

Vol. XVII

No. VI

Poetry

A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe
March 1921

A House

by Ford Madox Hueffer

Three Poems

by Edwin Ford Piper

Fannie Stearns Gifford

Margaret S. Anderson

543 Cass Street, Chicago

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MoParks

DEAR POETRY: I always feel that I ought to renew my thanks for your enterprise and faith, which are so ceaselessly at work on the task of renewing me.

Ferdinand Schevill

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POETRY for MARCH, 1921

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oetry
A Magazine of Verse

VOL. XVII
NO. VI

MARCH 1921

A HOUSE

The House. I am the House!
I resemble
The drawing of a child
That draws "just a house." Two windows and two doors,
Two chimney pots;
Only two floors.
Three windows on the upper one; a fourth
Looks towards the north.
I am very simple and mild;
I am very gentle and sad and old.
I have stood too long.

The Tree. I am the great Tree over above this House!
I resemble
The drawing of a child. Drawing "just a tree"
The child draws Me!
Heavy leaves, old branches, old knots:

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I am more old than the house is old.
I have known nights so cold
I used to tremble;
For the sap was frozen in my branches,
And the mouse,
That stored her nuts in my knot-holes, died. I am strong
Now . . . Let a storm come wild
Over the Sussex Wold,
I no longer fear it.
I have stood too long!

The Nightingale. I am the Nightingale. The summer
through I sit

In the great tree, watching the house, and throw jewels
over it!

There is no one watching but I; no other soul to waken
Echoes in this valley night!

The Unborn Son of the House. You are mistaken!

I am the Son of the House!—

That shall have silver limbs, and clean straight haunches,
Lean hips, clean lips and a tongue of gold;

That shall inherit

A golden voice, and waken

A whole world's wonder!

The Nightingale. Young blood! You are right,

So you and I only

Listen and watch and waken

Under

The stars of the night.

The Dog of the House. You are mistaken!

This house stands lonely.

Let but a sound sound in the seven acres that surround

Their sleeping house,

And I, seeming to sleep, shall awaken.

Let but a mouse

Creep in the bracken,

I seeming to drowse, I shall hearken.

Let but a shadow darken

Their threshold; let but a finger

Lie long or linger,

Holding their latch:

I am their Dog. And I watch!

I am just Dog. And being His hound

I lie

All night with my head on my paws,

Watchful and whist!

The Nightingale. So you and I and their Son and I

Watch alone, under the stars of the sky.

The Cat of the House. I am the Cat. And you lie!

I am the Atheist!

All laws

I coldly despise.

I have yellow eyes;

I am the Cat on the Mat the child draws

When it first has a pencil to use.

The Milch-goat. I am the Goat. I give milk!

The Cat of the House. I muse

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Over the hearth with my 'minishing eyes
Until after
The last coal dies.
Every tunnel of the mouse,
Every channel of the cricket,
I have smelt.
I have felt
The secret shifting of the mouldered rafter,
And heard
Every bird in the thicket.

I see
You,
Nightingale up in your tree!

The Nightingale. The night takes a turn towards cold-
ness; the stars

Waver and shake.
Truly more wake,
More thoughts are afloat;
More folk are afoot than I knew!

The Milch-goat. I, even I, am the Goat!

Cat of the House. Enough of your stuff of dust and of
mud!

I, born of a race of strange things,
Of deserts, great temples, great kings,
In the hot sands where the nightingale never sings!
Old he-gods of ingle and hearth,
Young she-gods of fur and of silk—
Not the mud of the earth—

Are the things that I dream of!
The Milch-goat. Tibby-Tab, more than you deem of
I dream of when chewing the cud
For my milk:
Who was born
Of a Nan with one horn and a liking for gin
In the backyard of an inn.
A child of Original Sin,
With a fleece of spun-silk
And two horns in the bud—
I, made in the image of Pan,
With my corrugate, vicious-cocked horn,
Now make milk for a child yet unborn.
That's a come-down!
And you with your mouse-colored ruff,
Discoursing your stuff-of-a-dream,
Sell your birthright for cream,
And bolt from a cuff or a frown.
That's a come-down!
So let be! That's enough!

The House. The top star of the Plough now mounts
Up to his highest place.
The dace
Hang silent in the pool.
The night is cool
Before the dawn. Behind the blind
Dies down the one thin candle.
Our harried man,

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

My lease-of-a-life-long Master,
Studies against disaster;
Gropes for some handle
Against too heavy Fate; pores over his accounts,
Studying into the morn
For the sake of his child unborn.

The Unborn Son of the House. The vibrant notes of the
spheres,

Thin, sifting sounds of the dew,
I hear. The mist on the meres
Rising I hear . . . So here's
To a lad shall be lusty and bold,
With a voice and a heart ringing true!
To a house of a livelier hue!

The House. That is true!

I have stood here too long and grown old.

Himself. What is the matter with the wicks?

What on earth's the matter with the wax?

The candle wastes in the draught;

The blind's worn thin!

. . . Thirty-four and four, ten . . .

And ten . . . are forty-nine!

And twenty pun twelve and six was all

I made by the clover.

It's a month since I laughed:

I have given up wine.

And then . . .

The Income Tax!

The Dog of the House. The mare's got out of the stable!

The Cat of the House. She's able, over and over,

To push up the stable latch . . .

Over and over again. You would say she's a witch,

With a spite on our Man!

The Milch-goat. Heu! Did you see how she ran!

She's after the clover; she's over the ditch,

Doing more harm than a dozen of goats

When there's no one to watch.

Yet she is the sober old mare with her skin full of oats,

Whereas we get dry bracken and heather;

Snatching now and then a scrap of old leather,

Or half an old tin,

As the price of original sin!

Himself. I shall live to sell

The clock from the hall;

I shall have to pawn my old Dad's watch,

Or fell

The last old oak; or sell half the stock . . .

Or all!

Or the oak chest out of the hall.

One or the other—or all.

God, it is hell to be poor

For ever and ever, keeping the Wolf from the door!

The Cat of the House. Wouldn't you say

That Something, heavy and furry and grey,

Was sniffing round the door?

Wouldn't you say

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Skinny fingers, stretching from the thicket,
Felt for the latch of the wicket?
Himself. You would almost say
These blows were repercussions
Of an avenging Fate!
But how have we earned them . . .
The sparks that fell on the cornricks and burned them
Still in the ear;
And all the set-backs of the year—
Frost, drought and demurrage,
The tiles blown half off the roof?
What is it, what is it all for?
Chastisement of pride? I swear we have no pride!
We ride
Behind an old mare with a flea-bitten hide!
Or over-much love for a year-old bride?
But it's your duty to love your bride! . . . But still,
All the sows that died,
And the cows all going off milk;
The cream coming out under proof;
The hens giving over laying;
The bullocks straying,
Getting pounded over the hill!
It used to be something—cold feet going over
The front of a trench after Stand-to at four!
But these other things—God, how they make you blench!
Aye, these are the pip-squeaks that call for
Four-in-the-morning courage . . .

May you never know, my wench,
That's asleep up the stair!
Herself [*In her sleep*]. I'll have a kitchen all white tiles;
And a dairy, all marble the shelves and the floor;
And a larder, cream-white and full of air.
I'll have whitewood kegs for the flour,
And blackwood kegs for the rice and barley,
And silvery jugs for the milk and cream . . .
O glorious Me!
And hour by hour by hour by hour,
On piles of cushions from hearth to door,
I'll sit sewing my silken seams,
I'll sit dreaming my silver dreams;
With a little, mettlesome, brown-legged Charley,
To leave his ploys and come to my knee,
And question how God can be Three-in-One
And One-in-Three.
And all the day and all the day
Nothing but hoys for my dearest one;
And no care at all but to kiss and twine;
And nought to contrive for but ploys and play
For my son, my son, my son, my son!
Only at nine,
With the dinner finished, the men at their wine;
And the girls in the parlor at forfeits for toffee,
I'll make such after-dinner coffee . . .
But it's all like a dream!
Himself. If Dixon could pay! . . . But he never will.

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He promised to do it yesterday . . . But poor old Dicky's
been through the mill.

And it's late—it's too late to sit railing at Fate!

He'd pay if he could; but he's got *his* fix on . . .

Yet . . . If he *could* pay—

God!—It would carry us over the day

Of Herself!

The Clock in the Room. I am the Clock on the Shelf!

Is . . . Was . . . Is . . . Was!

Too late . . . Because . . . Too late . . . Because . . .

One! . . . Two! . . . Three! . . . Four!

Himself. Just over The Day and a week or two more!

And we'd maybe get through.

Not with a hell of a lot

Of margin to spare . . . But just through!

The Clock in the Hall. One! . . . Two! . . . One! . . .

Two!

As . . . your . . . hours . . . pass

I re . . . cord them

Though you . . . waste them

Or have . . . stored them

ALL . . .

One!

Two!

Three!

Four!

Begun!

Half through!

Let be!

No more at all!

I am the Great Clock in the Hall!

Himself. It is four by the clock:

The creak of the stair

Might waken Herself;

It would give her a shock

If I went up the stair.

I will doze in the chair.

The House. Sad! Sad!

Poor lad!

I am getting to talk like the clock!

Year after year! Shock after shock!

Sunlight and starlight; moonlight and shadows!

I've seen him sit on his three-legged stool,

And heard him whimper, going to school.

But he's paid all the debts that a proper lad owes

Stoutly enough . . . You might call me a clock

With a face of old brick-work instead of the brass

Of a dial.

For I mark the generations as they pass:

Generation on generation,

Passing like shadows over the dial

To triumph or trial;

Over the grass, round the paths till they lie all

Silent under the grass.

Himself. And it isn't as if we courted the slap-up
people . . .

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

The House. Now does he remember the night when he
came from the station

In Flood-year December?

Himself. Or kicked our slippers over the steeple,

Or leaving the whites ate only the yolk.

We're such simple folk!

With an old house . . . Just any old house!

Only she's clean: you won't find a flea or a louse!

We've a few old cows—

Just any old cows!—

No champion short-horns with fabulous yields . . .

Two or three good fields;

And the old mare, going blinder and blinder . . .

And too much Care to ride behind her!

The House. I'd like him to remember . . .

There were floods out far and wide;

And that was my last night of pride,

With all my windows blazing across the tide . . .

I wish he would remember . . .

Himself. Just to get through; keeping a stiff upper lip!

Just . . . through! . . . With my lamb unshorn;

So that she mayn't like me be torn by care!

It's not

Such a hell of a lot!

Just till the child is born . . .

You'd think: God, you'd think

They could let us little people . . . creep

Past in the shadows . . .

But the sea's . . . too . . . deep!

Not to sink . . . Not . . . sink!

Just to get through . . .

Christ, I can't keep . . . It's too . . . deep . . .

The Cat of the House. He has fallen asleep. Up onto his
knee!

I shall sleep in the pink.

The House. You see!

His mind turns to me

As soon as he sleeps. For he called me a ship

On my last day of pride,

And he dreams of me now as a ship

As I looked in the days of my pride.

Then, he was driving his guests from the station,

And the floods were wide

All over the countryside . . .

All my windows lit up and wide,

And blazing like torches down a tide,

Over the waters . . .

The Mare [From the cloverfield]. That wouldn't be me!

When I was young I lived in Dover,

In Kent, by the sea. So he didn't drive me.

When I was young I went much faster

Over the sticks as slick as a hare,

With a gunner officer for a master.

And I took officers out to lunch

With their doxies to Folkestone. It wouldn't be me!

The Milch-goat. Munch; munch . . . Munch; munch!

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- In the Master's clover . . . But poor old Me!
The Unborn Son of the House. Malodorous Image-of-Sin-
with-a-Beard,
It is time I was heard.
The House. That Christmas night . . .
Son of the House. It would have to be Christmas
With floods so they missed Mass . . .
The House. Your Dad's never missed Mass
At Christmas! . . .
So all my windows, blazing with light
Called out Welcome across the night.
And the Master's voice came over to me:
"The poor old shanty looks just like a ship,
Lit up and sailing across the sea!"
That was my lad . . .
And another, just as young and as glad,
As they used to be, all, before the war,
Said: "And all of her lamps have all their wicks on!"
That would be Dickson . . .
Son of the House. My mother, when her pains have loosed
her
And I am grown to man's estate,
Shall go in gold and filagree;
And I'll be king and have a king's glory . . .
The Rooster. Kickeriko! Kickerikee!
I am the Rooster!
Son of the House. The Dad, with no hair on his pate,
Reading my story . . .

The Rooster. I am the Bird of the Dawn, calling the world
to arouse.

I, even I, am the cock of the house!

The Skylark. Time I was up in the sky!

It is time for the dew to dry.

I am the Bird of the Dawn!

The Nightingale. Time I was down on my nest.

The moon has gone down in the west:

Day-folk, goodbye!

The House-dog. Here's our young maid! What a yawn!

The Milch-goat. The houseboy is crossing the lawn

Under the fir.

Will he give me a Swede?

That's the thing I most need!

The House. What a stir! What a stir!

Did you ever?

All of a sudden it's day

With its tumult and fever!

I must have nodded away!

The Drake. I am the Drake! I'm the Drake.

We too have been all night awake;

But making no fuss, not one of the seven of us.

For our heads were far under our legs

Drinking the dregs of the lake.

Therefore my ladies lay eggs,

Ducksegg green!

The Maid. Where have you hid

The copper-lid?

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Where on earth have you been?

Where on earth is it hidden?

Houseboy. I didn't!

Maid. You did!

Houseboy. I didn't . . . I never . . .

Maid. I see you . . .

Houseboy. *You never!*

Maid. How on earth can I ever

Cook the pigs' food if I can't find the lid

Of the copper?

Houseboy. You whopper! I never

Touched the old lid of your copper!

Maid. The lid's lying out in the midden.

Himself must have took it!

Houseboy. So there then! Give over!

.

Maid. Did you ever! What next!

Our Master's asleep in his chair!

I'll wager you never a leg he's stirred

Since four of the clock, with the cat on his knee!

Postman. This letter's registered!

Maid [*To Himself*]. Ned Postman wants a receipt in
ink . . .

Himself [*Opening letter*]. To sink . . . No, not to sink!

Maid. It's a registered letter

The postman wants a receipt in ink for.

Herself [*Calling from upper window*]. Charley!

The mare's in the clover,

Making for the barley.
She's knocking down the sticks . . .

Himself. It's over—

We're over this terrible fix
For a quarter or so!

Herself. And we were in such a terrible fix!—

And you never let me know!

Himself. Not quite enough to take to drink for . . .

[*To Houseboy.*] Fetch the mare from the barley,
You'd better . . .

Herself. Oh, Charley!

Himself. I said: Not quite enough to take to drink for!

It was like being master of a ship,
Watching a grey torpedo slip
Through waves all green.
It would have been . . .

And all one's folk aboard . . .

Herself. Yourself! Yourself! You'll surely now afford

Yourself a new coat . . .

And a proper chain and collar for the goat!

Himself. Good Lord!

Yourself! Yourself! You may go to town
And see a show: there are five or six on,
And you can have the little new gown
You said you'd fix on . . .

Herself. But, O Yourself, we can't afford it!

Himself. You've not had a jaunt since the honeymoon . . .

Thirteen months and a day. And very soon . . .

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The Unborn Son of the House. I shall so prunk it and
king it and lord it—

Over the sunshine and under the moon . . .

Himself. If Fate be kind and do not frown,

And do not smite us knee and hip,

This poor old patched-up thing of a ship

May take us yet over fields all green,

And you be a little dimity queen . . .

Son of the House. As the years roll on and the days go by,

I shall grow and grow in majesty . . .

Herself. You always say I've no majesty!—

Not even enough for a cobbler's queen!

The House. By and by

They'll be talking of copper roofs for the stye!

The Pigs. We were wondering when you would come to
the Pigs!

Yet they say it's we that pay the rent!

Himself. Great golden ships in ancient rigs

Went sailing under the firmament,

And still sail under the sky and away—

Tall ships and small . . .

And great ships sink and no soul to say.

But, God being good, in the last resort

I will bring our cockle-shell into port

In a land-locked bay,

And no more go sailing at all!

Herself. Kind God! We are safe for a year and a day!

And he is so skilful, my lord and my master,

So skilled to keep us all from disaster;
Such a clever, kindly, Working One!
That I'll yet have my dairy with slabs of marble,
A sweet-briar thicket where sweet birds warble,
And an ordered life in a household whereof he
Most shall praise the nine-o'clock coffee;
And a little, mettlesome, brown-kneed One
To lie on my heart when the long day's done . . .

Rooster. Pullets, go in; run out of the sun!

He's climbing high and the hayseed's dun.

I am the Rooster with marvelous legs!

Pullets, run nestwards and lay your eggs!

Herself. For my son; my son; my son; my son!

EPILOGUE

The House Itself. I am their House! I resemble
The drawing of a child.
Drawing, "just a house," a child draws one like me,
With a stye beside it maybe, or a willow-tree,
Or aspens that tremble.
That's as may be . . .

But all the other houses of all nations
Grand or simple, in country or town,
All, all the houses standing beneath the sky
Shall have very much the same fate as I!
They shall see the pressing of generations
On the heels of generations;

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Shall bear with folly; shall house melancholy;
At seasons dark and holy shall be hung with holly;
On given days they shall have the blinds drawn down,
And so pass into the hands—
Houses and lands into the hands
Of new generations.
These shall remain
For a short space or a long,
Masterful, cautious or strong;
Confident or overbold.
But at last all strong hands falter;
Frosts come; great winds and drought;
The tiles blow loose; the steps wear out;
The rain
Percolates down by the rafter.
Their youths wear out;
Until, maybe, they become very gentle and mild.
For certain they shall become very gentle and old,
Having stood too long.
And so, all over again,
The circle comes round:
Over and over again.
And . . .
If You rise on this earth a thousand years after
I have fallen to the ground,
Your fate shall be the same:
Only the name
Shall alter!

Ford Madox Hueffer

EIDOLON

Of what use are windows?
I have seen too much.
Of what use are the shapes of my illusion?—
I have called things by too many names.

These curtains I will draw;
These candles I will extinguish.
One moon or two moons—
It makes no matter.
There is neither saffron nor samite,
Nor the whiteness of dead hands.

Of what use compassion?
Of what use these candles by the face of darkness?
Pity me not, for I am pitiless . . .
The image you would have me break
We dreamed.

Leslie Nelson Jennings

TWO POEMS

DEATH IN THE SUN

A warm gold shining world.
A whispering, laughing world.

You would not think that Death stands there in the sun,
Leaning against the posts of the red-brick house,
Leaning across the bright brass knocker and knob and bell.

A warm gold shining world,
And crocuses up in the lawn.

If Death were not so thin,
Like air or water or gas,
He would darken the smooth white door.
He would stain the little square gleaming window-lights dull
gray.

But he is so clear and thin
That they glitter and sparkle and live . . .

She was young, and her cheeks were red.
She was young, and loved laughing and gossip.
She wore coral-color, and sapphire, and violet;
And hats with feathers that knew how to trick you to star-
ing;
And shoes high-heeled, quick, dainty.
She did not think much. She was gay.
No one will say, "She is dead."

The crocuses out in the lawn—
White and purple and orange candles,
Windless and warm and safe—
Burn the brown soil with beauty . . .

No one will say, "She is dead."
Yet Death stands there in the sun.

APOLOGY

Now you are ugly. You are old.

And you are poorer than a stone.
And you are strong, but glacier-cold.
And you are kind, but dead-alone.

And you—what children never came
To dance like brooks across your heart!
And you—what trumpeting of fame
Blew by, and left you locked apart!

Courageous traitor! masked in steel!
How can you ache so, and yet live?
While I—though stars and sun may reel,
I have had all that life could give.

Oh, do not hate me! Should I too
Be Dearth's straight-lipped proud body-slave?
Forgive me, when you stare me through,
For never needing to be brave!

Fannie Stearns Gifford

SHADOW SONGS

ROSE TOADA

A Sleep Song

Shoo, Rose Toada, shoo!
Jeweled red eye for you.
Shoo, Rose Toada, shoo!

Hoosh, Rose Toada, hoosh!
Little green snake in the bush.
Hoosh, Rose Toada, hoosh!

Bizz, Rose Toada, buzz!
Gold on its wings and fuzz.
Bizz, Rose Toada, buzz!

EBONY

*On watching a beautiful black arm opening a Venetian Lan-
tern at Fleur de Lys*

Ebony, Ebony,
Dreaming of a rose—
Flame in the flower-heart,
Dusk in repose;

Jeweled eyes glistening,
Dew on the leaf:
Sweet to Africa
Is the thought of her grief.

Jeannette Marks

THE BROKEN DOOR

This is the place! I know
The broken door, the ragged bed of bloom
Where poppies grow,
Row after row.

This is the place.
A year ago her footprint
Marked the garden path
With tender hollow.

But now?
Time's step is slow to follow.

Jeannette Marks

PURPLE

A pigeon walking dainty in the street;
The morning mist where backyard fences meet;
An old Victoria—and in it, proud,
An old, old woman, ready for her shroud:
These are the purple sights for me,
Not palaces nor pageantry.

Margaret Steele Anderson

THE DEBT

God, take my hand
And understand:
I have it here, the lovely gift;
I cannot lift
 My fluttering eyes,
 Without receiving there, anew,
 Surprise;
I cannot part my lips—
Your breath between them slips.
 My ears awake
 Fair noises take.
Ah, all of me unites,
And wraps round thy delights.

God, take my hand,
And understand:
I cannot pay the lovely gift—
I am adrift.
 My tearful eyes,
 In spite of all the light they would
 Devise,
Betray my laughing lips,
Where thankful utterance trips.
 Yet, for your sake,
 The gift I take—
Take, but can give no grace
Here in my lonely place.

A PRAYER

Love us, Lord, but not too much.
Come thou near, yet not too near.
All thy laughing splendor spoils
What we daily see and fear,
What we bear, and do, and touch.
Love us still, but not too much.

Come thou near, Lord, not too near:
Let us breathe thee through our lips.
Even now I saw thy hue
In the maple's yellow tips,
When a leaf, so gay, so dear,
Fell—but come thou not more near.

Let us breathe thee through our lips!
Do thou enter in our eyes!
Touch us that we not forget:
Make us simple still, and wise.
Circling us, thy finger slips—
Let us breathe thee through our lips.

Jessie MacDonald

THREE POEMS

MARCH WIND

The moody wind—is this its grudge day? Whoo!

Against the dusty sky, in the late sun,
A veering flock of mottled pigeons bounce
From the shoulders of a gust. In our village street
The captious wind runs races with itself,
As a dog pursues its tail; with brute persistence
It buffets leafless elm and maple bough,
Tears at the stiff-armed oak.

From the window-pane

Little Fred looks for his father—he grew tired
Of playing outdoors with so rude a comrade;
For the wind hustles, keeps on pushing people,
Makes the street a barrier to neighboring houses,
Besieges timid folk.

Now the reddish sun

Abandons the world to the wind. In alien twilight
He whistles at keyhole, hisses at the window,
Makes all the timbers groan, exults—cuwooff!

Our lamplight in the kitchen shudders, staggers,
As Burton blows in from the writhing darkness,
And sets both knee and shoulder to the door
To force it shut.

“Hooray! I want my supper!
Good thing the trees are rooted! How the draught
Reddens the stovepipe!”

Supper chat is over.

I look out; clouds are hurrying past the stars;
I listen to the rising talk of the wind:
Puff, pant, moan, roar, and wail. It flaps and tugs
At fence and gate, it throws a wooden bench
Tumbling along the yard. I ask myself,
Has the wind any grudge against our house?

At bed-time it still rages. In the night
I lie and hear the creature—wiff, cuwooff!—
Rattling the sashes, bruising on the gable
The budding twigs of the elm.

I move to the window:

My husband sleeps as men who labor sleep;
And Fred and Jimmie both lie full of sleep.
Little Mabel stirs—is it that nerves of women
Respond to the nerves of storms? Cuwiff, cuwooff!

Unquiet stars. Dim leafless shapes of elm
Beating the dark between me and the stars;
Twisted at, jerked at, strained to the inmost heart,
Surging at the roots, moaning in the angry wind.

Why should this monster need the help of night?
The rushing presence, with invisible bulk,

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Has laid a heaving shoulder to my house:
The timbers strain, walls quiver, my heart shakes.

A thump, a crash on the roof, the bouncing slide
Of a brick—a dozen bricks—

“O Burton, say!—
It's got the chimney! Bring the boys down cellar!
I'm afraid of the wind in such a night! Come, Mabel!
I'll wrap you in this quilt!”

Cuwiff! Cuwooff!

WHISPERING OFTEN

When sunlight marries the swaying branches,
With shadowy dancings the rite is said—
To the crooning of easeful winds and waters,
Whispering often, “I love you, I love you.”

Now in wedded lilies the juices bubble,
And saps make music about the heart.
With flower on flower the spring is yearning
For the Easter of love, the sacrament of love,
The passion of the earth and the passion of the sky;
Whispering often, “I love you, I love you.”

HOME

Good-bye to riding the wilderness
With my thoughts for company;
To the old new bed on the prairie grass,
A saddle to pillow me!

I will build me a house in the April sun
On my little garden ground.
My hand shall shape the rafter and beam,
My hammer stroke shall sound.

For a house is a house, and home is home—
The roots of the soul go deep;
And I own the boards and the rusting nails
As I own my tears and my sleep.

Good-bye to riding the wilderness!—
I build in the April sun.
Good-bye to the land of the lonely sky—
My homeless days are done.

Edwin Ford Piper

COMMENT

THEIR WIDE RANGE

POETRY has seldom referred editorially to its current contents, preferring to leave the poems to make their own appeal to each individual reader. But this month we are moved to emphasize the contrast between Mr. Hueffer's poem, in this number, and a poem of the wilderness by Lew Sarett which will be printed in April; and, incidentally, to urge appreciative consideration of the wide range covered by modern poets, the variety of mood and manner in which they present, to the world of today and tomorrow, their interpretations of life.

Mr. Hueffer's is an indoor poem. Its little ancient manor-house, mossy and vine-clad among its gardens and meadows, venerable with family and neighborhood traditions reaching back for centuries, is beautiful with the piteous beauty of the old things; things outworn and outgrown, but lingering in their old place and holding human beings captive to their moss-covered walls. We shall not venture to suggest how far the poet typified the present situation of Old England by his ancient house—a house so dear to all who have received it from their ancestors that the removal of a single tuft of moss would be a desecration; and yet so shabbily inadequate to modern needs that the people fondly clinging to it are enslaved to debt and held to a narrow acreage and outlook, and thereby impaired in power. The implications of Mr. Hueffer's poem are both obvious and profound; and

the intelligent reader will not limit them to old England, or even to old New England.

Mr. Sarett's poem challenges civilization from the opposite angle, from the high vantage-ground of the wilderness; as readers of his Chippewa monologues in POETRY and in his book *Many Many Moons*, will suspect. In the new poem, *The Box of God*, his old Indian, converted by the glitter and glamour of the high altar in the little outpost mission church; electing to stay, a good Catholic, in that sheltering "box of God," but missing, even unto death, the wilder freedom of his old beliefs and customs—in him we see a personification of something bold and splendid in humanity which civilization destroys; a stark spiritual individualism which cannot exist in crowds, which demands the sterner substance to be wrung from nature's free spaces and from scantily peopled tribal barbarism.

We confess a certain pride in offering these two poems to our readers—poems in which the challenge, the eternal question, is symbolically presented according to the muse's unalterable laws, not prosaically stated and argued. And this leads, perhaps, to that larger pride referred to above—pride in the wide range covered by modern poetry, especially poetry in the English language; in its sympathetic response to the period, the human group and the locale—many different groups and locales. Modern poetry is telling the tale of the tribe for the next age; and telling it sometimes in forms of such authoritative beauty that the next age will be compelled to listen.

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This variety, this wide range of modern poetry in English, is more noticeable at present in the United States than anywhere else. Kipling widened the English literary empire enormously in his day; opened up India to the occidental imagination, uttering at least a few questions from the Orient. But today, in spite of the War, British poets cling more and more to the woods and meadows, the customs and traditions, of their tight little island; hesitating to follow their flag into the far-flung provinces of its empire, or to face the future with its problems, material and spiritual, for both the individual and the crowd. And the poets of Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, who will doubtless have their day sometime, have scarcely begun to be articulate.

But here in the United States the poets are certainly speaking out their minds, and challenging the traditional forms with new experiments—whatever the future may say of the results of the ferment. Extravagance and overemphasis may be found among them, no doubt, but even those who shout instead of sing cannot be accused of that deadliest of vices, insincerity. The locale, from New England to Arizona, is demanding its distinctive place; speaking with its own voice, from the aboriginal to the super-sophisticated. There is hardly a problem, social or spiritual, which is not the chief concern of some group of poets, even though it leads them outside of the legitimate confines of their art—to the pulpit, or the soap-box or lecture-hall platform of reform. Nor are our poets daunted by old inhibitions and taboos: already a few have given us free-

Their Wide Range

verse lyrics as beautiful as any old songs in rhyme; already we have hints of a truly modern poetic drama, as Mr. Schneider points out in another page of this number. And we of the Middle-west have at least one poet of epic imagination; for Edgar Lee Masters would set forth, on his immense canvas, "a census spiritual, taken of our America," showing

The closeness of one life, however humble,
With every life upon this globe.

Whatever exceptions may be taken in predicting the quality of the ultimate harvest, the most exacting critic must admit a rich growth. According to the *Mercure de France*,

Il est évident que les Etats-Unis entrent résolument dans l'Assemblée des Muses avec une merveilleuse offrande de poésie.

H. M.

THAMES MORASSES

I have just destroyed the article of which the above title remains—the reader's time is worth something. The situation reduces itself to this: Paris is, or at any rate feels as if it were, annoyed that civilization has been held up for five years. It contains the still respectable figure of Anatole France, apologizing for the "bêtises" which he has written during the late excitement. It contains a certain number of solid and respectable people, like Salomon Reinach, who go down to the Academy and the Institute and discuss problems connected with literature and scholarship with

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at least a certain serious decency. It contains Marcel Proust and a scattering of mentally active "younger authors" among them: Cocteau, Morand, Aragon, Cendrars, Soupault; and certain perhaps static poets like Cros, and Vlaminck when he lays down his paint-brush.

I return to London, and am immersed in the aroma of death. Mr. Gosse was at any rate a genuine antimacassar of the antimacassar period, but "to no such aureate earth is turned" that one needs commend the prolongation of his intellectual obsequies, as in the London *Mercury*, founded apparently for that purpose alone.

Britain is not annoyed at the suspension of civilization. Officially the recognized "organs" of Britain's literature desire literature as it was before Flaubert, which is just as intelligent as to desire science as it was before Pasteur and Curie. A dead language is still almost ubiquitous in the verse of the "Georgian poets." From various corners various "established" (saving your reverence, they are called) "critics," continue to commend works whose titles and authors they will have forgotten in ten months' time. Owen Seaman, from the camouflage of *Punch* humor, has unflinchingly praised the worst for twenty years; and to let this type of person speak for itself I turn to Mr. Lucas:

One of the most satisfactory things about literary England today is the revival of its journalism.

Unfortunately Mr. Lucas' statement is correct: anyone searching for anything better than journalism in this island will find not satisfaction but dissatisfaction, and that of

no moderate nature. Their journalism satisfies Mr. Lucas, but that is no reason why an intelligent foreigner should waste his time on current English productions. The faked highbrow side of their journalism is a buffoonery, a general commendation of the indifferent, an aversion from the precise word, a hatred of investigation, a dislike of exact valuation. As for the rest of it, a trace of cockney sarcasm in a two-penny comic (*London Opinion*) is the sole healthy symptom I have seen since my return from the continent. Verbatim:

We beg to "suggest" that the circulation of *London Opinion* is seven times as great as that of any other purely comic journal, except the *Daily Mail*. Any proof to the contrary will be ignored.

This paragraph, I may point out, is not so important a piece of work as Julien Benda's *Belphégor*, but it is the most serious piece of definitely English criticism of the *Englische Zeitgeist*, Anno Domini 1920, that I have found in the last six months.

Ten years ago I should have advised, and did advise, other American writers to come to England for the sake of their work; at the present moment there is no *literary* reason for my not leaving the country.

The news of literary London, in the sense of news of a London interested in literature, not in journalism, is, and has been for months, perfectly well known in America: Henry James is dead; Hardy is one-hundred-and-ten; W. H. Hudson is not very active; Mr. Yeats has retired to Oxford, Mr. Hueffer to Sussex; Mr. Eliot wastes his time

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in a bank; Mr. Lewis is painting; Mr. Lytton Strachey is writing the life of Queen Victoria; Mr. Frederic Manning is doing a biography of an official person of no interest whatever, and may sometime finish his romance begun in or about 1911; Mr. Kipling is contributing to the Anglo-French review; Mr. Lennox Robinson (Irish) has written a play which is said to be entertaining; Mr. Bottomley is writing in the *Sunday Illustrated* to controvert the Poet Laureate; Mr. H. G. Wells has written a history of the world in, I think, shilling parts, illustrated with baroque and marvellous fantasy; Mr. Austin Harrison edits the *English Review* to suit himself—a feat which would be remarkable in no other country save England, but is here highly commendable, his sole competitor in this line being that Fighting Temeraire, A. R. Orage, whose paper deals chiefly with economics, but stands rigidly for free speech on all topics. As for the rest of the periodic productions—the back files for 1895 are probably quite as instructive, certainly as modern, and very possibly more entertaining, than those bearing deceptive indications of the year current.

The intellectual curiosity of this island is nil. The desire for more precise ideation, for better prose, for international standards, is zero; and the young American who wants external stimulant for his thought would do better to turn his attention to Paris—despite the fact that the actual study of his own language can not be continued in that city, and that the study of his own language is of inestimable importance.

But in the choice of evils it would be better that our American prose should run to gallicisms, if so it might be supple and sensitive; better even that it contract a certain eccentricity if there come with this a capacity for precise rendering of the image: than that it should fall into lignifications of phrase, as in pre-Flaubertian English; into the traps of British academic thought—pomposity, *Spectator*, *Times Lit. Sup.* solemnity, the “cradle” of the balanced sentence—and all this other fustian, which is so adequately interpreted to mean that “any proof to the contrary will be ignored.”

“The rhetoricians ruined the empire,” and the Georgians finished the Asquith administration, and England of course must be let to do as she likes; but there is no reason for our being implicated in the débâcle of her intellect and of her literature.

Ezra Pound

REVIEWS

KORAL GRISAILLE

Kora in Hell: Improvisations, by William Carlos Williams.
Four Seas Co.

Patience, rather than any other attribute, has become the needful luggage of him who journeys through the chronicles of this day.

The human being is, at his best, a creature full of curiosity. We wish to know why we are as we are, and how the thing we call our modern world has come to be. So

we read the modern world's literature, and we are about as near a solution of the problem as were ever the book and thought lovers of any other day; which is saying but little, and yet all. What beyond this is there to say? Nothing remains but elaboration.

Often it is not only the lack of patience, but also the slippery, unsatisfactory combination of book and moment, that prevents us from the entirely generous and relaxed attention which such a work as *Kora in Hell* requires.

Just why these *Improvisations* are likable is difficult to say. The book holds many sadnesses and bitternesses between its covers; and certain of them, once discovered, find for themselves congenial nooks and resting-places in the mind.

William Carlos Williams leads us gently, not always gently, by the hand, to nowhere in particular. Of course it is easy enough to slip a hand out of a hand—a simple matter, but involved here and there with little wishes and preferences. There is an elusive charm about the way in which the sadnesses and bitternesses are disclosed. Even though at conception they must have leaned with all their powerful weight upon the pen of their translator, his chosen words, which contain and impart them, flip and flick and dance and dart about, so that the image of Mr. Williams in his sadness creating his word-impressions becomes curiously that of a dancer waving a spotted scarf.

Perhaps it is partly the very positive veiling of thought that is so agreeable, when coupled with the certainty that

soon a note will relieve the tension and tell the tale. But that the pleasurable sensation one must admit in reading the book should rest entirely upon this psychological prop is obviously absurd. One must not go too far. It is only one among several small, frail apologies I might proffer in explanation of my own liking for and interest in Mr. Williams' experiment in delicately insulting, macabre grisaille.

The plainly worded fact I am coming to, slowly enough, and now and then plucking a wayside weed as I travel, is that I find this work sad and beautiful, and very much akin to the rambling but honest way of my own observing sense.

So many little things, so many, so many . . . and but an hour's reflection! When a butterfly wing moves in the sunshine, it is not easy to catch the pattern among the colors, but the thing is real enough all the time. Improvisations are butterfly nets, but notes are drops of chloroform. After that one not only sees, one knows.

There is a genial and sweet simplicity in the form: "Go as far as you will with the music, and damn the public! . . . There's the business of the notes for certain people . . . Always some dull wits even among those who pay for their seats."

I still say there is a colossally nice simplicity about it, and that the change of tonality is utterly agreeable.

There are things to be taken from *Kora in Hell: Improvisations*. Even after but half a reading it has been

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possible to go on about this book rather eagerly, and that in itself is almost an introduction to its strong personality, a personality with a sense of something partly eastern about it; but why a flavor of the Orient must cling mysteriously to all writings that conform to a semi-regular change of pitch is unexplained. Perhaps it is that the far extremes of pure lightness and seriousness are so commonly the possession of the Oriental, and so rarely ours.

Helen Birch-Bartlett

CRUCIBLE

Sun-up, by Lola Ridge. B. W. Huebsch.

The words of Lola Ridge are thrust into the turmoil of today's city like darting flames—they are a curse and a cry of revolt.

Emily Dickinson meant poetical solitude; she meant thinking solitude of a poetic kind, Chinese daintiness at times. Adelaide Crapsey meant sadness, sweet sadness; sometimes rebellion too, but a sweet sad rebellion. Amy Lowell means voluminous and disorderly culture, wordiness, exaggeration; which words may all go under a heading that would comprehend the case of most women artists—weakness. But as for Lola Ridge, to fit her case no diminutive adjective could serve. It is not a case of sweetness, nor of any of those qualities which, up to date, have been said to pertain to women writers. She is a poet, that's all.

Talk of propaganda here! I wish every poet had something as strong and virile to uphold. It is not a matter

of politics, it's a matter of such damning hatred and love as would turn a modern city to ashes. Virile?—it may be an insult to use that adjective, since Lola Ridge has begun an era in which for a woman to be virile, i. e., masculine, might mean to be weaker.

I think she is one of the most beautiful signs we have of woman's emancipation and independence. Let her be a socialist: this rebellion of hers is pure beauty; it is sanctified; it is nothing less than burning human blood; it is no longer that particular fact of the revolt against actual social conditions, which is, unfortunately, what affects today's socialists and anarchists: it is an eternal thing, the thing that caused Prometheus to be bound; it's the fire of heaven burning in this wonderful woman's blood.

Her words are so intensely vivid, they are so palpable, so physically tangible, that they whip or stab—they hurt: there is a ghastliness here caused by an excess of pain and sorrow. And it is her integrity of impulse and emotion that makes her shun more elaborate rhythm forms for a perfectly simple and equal one; although her rhythmical sense is richer than that of certain poets, who discover forms as one finds mushrooms after a rain.

Sun-up is a rhythmical story of the fantastic realism of a child. She too is a singer of delicacies—she too utters sweet words, or sweet sad words. The poet of *Sun-up* is a child in all its sweetness, besides being a child in all the fulness of its sometimes quaint, sometimes ironic, sometimes portentous magic:

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He will scream into the sky
And sparks will fly out of him.
He will burn and burn—
And his blazing hair
Shall light up the world.

It is a woman suffering, but with no subdued sorrow—
with the snarl of a lioness rather. It is a lioness flinging
herself madly against the walls of the ugly city.

Emanuel Carnevali

EVELYN SCOTT

Precipitations, by Evelyn Scott. Nicholas L. Brown.

I shall not forget the sensation—something like the suppressed excitement that you feel at the first inkling of some momentous event—with which I first read some of these poems. This must be fully two years ago, when some of us were working over a belated issue of *Others* and Evelyn Scott was still a mystery-woman in far-away Brazil.

The union of strongly contrasting qualities that I then found in her work is emphasized in the present collection. The clear searching vision, like an electric ray, that seems to focus—almost lovingly—upon decay and death, with a child's simplicity and eager response to every mood of earth. It is a child's wishful hands that reach out to

A little white thistle moon
Blown across the frozen heather;

and a child's quick, open-eyed wonder in these lines from
Winter Dawn:

Snow maiden lets down her hair,
And in one shining silence
It slips to earth.

Evelyn Scott's happiest (in the literal sense) reactions are to nature, though even then it is a nature already touched with decay. We are shown the stars like jaded dancing girls, their faces "Pale in the harshness of the sunlight"; and over many of the vivid pictures pours silvery wonder of a decadent moon, a moon that

Reaches long white shivering fingers
Into the bowels of men.
Her tender superfluous probing into all that pollutes
Is like the immodesty of the mad.

And when Mrs. Scott's vision turns upon humans, it becomes that of a ruthless eye which sees through rosy and gracious contours to the putrescence behind—an eye avid, searching, throwing a gold-harsh light on life:

Life, the sleep walker,
Lifts toward the skies
An immense gesture of indecency.

Most of these poems are short. The eye is a continually shifting ray that penetrates, impartially lights up whatever shape, be it swathed in bandages or merely coquetting behind veils; that hovers a moment and is gone, leaving the conception to be completed or explained in the mind of the recipient. Sometimes, as in *Man Dying on a Cross*, it uncovers a terrible beauty that throws out a flame like burning flesh—a flame that dies out swiftly, as with a great breath that blows in the eyes a live and silvery dust and leaves in the nostrils a smell, sweetish, faintly foul.

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Fortunately this vision does not see too much, nor does it stray from the spot that is the centre of the flung ray. Thus there is economy of detail, and we are not confused with a flickering and broken image. The method is at its best in the clean muscular beauty of *Young Men*:

Fauns,
Eternal pagans
Beautiful and obscene,
Leaping through the streets
With a flicker of hoofs
And a flash of tails—

You want dryads,
And they give you prostitutes.

Occasionally, however, this concentration invites its penalty, and there is a lack of fluidity that is not so much stiffness as a halting movement that suggests the slight lameness of a beautiful body. Sometimes, too, an abrupt indifference to finish—perhaps something of that same refusal to chasten and refine which is manifest to life itself. Thus in three otherwise fine lines the words *drifts* and *melts*, following in succession, are left like grit under the teeth.

The golden snow of the stars
Drifts in mounds of light,
Melts against the hot sides of the city.

These poems show an astonishing and essentially modern awareness, an awareness that has nothing to do with "sophistication"—you might as well call a vulture sophisticated because it sensed its prey while patiently circling overhead. It is rather a consciousness that, while close to and keenly

aware of instinct, has yet obtained its release; so that it watches, intent but calmly elect—impartial appraiser of its own pleasure and its own pain. This consciousness knows fear, the while it walks intrepidly forward to the pit and casts a stone at the coiled terrors within. But the fear walks unashamed and does not cloak itself in cynicism; or that chain-armor of the weak, a sneer. There is no sneer even in the devastating lines of *Christians* and *Women*, that I am sorry I have not space to quote. It seems to be that the experiencing mind, with an almost machine-like accuracy, records its inevitable emotion. The result is convincing. You do not question the data of this uncloistered spirit. You accept the authenticity of its emotional responses, even though they may not tally with your own.

And while it is difficult to say how this book—with its avoidance of the “typical” and absence of corroborated emotions, as well as its rejection of the anaemic doctrine of “escape”—may be received, it introduces a new and potent force into American literature.

Lola Ridge

GREGORIAN ELIZABETHAN

Caius Gracchus, by Odin Gregory. Boni & Liveright.

Theodore Dreiser, Richard Le Gallienne, and Benjamin de Casseres have given considerable aid and comfort to the publisher of *Caius Gracchus*, by blowing his horn for him with a gusto and an abandon that the biggest-lunged blurbster might envy.

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Dreiser contributes a sincere, almost pious preface which nevertheless reveals to me a painfully naïve judgment; *Le Gallienne* a eulogy characteristically worded—"Here the impossible has been done, and done wondrous well"; and *de Casseres* brings Shakespeare and Juvenal into his toot.

After such ardors, to come to the truth of the matter is to take a precipitous tumble. To say that Shakespeare's name has been taken in vain; that every claim Dreiser makes in the preface is circumstantially refuted in the text; that *Le Gallienne's* impossible has certainly not been done by *Odin Gregory*—all this is not enough. First of all, what is the impossible? Apparently it is a recrudescence of Elizabethan drama, and Dreiser forgets *The Cenci* in his ruthless elimination of all the attempts preceding Mr. Gregory's. Apparently it has often been tried, this impossible; and one feels, at the basis of all this praise, a unanimous agreement that the trial is worth making, and that its success would be a millennial affair.

It is fortunate that the Bible is a holy book; and that religious sentiment has held it sacrosanct, and prevented sentimental people from yearning for new bibles and ambitious men of the word from writing them. In spite of this we have had *Al Coran* and the *Book of Mormon*; and in a more important, inverted sense, the scriptures of Friedrich Nietzsche.

One wishes that some similar mystic injunction had saved us from the neo-Homeric epics and neo-Elizabethan tragedies that demonstrate anew in every decade the in-

violability of old civilizations; for the epic and the Shakespearean drama are not methods of writing that can be applied to our own purposes, but separate cultures; and the attempt at re-creation is a vain futility. So in our own day John G. Neihardt's epics have been wistfully oblivious failures; and Mr. Gregory's poetic drama is a noisily self-conscious failure.

Mr. Gregory's theme is a moving episode from Roman history that one is sorry Shakespeare passed over. He has turned it into unrelieved melodrama. His characters, which in Plutarch are among the most powerful and interesting in that collection of ancient worthies, and which certainly offered Mr. Gregory prodigal opportunities for characterization, are crude masks. His verse is strident; his metaphors are pompous, and in some places pretty badly mixed; but not without a certain strength, when they are not the product of subconscious borrowings. And his purpose, in spite of the absolving preface, is an obvious parallelism between the evils of our day and of days past, with the unexpressed but attendant homily. How far Mr. Gregory is from Shakespeare may be demonstrated by one vivid similarity. Caius Gracchus, with the wily tribune Drusus following him on the platform, addresses a Roman mob. Immediately one thinks of Brutus and wily Antony, and that other Roman mob. There is an infinity between the two.

The failure was to be anticipated—Mr. Le Gallienne's impossible remains impossible. But does that argue despair of a poetic drama? No. What it does mean is that a

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poetic drama is not to be created by the short cut of copying the Elizabethan. It means that if we are to have it at all, it is to come from what is stirring in our own life, from equipment and tools that are natural to our hands.

It is undeniable that the epic has been absorbed by the novel. Poetry has been denuded to its fundamentals. It has become predominantly lyric and philosophical. Our poetic drama must evolve from that; to my mind, it is evolving. The *Aria da Capo* of Edna St. Vincent Millay, the disturbingly beautiful discussions by Maxwell Bodenheim predicating new dramatic values, the stark originality of Wallace Stevens' achievements, the lilting monotones of Alfred Kreymborg's mime plays, these are prototypes of a poetic drama which I believe will attain a transcending power and beauty. Nor must we forget Synge and Yeats and Dunsany, who have marked a transition. Mr. Gregory's play is an experiment; behind it was the same faith that motivated alchemy, the desire to get gold without digging for it. These others, while individually distinctive achievements, are, in the larger view, experiments also, gathering up the data from which our poetic drama is to be built.

In conclusion, I wish to digress upon another, but I believe interesting detail. The publishers of this book are known as enterprising people who have got surprising returns from fields other publishers have neglected. One feels that *Caius Gracchus* was published in the belief that a large public could be found for it among the self-conscious proletariat, who are the only growing class of book-

buyers. Mr. Gregory's book, being earnest and showing a firm knowledge of the subject, should find its public there. But the implication I am interested in is that here are publishers who dare to sell their poetry in open competition with fiction and literature of more general interest. Artistically the result has been poor; but what may come of it is a matter for pleasant and fearsome speculation.

Isidor Schneider

PROPHET OR POET?

Europe: A Book for America, by Samuel Roth. Boni & Liveright.

This book is a prophecy; not in the sense in which the average twentieth-century church-goer, steeped in the Puritan tradition, views prophecy, but as prophecy was understood in the days when the Hebrew prophets lived. As the prophets of those days were primarily forth-tellers, interpreters, of their day, so is Mr. Roth primarily an interpreter of his day. As they incidentally foretold the future, so does Mr. Roth endeavor incidentally to foretell a future for the present world. This future he sees in America.

Appearing in the role of prophet, Mr. Roth must be judged by its standards, validity and vision being the determining factors. In his interpretations Mr. Roth is ahead of the mob, but not far enough ahead to be a major prophet of this day. He sees America making "earth a worthy habitation for mankind," "a greater work . . . than the glory of writing operas and poems"—which might be said

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by any competent Sunday-school teacher or chamber-of-commerce speaker. "Watch Russia and you will know what will happen next in Europe," is scarcely more illuminating. The author's evident disillusionment is an effective feature of his interpretations.

In his manner Mr. Roth essays the stateliness, the grandeur, the denunciatory power of the prophets of ancient times, and his eloquent fervor brings him closer to the achievement of their mood and mode than any other present-day writer:

Russia will lean against you and level you to the mires of Danzig.
The great bear will put his lips to your breasts and suck you dry.
The swift rider of the Steppes will put his sabre clean through your forehead.

England is a hawk who has built many nests in the fields and valleys of the earth.
She has strong wings and she glides through the warm zones and through the cold.
The air trembles at the approach of her terrible wings.

Occasionally one meets passages that suggest descent from Whitman rather than the Hebrews.

The poem which seems perhaps the most characteristic in the volume illustrates Mr. Roth's strength and weakness, in both interpretation and manner:

There is a light wherever you go,
Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States.

There is a light over your collected speeches to Congress,
And a light over your dense history of these states.

You are really an awkward fellow,
But the light in your path is sure as the light in the pathways of old
Æneas.

The next future of the world will be in America.

It requires an extraordinary lyric passion to fuse the prophetic and the poetic function, for one is primarily ethical, the other esthetic. They do not fuse here. Mr. Roth is more a poet than a prophet, but he over-burdens his muse in such work as this, and his message becomes oratory rather than poetry.

Nelson Antrim Crawford

A NEW-ENGLANDER

The Township Line, by Albert Frederick Wilson. Harper & Bros.

These poems of New England, plain and common, seem to hang upon that country and its people as if the poet were afraid of guesswork, and of romance, and of color either in the land or in the spirit. There are certain things which he has undertaken not to talk about: as his New Englanders do, with their list of things they have to live without. But he has replaced these things on his index with talk of men's opinions. *Plows* and *The South Pasture Lot* are editorial tracts. *Waiting for the Real-estate Man* is a shift at the tear-pump such as Amy Lowell turns to every now and then; and so much is barred or denied, that *Barn Fire* even seems an accident, the best poem in this book and among the two or three best I have read from his country.

We do not tell the truth
About New England;
We love it beyond stark eyes.

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I believe that this very consciousness that other people have exaggerated or romanced has led him to this determination to say no more than he knows; to distrust his imagination for fear it may cheat him.

Woodrow Wilson, by this poet in POETRY for September, may be a sign that he has learned or remembered better. It is worth less to repeat what men say than to show what they are; and if a man's writing is worth anything, his imagination is worth more—the last thing and maybe the only thing that is new, and that we can take his word for.

H. L. Davis

ROBERT BRIDGES ONCE MORE

October and Other Poems, by Robert Bridges. Knopf.

England's laureates seem to feel obliged to spend part of their verse on patriotism, and perhaps that obligation goes with the job. Robert Bridges has undertaken it dutifully, that is all. Such a man can not hold a passion in common with so many people; he writes it out like a lesson.

His first book was *The Growth of Love*, and from that to *October* his verse has kept to its own banks. He owes nothing to the immense alteration in English poetry—effect and intention—which have come in since. Even the passion of love was a little bookish and cautious in him from the start, maybe because it seemed overly common, maybe because he used it only as a symbol for passion in thought, for which *Narcissus* and *The Philosopher and His Love* have found a more exact symbol:

Madest escape in life desirous
To embroider her thin-spun robe.

He seems scarcely to care sometimes, as if assured of an exact correspondence between words and his thoughts; so *October*, and *In der Fremde* and *The Flowering Tree* are too sweet and not wilful enough. Or else I got used to their beauty from other poems a long time ago, and take these without feeling any new presence. H. L. Davis

A CRITIC OF POETRY

The Sacred Wood, by T. S. Eliot. Methuen, London.
Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

In view of the hostility to criticism which is characteristic of some American writers, is it not paradoxical that an American poet should publish in London the most stimulating and thoughtful book of criticism of the year?

Probably one of the most vicious and stupid ideas of psuedo-criticism, one of the most destructive of healthy creative impulses, is the error that art or literature is a matter of mere fashion. The assumption is that a generation is interested—ought to be interested—in the literature of that generation; that all other literature is “dead” and hampering. On the other hand is the pedagogical point of view which accepts the past and is utterly blind to the present. Mr. Eliot’s essay, *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, defines carefully his own correct position, unaffected by either the journalistic or the pedagogical error. Let us hear him speak:

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If the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, "tradition" should positively be discouraged. . . . Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer, and within it the whole of the literature of his own country, has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. The historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal, and of the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.

How true that is, how just! Those few sentences are at once a statement of an artistic truth and the dispeller of a multitude of errors and heresies. I am tempted to say that no critic since Matthew Arnold has written in English with quite this serene profundity, this power of rightly directing a considerable culture to the literary problems of the present. It is perhaps an unique experience in the life of this generation, to find that we possess a critic of Mr. Eliot's intelligence; a critic with principles, not impressions; a critic whose perceptions have been stimulated by the best literature of the past, whose appreciation of the present is equally keen and just; a critic without fads, personal vanity, or affectation. A critic who has read the books he criticises.

The only qualifications I would make are these: sometimes his phraseology is a little too abstract; sometimes he

uses words with a restricted meaning which is not always clear to the reader. For example, he makes a sharp distinction between "emotions" and "feelings." The dictionary says that "emotions" are simply "feelings" of greater intensity, whereas I suspect Mr. Eliot means "emotions" and "sensations" or "sensory reactions." Again, in a very slight degree he tends to take the opinion of distinguished contemporaries instead of investigating for himself.

Let us turn again to the essay on *Tradition*, where almost every page will stimulate the modern writer even more than the student of literature. The following remarks are worth the most serious attention:

What happens, when a new work is created, is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered.

Now that is a critical idea of the first importance; it comes from a manifestly superior mind. An idea like that—so luminous, so harmonizing, so infinitely fertile—is as important as Taine's theory (for example) that "Men write their deepest tendencies in the works of their imagination;" as, "Byron prefigured his conduct at Missolonghi by the actions of Lara and the Corsair" (see Julien Benda's *Introduction à La Vie de Rancé*). I do not mean that it is the same idea, but an idea equally, perhaps more, fertile and original; one which, once thoroughly grasped, must modify and order our conceptions of literature.

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"Order"—that is what makes Mr. Eliot's critical work so precious to us today; he has imposed an order on our chaos, our intellectual anarchy; he throws us a plank as we drown in a sea of platitudes and foaming stupidities. His criticism is sane without being dull or imitative; original without eccentricities; profound without obscurity; cultured without affectation; vigorous without being superficial.

Richard Aldington

AUSTRALIAN AND U. S. COPYRIGHTS

A poet in Launceston, Tasmania, sends this letter:

Dear POETRY: I am sure that the question of fair and equal treatment for Australian and American authors under the copyright laws is of interest to you. This is the situation at present: U. S. A. authors can secure imperial, including Australian, copyright by newly publishing—exposing for sale—a copy or copies of the American edition of the work simultaneously in Britain and America. (Britain means any British Dominion, and simultaneously means within fourteen days.) To obtain U. S. A. copyright, however, British, including Australian, authors must set up, print and bind their work, or an edition of the same, in the United States, simultaneously with its first publication elsewhere.

That is loaded on the American side with almost impossible conditions for an Australian poet. Perhaps Dennis, who exploits the Australian language in verse, would find it worth while to set up an American edition, but no other Australian verse-writer would. If one should write a *Spoon River Anthology* before he knew it was worth while, the American copyright would be lost. If, say, two years were allowed in which to set up and publish an American edition, the Australian poet who found his book had an American sale would have a chance to protect his work.

Unless the American conditions are modified, the Australian laws will be brought into line. That will hit very hard all poets; but best sellers like Harold Bell Wright will not be affected, and they will find it pays to print an edition in Australia.

H. W. Stewart

NOTES

Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer, of London, has appeared often in POETRY, beginning with *On Heaven* in 1914. He is the author of numerous novels; and of *Collected Poems* (Max Goschen, London, 1914), and *On Heaven and Poems Written in Active Service* (John Lane Co., 1918).

Mr. Edwin Ford Piper, of Iowa City, is in the faculty of the University of Iowa. His book, *Barbed Wire and Other Poems*, was published in 1917 by the Midland Press.

Fannie Stearns Gifford (Mrs. Augustus McK.), of Stamford, Conn., is the author of *Myself and I*, and *Crack o' Dawn* (Macmillan Co.)

Mr. Leslie Nelson Jennings, a native of Massachusetts but "a Californian by choice and acclimatization," lives in the Napa Valley, sixty miles from civilization. He has contributed often to POETRY and other magazines.

Miss Jeannette Marks lives in South Hadley, Mass., being in the English Department of Mount Holyoke College. She will soon issue a book of poems.

Miss Jessie MacDonald, a native of Melbourne, Australia, educated there and in Europe, is now a resident of Seattle.

Miss Margaret Steele Anderson, who has been for many years literary editor of the Louisville *Post*, died suddenly in that city in January. Some of her newspaper verse is worthy of more permanent publication, especially certain *Poems of Old Louisville*, printed serially in her paper in 1917, which have historic interest as well as literary value, and should be issued in book form. She was also an enlightened and progressive critic, always open-minded toward every new movement, whether she wholly agreed with it or not. We quote from a private letter by Miss Hortense Flexner, to show what this lady's life and death have meant to Louisville:

"We didn't believe Miss Margaret could die. She had looked so ill forever that we were all used to it; but then, she never stopped to eat or sleep—just kept on walking against the wind, her head tipped forward, her arms full of bundles and books, her skirts blowing out for miles. She was character! Did you ever talk to her?—she fought your fight in this sleepy old town, though she didn't agree with lots of your judgments. . . . She was 'the flame in the wind'—she made the solid, heavy-going people think about lovely things; and she made the scornful young see beauty. This is a black day for Louisville."

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BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

- Verses for a Little Maid*, by James Plaisted Webber. Hanson Hart Webster, Boston.
- Pearls and Pomegranates*, by Dorian Hope. C. P. Putnam's Sons.
- The Marriage Feast*, by Marie Tudor Garland. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- The Waggoner and Other Poems*, by Edmund Blunden. Alfred A. Knopf.
- In American: Poems*, by J. V. A. Weaver. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Fir Trees and Fireflies*, by Carolyn Crosby Wilson. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Tossed Coins*, by Amory Hare. John Lane Co.
- Sonnets and Other Poems*, by Henry Aylett Sampson. Geo. H. Doran Co.
- The Song Book of Quong Lee of Limehouse*, by Thomas Burke. Henry Holt & Co.
- The Jars of Life*, by Alfred Fitchey. Roycrofters, E. Aurora, N. Y.
- Sonnet Stories from the Chinese*, by Herbert H. Gowen.
- Verses*, by Waldo Lee McAtee. Privately printed, Washington.
- Songs of Life and Fancy*, by E. Lucien Waithe. Arthur H. Stockwell, London.
- A Dozen Days in Iowa*, by Gertrude Mansfield Cole. Privately printed, Clinton, Ia.
- Fagots of Fancy*, by Scottie McKenzie Frasier. Progressive Publishers, Wheeling, W. Va.
- Library Windows*, by Retta Parrott. Harr Wagner Publishing Co., San Francisco.
- Morning, Noon and Night*, by Glenn Ward Dresbach. Four Seas Co.

PROSE:

- The Vintage Festival*, by Sara Bard Field. Printed by John Henry Nash for the Book Club of California, San Francisco.
- Ecclesiastes or the Preacher*, printed on large handmade paper in black, red and blue by John Henry Nash, San Francisco.
- Early Tudor Poetry 1485-1547*, by John M. Berdan. Macmillan Co.
- The Golden Book of Springfield*, by Vachel Lindsay. Macmillan Co.
- Literature in a Changing Age*, by Ashley H. Thorndile. Macmillan Co.
- Poetic Origins and the Ballad*, by Louise Pound. Macmillan Co.

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The New York Sunday Tribune of Jan. 9th, 1921, said editorially, in quoting seven poems from our January number:

"The varied interest and beauty presented are typical of POETRY's quality. Thanks to a rare coincidence of poise and generous imagination, of sense and sensitiveness, it ranks as easily the best vehicle of poetry in the English language."

In the London Times of Nov. 25th, 1920, we read:

"We need not linger over the many English and French contributors to this periodical. . . We do have to note that it has published, as it honestly claims, much of the best experimental poetry written by Americans in the past eight years. . . They have succeeded in their primary design—to create a poetry which should be American in thought, feeling, subject, and form. That is, after all, a distinct achievement."

The Chicago Evening Post, in commenting on POETRY'S eighth birthday, said:

"No editorship is infallible, but it is rather interesting and enlightening to look over the old numbers of POETRY and to realize that the first important chance for publication in America was given to many poets, almost unknown, who have since obtained fame. . . We wonder how many more may yet be helped. POETRY is, so far as we know, unique in the length of its life, recognized position and rigorously artistic standard."

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who has studied the poetry movement in all its phases, will give lectures and readings in the Carolinas and Georgia during the first half of March, and is prepared to consider other engagements in that region.

For terms, dates and other details please address

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VOLUME XVII

oetry

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Edited by
Harriet Monroe



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Erratum: Binders will please notice that the October number is one-fourth inch too long; and this excess should be cut off from the foot, not the top, of the pages before binding.

Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

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Two annual prizes will be awarded as usual next November for good work of the current year. To the donors of these prizes, as well as to the above list of guarantors, the editor wishes to express the appreciation of the staff and the poets:

To Mr. S. O. Levinson, for the Helen Haire Levinson Prize of two hundred dollars, to be awarded for the eighth time; and to the anonymous guarantor who will present, for the seventh time, a prize of one hundred dollars.

We feel that these prizes are a most valuable service to the art.

* * * * *

The editor deeply regrets to record the death of Mrs. Cyrus H. McCormick (born Harriet Hammond), which occurred in Chicago January seventeenth. Mrs. McCormick, together with her husband, was a guarantor of *POETRY* from the beginning, and always a loyal and enthusiastic friend. It would be difficult to count the artistic and philanthropic enterprises in Chicago and elsewhere which she stimulated with enlightened and generous sympathy.

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POETRY
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To have great poets
there must be great audiences too.

—Whitman

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