthal

ADORATION

The night has let down her warm dark hair,
Powdered with stardust.

She has broken the alabaster box
Of ointment.

She anoints the feet of her god
In a passion of fragrance.

Languorously
She caresses them with the dark of her hair.

Hazel C. Hutchison
THE GYPSY

"Where do I live when I'm at home?"
The gypsy laughed to me.
"My heartstone's set in the good red loam,
And the sky was raised for my own roof-tree.
As he hoists his shell on a shiny track,
I carry the sky, like a snail, on my back,
Till it dabbles its eaves in the sea.

"And when dark comes down, and its arch grows thin,
I haven't a place to be lonesome in;
For I look through the moon like a clean glass pane
And a candle set
In the house of a friend where I'll come again—
(But, Lord, not yet,
While the earth is warm to my side and kind!)
And the mischievous star in the curving tree
Is the spark of a wild faun's pipe maybe—
He with a mind
To happen in for an hour or two
Without any words, as a pal might do.

"Where I wake with a baby fern-leaf curled
In my rumpled palm, as a child could come—
That's where I live when I'm at home,
Right in the world!"

Beatrice Ravenel
LIFE EVERLASTING

And will you hear the proof now
   Of immortality?
An old English tinker
   Is come to life in me.

His feet were on the highroad
   When buds and bees were young;
Many a traveller since then
   Has hummed the songs he sung.

He wakened to the bird notes
   We hear through window bars—
Vagrant son of the countryside,
   Who slept under the stars.

He sat beneath the hedgerows
   To eat his bread and cheese—
Every English springtime
   Is built of things like these.

I cannot leave off wondering
   That such a one as he,
With all the world to choose from,
   Should come to live in me.

Esther A. Whitmarsh
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

**WAVES**

One by one upon my shore
The little waves are laid,
Each one a new and perfect thing
Which the sea has made.

From that which is forever old
They come, forever young,
The latest, faintest echoes
Of the song the sea has sung.

They echo it in whispers.
I listen ceaselessly,
For fear the echoes die away
And I should hear the sea.

**BEAUTY**

Why did you stop me, God, that day,
Upon my rutted road of living?
Why might I not have kept my way
And never known your ruthless giving?

I should not walk so burdened now,
Nor be alone in this new land,
If all there is of beauty in the world
You had not pressed into my hand.

*Louise Townsend Nicholl*
TO ONE BELOVED

Because I willed to have it so
I went last night where great trees grow,
And under them I made a bed
Of leaves and grasses, and my head
Was pillowed on the ripened clover . . .
It was beside a mountain stream
Where laden branches, bending over,
Make many patterns for a dream.
And there before I slept I heard
The leaves make melodies that stirred
An answer in my heart, and soon
New beauties flooded from the moon
About that cool, calm place. To me
Was given as to stream and grass and tree . . .
And now I come this morning to the town
With sunlight over me,
Like a sun-crested river that goes down
To give its light to the sea.
I am as grass that has known touch of dew,
I am as leaves the moonlight has shone through.

This is the morning when I may express
More understanding of your loveliness.

Glenn Ward Dresbach
THE LAST LADY

I have now no love nor lady,
Yet I do not wail bereft:
There are many, many beautiful ladies,
And in the world there is much love left.

I have now no love nor lady;
I have made a brave good-bye.
It is terrible not to have a lady
When the summer months run high.

And the summer and the autumn
And the winter may be gone;
But my mind is quite decided—
I shall have no other one.

It will need a greener spring-time
To seed new love in me.
But in another spring-time—
Ah—where shall I be?

Matthew Josephson
THE PELICAN

Unwieldy, huge, with no defined
  Plexus to gauge his gravity,
An ancient mariner he stands,
  And gravely bends his gaze on me.

His black eyes twinkle; he confirms
  The memory of some struggling fish
Caught like a jewel in his beak,
  Which serves him both as bowl and dish.

The fringed rock buttressing the spray,
  The burnished kelp, the sea, the sky,
He views with quiet nonchalance
  And elephantine majesty.

With legs wide-spread, and solemn mien,
  Like some old graybeard of the seas,
He balances his heavy chest—
  A metamorphic Socrates.

  Alice Louise Jones

[21]
GOSPEL WITH BANJO AND CHORUS

Dear ones, I have gambled, I have rolled the bones.

It's the truth, praise God!

Hell was open, waiting with its howls and moans.

There you are, praise God!

Heaven's gates were opening, up steps the Lamb,

"Sister, aren't you sick of sin?" "Yes," I said, "I am."

And it's the truth, praise God!

Sinner, aren't you going there, joining our procession—

Everybody holy, making loud profession?

And there you are, praise God!

Dear ones, I have wallowed belly-deep in sin.

It's the truth, praise God!

I'd looked into the puddle, devil shoved me in.

There you are, praise God!

Jesus came and saved me, gave me cleanly clothes:

"Sister, rise with Jesus!" and my spirit rose.

And it's the truth, praise God!

Sinner, aren't you going there? All the sky rejoices,

Everything is sounding with the heavenly voices.

And there you are, praise God!

Dear ones, drink's a serpent—it had me by the throat.

It's the truth, praise God!

Ever see a rattlesnake swallowed by a shote?

There you are, praise God!

Jesus came and grabbed me: "Sister, I declare!—
Devil's in your gizzard, you can spit him out in prayer."
    And it's the truth, praise God!
Brother, aren't you going there? Streets are hung with
    banners,
Cherubim and seraphim bow and show their manners.
    And there you are, praise God!

Dear ones, I was loose—Lord, Saturday night!
    It's the truth, praise God!
Along would come a black man, along would come a white.
    There you are, praise God!
Jesus came and chased them, drove them with a whip:
"Sister," says our Savior, "watch the devil skip!"
    And it's the truth, praise God!
Lover, aren't you going there, risen from the lowly,
Justified and sanctified and glorified and holy?
    And there you are, praise God!

Dear ones, it's the truth!
    Truth of God, praise God!
Sinner, it's the truth, it's the truth, praise God!
Sister, it's the truth, truth of God, praise God!
Brother, it's the truth, it's the truth, praise God!
Lover, it's the truth, it's the truth, the truth!
Mourner, it's the truth, and there you are, praise God!

Keene Wallis
O burning fire,
Streaking the midnight,
Parching the silence.

O the flames that are arrows,
Shaken in a golden quiver,
The flames.

O the flames that are sudden ripples
In an imprisoned river,
The flames.

O the flames that are screaming children
Danced in a slippery lap.
The flames.

O the wide-striding shadow of the flames,
The dark and stately smoke
That needs heaven
For a floor to die upon.

O burning Fire,
Tearing the face of the midnight,
Hissing into the ear of silence.

O red mouth
And yellow teeth
Of Fire.
I have seen you eat up trees and houses,
And fatten
Till your obese shadow covered the sky.

But men are your delicacy,
Men whose flesh is flavored with the blood of God.

You eat them with a hungry joy,
With flames flung upward,
As though with arrows
To spit the souls.

How you pant,
When you steal into a house,
And search
For a man.

We can yell louder than you—
Our shriek is leaner and longer.
We call for the touch of you to prickle our flesh,
Like insidious lewd fingers.

When the night grows over the houses
With broad black leaves,
When silence shuts,
And sounds are like grits
In a shell,
We come to you.

O snarling Fire!
Oh, curse, grovelling on the ground,
Where the sky hurls you!

Oh, we stand close around—
You, you are the god whose touch is death,
Who piteously asks for deaths.
Oh! oh! to embrace you—
To become Fire!
Always him whom we destroy
Death makes a god.

Our faces gleam—
We are cheeks of wet coral,
And our sweat is as hard as diamonds.
Our shouts spurt,
And our smiles
Are like nooses, that have caught our joy.
And we watch your feast,
O red mouth
With yellow teeth. . . .

The skin puckers up from the flesh—
How your breath grows heavy!
The blood drops into your tongue.
The hiss is a snap of teeth—
Pain beats like a heart.
Pain is the heart,
And the blood of pain flows swiftly . . .
Swiftly. . . .
O Fire, grow dark!
Call the shadows to pick your teeth—
Lie back and rest!
Your shadow in the distance grows numb.
We are exhausted with too much joy.
The keenness of our pleasure has grown dull.
We are like lovers,
Nodding at last within the marriage bed,
Our drained eyes seeking the swelling breast of the night.

Heal for us the darkness and the silence.
Now we can talk of our pleasures—
Talk is like licking the lips... 

Better than goading animals
Into crouched fear
Or strangulated pain,
Better than beating with sticks,
Or prodding where pain breaks quickly,
Better than tearing at girl's flesh,
And letting the fingers suck
At the bleeding maidenhood,
Better than all the terrible lusts!—
O green laughter of Herodias,
O leper-white feet of Astarte,
O self-embracing totem-poles!—
Better than all the terrible lusts
Is to give a man
To fire.
What shall I remember of this day?
The song that I uttered at rising?—
I have forgotten it.

The tapestry of yellow sunlight,
Over the wall of the house opposite?—
I have seen a richer cloth.

The scampering of the little white cat, which seemed to be dancing with its own fleas?
The empty leg of my trousers, which the arm of the chair held up?
The milk and bread of my breakfast?
The untroubled blackness of the hallways,
In which even a shadow might stumble,
And which knows no day and no night,
Only Time,
Who passes by, trailing a dusty coat-tail?
The morning hush of the streets, where one could hear the gutter drains gurgling?
The sleek clouds that had fattened on the dew?
The ring of my own feet on the pavement
Sounding doubled, as though I were running to meet myself?

Doors are sieve-holes with a sift of people;
And on Fifth Avenue they become a heap.
But through them all I can see myself coming nearer.
Over the tall man's shoulder,
Around the stout man's torso:
Bodies are diaphanous—
They have been worn thin by the usage of my vision.

A smile lies on them, like the glint of a bubble;
A bright face like a tatter of rainbow,
Clothing a bubble.

Through them I see myself walking toward me,
And here I have met myself on a piece of paper.
This shall be my memory for to-day.

THE HEROES

This is the procession of heroes.
Tall and stately they are,
And their feet are hard
And crush the flowers.

So have they gone through the ages—the heroes;
Heads lifted into a heaven
Where their eyes could mix with the visions.
But forever their hard feet
Trod the flowers under.

Yesterday my friend joined the procession.
These are his feet that you hear on the road.
They are tramping the flowers under.

[29]
POETRY, arriving this month at its eighth birthday—a great age among special magazines—may fitly pause and reflect. Subjects for reflection are numerous, but perhaps two will be sufficient for one article, and even these two may be essentially one—the general American attitude toward our poets and their poetry. The first division of this subject might be entitled Frugality, the second Deprecation.

Consideration of frugality is enforced upon us at this moment by the puff-ball finance of this post-war period, the general inflation of prices which we are compelled to emulate if we would survive. In government lists and other official catalogues, POETRY is classed as a “trade paper,” along with The Breeders’ Gazette, Bakers’ News, Barrel and Box, The Billiards Magazine, and hundreds more from A to Z. Of all the many lines of human activity represented in those closely printed columns, probably the poet’s trade is the only one possessed of but one organ of some apparent authority and permanence; and it may be that no other trade supports its organ with such severe and chastening discipline of frugality. If all poets, actual and potential, would only subscribe for their magazine as eagerly as all millionaires, achieved and aspirant, subscribe for the Wall Street Journal, POETRY would be lifted far above paltry considerations of the H. C. L.

But if poets enforce on their organ this iron discipline
of frugality, matched in the spiritual sphere by that of critical austerity, so the great American public enforces the same discipline on its poets. In these days of leaping expenses, POETRY has not been able to raise its paltry rates to them, and probably other magazines would tell the same tale. The three or four prizes given them in this rich country show little increase in number or size, and no scholarships are as yet endowed. The millionaire collector who pays twenty thousand dollars for a first edition of Poe's Tamerlaine, would not hand over five hundred to keep some other starveling poet alive, or print a book for him which may some day be a prize of collectors. This editor comes across cases of poignant necessity and suffering, the failure to relieve which, and thereby release brilliant talent for its true work, is an absurdity of our civilization. As the New York Nation said last March in its editorial, A Broker in Books:

The pitiful amount of public or private assistance given to American artists, men of letters, scientists, is one of the scandals of our civilization. Even England, by the pensions of her Civil List, has done infinitely more than we. And in countries where Anglo-Saxon neglect of the arts is not a tradition, literature has for a hundred years been encouraged as we have not even dreamed of encouraging it. We are the richest people in the world, and we are importing the rarest books as fast as we can find them and dislodge them. Yet we have practically no pensions or prizes for literature, and almost no endowment of research.

Our scholars spend exhausting and prohibitive hours at teaching or editing to keep themselves dustily alive. Our poets, even our successful poets, paid less for years of admirable work than a successful painter may receive for the work of a few weeks or even days, must live on the very margin of subsistence or else devote the greatest part of their strength to trivial work. If the
state will not pay as much attention to such matters as it pays to experiments on hog cholera or the eradication of poultry pests, our men of great wealth might be expected to take a hand. Yet every day brings tales of amounts paid for books of merely eccentric or fashionable value, the income from which would sustain some precious career of poetry or learning.

From this iron discipline of frugality enforced on our poets by their fellow-countrymen, let us pass to the second division of our subject—shall we call it the brazen discipline of deprecatory skepticism?

We are accused of being a boastful race—or agglomeration of races, and in certain crude and obvious commercial specialties perhaps we have earned the impeachment; but we have never boasted enough of our men and women of original creative genius, never believed enough in the distinction of their achievement, or sufficiently impressed upon them our sense of its value. We have waited for Europe to remind us of them—the cases of Poe and Whitman, of Wilbur Wright and Willard Gibbs are only too typical—and we have withheld due recognition and reward until the foreign wreath was sent over to decorate their brows, or more often their graves.

What might not be said for American poetry of the past eight years if our Kultur were energized with as militant a national consciousness as that of our late enemy? Listen to this rounding-up of the new German poets, sent from Berlin to the London *New Age* by our former compatriot Herman George Scheffauer, who has been in the country of his ancestors since 1915, when he went there from England:
Frugality and Deprecation

In Germany a new voice is rising out of the discordance—perhaps one that will dominate it. In this voice there is a note of eternity—it is tidal.

Whole choirs of poets have arisen, following a new star and burning with a new message to men. Let the Englishman who reads German procure, for example, Dr. Kurt Pinthus' anthology Menschheits-Dämmerung. Let him read Theodor Däubler, Franz Werfel, Johannes Becher, Ludwig Rubiner, Walter Hasenclever, August Stramm, René Schickele, Georg Heym, Oskar Loerke—and scores of others. Let him give ear to the sonorous symphonic note of the artisan poets of the Werkleute ("Nyland") movement—Jacob Kneip, Wilhelm Vershofen, Josef Winckler. The book-shops swarm with books the titles, the very bindings of which cry out that they have arisen new-fledged out of ruins. A new age is climbing out of the Past.

To-day more vital poetry is being published and read in Germany than ever before, and—this is again characteristically German—probably more "enemy" than in enemy lands themselves. The price of paper and printing has reached ruinous heights; yet so intense is the thirst for books that more are being published than in war-time or in peace-time, when Germany's production reached (1912) 34,800 volumes, England's 12,100, France's 9,600, or 51, 25 and 24 per head of population respectively.

Now I have never listened to those "choirs of poets" whose names Mr. Scheffauer rolls off with such enthusiasm—my German is insufficient, even if their books had crossed the ocean. So I have no right to confess a private skepticism in regard to the brilliancy of their "new star" and the potency of their "new message." My point is simply to contrast the enthusiasm of their audience with the deprecatory skepticism of ours; and to urge upon our countrymen a little of that loyalty to one's own which is perhaps over-developed in Germany.

Of course, I should be willing to pit our present-day poets, man for man or choir for choir, against those of any
country in Christendom; because I believe, aided by such small linguistics as I possess and fortified by such information as I can gather, that no other group is doing work so vital and various and beautiful, so true to the locale and to modern life. So let us assume Mr. Scheffauer’s attitude, and capture his eloquence for the service of our own poets—perhaps even improve upon it, as follows:

In America a new voice is rising out of the clamor and tumult—perhaps one that will dominate the storm. In this voice there is a note of eternity—it is tidal.

Whole choirs of poets have arisen, following a new star and burning with a new message to men. Let the European who reads American procure, for example, Dr. Monroe’s anthology, The New Poetry, as well as the files of her magazine. Let him read Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay, Ezra Pound, John Gould Fletcher, Amy Lowell, Robert Frost, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Wallace Stevens—and scores of others. Let him give ear to the sonorous symphonic note of the socialist poets of the labor movement—James Oppenheim, Arturo Giovannitti, C. E. S. Wood, and many more. Let him listen to the clear singing of women—sopranos like Sara Teasdale and Edna Millay, mezzos and contraltos like Helen Hoyt, Alice Corbin, Agnes Lee and Eunice Tietjens. Let him be amazed at the variety of mood and manner displayed: from the romantic rhyming balladry of William Rose Benét, to the Imagists’ delicate discoveries of new beauty, set forth in new measures; from Vachel Lindsay’s rich orchestrations of the white pioneer, the Negro and the Chinaman, to the aboriginal tunes of Dr. Gordon and Miss Skinner; from the high aesthetic aloofness of Wallace Stevens, to the democratic loving-tenderness of Carl Sandburg, and the searching, almost surgical realism of Edgar Lee Masters. The book-shops swarm with books the titles, the very bindings of which cry out that they have arisen new-fledged out of the spiritual need of a thinking, imaginative people. A new age is climbing out of the Past.

To-day more vital poetry is being published and read in the United States than ever before. The price of paper and printing has reached ruinous heights, yet more books are being published than in war-time or in peace-time, when the production reached—(will some statistician supply the figures?).
Frugality and Deprecation

How does it sound—this German eloquence applied to our own poets? If, as is certain, this is not over-praise, why should it not be uttered? Why should we always smile and deprecate and question, with a niggardliness disguised as scrupulous intellectuality? Such an attitude conceals our most precious spiritual treasures, and deceives the rest of the world. It lays us open to such charges as Mr. Scheffauer hurls at us from the capital of his “land of poets and thinkers,” whose “latent creative energies have gone forth to conquer a new empire.” From that lofty Prussian vantage-ground we and our former Allies are “Brute Might armed to the tusks,” and Germany is molding the “New Renaissance of Humanity . . . content to leave the offal and rubbish of a doomed mechanized and mammonized epoch to those to whom these things are still Baal.”

The people of America should learn that their poets cannot do their work alone. An artist must feel his neighbors behind him, pushing, urging, arousing him, if he is to achieve his utmost. The great epochs, in any department of human activity, come only when a strong creative impulse in the minds of the few meets an equal impulse of sympathy in the hearts of the many. A masterpiece is no isolated miracle, but a conspiracy between a man of genius and his epoch.

H. M.

THE DISCIPLES OF GERTRUDE STEIN

It is somewhat rashly concluded by many English, and even by some American critics, that the literature of the
United States has had no considerable effect on that of Europe. If we consider modern French poetry at all closely it is possible to trace a distinct and growing American influence. Baudelaire, who condescended to copy Longfellow in his sonnet, Le Guignon, was profoundly influenced by Edgar Allan Poe. Mallarmé was also a translator of Poe; and as these two Frenchmen share with Verlaine the mastership of Symbolisme, the whole of that vast and fertile movement may be said in some degree to have originated in America.

Coming to more recent days, we find, with the French Unanimistes, that Whitman has ousted Poe. Leaves of Grass, some poems of which were translated in Paris as early as 1871, was translated in full a few years ago by M. Léon Bazalgette; and even M. Claudel has tried his hand at a few Whitman poems. French poetry, from about 1908 to 1914, was largely Whitmanian. I run over these facts, so well known as scarcely to need repetition, by way of introducing the new school of French humorist poets who derive from the works of Miss Gertrude Stein, and typographically from the newspapers of Mr. Hearst. The Raven, Leaves of Grass, Tender Buttons, are three impingements of American genius upon the mind of Europe.

French humor, from the earliest times, has been marked by a kind of ferocious irony, and a self-mockery very astonishing to Spaniards and Englishmen; but clearly it has some kinship with American calculated facetiousness. I need only
The Disciples of Gertrude Stein

refer to the satiric fabliaux of early France, and to the writings of Rabelais, Claude d'Esternod, Claude le Petit, and, in the nineteenth century, Aristide Bruant and Laurent Tailhade, to prove how persistently this humorous strain has endured. Since about 1912 there has been a revival of more or less humorous poetry in France. The poètes futuristes, the poètes cubistes, the simultanéistes, the fantaisistes, and lastly the Dadaistes, have contributed in varying degrees to the gayety of nations. Obscurity of diction, extreme fragility of thought, a pleasing vacuum in place of a subject, and typographical excesses, are the hallmark of genius with this new group.

In the short space allotted me I cannot hope to give a really adequate account of these numerous and talented authors, or even to comment on them at any length. What I can do is to translate a few typical specimens and leave the reader to fill in his own comments. I begin with the late Guillaume Apollinaire, a man of considerable erudition and a writer of novels and literary criticism. Like other French disciples of Miss Stein, Apollinaire omitted the triviality of punctuation; and, as his vers libre has no strongly marked rhythm, I compress my translation into prose form to economize space:

Thy scarlet face thy biplane transformable into a hydroplane thy round house where a salt herring swims I need the key of eyelids happily we have seen M. Panado and we are tranquil in that respect what do you see old M. D. . . . 90 or 324 a man in the air a calf looking under its mother's belly I have long sought on the roads so many eyes are shut on the edge of the woods the wind makes the willow plots weep open open open open open open open look
but look the old man washes his feet in the pot una volta ho inteso
dire Ach du Lieber Gott I began to weep remembering your child-
hoods and thou shewest me a terrible violet this little picture where
there is a carriage reminds me of the day a day made of pieces
mauve yellow blue green and red when I went away to the country
with a charming chimney holding her dog on the leash there is no
more thou hast no more thy little reed-pipe the chimney smokes
Russian cigarettes far from me the she-dog barks against the
lilacs and the burnt-out night-light on the dress the petals have
fallen two rings of gold near sandals in the sun are lighted but the
hair is the trolley across Europe dressed in little many-coloured fires.

This work is entitled Rotsoge, a word I cannot find in
any dictionary; nor can anyone tell me what it means. The
poem itself does not suggest to my incomplete intelligence
what Rotsoge means. Indeed, I do not know what the poem
“means,” but the syntax proves it a masterpiece. After
Apollinaire, who may be considered the first French apostle
of Steinism, I come to other not less talented poets. The
works of M. Blaise Cendrars are frequently tainted with
intelligibility, and he has written some poems which display
both emotions and ideas. He is not an out-and-out Steinist,
but the following quotation from his book, Du Monde
Entier, will show what he can do:

The bear the lion the chimpanzee the rattlesnake taught me
to read Oh that first letter which I spelled out alone and more
swarming than all creation my uncle said: I am a butcher at Gal-
veston the slaughter-house is six miles from the town I bring
back the bleeding animals, at night, beside the sea and when I
pass the cuttle-fish rise in the air sun set . . . . and there was
still something else the sadness and the “mal du pays.”

M. Jean Cocteau is renowned for his Russian ballet,
Parade, for his symbolical drawings, and for a book of pro-
found maxims. Here is a recent poem called Child’s Nurse:
The Disciples of Gertrude Stein

Composition for trombones alone polka soft caramels acidulated bon-bons pastilles ENTR'ACTE the smell in sabots fine satin game killed by the drum Hambourg bock raspberry syrup bird-catcher with his own hands intermezzo uniform blue a trapeze burns incense to death.

I cannot hope to reproduce the marvellous typography of M. Reverdy or of M. Tzara; but after all in literature it is the thought, the emotion, the revery we seek rather than luxuries of printing. Most of the poems of M. Reverdy are too long to quote; here is a short one which should intrigue lovers of Martial and Herrick:

The rum is excellent the pipe is bitter and the stars which fall from your hair fly away in the chimney.

M. Tristan Tzara is the chief of the Dadaistes. I advise any one who wishes to study his work to procure some copies of Dadaiste propaganda, which are sent gratis to any one brave enough to express an interest. I prefer to quote the work of a hitherto unknown genius, M. G. Ribeumont-Dessaignes, which seems to me to synthesize the whole movement. The title is Sliding Trombone:

On my head I have a little wing which turns in the wind and pumps water into my mouth and into my eyes for appetites and ecstasies in my ears I have a little cornet full of the smell of absinthe and on my nose a green paraquet which flaps its wings and cries: To Arms! when grains of sun fall from the sky the absence of steel in the heart in the depth of old un-stoppered stagnant realities is partial to lunatic tides I am captain and Alsatian at the cinema in my stomach I have a little agricultural machine which cuts and binds electric wires the cocoa-nuts thrown by the melancholy monkey fall like spit-gobs in the water or flower again as petunias in my stomach I have an ocarina and I have a virginal liver I nourish my poet with the feet of a pianist whose teeth are even and odd and at night on gloomy Sundays I cast morganatic dreams to the turtle-doves which laugh like hell.

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Other poets of similar inspiration are Ph. Soupault, Louis Aragon, André Breton, Raymond Radiguet, Gabrielle Buffet, J. Perez Jorba, Pierre Albert Birot, Paul Dermée and Céline Arnauld. I know nothing of them beyond their works. It is noticeable that the style of these ladies and gentlemen, so obscure in their poetry, is comparatively limpid in their advertisements; their names are also easy to read.

Americans, who believe with me that literature is something more than a series of little jokes, “leg-pullings,” “astonishing the grocers,” and so on, must forgive me for throwing the ultimate responsibility for this “new art” upon America. Perhaps Italy, with Marinetti, should bear some of the blame, but Tender Buttons and America are the real parents.

Richard Aldington

REVIEWS

CAMOUFLAGE

Reynard the Fox, or the Ghost Heath Run, by John Masefield. Macmillan Co.

John Masefield is almost too good to be true, too divinely simple and child-like. Here are his two latest books, one a superior nursery-rhyme for growing-up and adult boys and girls; and the other mostly romantic tales creaking with all the old machinery—the first long narrative, Enslaved, giving us actually a lovely lady abducted by pirates, followed by her voluntary-slave lover, rescued by him from the Khalif's
own harem, and finally freed from sentence of death by the noble autocrat when he hears of the heroic adventure!

The super-naïveté of a mind which can indulge in such romantic and acrobatic stunts in sober middle-life, is a faculty upon which we must congratulate the poet and the world. *Reynard the Fox* is a rattling good story, which is like to replace *Hiawatha* and *The Lady of the Lake* in school catalogues, and carry on for several more generations the grand old English tradition of fox-hunting. The poet's hero, the fox, is more vividly alive, perhaps, than any man or woman in all his books; but the various human types, not to mention the horses and hounds, are sketched in with a lively sympathy—the country squire and his wild-ranging sons and daughters, the groom and huntsman, the vicar and the lordling, all those familiar figures of English country-gentleman life who still follow the hounds exactly as their ancestors did half a thousand years ago, in spite of inconvenient modern obstacles. Here, for example, is an equestrian portrait almost worthy of Chaucer himself:

A pommle cob came trotting up
Round-bellied like a drinking-cup,
Bearing on back a pommle man
Round-bellied like a drinking-can—
The clergyman from Condicote.
His face was scarlet from his trot,
His white hair bobbed about his head
As halos do 'round clergy dead.
He asked Tom Copp, "How long to wait?"
His loose mouth opened like a gate
To pass the wagons of his speech.
He had a mighty voice to preach,
Though indolent in other matters.
He let his children go in tatters.
And here is Reynard, pictured at the moment of swiftest chase, when “his game heart gulped and he put on steam”—and escaped:

Like a rocket shot to a ship ashore
The lean red bolt of his body tore;
Like a ripple of wind running swift on grass,
Like a shadow on wheat when a cloud blows past;
Like a turn at the buoy in a cutter sailing
When the bright green gleam lips white at the railing;
Like the April snake whipping back to sheath,
Like the gannet’s hurtle on fish beneath;
Like a kestrel chasing, like a sickle reaping,
Like all things swooping, like all things sweeping;
Like a hound for stay, like a stag for swift,
With his shadow beside like spinning drift.

Enslaved, I confess, is too much for me. Byron, writing The Corsair, knew what he was doing—he was “writing for women,” as he put it bluntly in asserting that his memoirs—destroyed, alas, by those two false-friend snobs, Moore and Murray—were written for men. But whom is Mr. Masefield writing for—in this post-war period when even fine ladies are wearing short skirts and sitting in Parliament? Pirates and khalifs are as much out of fashion as the smooth, rhyme-bounded, line-cut iambics in which the tale is told “all early in the April.” And this be-furbelowed balderdash is by the author of Gallipoli, by a man who lived and suffered through the Great War, and wrote one of the most mournful and beautiful poems in the war anthologies!

We have in Mr. Masefield a curious example of a man who cheats his mind—feeds it sugar-plums and sleeping-draughts. He is not, of course, a profound or original thinker; but his meditative poems, in Good Friday and
Lollingdon Downs, are the earnest inquiry of a typical modern mind into the meaning of life; one whom science has deprived of its orthodox God, and its faith in personal immortality. This is the feeling expressed once more in the finest and sincerest poem of this latest volume, *The Passing Strange*, of which we quote the closing stanzas:

So, in this water mixed with dust,
The byre-cock spirit crows, from trust
That death will change because it must.

For all things change—the darkness changes,
The wandering spirits change their ranges,
The corn is gathered to the granges.

The corn is sown again, it grows.
The stars burn out, the darkness goes.
The rhythms change, they do not close.

They change; and we, who pass like foam,
Like dust blown through the streets of Rome,
Change ever, too; we have no home,

Only a beauty, only a power,
Sad in the fruit, bright in the flower,
Endlessly erring for its hour,

But gathering, as we stray, a sense
Of Life, so lovely and intense
It lingers when we wander hence,

That those who follow feel behind
Their backs, when all before is blind,
Our joy, a rampart to the mind.

Yet we find him, in another poem, offering the sedative:

And now, perhaps, the memory of their hate
Has passed from them and they are friends again,
Laughing at all the troubles of this state
Where men and women work each other pain.

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Indeed, he is constantly slipping out of his own richly romantic epoch, blown by all the eager winds of change, and evading its beauty and terror. He escapes not only by excursions into pirate-haunted seas and fox-hunted downs, but by feeling and presenting modern life as melodrama—in such narratives as *The Widow in the Bye Street* and *The Everlasting Mercy*—instead of searching it as truth. He lulls his soul with out-worn orthodoxies and conventions, just as he dulls his art with clichés; and then excuses himself with the plea of aging energies, as in these few lines of the poem, *On Growing Old*:

Be with me, Beauty, for the fire is dying.
My dog and I are old, too old for roving.
Man, whose young passion sets the spindrift flying,
Is soon too lame to march, too cold for loving.

Only stay quiet while my mind remembers
The beauty of fire from the beauty of embers.

It's too early for that kind of talk, Mr. Masefield. It is mere self-indulgence, sleepiness of the spirit. In the fifties a poet should not be too old for either roving or loving, certainly not for thinking.  

**H. M.**

**FLINT AND RODKER**


If I cannot say that these two poets have genius, if I am unable to persuade myself of their immortality, I can at least declare that I find the art of Mr. Flint infinitely
preferable to that of Mr. Rodker. The value of a writer to his generation as a representative of his generation to other times is fluctuating and capricious. In honesty no man can say of a book more than what it means to him; he can express only his own reactions. The works which the future critic will choose as representing to him the spirit of this time cannot be a matter of more than remote speculation. Therefore we shall not try to imagine that we are dealing with imperishable masterpieces, but shall confine ourselves to the proposition that Otherworld and Hymns are each the expression of a Londoner during the second decade of this century. Let us see what these poets imagine life and art to be, and so discover what they themselves are.

Melancholy, sometimes a little bitter, sometimes mellowed by reflection; an eager love of beauty which is often thwarted and disappointed; an essential sweetness, homeliness and good sense; above all an instinctive gusto for ordinary human life in spite of all the weakness and folly and sordidness: these are the qualities I find in Mr. Flint’s Otherworld. The long poem which gives its name to the book is simple and moving. It is a contrast and a desire; a contrast between the maimed, incomplete existence of daily life and the full healthy joy that life might be if all things concurred; a desire, even a yearning, to create this not unreasonable earthly paradise at least in the imagination. Already one or two “superior” people have found this dream a thing to sneer at; it is altogether too simple and homely for their refined tastes. Mr. Flint’s “emotions are
not of a truly large and generous spring,” says the *Times Literary Supplement*; the “vision of the infinite in its transcendence is beyond his ken.” Perhaps it is; I for one do not know the “infinite in its transcendence” and I should not be able to recognize it if I met it. But I confess I am moved by *Otherworld* even if it is not “large and generous” in the Sir William Watson, *Reynard the Fox*, Mr. Brett Young manner beloved of the *Times*. I admit I am moved by the poet who confesses himself and his dreams so simply and unaffectedly; who is tired of being a servant at a paltry wage; who longs for a house in the country where his wife and children could be happy and well fed, where he could have his books, his reveries and the society of the friend who loves him. I confess I cannot compass the “noble and generous” emotions of the *Times’* reviewer which enable him to dismiss Mr. Flint with such refined condescension. Like Mr. Flint, and unlike the *Times’* reviewer, I am a humbly-born, rather ignorant sort of person; I am quite “out of it” in the society of dukes and transcendent infinities; perhaps that is why I am so moved by (doubtless plebeian) emotions in reading *Otherworld*. The superior reader must pay no attention to my opinion; he must read the superman in the *Times*, from whom he will receive the pure gospel of transcendent snobbery.

The shorter poems in this book have the same direct simplicity as *Otherworld*. They show on a smaller scale Mr. Flint’s control of his art. Sometimes, as in *Trees*, he gives in emotional revery the sensations of his childhood; sometimes,
as in *Zeppelins* and *Lament*, he gives poignant pictures or meditations on war; more often these lyrics are the expression of a mood, of exquisite perceptions, of a sort of spiritual contrast between reality and imagined beauty. In all of them I feel a healthy mind struggling against bitterness and discouragement; an intense sincerity; a realism which is neither sordid nor affected, for nowadays even realism can be affected. He is himself; he is an "individual" without being either grotesque or unintelligible; his originality is very seldom consciously sought.

I find Mr. Rodker's *Hymns* the exact opposite of Mr. Flint's book. Where the one is all candor, simplicity, naturalness and health, the other is affectation, insincerity, falseness and disease. I can find little in Mr. Rodker's hymns which is not the expression of a vain and morbid sensibility. When he talks about "avalanche pickled in splintered quartzes," I yawn; when he screams, "Under the whips of men the skin shreds off—I bleed from every pore," my compassion is quenched by repulsion for this mawkishness à la Leautréamont; and when he feebly dams the universe in his pretentious *Hymn of Hymns* then I am frankly sorry for Mr. Rodker, who finds life such a devastating and unpleasant process. Numerous remarks scattered through these pages are possibly intended to cater to the amateur of furtive pornography; they can serve no other purpose.

There is something painfully weak and dismal in this work. Its affected style, where mixed and mangled metaphors are panted out in telegraphic journalese, is the husk
of a terrible spiritual sterility painful to envisage. There was once a man who said, "En art tout est faux qui n'est pas beau"—a strong though noble dogmatism. Mr. Rodker is not of the opinion of M. France; he would say, "En art tout est faux qui n'est pas sale." It is the fashion of the day.

It pleases me to congratulate Mr. Flint on not following the fashion so perfectly congruous to Mr. Rodker's intelligence.

Richard Aldington

THREE POETS OF THREE NATIONS

Messines and Other Poems, by Emile Cammaerts, with English translations by Tita Brand-Cammaerts. John Lane Co.

Reading Cammaerts, one has in mind Verhaeren. But the sombre Verhaeren, with his heart of rumbling machine, has become smiling—vaguely and sentimentally smiling, telling us a tale which we can't believe. Yes, in Belgium, besides the tempest and the earthquake that were Verhaeren, one imagined, and asked for, the serenity and peace and smile that are over all the countries in the world. But the smile and serenity that came are rather fit to soothe children than to satisfy our desire.

However, one cannot deny that some of these sweet words are actually sweet:

Du linge, sur une corde, au bout du jardin,
Bat de l'aile dans la brise rieuse.
It is obvious that Cammaerts strives towards the simple wistfulness of the folk-song and the startling naiveté of the modern; but his naiveté lacks subtlety and his song is too light ever to resemble folk-song.


Kostes Palamas is—so an American-Greek professor and a French critic assure us—"incontestably the greatest" European poet of these days. To call anyone "the greatest poet," without telling us just how great, is a miserable stunt of poor criticism. Well, how great?

We are helpless too. We can't say. The translator has put a mask on his face—not a cheap mask, but incontestably a mask. "Evil demons seized my all," "My frame is bent," "thrice-beautiful," "thrice-happy," "thrice-wonderful," "magic beauty's charms"—if these be features of a face, the face is certainly not that of the greatest poet. But we perceive that a mask is on it: for even in the translation Kostes Palamas' size can be guessed by the quantity of his poetry: descriptions are minute to the tiniest particular, and symbols are presented to the faintest line of their contours. One may not, however, call these descriptions startling or exact, because the language of the translator is not such; and, for the same reason, one may not call these symbols real. A gorgeous symbolism which, in order to succeed, demands the full strength and precision of pure words, is
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wasted by the correct—I said not a cheap mask . . . quite an expensive one indeed, but ugly too—but cold and limp English of the translation. It is as though some of the beauty of the original had forced its way through the hurdles of the professor’s English. Some very lovely words in this book strike one as helplessly accidental. And one does not know whether, when the gorgeousness becomes pompousness—which happens often—the change is due to uninspired translating or to the overmuch self-satisfied sense of form of the Greek national genius.

To be sincere, we suspect that superlative, “greatest.” There’s too much of the old mythological-rhetorical high-brow stuff—too poetical for these days of gas masks and Einstein Theories; and we cannot blame that on the translator. There is too much of the involved, long-winded symbolism that makes Hawthorne boresome to modern readers educated to the brevity and the sharpness of, say, a Carl Sandburg or an Alfred Kreymborg.

Altogether, it is a puzzling proposition: I am reminded of seeing once two English translations of that truly “greatest” poet, Giosue Carducci; and of being convinced how few were the chances that an American who does not know Italian would ever get the beauty of his work. How easy it had been for both translators to make palaver and doggerel out of Carducci’s beautiful Ode alle Fonti del Clitunno!

And as for the rest of the European poets, we ask how a comparison of Kostes Palamas with Jean de Bosschères
would run. De Bosschères would be "just Greek" to Palamas, and Palamas much worse to de Bosschères.

One thing definitely strikes me: Palamas is a promoter of Neo-Greek, of a living language versus an ancient dead one; and the language of the translation is stale and pseudo-Elizabethan.

*The Soothsayer*, by Verner von Heidenstam. Four Seas Co.

Here's another "greatest," a Nobel Prize winner. If there was any beauty in the original only God or a Swedish-speaking man may know. The idea is, "Thou canst not serve two gods;" and the play is a play of ancient Greece, where you were supposed to serve not only two but a hundred gods at once. And the play shows the tragedy and horror of serving two gods instead of only one—isn't it awkward?

But, all in all, what lack of faith in our beautiful world makes these poets find refuge in stale legends of ancient Greece? And what perversion is this of a man who has no enthusiasm for us living, and finds grandiloquent words to give to a bunch of dead men? The explanation is this: "Heidenstam has been the great champion in Sweden of the more classical school"—so says the cover writer; and he goes on speaking of the "beautiful in literature" and other such ugliness.

*Emanuel Carnevali*
ARGENTINE DRAMA


The Brazilians have their race of peerless aborigines, typified by Guarany, the Indian demi-god of unofficial tradition. The people of the Argentine have their gaucho, who takes most characteristic shape in the person of Santos Vega, the singer of the pampas, defeated only by the devil himself; incarnate as Juan Sin Ropa—modernity, progress, the ruthlessly impersonal.

Of the three plays translated by Jacob S. Fassett, Jr., and conscientiously edited by Mr. Bierstadt, The Witches' Mountain is the single example of the modern conception of drama. Its action is the expression of a psychological sequence in the emotional experience of its characters, but this psychology is on a broad plane where motives are simplified to a point which elevates a theme of every-day until it touches the proportions of the heroic. The alchemy of this method of transmuting clay into gold is best known to Scandinavian romanticists, such as Björnson. It is the technique of realism modified to serve the romantic spirit. Jacobson used it in Marie Grubbe.

Romanticism is the wish-motif in life, justified in art only when through naiveté it avoids the laxity of sentimentality, or when consciously it presages tragedy by a vainglorious militance. The sense of tragedy is invariably tinged with the romantic spirit, and the partial disappearance of this
sense from the work of the most modern writers in prose and verse is, it seems to me, an evidence of the indecisiveness of a complex consciousness which no longer challenges the gods with a whole heart.

*The Witches' Mountain* is the best of the plays, in the literary sense; but it reveals less of the spirit of a race than the episodic dramas which precede it. Mr. Bierstadt gives us a fair outline of the development of a theatre in the Argentine, telling us that the *gauclo* dramas were originally introduced to supplement the performance of the circus: a platform was erected in one part of the ring where more or less impromptu tableaux were enacted. These playlets dealt with local conditions or incidents, but the interest of audiences gradually centered about certain traditional characters who had a popular appeal, and around these figures the dramas crystallized. From such beginnings sprang a theatre which had a national inspiration.

*The gauclo* is the minstrel of the Argentine, and the plays here set forth as prose were in the original Spanish largely compositions in verse, often to be declaimed or sung to musical accompaniment. Mr. Bierstadt quotes Alfred Coester, who tells us that the cantor, or professional troubadour of the plains, possessed a repertory of popular poems in octosyllabic lines variously combined into stanzas of five, ten, or eight lines. He was wont to intersperse his heroic songs with tales of his exploits; but his original poetry was clumsy, monotonous, and irregular, and he was more occupied with narration than with the expression of feeling.
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Juan Moreira—more indigenous in composition than Santos Vega, which is a young Spaniard's dramatized version of a poem by Obligado—utters the sentiments of a race still unsophisticated but no longer primitive in feeling. In short it springs from a soul which has discovered for the first time the enhancement of a lie. It is childish rather than childlike, for it is the expression of a being who no longer deceives himself and is deliberately rhetorical.

Santos Vega is based on a common Argentine legend which has been handled before in various forms. There is triteness in this interpretation, but there are also moments of beauty, and of the epic quality to be found in childlike races. Santos Vega with perfect spontaneity flings the winds of the pampas about him like a cloak, and the posture he assumes is at the same time puerile and godlike.

In Brazil there has been no poetic movement comparable to the one which gave rise to these *dramas criollos*; for the Portuguese American has left it to the pedantic exponents of his early literary culture to reveal the glorious vanity of his traditions. The vaqueiros, it is true, have songs, in feeling much like those which our negroes have taught us, of similar poetic value and with an impromptu dramatic quality; and there are *sambas*, of African origin also, that mingle recitative with the dance, recounting in intimate fashion the woes or joys of a class which has escaped slavery only to find itself in peonage.

However, in Brazil the formal art of the theatre, and especially the poetic drama, has been an imposition rather
than an expression, and in the instances in which I have seen the people participate as creators it has never been more than a tawdry adaptation of a convention already stale. The Brazilian nature is more facile than the Argentine, and is almost fatally assimilative. To me a most characteristic figure was a barefoot shepherd of the Itagiba Mountains who, being fatherless, accepted the definitive appellation of Chico Musico, a tribute to his talents as a performer on the accordion. This person, who could neither read nor write, who had never been farther from the fazenda of his patrão than the village where the weekly feira was held, composed technically presentable sonnets that were in flawless conformity with the emotional commonplaces of civilization.

Evelyn Scott

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I am handing you the dope—
You must buy this kind of soap!"

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This I know, and know it well:
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I'll be selling souvenirs:
"You must buy this boiling pitch,
You must buy this boiling pitch!
Fresh today, red-hot and rich—
You must buy this boiling pitch!"

Morris Bishop

MODERN POETRY AT THE U. OF C.

Dear POETRY: You have often criticized the colleges for indifference toward modern poetry—may I ask you therefore to record certain evidences that some of them are becoming more aware of the importance of this subject, and of their students' interest in it?

In the summer Calendar of Public Lectures of the University of Chicago, for example, I find such evidences: viz., two lectures by the editor of POETRY on Recent Poetry in English; an author's reading and a lecture on Walt Whitman and the New Poetry by Miss Amy Lowell, who was specially imported from Boston; also the inevitable Percy MacKaye, who discoursed on Community Drama and gave two readings of his plays.

Besides these, other entries show increasing interest in

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modern art: for example, a course of twelve lectures on Comparative Literature by various specialists of the faculty who did not confine themselves wholly to the past; two lectures on Playmakers of the People and A New Folk-drama by Professor Henry Koch, A. M., of the University of North Carolina; and six lectures on the Processes and Problems of Sculpture by Lorado Taft, N. A. A credit mark, please, for the U. of C.

NOTES

Mr. John Gould Fletcher, one of our earliest and most frequent contributors, has been living in London of late, though born in Arkansas, and at present a guest of his sister in Cambridge. His latest books of verse, as our readers are aware, are The Tree of Life (Chatto & Windus) and Japanese Prints (Four Seas Co.).

Mr. Glenn Ward Dresbach, of Tyrone, N. M., is another frequent contributor. His latest book of verse, Morning, Noon and Night, has just been published by the Four Seas Co.

The other poets represented in this number appear for the first time in POETRY:

Mrs. Laura Sherry, of Milwaukee, Wis., is the founder and director of the Wisconsin Players, who have done excellent dramatic work during the past few years.

Miss Louise Townsend Nicholl, of New York, who may by this time have become Mrs. Marshall Don Beuick, has been for some time one of the literary editors of the New York Evening Post.

Mr. Jack Merten was one of the editors of Youth: Poetry of Today, a few issues of which were published in Cambridge, Mass., a year or two ago.

Mr. Isidor Schneider lives in New York; Mr. Walter McClellan in Memphis, Tenn.; Mr. A. A. Rosenthal in Easton, Pa.; Mr. Matthew Josephson in Brooklyn; Mr. Keene Wallis lives almost anywhere, but is at present sojourning in Washington, D. C.

Beatrice Ravenel (Mrs. F. G.) is a resident of Charleston, S. C. Miss Alice Louise Jones, of Los Angeles; Miss Hazel C.
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Hutchison, of Cleveland, O.; and Miss Esther A. Whitmarsh, of Providence, R. I.

The November number of POETRY will contain our annual Announcement of Awards. The two annual prizes, of $200 and $100, founded seven years ago by two guarantors, will be awarded for distinguished work printed in the magazine during the year which ended with the September number; also a special prize of $100, more recently contributed, for good work by a young poet.

POETRY for January, 1920, has become very scarce. The editors will be grateful for any copies sent in, and will remit the full retail price until the scarcity is relieved.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:
Selected Poems, by Lady Margaret Sackville. E. P. Dutton & Co.
The Creed of My Heart and Other Poems, by Edmond Holmes. E. P. Dutton & Co.
Verse of Today and Yesterday, by Abigail Fletcher Taylor. Small, Maynard & Co.
October and Other Poems, by Robert Bridges. Alfred A. Knopf.
Poems, by Frederick T. Macartney. Sydney J. Endacott, Melbourne, Australia.

ANTHOLOGIES:

PROSE:

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