Vol. XIX No. V

Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

Edited by Harriet Monroe

February 1922

Poems by Wang Wei, tr'd by
Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu
Abrigada, by Leonora Speyer
Winter Dawn, by C. L. Skinner
Fate, by Harold Monro
Fire, by Eunice Tietjens

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Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer, the distinguished English poet, novelist and critic, wrote us last July:

If American periodical literature has today a little peak, a little group of journals, raising it to the level of the best of European cosmopolitanism, or at any rate in that direction, it is because you and your small paper showed how, editorially and economically, it could be done.

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POETRY *asks its friends to become Supporting Subscribers by paying ten dollars a year to its Fund. The art of poetry requires, if it is to advance, not only special sympathy from a discriminating public, but also endowment similar to that readily granted to the other arts. All who believe in the general purpose and policy of this magazine, and recognize the need and value of such an organ of the art, are invited to assist thus in maintaining it*

Poetry
A Magazine of Verse

VOL. XIX
NO. V

FEBRUARY 1922

POEMS BY WANG WEI

ANSWERING VICE-PREFECT CHANG

AS the years go by, give me but peace,
Freedom from ten thousand matters.
I ask myself and always answer,
What can be better than coming home?
A wind from the pine-trees blows my sash,
And my lute is bright with the mountain-moon.
You ask me about good and evil? . . .
Hark, on the lake there's a fisherman singing!

BOUND HOME TO MOUNT SUNG

The limpid river, past its bushes
Flowing slowly as my chariot,

Seems a fellow-voyager
Returning with the evening-birds.
A ruined city-wall overtops an old ferry,
Autumn sunset floods the peaks. . . .
Far away, beside Mount Sung,
I shall rest and close my door.

A MESSAGE TO P'AI TI

Cold and blue now are the mountains
From autumn-rain that beat all day.
By my thatch-door, leaning on my staff,
I listen to cicadas in the evening wind.
Sunset lingers at the ferry,
Cooking-smoke floats up from the houses. . . .
Oh, when shall I pledge Chieh-yu again,
And sing a wild poem at Five Willows!

ON THE WAY TO THE TEMPLE

Not knowing the way to the Temple of Heaped Fragrance,
I have roamed, under miles of mountain-cloud,
Old woods without a human track.
But far on the height I hear a bell,
A rillet sings over winding rocks,
The sun is tempered by green pines. . . .
At twilight, close to an emptying pool,
I lie and master the Passion-dragon.

ICU

MOUNT CHUNG-NAN

The Great One's height near the City of Heaven
Joins a thousand mountains to the corner of the sea.
Clouds, when I look back, close behind me;
Mists, when I enter them, are gone.
A central peak divides the wilds
And weather into many valleys. . . .
Needing a place to spend the night,
I call to a wood-cutter over the river.

A VIEW OF THE HAN RIVER

With its three Hsiang branches it reaches Ch'u border
And with nine streams touches the gateway of Ching:
This river runs beyond heaven and earth,
Where the color of mountains both is and is not.
The dwellings of men seem floating along
On ripples of the distant sky. . . .
O Hsiang-yang, how your beautiful days
Make drunken my old mountain-heart!

IN MY LODGE AT WANG-CH'UAN AFTER A LONG RAIN

The woods have stored the rain, and slow comes the smoke
As rice is cooked on faggots and carried to the fields;
Over the quiet marshland flies a white egret,
And mango-birds are singing in the full summer trees.

I have learned to watch in peace the mountain morning-
glories,
To eat split dewy sunflower-seeds under a bough of pine,
To yield the place of honor to any boor at all. . . .
Why should I frighten sea-gulls even with a thought?

MY RETREAT AT CHUNG-NAN

My heart in middle age found the Way,
And I came to dwell at the foot of this mountain.
When the spirit moves, I wander alone
Where beauty is known only to me.
I will walk till the water checks my path,
Then sit and watch the rising clouds,
And some day meet an old woodcutter,
And talk and laugh and never return.

IN A RETREAT AMONG BAMBOOS

Alone I am sitting under close bamboos,
Playing on my lute, singing without words.
Who can hear me in this thicket? . . .
Bright and friendly comes the moon.

LINES

You who arrive from my old country,
Tell me what has happened there!
Did you see, when you passed my silken window,
The first cold blossom of the plum?

A PARTING

Friend, I have watched you down the mountain
Till now in the dark I close my thatch-door. . . .
Grasses return again green in the spring,
But, O Wang Sun, will *you* return?

A SONG AT WEI-CH'ENG

The morning rain settled the dust in Wei-ch'eng;
In the yard of the tavern green willows revive. . . .
Oh, wait to empty one more cup!
West of Yang Gate—no old friends!

THE BEAUTIFUL HSI-SHIH

Since beauty is honored all over the empire,
How could Hsi-shih remain humbly at home?
At dawn washing clothes by a lake in Yueh;
At dusk in the Palace of Wu, a great lady!
Poor, no rarer than the others—
Exalted, everyone praising her rareness.
But above all honors, the honor was hers
Of blinding with passion an emperor's reason.
Girls who had once washed silk beside her
Now were ordered away from her carriage. . . .
Ask them, in her neighbors' houses,
If by wrinkling their brows they can copy her beauty.

A SONG OF YOUNG GIRLS FROM LO-YANG

There are girls from Lo-yang in that door across the street,
Some of them fifteen and some a little older.
While their master rides a rapid horse with jade bit and bridle,
Their handmaid brings them codfish on a golden plate.
On the painted pavilions, facing their red towers,
Cornices are pink and green with peach-bloom and with willow;
Canopies of silk awn their seven-scented chairs;
Rare fans shade them home, to their nine-flowered curtains.
Their lord, with rank and wealth and in the green of life,
Exceeds, for magnificence, even Chi-lun;
He favors girls of lowly birth and teaches them to dance,
And he gives away his coral-trees to almost anyone.
The wind of dawn just stirs when his nine soft lights go out,
Those nine soft lights like petals in a flying chain of flowers.
From play to play they have barely time for singing over the songs;
No sooner are they dressed again than incense burns before them.
Those they know in town are only the rich and the lavish,
And day and night they're visiting the homes of Chao and Li. . . .
Who cares about a girl from Yueh, face jade-white,
Humble, poor, alone, by the river, washing silk!

HARMONIZING A POEM BY PALACE-ATTENDANT KUO

High beyond the thick wall a tower shines with sunset,
Where peach and plum are blooming and willow-cotton flies.
You have heard it in your office, the court-bell of twilight:
Birds discover perches, officials head for home.
Your morning-jade will tinkle as you thread the golden palace,
You will bring the word of heaven from the closing gates at night.
And I should serve there with you; but, being full of years,
I have put aside official robes and am resting from my ills.

A GREEN STREAM

I have come on the River of Yellow Flowers,
Borne by the current of a green stream
Rounding ten thousand turns through the mountains
To journey less than a hundred li.
Rapids hum on scattered stones,
Light is dim in the close pines,
The surface of an inlet sways with nut-horns,
Weeds are lush along the banks.
Down in my heart I have always been clear
As this clarity of waters.
Oh, to remain on a broad flat rock
And cast my fishing-line forever!

Translated from the Chinese
by Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu

IN PRAISE OF ABRIGADA

I had been told
A foolish tale—
Of stone—dank—cold:
But you,
Held to wide winter storm,
To clutch of blackening frost and ocean gale,
Are warm!

I thought that stone was silent too,
Unmoved by beauty,
Unaware of season or of mirth:
But I hear laughter, singing, as I lay
My face against your gray;
Surely I hear the ritual of far waves
And scent their winging spray,
Mixed with wild-rose and honeysuckle,
Budding sassafras,
And the cool breath of pungent, leafy bay.

I knew that walls were sheltering
And strong;
But you have sheltered love so long
That love is part
Of your high towering,
Lifting you higher still,
As heart lifts heart. . . .

Hush!
How the whip-poor-will
Wails from his bush:
The thrush
Grows garrulous with delight!
There is a rapture in that liquid monotone,
"Bob White! Bob—*White!*"
Dear living stone!

. . . . . .

In the great room below,
Where arches hold the listening spaces,
Flames crackle, leap and gleam
In the deep fire-places;
Memories dream . . .
Of other memories, perhaps,
Of gentle lives,
Of births, and of those other births that men call death,
Of voices, foot-steps tapping the stone floor,
And faces . . . faces . . .

Beyond, the open door,
The meadows drowsy with the moon,
The faint outline of dune,
The lake, the silver magic in the trees:
Walls, you are one with these!

. . . . . .

High on the loggia-roof,
Under the stars as pale as they,

Two silent ones have crept away,
Seeking the deeper silence lovers know:
Into the radiant shadows of the night,
Into the aching beauty of the night,
They dare to go!

The moon
Is a vast cocoon,
Spinning her wild, white thread
Across the sky.
A thousand crickets croon
Their sharp-edged lullaby.
I hear a murmuring of lips on lips:
"All that I am, beloved!
All!"—
Lovers' eternal cry!
Lift them still higher, wall!

. . . . . .

You stand serene:
The great winds linger, lean
Upon your breast;
The mist
Lifts up a gray face to be kissed;
The east and west
Hang you with banners,
Flaunt their bold victories of dusk and dawn;
Seasons salute you as they pass,
Call to you and are gone.

Amid your meadow-grass
Lush, green,
You stand serene.

. . . . . .

Houses, like hearts, are living, loving,
Joyful or woeful,
Forget or are forgot;
Houses, like tired hearts,
Sicken at last, and die,
Crumble and rot:
But they who know you, Abrigada,
They—and I—
Forget you not!

. . . . . .

Nor they who stand on Abrigada's roof,
Glowing, aloof!

. . . . . .

Come with me now,
Climb with me, stand, look down
In new content of mood,
Withdrawn from clasp of crowd
And tangle of the town!
Climb swifter still—
From safe companionship of cloud
The deeper to look down!

Not back!
Forget the thirst, the sordid cup,

The plethora, the piteous lack;
Forget the trafficking in tears,
The arrogance of scars.
Look up . . .
To dream undaunted dreams aloud,
And stumble toward the stars!

. . . . . .

This be in praise
Of Abrigada;
In all the ways
That come to me
Through the wise, wistful summer days.

In speech, in rhyme and rhythm of word—
Call it a poem, maybe!

In song—tuck the brown shining wood
Under my chin!
Call it my bird,
My heart,
My violin!
In prayer . . .
In dream . . .
In silence, best of all,
Leaning on the beloved dew-drenched wall.

Leaning and lifting . . .
High . . .
With Abrigada's gesture toward the sky.

Leonora Speyer

AN OLD WOMAN

Something within her makes her live so long—
  It pays no heed that all her friends are dead.
Her age is moving as a simple song,
  Wailing that happy days long since are dead.
Something forgets that all her teeth have dropt,
  That eyes no longer serve to see her ways.
Time seems not weary of this weed uncropt,
  And draws her on into these newer days.
She does not know at night if she will rise
  And wake again to live another day.
Eternity of age now makes her wise—
  A thing on point of passing, hear her say:

"The moon outlasts my days; the sleepless hounds
Bark ever in the night—strange haunting sounds."

I COMPLAIN IN PASSING

I am weary of green in the grass,
  Of green in the trees;
Of blue in the sky, of white on the clouds,
  And things like these.
I pray for one boon down the long white day—
  That I may cease;
For mountain and meadow and grove and sky
  Leave me no peace.

Harlow Clarke

WINTER DAWN

The dark rolls back.
Like dropped stars,
The willows shine on the sides of the water-courses:
Their ice-blades clash,
Making a slow thin music.
So wakes he, Tem-Sotetc-Kwi;
So comes he slowly—like a slow thin music.
Ah—ah—hi-i, brothers! Lovers of trails and sea-paths!
It is the time of sorrow and the time of shutting-in:
For he has come again—Tem-Sotetc-Kwi—
With heavy winds,
Like frozen ropes of cedar, hoary,
Uncoiling from his thighs
To bind the world.

I have seen his white moccasins upon the mountain:
His steps have hushed the waters
Of the great and little falls;
The rushing rivers are stopped.
He has fed the lake's watery breast to the White Bear
That follows him.
The canoes of the Coast-dwellers are hung under the roofs
Like empty cradles:
We can no longer rock on the wings of the great Blue
Heron!

The great Blue Heron has hidden herself

Under the thatch of her nest,
Because of his pale gray foxes, with white ears—
His hungry foxes,
Huddled about the brink of her nest.
He has taken away the brown fields,
Where our bare feet danced with Autumn
At the feast of berries and maize—
The bare brown fields that were glad
When we drummed with our brown bare feet,
Singing, "Hoy-mah-ah! hoy a-mah!"

Ai-hi! The mats his witch-woman weaves for him are
thick and cold:
We have put beaver-fur about our feet,
And made us long, long flat shoes to bear us up.
(This is our magic, wise men's magic,
To save us from the White Bear's maw!)
His great snowy owls fill all our cedars.
Aii-hi! The red breasts of woodpeckers
No longer flicker in our forests.
His witch-woman is plucking the wings of the sky,
The air is stuffed with white feathers:
We no longer may speak with the sun—ai-i!
Gravely, with bowed hearts, we greet you,
O Tem-Sotetc-Kwi, Snow-chief, Ice-hunter,
Priest of the Long White Moons!

Slowly, slowly, like thin music,
Murmur the sorrow-chant,

Coast-dwellers, my brothers:
For Tem-Sotetc-Kwi has carved the death totem
Over Swiya's house-door—
Q'ulx—se—wag—ila—making pure!
Our mother Swiya, Swiya our mother is dead.
Sorrow, sorrow, my tribe, for Swiya!

Much joy had Swiya, our mother, who loved three lovers!
As a maid, boldly she went forth
And met Spring among the willows;
He pierced her with hope.
Singing she entered the green doors of Summer;
Singing she came out, girdled with fragrance.
She took the yellow harvest-moon in her hands,
And waited in the maize-fields behind our village.
Autumn clasped her there in the fields; he crowned her with maize,
He filled her pouch with berries, he gave her much deer's meat.

Autumn, Feast-maker! Dearest was he among her three lovers—
He was the strong one: he gave the most food; he was the last.
Ai! great joy had Swiya, our mother, who loved three lovers,
And took their gifts.
All their gifts were ours: Swiya, our mother, kept nothing back.

Now she lies bare, her hands are empty, her face is cold;
Her eyelids are shut, for her eyes are in the Place of Death,
Under white eyelids! *Q'ulx—se-wag-ila!*
Tem-Sotetc-Kwi has carved the death-totem over Swiya's
door.
Slowly, softly, like thin music, murmur the sorrow-chant
For Swiya, our mother. Swiya, our mother, is dead.

Q'ulx—se—Q'ulx-se-wag-ila wa!

Gravely, with bowed hearts, we greet you,
O Tem-Sotetc-Kwi, Snow-chief, Ice-hunter,
Priest of the Long White Moons!

Constance Lindsay Skinner

FROM A CHICAGO "L"

The great gray houses walk along
Sombrely and slow,
Weary in the dusk,
In a dragging row.
They are very tired,
Heart-broken and old;
They seem to shudder as they pass,
The winter wind is cold.

Sarah-Margaret Brown

FATE

I

I have so often
Examined all this well-known room
That I inhabit.

There is the open window;
There the locked door, the door I cannot open,
The only doorway.

When at the keyhole often, often
I bend and listen, I can always hear
A muffled conversation.

An argument:
An angry endless argument of people
Who live behind;

Now loudly talking,
Now dimly to their separate conflict moving
Behind the door.

There they seem prisoned,
As I, in this lone room that I inhabit:
My life; my body.

You, of the previous being,
You who once made me and who now discuss me,
Tell me your verdict, and I will obey it!

You, long ago,

With doubting hands and eager trembling fingers,
Prepared my room.

Before I came,
Each gave his token for remembrance, brought it,
And then retired behind the bolted door.

There is the pot of honey
One left, and there the jar of vinegar
On the same table.

Who poured that water
Shining beside the flask of yellow wine?
Who sighed so softly?

Who brought that living flower to the room?
Who groaned, that I can ever hear the echo?
You do not answer.

Meanwhile from out the window
Sounds penetrate of building other houses:
Men building houses.

And so it may be
Some day I'll find some doorway in the wall—
What shall I take them?

What shall I take them
Beyond those doorways, in the other rooms?
What shall I bring them,
That they may love me?

Fatal question!
For all the jangling voices rise together;
I seem to hear:

"What shall he take them?" . . .
Beyond their closed door there's no final answer.
They are debating.

II

O Fate! Have you no other gift
Than voices in a muffled room?
Why do you live behind your door,
And hide yourself in angry gloom?

And why, again, should you not have
One purpose only, one sole word,
Ringing forever round my heart,
Plainly delivered, plainly heard?

Your conversation fills my brain
And tortures all my life, and yet
Gives no result. I often think
You've grown so old that you forget;

And having learnt man's fatal trick
Of talking, talking, talking still,
You're tired of definite design,
And laugh at having lost your will.

Harold Monro

HILLSIDE POEMS

WINTER RAIN

It is sad, this rain
Drip-dripping in the night
Monotonously
Into the snow;
Dripping from the corners of the house
And the ends of black twigs
All night long without change.
Rain, rain soft-fingered,
Lifting up the white snow,
Uncovering the clay beneath;
Rain, soft,
Almost unwilling—
The fingers of an old woman
Who cannot resist
Slipping downstairs in the night
To the front room,
And lifting the sheet for a last look
At what it conceals.

A NAKED MAPLE

You have put off your leaves.
You are like a runner who stands naked at the mark,
Calm and certain of victory.

You are glorious in your ease,
Waiting for the first silver whistle of the snow;
And in your sureness
That the yellow medal of a May moon will be pinned to
your breast,
Clothed again and triumphant.

NOONTIME

Noontime and locusts,
Locusts goading the heat
Quivering over the hay-fields;
Yet the men arise from half-eaten dinners
And hood canvas over the stacks—
The full tawny breasts of the hayfields—
For the first dark finger of lust
Is pointing over a steeple
Far in the distance.

JUDGES

Between her two brothers,
Who argue of nations and laws
With a neighbor,
She stands, big with a child,
Watching the sunshine;
Waiting the end of their talk,
Saying nothing.

Frederick R. McCreary

ALONE ON THE HILL

Alone on the hill
In the warm October noon,
With the woods below
And beyond their brilliance the sea:
The moment has come,
The rapt still instant of being,
When water and wood are gone.
There is nothing now
But the on-running fluid of hours
Gleaming with blue, yellow, crimson.
Now quick! Let me run on sharp stones,
Let me strangle in surf choked with the bitter salt-water!
Let me feel pain, feel torture,
And the acid hunger of loneliness!
Give me self, self—
Before I am lost
In this madness of space eternal,
This horror of dream triumphant.

Frederick R. McCreary

INCIDENTALS

DUST IN THE ROAD

The dust
Is a yellow-grey veil
Over the limbs of the wind.
And the little breeze dons it,
That her fleet litheness,
And the whirling torsions of her sprite's form,
May be apparent
As she gaily runs down the road
To greet us.

TAPS

Out of the night,
Up from the serene valley of the Missouri,
Over the free forested Kansas hills
Come notes of a bugle—
Mincing, silver-slippered steps of music.

THE STAR

When the "screws" had made their last round
And the lights in the cells were out,
I arose and peered out the window.
And just over the edge of the prison-wall
I saw a tiny, twinkling, yellow star

Furtively winking at me,
Like the eye of the Infinite;
Mischievously happy
Because it had slipped me a bit of joy
Over the wall, from "the outside."

PORTRAIT OF AN OLD ROUÉ

The seeds of his sin
Thrust tiny red roots
Among the cell-crevices of his face.
Now their minute purple tendrils
Trace, on his cheeks and nose,
Vine-patterns as intricately beautiful
As his fastidious iniquities.

Hi Simons

TAK FOR SIDST

To C. S.

"Good-bye," you said, and your voice was an echo, a
promise.
You turned to go, a grey iron ghost.
The night took you.
Insubstantial as air, stronger than iron,
You were here and had gone.
Your voice was an omen, an echo.

Babette Deutsch

IN THE OFFICE

THE GUARDIANS

Old men nodding over great books,
Always writing with gold pens,
Every morning
Adding figures,
Turning pages;
Every morning
A little grayer,
A little mustier,
A little older.

Old men!—do you keep Age
Hidden between your desks?
Will she catch me
If I come down to ask you
For the October statement?

AILEEN

She goes through the order of the day
Like a nun.
The rattle of her typewriter
Is the rustle of a rosary;
And she speaks in the telephone
With the retreated delicacy
Of one who murmurs before an altar.

Gwendolen Haste

MOTHERHOOD

Playing alone by the ocean's edge,
  Eager and unafraid,
You are the child I used to be,
  Playing the games I played.

Now I have only a coward's heart,
  Finding you all too dear,
Learning at last that love shall teach
  The fearless how to fear.

You are so little against the sky,
  Laughing and undismayed—
Oh, little son by the ocean's edge,
  I am afraid, afraid!

Medora C. Addison

THE LOVER

You do not know the wonder I will pour on your name—
It will burst like thunder with all heaven for a frame!
I will raise it as a flame that the wind blows under,
I will cast myself asunder—to my shame, to my blame!
I will make a fame, a wonder of your name.

Paul Tanaquil

FIRE

Love, let us light
A fire tonight,
A wood fire on the hearth.

With torn and living tongues the flames leap.
Hungrily
They catch and lift, to beat their sudden wings
Toward freedom and the sky.
The hot wood sings
And crackles in a pungent ecstasy
That seems half pain of death, and half a vast
Triumphant exultation of release
That its slow life-time of lethargic peace
Should come to this wild rapture at the last.

We watch it idly, and our casual speech
Drops slowly into silence.
Something stirs and struggles in me,
Something out of reach
Of surface thoughts, a slow and formless thing—
Not I, but a dim memory
Born of the dead behind me. In my blood
The blind race turns, groping and faltering.

Desires
Only half glimpsed, not understood,
Stir me and shake me. Fires

Answer the fire, and vague shapes pass
Like shapes of wind across the grass.

The red flames catch and lift,
Roaring and sucking in a furious blaze;
And a strange, swift
Hunger for violence is in me. My blood pounds
With a dark memory of age-old days,
And mad red nights I never knew,
When the dead in me lived, and horrid sounds
Broke from their furry throats.
In drunken rounds,
Blood-crazed, they danced before the leaping flames,
While something twisted in the fire. . . .

Now as the flames mount higher
Strange pictures pass. I cannot see them quite
And yet I feel them.
I am in a dread
Dark temple, and I beat my head
In maddened rite,
Before the red-hot belly of a god
Who eats his worshippers. . . .
This is a funeral pyre
And one lies dead
Who was my life. The fat smoke curls and eddies,
Beckoning suttee. . . .
But the moment slips
To Bacchanalian revels—quick hot lips

And leaping limbs, lit by the glare
Of human torches. . . .

A sudden spark
Goes crackling upward, followed by a shower;
And I am in the hills, cool hills and dark,
Primeval as the fire. The beacon flare
Leaps in a roaring tower,
Spattering in sparks among the stars
Tales of wild wars.
And on a distant crest
Its mate makes answer. . . .

But the embers gleam
Like molten metal steaming at a forge,
Where with rough jest
Great lusty fellows
Ply the roaring bellows,
And clang the song of labor—and the dream
Man builds in metal. . . .

Now the red flame steadies.
Softly and quietly it burns,
Purring, and its embers wear
A friendly and domestic air.

This is the hearth-fire—home and peace at last.
Comfort and safety are attendant here.
The primal fear
Is shut away, to whistle in the blast

Beyond the doorway where the shadows twine.
The fire is safety, and the fire is home,
Light, warmth and food. Here careless children come
Filling the place with laughter;
And after
Men make good council-talk, and old men spin,
With that great quiet of the wise,
Tales of dead beauty, and of dying eyes.

The fire is drooping now. A log falls in
Softly upon itself, like one grown tired
With ecstasy. The lithe tongues sink
In ash and ember:
And something I remember
From ages gone—and yet I cannot think—
Some secret of the end,
Of earth grown old, and death turned friend,
And man who passes
Like flame, like light, like wind across the grasses.

Ah, what was that? A sudden terror sped
Behind me in the shadows. I am cold;
And I should like your hand to hold
Now that the fire is dead.
Love, light the lamp, and come away to bed.
Fire is a strange thing, burning in your head.

Eunice Tietjens

COMMENT

THE UTTERANCE OF POETRY

IN the *Literary Review* of a recent New York *Evening Post* Lawrence Mason tells whimsically of the tortures he has endured in hearing poetry read aloud. Listing "several different methods," he says:

> Some chant or intone it in a dulcet sing-song that woos reluctant slumber from her lair. Some attack it with athletic vigor, and pride themselves upon the sheer speed of their delivery. Others find the *summum bonum* in emphasizing the beat with the deadly regularity of a metronome. Still others coldly isolate and anatomize each line till there is no more savor in it than in a dried prune. Others, again, so boggle and halt and garble and apologize and re-read that the hearer is driven to madness, despair, or violent revolt.

And he refers to a cousin "whose method is none of these—his sole and sufficient guiding principle is to conceal from his unfortunate hearers every evidence of versification."

Mr. Mason's suffering reminds me of my own experience with a certain "eminent dramatic revelator" (so advertised) who for two seasons has given expensive recitals in Chicago under the alleged patronage of women of social prominence, of whom some, as I definitely ascertained, had never consented to the use of their names, and others had consented in a mistaken impulse of kindliness while in blessed ignorance of the man and his "art." The revelator, whose programs ranged from *Othello* to *Deburau*, followed the method of Mr. Mason's

cousin, but enriched it with a kind of vocal gymnastics inherited from the elocutionary school of the eighteen-seventies. While the three-dollar-a-head audience sat in silence under the infliction, I amused myself, during the half-hour or so that a heroic sense of duty held me there, in certain speculations about the simple, but much abused art of reading poetry aloud.

It would seem to be a rare gift—the beautiful reading of poetry. Even the poets themselves are often disappointing, though there is usually a degree of beauty and illumination to be gained from a poet's reading of his own verse. The poet instinctively emphasizes rhythm, sometimes even to the point of intoning or chanting it; indeed, he rarely carries this too far. But not all poets have good voices, an accent neither too local nor too studiedly correct, and a simple effective delivery.

Certain poets, of course, it is a privilege to hear—their reading is as much a work of art as the poem, and the two fit together in indissoluble unity. I used to feel this of Lindsay, whose first reading of *The Congo* at POETRY's first banquet—in March, 1914—was a triumph in the double art. But of late Lindsay has acquired bad habits —his reading has become too loud and melodramatic. John Masefield's very simple reading of his poems is beautiful beyond words, because of that marvellous bass voice of his, rich with all the sorrows of the world. Carl Sandburg also has a deep-toned organ in his throat which he uses with subtle simplicity in the proof of his delicate

rhythms. The fine voice of William Butler Yeats is of higher pitch than these; his quiet intoning of poetry nobly illustrates its beauty. Lew Sarett's presentation of his Indian poems is their perfect and almost necessary completion. Robert Frost's personality and voice also fulfil and emphasize the quality of his poems. Witter Bynner has a rich voice and graceful delivery, but an over-precise utterance mars the effect of his reading for me. Alfred Kreymborg, Carlos Williams, Maxwell Bodenheim—each of these complements his very personal rhythm in the utterance of his poems. And Padraic Colum brings to us the authentic Celtic tune—he is even more of an Irishman than Mr. Yeats.

I wish I could say as much for the women. Amy Lowell, Eunice Tietjens, Lola Ridge, Helen Hoyt, Marjorie Seiffert, Florence Frank, Jean Untermeyer—all these read well, some of them brilliantly; all simply, and in rhythmic fulfilment of their poems. But none of them with quite the artistic beauty which some of the men have attained.

On the stage one rarely hears beautiful utterance of poetry. In all my unusual experience of theatricalized Shakespeare, which, beginning with Edwin Booth in my sixth year, includes almost every distinguished interpreter since his time, I have heard only one whose reading of the lines—no, not reading, not anything remembered and recited—whose spontaneous utterance of the lines—seems to me of such perfection, such strange

and consummate beauty, as to be forever memorable and—alas—incomparable. This was Ada Rehan: to hear her as Viola or Rosalind was to be moved by a voice, deep and rich like falling waters, which turned English words into speech-music of transcendent quality, music that moved one like Kubelik's violin or Isadora Duncan's dancing.

Among women, Ellen Terry was perhaps Miss Rehan's closest rival; but her voice was not quite so bitter-sweet, and there was a slight jerkiness in her delivery which gave it vitality and picturesqueness but detracted from absolute music. Mary Anderson had a voice like a cello, of extraordinary richness and range, and a fine sense of poetic cadence; but her delivery, though beautiful, to be remembered always with joy, was more deliberate and studied, leaning more to the old rhetorical school.

Booth was wonderful, of course—my youth shone with the romantic glamour of him. But it must be admitted that Booth mouthed his lines by overstressing his consonants, and that his delivery was not the spontaneous utterance of perfect art but the brilliant recital of speeches learned. He was a great artist of his Victorian time and his somewhat rhetorical school; but he was not an originator, not one of the genius-illumined who strike out new times, new methods.

Henry Irving had a more far-seeing mind, but his gift was for the spectacular. His speech was gusty and storm-ridden, his cadences churned and broken like a bold

skiff outriding a gale. It was an adventure to listen to the lines of his Shylock—the poetry was so often in danger and so unexpectedly triumphant. He ranted early and often, but his ranting was always in the picture, always in the service of a deliberate conventionalization, a planned and achieved pattern. The modern poetic drama has scrapped his particular convention; but we may still envy him his skill, for we cannot yet claim to have established our own convention.

If Booth and Irving ranted sometimes, Lawrence Barrett ranted always; and John McCullough was seldom above the temptation, although his robust blank verse had always a certain beauty of cadence. Richard Mansfield came in a time of more simple Thespian manners, but he broke up the lines, he had no sense of rhythm; whether in *Henry Fifth* or *Beau Brummel*, he spoke always prose. Of all the male actors I have heard, Forbes-Robertson is the most assured master of poetic cadence; but his reading of Shakespeare, though beautiful, is sophisticated and deliberate—it lacks the spontaneity, and also the variety, which made Ada Rehan's, and even Ellen Terry's, a continual flaring of new fires.

The Irish Players are rhythmically endowed beyond any other company of my remembrance; which is not strange, since Irish speech is musical with poetic cadence, and these players were trained by Synge and Yeats and Lady Gregory, the three poets who have used it to the highest poetic purpose. This beautiful rhythmic speech has been

the secret of their charm, the one most potent reason for the effect of artistic unity and beauty in their rendition of the great plays of the Celtic renaissance.

The subject has led me to reminiscence when inquiry was intended—we have lingered with the masters instead of seeking examples in common life. If few actors read poetry with due regard for the rhythm, still fewer public readers have any conception of the primary principles of the art they profess, even when they have freed themselves of the hideous old elocutionary tradition which deliberately destroyed poetic cadence, broke up the lines, and turned poetry into agonizing prose.

This tradition is chiefly to blame for banishing from modern life an art which should be at least as common and friendly a pleasure and solace as music. A good voice, a sense of rhythm, simple unexaggerated utterance, all showing respect for the line and revealing the larger cadences which overlie the basic pattern—such a combination may make the reading-aloud of poetry, in any household or group of friends, a joy as fine as the excellent playing of a musical instrument.

More encouragement of this art might reveal and develop exceptional talent in persons scarcely aware of it. I remember an exquisite out-door presentation of Ernest Dowson's *Pierrot of the Minute* by two young sisters who had never realized their rare gift for the most delicate musical subtleties of poetic dialogue. And in the history department of the University of Chicago hides a

certain modest professor whose reading of the *Ode to a Nightingale* gives his friends an experience as magnificent as Muratore ever offered with his proudest solo, or Paderewski in his palmiest days.

The reading of poetry should be an easily accessible delight instead of the bore which it usually is. The defect chiefly to be avoided is a certain high-sounding rotundity which most people assume like a toga when they start to read poetry aloud. Most voices need training, to be sure, to develop the latent beauty in them; every school should teach the proper use of this delicate musical instrument within us. Given a good voice properly controlled, an ear for poetic rhythm, and the simplest possible observance of the pitches and tones of poetically enhanced speech, and you have the beginning of good reading of poetry—a beginning which practice, and the stimulus of emotional and imaginative intensity, may develop into high artistic beauty. *H. M.*

TRANSLATING WANG WEI

Just as Tu Fu and Li Po are often spoken of in conjunction by the Chinese, so are two other great poets of the T'ang Dynasty, Meng Hao-jan and Wang Wei. The latter, who lived 699-759 A. D., is distinguished among the poets of China by a deep and beautiful optimism. The melancholy that wounded Tu Fu and Meng Hao-jan seems not to have touched Wang Wei beneath the surface.

And, whereas Li Po sought in wine solace from the ills and sorrows of life, Wang Wei found an abiding content in the "green and healing hills" and in the highly humbled and attuned mysticism of Lao-tzu's teaching.

As a young man, Wang Wei became Assistant Secretary of State; but at the age of thirty-one, when his wife died, he left his post and retired to live near Mount Chung-nan. Two of his poems about Mount Chung-nan are published in this number, both breathing the sober sweetness and simplicity of his retired life. One of them begins with the line, "My heart in middle age found the Way"; the Chinese word for the Way being Tao, the first character of the title of Lao-tzu's book, *Tao-Te-Ching*, which may be translated in whole as *The Way and the Exemplification*. Taoism appears, then, to have been the consolation of Wang Wei, although Professor Herbert M. Giles, in his volume *Chinese Literature*, declares it to have been Buddhism. We realize, not only from the direct statement in this one poem, but from the spirit of all his poems, that he had serenely accepted the Way, the natural way of the universe.

There was for a while a strong division between the followers of Lao-tzu and the followers of Confucius. Po Chu-yi ridiculed Taoist doctrines in the following four lines, crisply translated by Professor Giles:

> "Who know speak not, who speak know naught,"
> Are words from Lao-tzu's lore.
> What then becomes of Lao-tzu's own
> Five thousand words or more?

The answer is that Lao-tzu's words, fused now with both Buddhism and Confucianism, have become an integral part of the religion of China. Here are two characteristic quotations from his gospel:

> Follow diligently the Way in your own heart, but make no display of it to the world.
>
> Do nothing, and all things will be done.

Among the selections printed in this issue, note the last two lines of the poem, *Answering Vice-Prefect Chang:* a question asked in terms of complicated morality and answered in terms of simple happiness:

> You ask me about good and evil?
> Hark, on the lake there's a fisherman singing.

This does not mean that the ideal Taoist literally "did nothing." As a matter of fact Wang Wei was a physician, a high government official, a great poet, and also one of China's most illustrious painters. (A scroll attributed to him is on view at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.) His activities, however, were all in flow with universal forces: they sang like the fisherman—there was no fret, no jealousy, no self-exaltation, no irritated struggle; only harmony, humility, exalted identity with nature—a true and wide knowledge of values, making him a master of words, a master of the brush, and a master of life. Yes, there was a sure gaiety in Wang Wei, instanced in his *Message to P'ai Ti*, the fellow-poet with whom he longed to drink again and to "sing a wild

poem"; or in the verses already mentioned, *My Retreat at Chung-nan*, in which he happily anticipated the day when he should "meet an old wood-cutter, and talk and laugh and never return."

In the last two lines of the poem to P'ai Ti, he addressed his friend, according to a too frequent Chinese manner, by the name of Chieh-yu, who was a recluse of the Ch'u kingdom, famous somewhat for drinking, but more for stopping Confucius' chariot and warning him against politics with the song:

> O phœnix, O phoenix,
> Virtue is corrupted!
> What is past is past all counsel,
> What is future may be moulded. . . .
> Come away! Come away!
> Politics are dangerous!

And Wang Wei's reference in the final line of this same poem is to the place where he will be drinking with his friend; yet Five Willows is the place named, where long ago T'ao Ch'ien had lived, another famous recluse who was both a great writer and a great drinker.

The last two lines of the poem *In my Lodge at Wang-Ch'uan after a Long Rain*, clear and significant as they are in themselves, yet contain, for the Chinese reader, enriching allusion and connotation. There was once a scholar, Yang-tzu, who, before he became a student of Lao-tzu, was highly respected and honored by his fellow-men. Later, through the many years of his discipleship, he lost his prestige, and even a boor would take precedence over

him; but he was glad because he had formerly been proud and pretentious. The last line refers to a hermit who was fond of sea-gulls; they followed him wherever he went. His father asked why they were not afraid and bade the son bring him some; but next day, when the hermit went out intending to take them to his father, they all flew away.

The poem in the group most in need of explanation, because of its allusion to historic events and personages, is *The Beautiful Hsi-shih;* and the last two lines of *A Song of Young Girls from Lo-Yang* also require the following summary:

During the Chou Dynasty, when the Yueh kingdom was conquered by the Wu kingdom, the Yueh king still held his throne and plotted to throw off the tributary yoke. Aided by his able minister, Fan Li, he planned to distract the king of Wu with women. Fan Li searched through the Yueh kingdom for girls to beguile him and came upon Hsi-shih washing clothes by a lake. Conquering his own love for her, he fiercely persuaded her to his scheme. She remained at court for some time; and the Wu king, in his infatuation, forgot affairs of state. Weakened by this means, the Wu kingdom was overcome by the Yueh kingdom; and Fan Li eventually accepted Hsi-shih as his reward. The whimsical phrasing of the line "If by wrinkling their brows they can copy her beauty" alludes to the fact that she had heart trouble, and it was said that her drawn brows, her look of gentle-

ness in suffering, which the girls of her time tried unsuccessfully to imitate, made her more beautiful.

One might enlarge upon references in others of the poems. For instance, the quatrain called *Lines* contains the phrase "my silken window." This is not a decorative adjective. It merely means that, before the use of paper or glass, windows in China were of silk. The last line of the same poem is made lovelier by knowledge that the *mei*, or plum blossom, is in China the earliest flower of spring. It is interesting to know that *A Song at Wei-Cheng*, which was written for music, is still popular through China as a song of farewell, and that to this day "since we picked willow-branches at Wei-Cheng" means "since we parted." The beauty of the four lines called *A Parting*, with its simple, profound expression of the abiding presence of friendly nature and the transient presence of friendly man, is heightened by the reader's response to the grace of the name Wang Sun, which from a dim and ancient origin still means in China a noble-hearted young scholar, or sometimes lover. But on the whole, these T'ang poems are so valid and universal in uttering beauty that they may vitally enter the poetic consciousness of a westerner still ignorant of the various allusions.

Translating the work of Wang Wei and others in the *Three Hundred Poems of the T'ang Dynasty*, Dr. Kiang and I have tried constantly to transfer the Chinese idiom into an equivalent idiom in English, rather than to stress the

local novelty and pungency of Chinese phrasing. It would be as erroneous to overemphasize the component radicals of a Chinese character as to overemphasize the component meanings of such words in English as daybreak, breakfast, nightfall or landscape. The delicate importance of the translator's office lies in bringing from one language to another the rounded and proportioned effect of a whole poem. And we, conscientiously, have tried to make felt, in our translations, the high honesty and wise humanness of poets who have in many ways, and in one Wei especially, lived closer to the heart of life than importunate passion brings the poets of the West.

Witter Bynner

Note by the Editor: Mr. Bynner's preference for the line of four feet and for the four-line or eight-line poem is his tribute to the close prosodic structure of Chinese poetry. In the translator's opinion the form he has chosen is the closest approach to the original which is possible in English.

REVIEWS

A COOL MASTER

Collected Poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson (with portrait frontispiece). Macmillan Co.

Near the middle of the last century, Ralph Waldo Emerson, a sentimental philosopher with a genius for a sudden twisted hardness of words, wrote lines like:

> Daughters of Time, the hypocritic days,
> Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,

> And marching single in an endless file,
> Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.

And it was with Emerson that American poetry may be said to have begun. He was slight enough, but at his best a master, and above all a master of sound. And he began a tradition that still exists.

He was followed shortly by Emily Dickinson, a master of a certain dowdy but undeniably effective mannerism, a spinster who may have written her poems to keep time with her broom. A terrible woman, who annihilated God as if He were her neighbor, and her neighbor as if he were God—all with a leaf or a sunbeam that chanced to fall within her sight as she looked out the window or the door during a pause in her sweeping:

> And we, we placed the hair,
> And drew the head erect;
> And then an awful leisure was,
> Our faith to regulate.

The woman at her most terrible had the majesty of an erect corpse, a prophet of unspeakable doom; and she spoke through sealed lips. She was greater than Emerson, was one of the greatest poets of our language, but was more or less in the tradition that Emerson began. She and Emerson were probably the only poets of any permanently great importance who occurred in this country during their period.

The tradition of New England hardness has been carried on by Mr. Robinson, in many ways may be said

to have reached its pinnacle in Mr. Robinson. This poet, with a wider culture than his predecessors, has linked a suavity of manner to an even greater desperation than that of Dickinson's *The Last Night*—his hardness has become a polished stoniness of vision, of mind.

This man has the culture to know that to those to whom philosophy is comprehensible it is not a matter of the first importance; and he knows that these people are not greatly impressed by a ballyhoo statement of the principles of social or spiritual salvation. A few times he has given his opinion, but quietly and intelligently, and has then passed on to other things. A man's philosophical belief or attitude is certain to be an important part of his milieu, and as a part of his milieu may give rise to perceptions, images. His philosophy becomes a part of his life as does the country in which he was born, and will tinge his vision of the country in which he was born as that country may affect his philosophy. So long as he gives us his own perceptions as they arise in this milieu, he remains an artist. When he becomes more interested in the possible effects of his beliefs upon others, and expounds or persuades, he begins to deal with generalities, concepts (see Croce), and becomes a philosopher, or more than likely a preacher, a mere peddler. This was the fallacy of Whitman and many of the English Victorians, and this is what invalidates nearly all of Whitman's work. Such men forget that it is only the particular, the perception, that is perpetually startling. The generality, or concept,

can be pigeon-holed, absorbed, and forgotten. And a ballyhoo statement of a concept is seldom a concise one—it is neither fish nor flesh. That is why Whitman is doomed to an eventual dull vacuum that the intricately delicate mind of Plato will never know.

Much praise has fallen to Mr. Robinson because he deals with people, "humanity"; and this is a fallacy of inaccurate brains. Humanity is simply Mr. Robinson's physical milieu; the thing, the compound of the things, he sees. It is not the material that makes a poem great, but the perception and organization of that material. A pigeon's wing may make as great an image as a man's tragedy, and in the poetry of Mr. Wallace Stevens has done so. Mr. Robinson's greatness lies not in the people of whom he has written, but in the perfect balance, the infallible precision, with which he has stated their cases.

Mr. Robinson's work may be classified roughly in two groups—his blank verse, and his more closely rhymed poems, including the sonnets. Of his blank verse, the *Octaves* in *The Children of the Night* fall curiously into a group by themselves, and will be considered elsewhere in this review. The other poems in blank verse may be called sketches—some of people the poet may have known, some of historical figures, some of legendary—and they have all the evanescence, brittleness, of sketches. However, there are passages in many of these poems that anticipate Robert Frost, who in at least one poem, *An Old Man's Winter Night*, has used this method with greater

effect than its innovator, and has created a great poem. Mr. Frost, of course, leaves more of the bark on his rhythms, achieves a sort of implied colloquialism which has already been too much discussed. But with Frost in mind, consider this passage from *Isaac and Archibald:*

> A journey that I made one afternoon
> With Isaac to find out what Archibald
> Was doing with his oats. It was high time
> Those oats were cut, said Isaac; and he feared
> That Archibald—well, he could never feel
> Quite sure of Archibald. Accordingly
> The good old man invited me—that is,
> Permitted me—to go along with him;
> And I, with a small boy's adhesiveness
> To competent old age, got up and went.

The similarity to Frost is marked, as is also the pleasing but not profound quality of the verse. It has a distinction, however, that many contemporaries—French as well as English and American—could acquire to good advantage.

Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford, a much praised poem, seems largely garrulous, occasionally brilliant, and always brittle; and one can go on making very similar comments on the other poems in this form, until one comes to those alternately praised and lamented poems, *Merlin* and *Lancelot*. Remembering Tennyson, one's first inclination is to name these poems great, and certainly they are not inconsiderable. But there are long passages of purely literary frittering, and passages that, while they may possess a certain clean distinction of

manner, are dry and unremunerative enough. But there are passages in these poems which are finer than any other blank verse Mr. Robinson has written—dark, massive lines that rise out of the poem and leave one bitter and empty:

> On Dagonet the silent hand of Merlin
> Weighed now as living iron that held him down
> With a primeval power. Doubt, wonderment,
> Impatience, and a self-accusing sorrow
> Born of an ancient love, possessed and held him
> Until his love was more than he could name,
> And he was Merlin's fool, not Arthur's now:
> "Say what you will, I say that I'm the fool
> Of Merlin, King of Nowhere; which is Here.
> With you for king and me for court, what else
> Have we to sigh for but a place to sleep?"

But passing on from this less important side of Mr. Robinson's work to his rhymed poems, one finds at least a large number of perfectly executed poems of a sensitive and feline approach. What effect rhyme, or the intention of rhyme, has upon an artist's product, is a difficult thing to estimate. The question verges almost upon the metaphysical. The artist, creating, lives at a point of intensity, and whether the material is consciously digested before that point is reached, and is simply organized and set down at the time of creation; or whether the point of intensity is first reached and the material then drawn out of the subconscious, doubtless depends a good deal on the individual poet, perhaps on the individual poem. The latter method presupposes a great deal of previous

absorption of sense impressions, and is probably the more valid, or at least the more generally effective, method. For the rhythm and the "matter," as they come into being simultaneously and interdependent, will be perfectly fused and without loose ends. The man who comes to a form with a definitely outlined matter, will, more than likely, have to cram or fill before he has finished, and the result is broken. The second method does not, of course, presuppose rhyme, but it seems that rhyme, as an obstacle, will force the issue.

The best of Mr. Robinson's poems appear to have come into being very much in this second fashion. He has spun his images out of a world of sense and thought that have been a part of him so long that he seems to have forgot their beginning—has spun these images out as the movement of his lines, the recurrence of his rhymes, have demanded them. A basic philosophy and emotional viewpoint have provided the necessary unity.

This method inevitably focuses the artist's mind upon the object of the instant, makes it one with that object, and eliminates practically all individual "personality" or self-consciousness. The so-called personal touch is reduced to a minimum of technical habit that is bound to accrue in time to any poet who studies his medium with an eye to his individual needs. The man of some intelligence who cannot, or can seldom, achieve this condition of fusion with his object, is driven back to his ingenuity; and this man, if he have sufficient intelligence or ingenuity,

becomes one of the "vigorous personalities" of poetry; and he misses poetry exactly in so far as his personality is vigorous. Browning, on two or three occasions one of the greatest of all poets, is, for the most part, simply the greatest of ingenious versifiers. He was so curious of the quirks with which he could approach an object, that he forgot the object in admiring, and expecting admiration for, himself. And it is for this reason that Mr. Robinson, working in more or less the same field as Browning, is the superior of Browning at almost every turn.

And it is for this reason also that Mr. Robinson's *Ben Jonson* is a failure. For the poet, while in no wise concerned with his own personality, is so intent upon the personality of Jonson, his speaker, that, for the sake of Jonson's vigor, he becomes talkative and eager of identifying mannerism; and the result is, that Shakespeare, about whom the poem is written, comes to the surface only here and there, and any actual image almost never.

The following stanza is an example of Mr. Robinson's work at its best:

> And like a giant harp that hums
> On always, and is always blending
> The coming of what never comes
> With what has past and had an ending,
> The City trembles, throbs, and pounds
> Outside, and through a thousand sounds
> The small intolerable drums
> Of Time are like slow drops descending.

And there is the compact, intensely contemplated statement of *Eros Turannos*, a poem that is, in forty-eight

lines, as complete as a Lawrence novel. And the nimble trickery of *Miniver Cheevey*, as finished a piece of burlesque as one can find in English. A few of us have feared, in the last few years, that Mr. Robinson was deteriorating; but going through this book one is reassured. If there is nothing in *The Three Taverns* to equal *Eros Turannos*, there are at least two or three poems as great as any save that one Mr. Robinson has written; and there is nothing in these last poems to preclude the possibility of another *Eros Turannos*.

Mr. Robinson, as probably the highest point in his tradition, has been followed by Frost, a more specialized, and generally softer artist. And there is Gould, who, if he belongs to the tradition at all, is a mere breaking-up of the tradition, a fusion with Whitman. But in considering the work of a man of so varied a genius as Mr. Robinson, it is interesting, if not over-important, to observe the modes of expression that he has anticipated if not actually influenced; even where he has not chosen, or has not been able to develop, these modes.

The resemblance in matter and manner, save for Mr. Robinson's greater suavity, of certain poems, especially the sonnets, in *The Children of the Night*, to the epitaphs in *The Spoon River Anthology*, has been noted by other writers; and I believe it has been said that Mr. Masters was ignorant of the existence of these poems until after the *Anthology* was written. There is little to be said about such a poem as Mr. Robinson's *Luke Havergal:*

No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies
To rift the fiery night that's in your eyes;
But there, where western glooms are gathering,
The dark will end the dark, if anything:
God slays Himself with every leaf that flies,
And hell is more than half of paradise.
No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies—
In eastern skies.

Out of a grave I come to tell you this,
Out of a grave I come to quench the kiss
That flames upon your forehead with a glow
That blinds you to the way that you must go.

And Mr. Masters' satire has been forestalled and outdone in these early sonnets.

But a more curious and interesting resemblance to a later poet is found in the *Octaves* in the same volume:

To me the groaning of world-worshippers
Rings like a lonely music played in hell
By one with art enough to cleave the walls
Of heaven with his cadence, but without
The wisdom or the will to comprehend
The strangeness of his own perversity,
And all without the courage to deny
The profit and the pride of his defeat.

If the actual thought of this passage is not that of Wallace Stevens, nevertheless the quality of the thought, the manner of thinking, as well as the style, quite definitely is. To what extent Mr. Robinson may have influenced this greatest of living and of American poets, one cannot say, but in at least three of the *Octaves*, one phase of Mr. Stevens' later work—that of *Le Monocle de Mon Oncle* and other recent and shorter poems—is certainly fore-

shadowed. Mr. Robinson's sound is inevitably the less rich, the less masterly.

In another of the *Octaves* there are a few lines that suggest the earlier poems of Mr. T. S. Eliot, but the resemblance is fleeting and apparently accidental.

If the tradition of New England seems to be reaching an end in the work of Mr. Frost, Mr. Robinson has at least helped greatly in the founding of a tradition of culture and clean workmanship that such poets as Messrs. Stevens, Eliot, and Pound, as H. D. and Marianne Moore, are carrying on. Mr. Robinson was, when he began, as much a pioneer as Mr. Pound or Mr. Yeats, and he has certainly achieved as great poetry. While the tradition begun, more or less, by Whitman, has deteriorated, in the later work of Mr. Carl Sandburg, into a sort of plasmodial delirium; and while the school of mellifluous and almost ominous stage-trappings, as exemplified by Poe, has melted into a sort of post-Celtic twilight, and has nearly vanished in the work of Mr. Aiken; the work of these writers and a few others stands out clear and hard in the half-light of our culture. I cannot forget that they exist, even in the face of the desert. *Yvor Winters*

MR. YEATS' PLAYS

Four Plays for Dancers, by William Butler Yeats. Macmillan Co.

Mr. Yeats is one of the few poets writing poetic plays who are also, in exact meaning, men of the theatre. Just

as he is probably the foremost poet of his generation, so he shares with Gordon Craig and one or two others the distinction of having seen furthest into the theatre as it may become. That youth which in the Irish temperament is so old as to be imperishable has retained for him his leadership in the poetic drama and in the exploration of new forms. *Four Plays for Dancers*, as in its own time *The Land of Heart's Desire* (written "without adequate knowledge of the stage"!), is the work of a pioneer bringing a form to its perfection with no apparent interval of apprenticeship.

"My blunder has been," he writes, "that I did not discover in my youth that my theatre must be the ancient theatre that can be made by unrolling a carpet, or marking out a place with a stick, or setting a screen against a wall." When he was last in America he told us of such a theatre, so intimate that its few properties could be carried by the players in a taxicab and set in a drawing-room, and of how he had found a first model in the *Noh* stage of aristocratic Japan. Shortly afterward *The Only Jealousy of Emer* was published in POETRY; and now, with three other plays similar in construction, it appears in book form. There are also masks and costume plates by Edmond Dulac for *At the Hawk's Well*, produced as early as 1916 in England, music for the dances and songs by W. M. Rummel, and suggestive notes on the plays and their production.

Unhesitatingly one may call this book the most signifi-

cant contribution to the art-theatre that has been written in a long while. True, it is the art-theatre in its most aristocratic phase; but the best in this art, as in another, must sometimes, in relation to audiences, be aristocratic. What gives to these plays their significance, apart from the almost ineffable beauty with which at least two of them are written, is that he has found a way by which the color, the enchantment, the distance and subtlety of legendary drama may be projected intimately and by a medium of amazing simplicity. In doing this, granting that one's insight into the effect of the plays in production is accurate, he has conquered difficulties which would seem insurmountable.

He has secured the illusion of distance, not in despite of, but *through*, the intimacy of a small audience in contact with the players. Never before in the western theatre, and in no other western art except perhaps that of the story-teller setting his tale directly in the imagination, has such an effect been possible. It is the quality of his technique, the unerring sense of the theatre, which seems to make this an authentic form both in these individual plays and as existing apart from them. Beside it the artificial intimacy effected by Max Reinhardt becomes claptrap. Restricting himself to the simplest means, he has chosen them with the instinct of a poet, with that same instinct which made such lines as these of the Musician:

> I call to the eye of the mind
> A well long choked up and dry,
> And boughs long stripped by the wind.

And I call to the mind's eye
Pallor of an ivory face,
Its lofty dissolute air,
A man climbing up to a place
The salt sea wind has swept bare.

"In literature if we would not be parvenus we must have a model;" and as his theatre has been modified until it has become independent of the *Noh*, so a new poetic drama may be liberated by his inspiration.

As for the plays in relation to each other, we have learned long since to expect in the work of Mr. Yeats the clarity and beauty of poetic content and expression that one finds in these plays. We expect it; and it seldom fails the anticipation. If *The Dreaming of the Bones* and *Calvary* do not seem quite to reach the height of the two others, that is not to deny that they are rich in content also. But there is a beauty lacking in them, purity of inspiration replaced by what is not far from propaganda in the one and from an over-subtle interpretation in the other. The mood has flagged somewhat, after the splendor of utterance in *At the Hawk's Well* and *The Only Jealousy of Emer*. These are incomparable.

. . . . . .

Postcript—to "Little Theatres": These plays, when you read them, may not appear difficult to present, what with the elaborate stage directions and the photographs. But I fear that you would find them impossible, lacking a Yeats, a Dulac, and a Michio Itow, who are indispensable. And it would be a mistake to confuse this theatre

in any way with the theatre of Jacques Copeau, which is also admirable. Mr. Yeats has not abandoned the *mise en scène*—he has intensified it. And, incidentally, he has given us, when we are ready for it, one kind of synthetic theatre, including even the management of light.

Cloyd Head

NOTES

Wang Wei, the famous poet-painter who lived in China thirteen centuries ago, interests Mr. Bynner more than any other Chinese poet, and is sufficiently introduced by his editorial. For nearly three years the two translators have been studying Chinese poetry of the great age for the benefit of readers of English, and their book of translations, *The Jade Mountain*, is to be published next autumn by Alfred A. Knopf.

Kiang Kang-hu, who is a scholar in both languages, made the literal English versions which Mr. Bynner, after close consultation over meanings and rhythms, has shaped into English poems.

Eunice Tietjens (Mrs. Cloyd Head) of Chicago, who is a member of POETRY's advisory committee, is the author of two books of verse—*Profiles from China* and *Body and Raiment* (Alfred A. Knopf).

Leonora Speyer (Mrs. Edgar S.), of New York, is the author of *A Canopic Jar* (E. P. Dutton & Co.). Abrigada is not a castle in Spain, but an old house in Long Island where the Speyers lived last summer.

Miss Constance Lindsay Skinner, of New York, received, in 1915, one of POETRY's prizes for her group of Indian poems, *Songs of the Coast-dwellers*. She has not yet printed a volume of her Indian interpretations, but many of them may be found in George W. Cronyn's anthology, *The Path on the Rainbow* (Boni & Liveright).

Mr. Harold Monro, of London, author of three or four books of verse and editor of *The Chap Book*, will publish this spring, through the Poetry Book Shop, of which he is chief, a new book of poems, *Real Property*.

Babette Deutsch (Mrs. A. Yarmolinsky), of New York, is the author of *Banners* (George H. Doran Co.). Mr. and Mrs. Yarmolinsky together translated from the Russian *The Twelve*, by the late Alexander Blok,

which was published in 1920 by B. W. Huebsch, with an introduction by the translators; and they have just issued, through Harcourt, Brace & Co., *Modern Russian Poetry: An Anthology*.

"Paul Tanaquil" is a cosmopolite resident of Coronado, Cal.

The other poets in this number are new to our readers:

Medora C. Addison (Mrs. Charles Read Nutter), of Concord, Mass., will soon publish, through the Yale Univ. Press, her first book of verse, *Dreams and a Sword*.

Mr. F. R. McCreary is a young poet of Cambridge, Mass. Miss Gwendolen Haste, a native of Illinois, is now in business in New York. Miss Sarah-Margaret Brown is a student at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.

Mr. H. Austin Simons, or "Hi Simons," as he prefers to be called, was imprisoned for eighteen months as a conscientious objector at Fort Leavenworth, and since his release has been doing newspaper work in Chicago.

All trace of Mr. Harlow Clarke, except his poems, has disappeared from this office—we shall be grateful for a word from him.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Dreams Out of Darkness, by Jean Starr Untermeyer. B. W. Huebsch.
Explorations, by Robert McAlmon. Egoist Press, London.
Hymen, by H. D. Henry Holt & Co.
Cobblestones, by David Sentner. Alfred A. Knopf.
Poems: Second Series, by J. C. Squire. George H. Doran Co.
The Secret Way, by Zona Gale. Macmillan Co.
A Web of Thoughts, by Marjorie Anderson. Four Seas Co.
With Star and Grass, by Anna Spencer Twitchell. Cornhill Co.
Mystic Songs of Fire and Flame, by K. Arthur-Behenna. Cornhill Co.
Tree-top Mornings, by Ethelwyn Wetherald. Cornhill Co.
Mid Light and Shade, by John Langdon Jones. Duffield & Co.
Anita and Other Poems, by Evarts Scudder. Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
Eternal Helen, by F. Pearce Sturm. Basil Blackwell.
The Traveller's Tale, by Clifford Bax. Basil Blackwell.
Through a Glass, by Fanny DeGroot Hastings. Priv. ptd., New York.

Shadings, by Bessie Glen Buchanan. Privately printed.
The Birth of the Poinsettia, by Francis A. W. Kendall. Priv. ptd.
Irish and Canadian Poems, by Michael A. Hargadon. Modern Printing Co., Montreal.
Pjesme, by Vladislav S. Pavic. Stamparija J. A. Omero Press, N. Y.
Igdrasil, by Royall Snow. Four Seas Co.
The Playground of the Gods and Other Poems, by Elizabeth Huntingdon. Four Seas Co.
Missouri and Other Verse, by Nathaniel M. Baskett, M. D. Privately printed, Canton, Mo.
Legends of Life and Other Poems, by Bertha Oppenheim. Stratford Co.
Mavericks, by William A. Brewer, Jr. Priv. ptd., Berkeley, Cal.

PLAYS:

Plays of Edmond Rostand. Translated by Henderson Daingerfield Norman; illustrated by Ivan Glidden. (2 Vols.) Macmillan Co.
Aria Da Capo, by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Mitchell Kennerley.

ANTHOLOGIES AND TRANSLATIONS:

Modern Russian Poetry, chosen and translated by Babette Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky. Harcourt, Brace & Co.
Die neue Welt, eine Anthologie juengster Amerikanischer Lyric, herausgegeben von Claire Goll. S. Fischer, Berlin.
Fir-flower Tablets. Translated from the Chinese by Florence Ayscough; English versions by Amy Lowell. Houghton Mifflin Co.
Some Contemporary Poets—1920, by Harold Monro. Leonard Parsons, London.

PROSE:

The Golden Fleece and the Heroes Who Lived Before Achilles, by Padraic Colum. Illustrations by Willy Pogany. Macmillan Co.
A Hasty Bunch, by Robert McAlmon. Priv. ptd., Dijon, France.
A Mother's First Prayer, by Kathryn Wire Hammond. Abingdon Press, New York.
The Poetic Procession, by J. F. Roxburgh. Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
The Beginning of Wisdom, by Stephen Vincent Benét. Henry Holt & Co.
Gray Wolf Stories—Indian Mystery Tales of Coyotes, Animals and Men, by Bernard Sexton. Illus. by Gwenyth Waugh. Macmillan Co.
Browningiana in Baylor University, compiled by Aurelia E. Brooks. Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas.

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