Medley of Poems  
by Carl Sandburg

Monologue from a Mattress  
by Louis Untermeyer

Marion Strobel, Ruth Harwood  
Morris Bishop

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How I wish that some English paper had anything like the authentic vitality of POETRY!

Louis Golding

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MARCH 1922

MEDLEY OF POEMS

MOON-RIDERS

WHAT have I saved out of a morning? The earliest of the morning came with moon-mist
And the travel of a moon-spilt purple:
Bars, horse-shoes, Texas long-horns,
Linked in night silver,
Linked under leaves in moonlit silver,
Linked in rags and patches
Out of the ice-houses of the morning moon.
Yes, this was the earliest—
Before the cowpunchers on the eastern rims
Began riding into the sun,
Riding the roan mustangs of morning,
Roping the mavericks after the latest stars.
What have I saved out of a morning?
Was there a child face I saw once
Smiling up a stairway of the morning moon?

II

"It is time for work," said a man in the morning.
He opened the faces of the clocks, saw their works,
Saw the wheels oiled and fitted, running smooth.
"It is time to begin a day's work," he said again,
Watching a bullfinch hop on the rain-worn boards
Of a beaten fence counting its bitter winters.
The clinging feet of the bullfinch and the flash
Of its flying feathers as it flipped away
Took his eyes away from the clocks—his flying eyes.
He walked over, stood in front of the clocks again,
And said, "I'm sorry; I apologize forty ways."

III

The morning paper lay bundled,
Like a spear in a museum,
Across the broken sleeping-room
Of a moon-sheet spider.
The spinning work of the morning spider's feet
Left off where the morning paper's pages lay
In the shine of the web in the summer-dew grass.
The man opened the morning paper: saw the first page,
The back page, the inside pages, the editorials;
Saw the world go by, eating, stealing, fighting;
Saw the headlines, date-lines, funnies, ads,
The marching movies of the workmen going to work, the
workmen striking,
The workmen asking jobs—five million pairs of eyes look
for a boss and say, "Take me";
People eating with too much to eat, people eating with
nothing in sight to eat tomorrow, eating as though
eating belongs where people belong.

"Hustle, you hustlers, while the hustling's good,"
Said the man, turning the morning paper's pages,
Turning among headlines, date-lines, funnies, ads.
"Hustlers carrying the banner," said the man,
Dropping the paper and beginning to hunt the city;
Hunting the alleys, boulevards, back-door by-ways;
Hunting till he found a blind horse dying alone,
Telling the horse, "Two legs or four legs—it's all the same
with a work plug."

A hayfield mist of evening saw him
Watching the moon-riders lose the moon
For new shooting-stars. He asked,
"Christ, what have I saved out of a morning?"
He called up a stairway of the morning moon
And he remembered a child face smiling up that same
stairway.

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FEATHER LIGHTS

Macabre and golden the moon opened a slant of light.
A triangle for an oriole to stand and sing, "Take me home."
A layer of thin white gold feathers for a child queen of gypsies.
So the moon opened a slant of light and let it go.
So the lonesome dogs, the fog moon, the pearl mist, came back.

THE NAKED STRANGER

It is five months off.
Knit, stitch, and hemstitch:
Sheets, bags, towels, these are the offerings.
When he is older, or she is a big girl,
There may be flowers or ribbons or money
For birthday offerings. Now, however,
We must remember it is a naked stranger
Coming to us; and the sheath of the arrival
Is so soft we must be ready, and soft too.

Knit, stitch, hemstitch, it is only five months.

It would be easy to pick a lucky star for this baby
If a choice of two stars lay before our eyes—

[298]
One a pearl-gold star and one pearl-silver—
And the offer of a chance to pick a lucky star.

When the high hour comes
Let there be a light flurry of snow,
A little zigzag of white spots
Against the gray roofs.
The snow-born all understand this as a luck-wish.

MEDLEY

Ignorance came in stones of gold;
The ignorant slept while the hangmen
Hanged the keepers of the lights.
Of sweet stars: such were the apothegms,
Offhand offerings of mule-drivers
Eating sandwiches of rye bread,
Salami and onions.

"Too Many Books," we always called him;
A landscape of masterpieces and old favorites
Fished with their titles for his eyes
In the upstairs and downstairs rooms
Of his house. Whenever he passed
The old-time bar-room where Pete Morehouse
Shot the chief of police, where
The sponge squads shot two bootleggers,
He always remembered the verse story,
*The Face on the Bar-room Floor—*

The tramp on a winter night,
Saddened and warmed with whiskey,
Telling of a woman he wanted
And a woman who wanted him,
How whiskey wrecked it all;
Taking a piece of chalk,
Picturing her face on the bar-room floor,
Fixing the lines of her face
While he told the story,
Then gasping and falling with finished heartbeats,
Dead.

And whenever he passed over the bridge at night
And took the look up the river to smaller bridges,
Barge lights, and looming shores,
He always thought of Edgar Allan Poe,
With a load of hootch in him,
Going to a party of respectable people
Who called for a speech,
Who listened to Poe recite the Lord’s Prayer,
Correctly, word for word, yet with lush, unmistakable
Intonations, so haunting the dinner-party people
All excused themselves to each other.

Whenever Too Many Books
Passed over the town bridge in the gloaming,
He thought of Poe breaking up that party
Of respectable people. Such was Too Many Books—
We called him that.

GYPSY MOTHER

In a hole-in-a-wall on Halsted Street sits a gypsy woman,
In a garish, gas-lit rendezvous, in a humpback higgling
hole-in-a-wall.

The left hand is a tattler; stars and oaths and alphabets
Commit themselves and tell happenings gone, happenings
to come, pathways of honest people, hypocrites.

"Long pointed fingers mean imagination; a star on the
third finger says a black shadow walks near."
Cross the gypsy’s hand with fifty cents, and she takes your
left hand and reads how you shall be happy in love,
or not, and whether you die rich, or not.
Signs outside the hole-in-a-wall say so, misspell the
promises, scrawl the superior gypsy mysteries.

A red shawl on her shoulders falls with a fringe hem to a
green skirt.
Chains of yellow beads sweep from her neck to her tawny
hands.
Fifty springtimes must have kissed her mouth holding a
calabash pipe.

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She pulls slow contemplative puffs of smoke. She is a shape for ghosts of contemplation to sit around and ask why something cheap as happiness is here; and more besides than plain happiness, chapped lips, rough eyes, red shawl, gypsy perfection of offhand insolence.

She is thinking about somebody and something—the same as Whistler’s mother sat and thought about somebody and something.

In a hole-in-a-wall on Halsted Street are stars, oaths, alphabets.

Carl Sandburg
SONG SKETCHES

WE HAVE A DAY

We have a day, we have a night
Which have been made for our delight!

Shall we run, and run, and run
Up the path of the rising sun?

Shall we roll down every hill,
Or lie still
Listening while the whispering leaves
Promise what no one believes?

(The hours poise, breathless for flight, and bright.)

Only a night, only a day—
We must not let them get away:

Don a foolish cap and bell,
For all is well and all is well!

Dance through woods a purple-blue!
Dance into
Lanes that are a hidden stem
Beneath the beauty over them.

(The hours lift their shadow-form, are warm.)
Why do you still stand mute and white?  
The day is past, but there is night.

Turn your head, give me your lips—  
The darkness slips!  The darkness slips.

We could make it hushed and still.  
If you will  
We could hear, close to the ground  
Life—the one authentic sound.

(The hours, as a startled faun, are gone.)

SPRING MORNING

O day—if I could cup my hands and drink of you,  
And make this shining wonder be  
A part of me!  
O day!  O day!  
You lift and sway your colors on the sky  
Till I am crushed with beauty.  Why is there  
More of reeling sunlit air  
Than I can breathe?  Why is there sound  
In silence?  Why is a singing wound  
About each hour?  
And perfume when there is no flower?  
O day!  O day!  How may I press  
Nearer to loveliness?

[304]
TONIGHT

A flame
Leaps high
In a wind:
    I am the same.

I go
My head
High. I flame
    Red—blue. Oh,

Tonight
The sky
Will be a
    Cry of light—

Fire!
Come swift
As wind—come,
    Lift me higher!

THE SILENCE STIRS AGAIN

The silence that has lain so long between us
Stirs again:
The rushes bend in shining pathways
To the shining end;
The air is burdened with the rose that is not there—
Always the rose.

[305]
I have no laughter now, no tears—
Only the silence grows big with years,
Only the silence has a touch
That hurts overmuch.

The rushes bend
In shining pathways to the shining end;
Bend, and close.

THE NIGHT

The night binds darkness round my eyes
And makes me wise.
The quiet hours beguile—
Like maidens chaste in single file,
Like maidens who have said,
“Be comforted.”
The truth of day falls far away
And far away . . .
And all the little gaieties
Are dressed in colors as I please;
And sadness has a gentle hand
I understand.

The night bound darkness round my eyes—
I was made wise.
I WOULD PRETEND

Now that between us there is nothing more
To say, I would have loud and foolish speech
With you, I would pretend I still adore
Your voice: “Come, beautiful, draw near and teach
The way my hands should go in a caress—
Should fingers trail as pink feet of a crane
That skim the water?—or should fingers press
Their weight heavily?” Draw near me again—
What does it matter if the words you say
Are lies, if they be sweet to listen to?
Your lips are quite as cruel, quite as gay
As ever; and your eyes are honest blue.
Oh, be sublimely false (who are not true)—
And I’ll pretend I love you . . . as I do!

ADMONITION

Come quietly, without a word—
I am so tired of the things I’ve heard.
I am so tired of words that tear
At beauty till the branch is bare:

Of words that will not let beauty be
A sweet-clustered mystery.
As a Canterbury bell
Purse your lips, but do not tell.

[307]
Child of the frightened face,
    Trying to understand
The little bit of love
    Under your hand,

Holding the little love
    Under fingers that crush
That which is soft as the
    Throat of a thrush,

Holding your hand upon
    The wonder of the thing,
Crushing out the song that
    Wanted to sing:

Child of the frightened face,
    Why do your fingers try
To kill the little love?
    Soon it would die.

And at last when I go
Will it be so?
Shall I find you behind
The rude platitude of death?
I kneel within the certainty
That you are near to me:
Each day I pray
That I may follow through
To you.
Each day I pray.

L’ENVOI

The moments reach and touch the hours gently.
Each is kind,
Each is soothing as the tips
Of fingers held to lips.

The moments reach and touch the hours: flowers
Will bloom again,
And I shall pick fresh jonquils for the room;
And I shall pick fresh jonquils in the usual way
Every day.

The moments reach and touch the hours:
Time has no beginning, and no end,
Dear friend.

Marion Strobel
WORKING-HOUR SONGS

THE SHOE FACTORY

Song of the knot-tyer

They told me
    When I came
That this would be drudgery,
    Always the same
Thing over and over
    Day after day—
The same swift movement
    In the same small way.

    Pick up,
    Place,
    Push,
    And it’s tied.

    Take off,
    Cut,
    And put
    It aside.

Over and over
    In rhythmical beat—
Some say it is drudgery
    But to me it is sweet.
Pick up,
Place,
Push,
And it's tied.

Out-doors
The sky
Is so blue
And so wide!

It's a joyous song
Going steadily on,
Marching in measures
Till the day is gone.

Pick up,
Place,
Push,
And it's tied.

Soon end
Of day
Will bring him
To my side.

Oh, I love the measures
Singing so fast,
Speeding happy hours
Till he comes at last!

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MAKING LITTLE CLOTHES

Grey rain on the window-pane,
And in my heart grey rain—
And the ceaseless whir of machines
Pounding my weary brain.

*He had such a little share of life,*
*And now he's gone.*
*And all my heart went with him,*
*Yet I go numbly on,*
*Making little clothes*
*Just the size of him,*
*Little clothes for others*
*But nevermore for him.*

Grey rain on the window-pane,
And in my heart grey rain—
And the endless grind of machines
Beating a dull refrain.

ALWAYS AND ALWAYS

Always and always
I go out from myself
In the silver morning,
Out to greet some new friend,
With my arms laden with friendship gifts
And a hundred little songs of gladness on my lips.

[312]
Always and always
I return to myself
In the purple twilight—
Back to the comforting sureness of myself,
To fill my empty arms again with gifts,
To ease the little hurt my heart has brought.

THE UNLOVED

Stephen, son of me,
    You will never be born, my dear.
Light of day you will never see,
    And the earth-sounds never hear.

But after I have died,
    When I come to the courts of the sun—
Though husband-love I have never had,
    And lovers never a one—

You will stand with a ripple of joy
    On the lips that have never smiled,
And I shall clasp my son at last—
    My child, my child!

[313]
In the smoke-blue cabaret
    She sang some comic thing:
I heeded not at all
    Till "Sing!" she cried, "Sing!"
So I sang in tune with her
    The only song I know:
"The doors shall be shut in the streets,
     And the daughters of music brought low."

Her eyes and working lips
    Gleamed through the cruddled air—
I tried to sing with her
    Her song of devil-may-care.
But in the shouted chorus
    My lips would not be stilled:
"The rivers run into the sea,
     Yet the sea is not filled."

Then one came to my table
    Who said, with a laughing glance,
"If that is the way you sing,
     Why don't you learn to dance?"
But I said: "With this one song
    My heart and lips are cumbered—
'The crooked cannot be made straight,
     Nor that which is wanting, numbered.'
Morris Bishop

"This song must I sing,
    Whatever else I covet—
Hear the end of my song,
    Hear the beginning of it:
'More bitter than death the woman
    (Beside me still she stands)
Whose heart is snares and nets,
    And whose hands are bands.'"

A NEW HAMPSHIRE BOY

Under Monadnock,
    Fold on fold,
The world's fat kingdoms
    Lie unrolled.

Far in the blue south
    City-smoke, swirled,
Marks the dwellings
    Of the kings of the world.

Old kings and broken,
    Soon to die,
Once you had little,
    As little as I.

Smoke of the city,
    Blow in my eyes—
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Blind me a little,
Make me wise.

Dust of the city,
Blow and gust—
Make me, like all men,
Color of dust.

I stand on Monadnock,
And seem to see
Brown and purple kingdoms
Offered to me.

Morris Bishop

ROADS

You who have made the ancient road of turf,
That my feet might pass over it
Into the level evening—
Make now the ancient road of tears
That my song may pass over it;
Make the ancient road of song
That my ghost may pass over it,
Coming with the new earth.

Sarah Unna
HOLIDAY CROWD

They do not know they wear their wounds so plain,
These covered bodies swathed in cloth and fur.
They do not dream they hold their naked pain
Before this show of life—the checkered stir
Here in the wintry sunlight on the street.
And yet, like martyrs on an old church wall,
They point their wounds— their bleeding hands and feet,
The aching scars, and lips that drank the gall.
For life has hurt them, though they will not cry
"Enough"; shaped flesh to hunger quick or dead,
Withered them, harried, twisted bones awry,
And bleached them white beneath their flying red.
Strange skeletons in merry dominoes,
They do not dream how plain the outline shows.

WINGED VICTORY

Your flimsy dress,
Out of a bargain basement,
Reacts to the wind
As the living draperies
Of the Victory of Samothrace.
Your body also is proudly revealed,
Cleaving the air as hers.
And, verily, you would do as well
Without a head.

Hortense Flexner
MONOLOGUE FROM A MATTRESS

Heinrich Heine, aetat 56, loquitur:

Can that be you, La Mouche? Wait till I lift
This palsied eyelid and make sure. . . . Ah, true.
Come in, dear fly, and pardon my delay
In thus existing; I can promise you
Next time you come you'll find no dying poet!
Without sufficient spleen to see me through,
The joke becomes too tedious a jest.
I am afraid my mind is dull today;
I have that—something—heavier on my chest,
And then, you see, I've been exchanging thoughts
With Doctor Franz. He talked of Kant and Hegel
As though he'd nursed them both through whooping-cough;
And, as he left, he let his finger shake
Too playfully, as though to say, "Now off
With that long face—you've years and years to live."
I think he thinks so. But, for Heaven's sake,
Don't credit it—and never tell Mathilde.
Poor dear, she has enough to bear already . . .
This was a month! During my lonely weeks
One person actually climbed the stairs
To seek a cripple. It was Berlioz—
But Berlioz always was original.

Come here, my lotus-flower. It is best
I drop the mask today; the half-cracked shield

[318]
Of mockery calls for younger hands to wield.
Laugh—or I’ll hug it closer to my breast!
So . . . I can be as mawkish as I choose
And give my thoughts an airing, let them loose
For one last rambling stroll before—Now look!
Why tears?—you never heard me say “the end”.
Before . . . before I clap them in a book
And so get rid of them once and for all.
This is their holiday—we’ll let them run—
Some have escaped already. There goes one . . .
What, I have often mused, did Goethe mean?
So many years ago, at Weimar, Goethe said,
“Heine has all the poet’s gifts but love.”
Good God!—but that is all I ever had.
More than enough!—so much of love to give
That no one gave me any in return.
And so I flashed and snapped in my own fires
Until I stood, with nothing left to burn,
A twisted trunk, in chilly isolation.
_Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam—you recall?
I was that northern tree and, in the South,
Amalia. . . . So I turned to scornful cries,
Hot iron songs to save the rest of me:
Plunging the brand in my own misery,
Crouching behind my pointed wall of words—
Ramparts I built of moons and loreleys,
Enchanted roses, sphinxes, love-sick birds,
Giants, dead lads who left their graves to dance,
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Fairies and phoenixes and friendly gods—
A curious frieze, half renaissance, half Greek,
Behind which, in revulsion from romance,
I lay and laughed—and wept—till I was weak.
Words were my shelter, words my one escape,
Words were my weapons against everything.
Was I not once the son of Revolution?
Give me the lyre, I said, and let me sing
My song of battle: words like flaming stars
Shot down with power to burn the palaces;
Words like bright javelins to fly with fierce
Hate of the oily philistines, and glide
Through all the seven heavens till they pierce
The pious hypocrites who dare to creep
Into the Holy Places. "Then," I cried,
"I am a fire to rend and roar and leap;
I am all joy and song, all sword and flame!"
H'm—you observe me passionate. I aim
To curb these wild emotions lest they soar
Or drive against my will. (So I have said
These many years—and still they are not tame.)
Scraps of a song keep rumbling in my head...
Listen—you never heard me sing before.

When a false world betrays your trust
And stamps upon your fire,
When what seemed blood is only rust,
Take up the lyre!

[320]
How quickly the heroic mood
Responds to its own ringing;
The scornful heart, the angry blood
Leap upward, singing!

Ah, that was how it used to be. But now,
Du schöner Todesengel, it is odd
How more than calm I am. Franz said he knew
It was religion, and it is, perhaps;
Religion—or morphine—or poultices—God knows.
I sometimes have a sentimental lapse
And long for saviors and a physical God.
When health is all used up, when money goes,
When courage cracks and leaves a shattered will,
Christianity begins. For a sick Jew
It is a very good religion. . . . Still
I fear that I shall die as I have lived,
A long-nosed heathen playing with his scars;
A pagan killed by Weltschmerz. . . . I remember,
Once when I stood with Hegel at a window,
I, being full of bubbling youth and coffee,
Spoke in symbolic tropes about the stars.
Something I said about "those high
Abodes of the blest" provoked his temper.
"Abodes? the stars?"—he froze me with a sneer;
"A light eruption on the firmament."
"But," cried romantic I, "is there no sphere
Where virtue is rewarded when we die?"
And Hegel mocked: "A very pleasant whim—
So you demand a bonus since you spent
One lifetime and refrained from poisoning
Your testy grandmother!" ... How much of him
Remains in me—even when I am caught
In dreams of death and immortality!

To be eternal—what a brilliant thought!
It must have been conceived and coddled first
By some old shopkeeper in Nuremberg,
His slippers warm, his children amply nursed,
Who, with his lighted meerschaum in his hand,
His nightcap on his head, one summer night
Sat drowsing at his door; and mused: "How grand
If all of this could last beyond a doubt—
This placid moon, this plump gemüthlichkeit;
Pipe, breath and summer never going out—
To vegetate through all eternity. . . ."
But no such everlastingness for me!—
God, if he can, keep me from such a blight.

Death, it is but the long cool night,
And life's a sad and sultry day.
It darkens; I grow sleepy;
I am weary of the light.

Over my bed a strange tree gleams,
And there a nightingale is loud
She sings of love, love only . . .
I hear it, even in dreams.

My Mouche, the other day as I lay here,
Slightly propped up upon this mattress-grave
In which I’ve been interred these few eight years,
I saw a dog, a little pampered slave,
Running about and barking. I would have given
Heaven could I have been that dog; to thrive
Like him, so senseless—and so much alive!
And once I called myself a blithe Hellene,
Who am too much in love with life to live.
The shrug is pure Hebraic . . . for what I’ve been,
A lenient Lord will tax me—and forgive.
_Dieu me pardonnera—c’est son métier._
But this is jesting. There are other scandals
You haven’t heard. . . . Can it be dusk so soon?—
Or is this deeper darkness . . . ? Is that you,
Mother?—how did you come? And are those candles
There on that tree whose golden arms are filled?—
Or are they birds whose white notes glimmer through
The seven branches now that all is stilled?
What—Friday night again and all my songs
Forgotten? Wait . . . I still can sing—
_Sh’ma Yisroel Adonai Elohenu,
Adonai Echod . . ._

Mouche—Mathilde . . .
A RECENT editorial in the Washington Herald begins with the following paragraph:

Literary editors of newspapers know that some of the best verse brought out in America first sees the light of day in the columns of the press. Morocco binding and hand-drawn initials don't insure excellence, nor have the higher-class magazines any monopoly on truly good poetry.

And corroborative evidence is offered from the Atlanta Constitution, which says:

Some of the best poetry written in this country today appears first in the columns of the daily or weekly press. The literary magazines have never had a monopoly of it—and they never will.

In discussing newspaper verse it is hardly fair to include the "weekly press"; for our only purely literary reviews, or reviews largely devoted to current literature—such papers as The Literary Review of the New York Evening Post, The Nation, The New Republic, The Freeman, the New York Times Magazine—are weeklies, and as a rule they are much more progressively edited, so far as modern poetry is concerned, than most of the monthlies. Reedy's Mirror, for example, under the editorship of a remarkable man, was a much more "literary magazine" in its day than The Century, Harper's, Scribner's, or any other alleged "higher-class magazine"; and it had more "discoveries" to its credit, in both verse and prose,
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than all these New York respectables combined. In fact, the weeklies have been more hospitable to modern poets, to "the new movement," than any of the monthlies except The Dial, The Masses with its successor The Liberator, and the magazines which, like Poetry, are the special organs of the art.

Therefore we shall confine our part of the present discussion to newspaper verse, to those "colyumists" and other poets—and poetasters—who have got their start, and won their fame, through broad-cast publication in the daily papers. On this basis let us inquire whether "some of the best verse" is thus introduced.

The best light verse—yes, unquestionably. The wittily rhyming commentator on life and letters, appearing from day to day in Sharps and Flats, A Line o' Type or Two, The Conning Tower, The Periscope, and other columns less familiar to this editor, has added to our literature masterpieces in this kind. Eugene Field began it with poems like The Bibliomaniac's Prayer and The Truth about Horace, each of which started a fashion. Bert Leston Taylor continued it with such incisive satires as In the Gallery and The Kaiser's Farewell to Prince Henry. And more recent Chicago philosophers are living up to the tradition. Who could show a nimbler wit or a keener critical insight than Keith Preston in many poems now reprinted from The Periscope in his new book, Splinters?—for example, this one, entitled Effervescence and Evanescence:

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We’ve found this Scott Fitzgerald chap
A chipper, charming child;
He’s taught us how the flappers flap,
And why the whipper-snappers snap,
What makes the women wild.
But now he should make haste to trap
The ducats in his dipper—
The birds that put him on the map
Will shortly all begin to rap
And flop to something flipper.

And if Mr. Preston wields a rapier, listen to the blows
of Guy Lee’s bludgeon—in honor of that noble animal,
the frog, who has to keep his mouth shut in order to
breathe. We quote from a Chicago Tribune of recent
date:

When I hear the politician spouting hot air by the ton,
When I note the silly twaddle of the genus Native Son,
When I’m sentenced to a banquet where a war of words ensues,
When a socialist gets near me and begins to shout his views,
When a bore essays a story that has neither point nor end,
When a highbrow author’s ego by his voice starts to extend,
When a woman with a grievance (or without one) launches out
On a marathon of language o’er the conversation route,
I ponder on this habit of mankind to squeak and squawk
In a never-ending serial of talk and talk and talk;
And I figger, as we flounder in the vocalistic bog,
It’s a pity human beings are not fashioned like the frog!

Such humor as these things from our newspaper poets
is straight American stuff, expressive of our kind of smiling
common-sense, our special good-natured chuckle, over the
piffle and burble, the mawkishness and pretense which
encumber our every-day life. Such wit from the colyum-
ists is a shaft of sunlight on the breakfast-table—it clears
the air and gleams on the sharpened edge of the mind.

But what about the more serious verse of the newspaper
poets? To be sure, Eugene Field’s finest poems—such as
Little Boy Blue and Wynken, Blynken and Nod—first saw
the light in his Sharps and Flats; Frank Stanton achieved
one now and then in Atlanta; and a few slyly delicate
poems by Bert Taylor adorned the Line. But the
successors of these men have been less inclined to favor
the unsmiling muse, or she to favor them; and the song­
sters they admit to their columns are usually about as
adventurously lyric as a chirping sparrow. If “some of
the best verse first sees the light of day” in these columns
of cheer, the present writer has missed it. Yet here may
be found, as a rule, the best of the newspaper verse—at
least these column sparrows are honest, and their saltily
humorous environment keeps them from rot and reek.

But what shall be said of certain other kinds of seriously
intended newspaper verse—of the placid rhyming
journalese of Walt Mason or the syndicated moralizings
of Edgar Guest? The former may be harmless; his end­
less reeling of facile observations has sometimes a faint
trace of savor—the tireless crank is turned by a mild old
busybody at least humanely observant. But the stickily
sugary Mr. Guest is not only a blight but a menace.
His molasses factory proves profitable in more ways than
one; so, like other wide-awake business-men, he spreads
its products over the land. Syndicated in hundreds of
newspapers, crowded with platform engagements, this
favorite of fortune, journeying to Denver, is met at the
station by the whole Colorado legislature, adjourned in
his honor and celebrating his greatness with a brass band.
And the school-children of many cities are stimulated by
his example toward the high rewards, financial and glory-
coronal, of poesy.

Let us examine Mr. Guest’s style—here is a recent
and typical example, entitled For the New Year:

This I would like to be—braver and bolder,
Just a bit wiser because I am older,
Just a bit kinder to those I may meet,
Just a bit manlier taking defeat.
This for the New Year my wish and my plea:
Lord, make a regular man out of me.

This I would like to be—just a bit finer,
More of a smiler and less of a whiner;
Just a bit quicker to stretch out my hand
Helping another who’s struggling to stand.
This is my prayer for the New Year to be:
Lord, make a regular man out of me.

This I would like to be—just a bit fairer,
Just a bit better and just a bit squarer,
Not quite so ready to censure and blame,
Quicker to help every man in the game.
Not quite so eager men’s failings to see—
Lord, make a regular man out of me.

This I would like to be—just a bit truer,
Less of the wisher and more of the doer;
Broader and bigger, more willing to give,
Living and helping my neighbor to live.
This for the New Year my prayer and my plea:
Lord, make a regular man out of me.
What do those Colorado legislators think they find in such sermonizing twaddle as this? Poetry?—if such a fond allusion is possible, how do they define poetry? In what department of their minds do they receive its proud appeal? Wisdom?—if they are honoring a sage, what high truth is he telling them? To what clear heights is he leading their souls? Do they discover beauty in this cheap rattle of foot-rule rhymes, emotion in this sickish slobber of easy virtue? Is it this rhymester or themselves they are stultifying when they offer him public homage, and thereby inform the rising generation that he is their ideal of a great man of letters?

Mr. Guest is not the only one of his kind—alas!—but he is conspicuous and typical. These syndicated rhymers, like the movie-producers, are learning that “it pays to be good,” that one “gets by by giving the people the emotions of virtue, simplicity and goodness, with this program paying at the box-office.” And it pays very well.

B. L. T. hit off the situation a decade or more ago, saying:

Lives of poets oft remind us
    Not to wait too long for time,
But, departing, leave behind us
    Obvious facts embalmed in rhyme.

Poems that we have to ponder
    Turn us prematurely gray;
We are infinitely fonder
    Of the simple heartfelt lay.

Whitman’s Leaves of Grass is odious,
Browning’s Ring and Book a bore.

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Bleat, ye bards, in lines melodious,
Bleat that two and two is four!

Today he might have added:

Bleat, ye bards, of home and mother,
Pray to be a regular man.
Treacle mixed with tears is golden—
Pile the shekels while you can.

Let the newspaper poets be true to the muse of laughter.
We need their salt in our daily food, lest the maudlin adulterations of pseudo-literary profiteers poison our in'ards!

H. M.

REVIEWS

MISS LOWELL'S LEGENDS


Too many legends are getting lost and forgotten. To tell any of them over again and save them from the dust and ashes of the dead is a good thing; but even better to tell them so people will listen. To most of Miss Amy Lowell's Legends it is not easy to listen intently—they are too crowded with adjectives, with ornament, with imagery; they are obese with adornment. So they do not cut into you the way even the bare outline of a story may do in some textbook of mythology, or the way voices of a legendary day sometimes still reach you through old men and old women bridging two epochs.

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In *Legends* Miss Lowell has sought alliance with Aztec, Cantonese, Indian, and English; but has not, it seems, become one with any of them. Their grief is not her grief, their passion not her passion. At their feasts and funerals she revels more like a tourist in the surprises of intricate ancient rites. She lays no claim, it is true, to accuracy; she has “changed, added, subtracted, jumbled several stories together,” she says, “at will to suit her particular vision.” But she has not made them over with a vision acute enough to equal the origin of primitive lore. She has not made them with an economy of means that comes of violence.

As a vendor of foreign goods she resorts to selling-talk, with sometimes the taint of a conflicting code of morals or manners upon it. So in the Aztec story of a fox assaulting the moon, the print of a fox’s paws on the disc of the moon is labeled as “obscene.” She labels these characters, the fox and the moon, instead of making them sheerly exist.

It is a pity, the way this book has of calling things by so many names that they cease to be named at all. One is aware of passing by almost with indifference succinct, polished song and picture which in more spare surroundings might make an instant appeal, a quick thrust. This passage for one:

A stream flowed in a sunwise turn across the prairie, and the name of the stream was Burnt Water, because it tasted dark like smoke. The prairie ran out tongues of raw colors—blue of camass, red of geranium, yellow of parsley—at the young green grass. The prairie
flung up its larks on a string of sunshine, it lay like a catching-sheet
beneath the black breasts balancing down on a wind, calling, "See
it! See it!" in little round voices.

If you consider each legend in the book as a unit of art,
it is easy to remember only the two last poems—Before
the Storm and Four Sides to a House. One of these is New
England legend; the other, not labeled, seems as real and
as native to Miss Lowell. The ghosts of a man and child
driving a high yellow chaise and a white horse before
wind and rain, unwind, as the wheels whirl, a keen
impetuous movie of New England. Four Sides to a House
is a beautiful ballad—the crying of an old man, murdered,
buried in a well. Words, rhymes, stanzas fall into place;
the sound is true; the design complete and haunting.
Here is one bead of the ballad string quoted for the
pleasure of quoting:

Around the house, and around the house,
With a wind that is North, and a wind that is South,
Peter, Peter.
Mud and ooze and a dead man's wrist
Wrenching the shutters apart, like mist
The mud and the ooze and the dead man twist.
They are praying, Peter.

This is a poem with intangible quality. Many of the
others disobey the laws of measure and contrast, which are
bound up with mysteries, and which rule that shadows
will be sure to count against a blaze of light or a blaze of
incident, that brilliants come to life across a dark sky,
that a dance is figured also by its pauses, and objects by
the space they keep around them. Dorothy Dudley
It is difficult to write an appreciation or criticism of modern literature because words have altered slowly during the past century and have lost their rightful meaning. Beauty, wisdom, life—these terms have come to represent an indefinite standard of pedantry or the washed-out sentiment of some school-room text. Civilization has rendered the states that these words should express almost impossible of achievement. So there is discontent, a brooding rebellion—no new forceful words and the old ones blurred until the same sentence may evoke for different people entirely separate worlds.

Thus it has been said of H. D.'s earlier poetry that it was perfectly wrought but cold and passionless, and that it was concerned rather with the loveliness of a perished age than with the modern world or everyday emotions. But is it not simply the association of Greek with scholasticism, in the minds of these critics, that has led them astray in their consideration of the poet's work?

Perfectly wrought the poems are: the rhythms swoop in and out of the head as birds perch and flutter in and out of apple-branches. Lines haunt the ears as the sound of rain in the South. The use of some simple but unexpected syllable brings all the fragrance into a mood that the Ionian roses suddenly awaken, after some swift storm. But they are not cold, they are not passionless; and apart from the color of some Attic names how
are these songs anything but the expression of the emotions and desires of an extremely present age?

To people born in England H. D.'s work is peculiarly American—American with a southern flavor and a singularly native strength. Call Simaetha any American name and nothing is lost but the impersonality of the far-off, silver-grey Greek syllables. Circe is any woman of intellect who, with the very sincerity of her vision, turns lesser minds "each to his own self." The children in Hymen are strange in their beauty only because the restrictions of school have not seized them too early nor crushed them into patterns.

It is true that H. D. is concerned with life, which changes little from epoch to epoch, rather than with the exterior impressions of telephones or steel rails. She is very sensitive to the visible world, but it is not particularly Greek; her country is any stretch of sea-coast in Europe or America where there are sand and low pools and surge of heavy rocks. Compare the Phaedra and the Hippolytus series, which were actually written in Greece, with Cuckoo Song, Thetis, or Evadne. Apart from an added intensity of color—the "lizard-blue" water, the "red sands" of Crete—they are as independent as the poems written further north of any definite landscape.

Could anything be more modern of mood than these few lines from At Baia?

I should have thought
In a dream you would have brought

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Some lovely, perilous thing—
Orchids piled in a great sheath,
As who would say (in a dream),
I send you this
Who left the blue veins
Of your throat unkissed.

The song is too long to quote in full, but it expresses perhaps more perfectly than any other recent poem, the disappointment and yet the sympathy which come when some personality one has admired fails to fulfil both its promise and its task.

It is not easy to be true to any faith in a war-torn world. Perhaps the most difficult test of all is to keep faith in beauty. But there is no sentiment or weakness in the lines which follow—they are stark as a war-chant or as waves against a prow:

But beauty is set apart;
Beauty is cast by the sea,
A barren rock;
Beauty is set about
With wrecks of ships
Upon our coasts; death keeps
The shallows—death waits
Clutching toward us
From the deeps.

Beauty is set apart;
The winds that slash its beach
Swirl the coarse sand
Upward toward the rocks.

Beauty is set apart
From the islands
And from Greece.
Life is a fact to the poet, not a dream. But she has a trick of hiding a difficult thought under a beautiful phrase until the eyes read the song carelessly, and only with the ripening of personal experience is the truth uncovered behind the vivid words. A psychological state that a scientist might take a volume to describe is crystallized into a couple of pages. And she can turn and write songs such as the one which follows, simple as any Elizabethan lyric and without the sixteenth-century mannerisms.

From citron-bower be her bed,  
Cut from branch of tree a flower  
Fashioned for her maidenhead.

From Lydian apples, sweet of husk,  
Cut the width of board and lathe.  
Carve the feet from myrtle-wood.

Let the palings of her bed  
Be quince and box-wood overlaid  
With the scented bark of yew.

That all the wood in blossoming,  
May calm her heart and cool her blood  
For losing of her maidenhood.

Her psychology is never once at fault. Thetis, proud, beautiful and alone; Simaetha, wrecked by war; Phaedra, smashed by alien forces—it is only their names (perhaps their personal beauty) that differentiate them from the individuals who struggle and suffer in this present world. They are not easily found, but personality is rare in an age of standardized opinions and patented emotions.
And perhaps the essential characteristic of these poems is their originality—they are cyclamen flowers caught on the spear-point of an analytical intellect.

Not cold, not passionless, but with emotion and thought perfectly balanced, *Hymen* can make even the "disenchanted days" of which the poet writes, bright with beauty.

*W. Bryher*

"A DISTINGUISHED YOUNG MAN"


Mark Turbyfill is a young man, but has already been spoken of in print and out, and it is a pleasure to consider his poems as a whole in Mr. Wheeler's excellently made book. One has already heard so much unfortunate talk of Mr. Turbyfill's estheticism, that one is lucky to have a slight acquaintance with his work as it has appeared in the magazines before approaching this book by way of the reviewers. When a reviewer in our generation speaks of a poet as an "esthete" he is generally being sentimental about that poet's sentimentality; and this is a lamentable condition for a good word to reach. As for reviewers, they are largely static.

For Mr. Turbyfill can indeed be sentimental, and that a good part of the time, his sentimentality being greatly patterned after the writings of that other esthete of late consideration, Richard Aldington. But it is not
for this reason that he is one of the dozen or so living Americans who have done anything worth remembering. At his best, Mr. Turbyfill is the master of a certain fleeting precision that, like the finest of needles, strikes deep into one's being and is gone before it can be observed.

I am the surprised young man, light walker on night lawns,

he writes; and in a recognition and fuller exploitation of this fact will lie his greatness if he ever achieves it. This one sentence, unfortunately, is embedded in a long discussion of a love-affair which has few merits; and very often Mr. Turbyfill spoils an excellent passage by not knowing where to cut. Had this passage stood alone, it had been one of his finest poems.

Perhaps his weakness is a conscience which drives him to do complete justice to his friends, loves and admirations, wherever they have acted as the original impetus of a poem. He forgets that a poem is a state of perfection at which a poet arrives by whatever means; and that the poem has no responsibility of any sort to ladies or lambrequins. It is a thing that begins somewhere and ends in itself.

In such poems as Shapes and Fertile Gesture Mr. Turbyfill has remembered, or not needed to remember, this fundamental truth. I quote Shapes intact, as an example of the poet at his finest:

Let us deliberately sit into design
With these elephant ears

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Stretched from the pot
Into green wax consciousness.
Let us exert
Our unused selves
Into other static
Sharpnesses.
In what fleet gestures
Have you found eternity?
His amber-painted torso
A Persian dancer
Has conceived into a leaf-line,
The head inclined.

Other poems that one remembers are *She Walks to Pisa*, *Fragment of Vision*, *Carved Mood*, *Burden of Blue and Gold*, *The Moments Halt a Little While before the Day*, and *End of Summer*. There are lines and passages scattered through other poems, the finest of these being the sentence already quoted, and the third stanza of *The Intangible Symphony*.

To estimate the magnitude of such a poet as Mr. Turbyfill is a difficult if not impossible task. This despite the fact that at least one word of magnitude has been spoken of him in this review. But one can accurately say that his five or six finest poems are perfectly executed, and entirely achieve that which they apparently set out to achieve. And perhaps this is the fullest praise that one can give to any poet.

*Yvor Winters*
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A PRIZE-WINNER


(This book shared with Carl Sandburg's Smoke and Steel the Poetry Society's recent award of five hundred dollars to the best American verse published in 1920.)

Not long ago I heard Robert Frost remark laughingly before an audience that one could practically place a poet as major or minor according to the number of times he used the word beauty. By that gauge Heavens and Earth is indeed a large order.

The first section of the book is called Two Visions of Helen; it begins:

Slowly blanch-handed Dawn, eyes half awake,
Upraised magnificent the silver urn.

The word morning appears in italics in the margin to print on the mind a clear and single image. One need not demand of Stephen Benêt that he be either Carl Sandburg or J. V. A. Weaver—many of the younger poets are turning away with tired eyes from the verities of modern life. But Victoria is dead—that, at least, has been definitely settled; it is too late to contest it and futile to look back.

The poet continues:

Beautiful monstrous dreams they seemed as they ran,
Trees come alive at the nod of a god grown mute!
Their eyes looked up to the sun like a valiant man;
Their bows clashed shrill on the loins and limbs of the brute!
The second line is quite plainly inserted to meet the exigencies of rhyme; the rest plainly a compromise with rhyme. An ultimate word exists that will do duty for both sense and sound. Is not art the pursuit of that word?

Laughing, rejoicing, white as a naked birch,
Slim as a spear in a torrent of moving towers,
Itya, the prince, ran gay in the storm of their search
Silverly shod on feet that outstripped the Hours!

Heavens and Earth so aptly illustrates the vices of its school that the exposé may as well be thorough now it is begun. Was the towers line added only to rhyme with Hours, since white as a naked birch conveys not only color but form? For me slim as a spear is, besides being poor economy, confusing; it leaves me with the blurred image of one who has stared for a long time at the same spot. Nature is admittedly prolix; it is left for that royal combination of gift and reason which determine the poet to model and trim beyond the possibility of confusion. Let the artist’s scope be the universe, but let the artist hold the rein. It is admonitory to speculate on what the masters must have held in reserve in prunings alone, for they were all great economists. And who does not know that one thought leads to another?

Stephen Benét has imagination; otherwise—one fails to detect behind his art that significant struggle for the final syllable, the final image. Rather a quick acceptance of what the tempter, tradition, whispers into the ear.

We go on with The First Vision of Helen and meet with
an interesting line. *He dreamed as a dog dreams, uneasily;* and another, *And how she smoothed her hair back with one hand,* the universal gesture of woman. But *The Visions of Helen* are not successful. What is the reason, if any, for the long symphonic arrangement? One has a right to expect that the form a poet uses justify itself. Many of Mr. Benét’s changes of movement differ only in length of line; otherwise, the same overwrought design, the same lameness. Although both the Helen stories have a reasonable amount of inherent interest, one is left with the feeling that they might have been done carefully, in a page apiece, with more point.

*Two at the Crossroads* dallies with the delicious idea of the meeting of one Palomides and a stranger; Palomides riding furiously, his brain a black pin-wheel. He answers the stranger’s inquiry after the sea-road with a maudlin account of his love for Iseult, and rides madly on. Then, the amusing dénouement:

> Palomides was far.  
> And, settling well his harp upon his back,  
> With something of amusement in his mouth,  
> Tristram rode southward to the Breton ships.

But Mr. Benét is still without identity. In this instance it is a slightly chastened Tennyson. Many moderns write for the eye alone. H. D., William Carlos Williams, subordinate the oral to the visual, making a form akin in impression to the mural or bas-relief. The concern of the present poet is to grind out grand-
iloquent Victorian harmonies. Fortunately it has been proved, by Carl Sandburg among others, that one may write primarily for the ear and still retain the identity both of the individual and of the age.

Take *Three Days' Ride*, the old theme of elopement and tragic outcome, a story which depends for very existence upon the unique style of the artist and its relevancy to period and locality. Certainly no man who takes pride in his modernity would have begun thus:

> We had fled full fast from her father's keep,
> And the time had come that we must sleep.

For the rest, it is to be remembered that, as we live in the age of the superlative, hyperbole no longer has force behind it. To exaggerate in the hope of heightening the effect of drama is to frustrate oneself in advance. Simple statement of fact is more impressive.

*The Kingdom of the Mad*, the last section, a series of sonnets in a less serious humor, is more felicitous. The poet seems not quite so young and chaotic. He detaches himself and begins to speak in order with urbanity.

"Books should be tried by a judge and a jury as though they were crimes, and counsel should be heard on both sides," says Samuel Butler in his *Note Books*. On my side, I am left with the unsatisfactory sense that Stephen Benét's verses are melodramatic accidents of rhythm and rhyme. I look in vain for volition, for image and thought too sacred to have been lightly changed.

Pearl Andelson
A LUTE OF ONE STRING

The Lifted Cup, by Jessie B. Rittenhouse. Houghton Mifflin Co.

This small book of forty or more very brief poems is a soft-voiced little lute of one string. So restricted a lyric range seems scarcely possible from a woman who has traveled about this varied world; and the emotional experience it records is too narrow to be easily accepted as the whole truth. It is rather an unconscious yielding to a convention—the presentation of a wistful and sensitive feminine type as men and women of richer experience expect to find it. We have it caught to perfection in a number of these poems, for example The Door:

There was a door stood long ajar
   That one had left for me,
While I went trying other doors
   To which I had no key.
And when at last I turned to seek
   The refuge and the light,
A gust of wind had shut the door
   And left me in the night.

Perhaps the following poem comes nearer escaping the convention than any other in this book—has a brighter bloom. Its first line is its title:

We who give our hearts in spring,
   Putting all the old life by,
We shall start with everything
   Keen and glad beneath the sky.
We shall know the urge of grass
   Parting each detaining clod,
A Lute of One String

Know the one sweet day they pass—
   Flowers, the spirit of the sod.

We are caught into the flame
   Where the golden fire runs—
All its ardor is the same,
   In the flesh and in the suns.

H. M.

A POET IN EMBRYO


This book shows a distinct advance over Moods in poetic technique, although most of the poems still leave much to be desired. The author has certain gifts of the poet—quick feeling, a degree of imaginative insight, and eagerness to pour out her soul, to express the beauty and strangeness of life, to give herself away. She says what she has to say with a forthright simplicity and directness; and in such poems as Platitudes and Your Face she says a fine thing, with refreshment in it.

But she is just beginning to learn her trade. She shows a promising capacity to learn it in three or four poems—Unreality, Poor Fools, To Vouletti—in which there is a suggestion of poetic rhythm. Sometimes she uses rhyme—usually the irregular, half-veiled rhymes now so much in vogue; but not yet with quite the air of an adept. Occasionally she should give another thought to such details as grammar: one can stand will for shall—all of us do that—but not "the maddest of we three."

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However, one may forgive much to a book which reveals a fresh and ardent personality. And one may hope that after a few more experimental sheaves the art will respond to the impulse. 

H. M.

Rhetoric Unashamed


Rhetoric here marches unashamed across the cluttered stage of the world's affairs—rhetoric, flaunting exaggerated gestures under its shabby outworn toga, stubbing the toe of its stiff buskin against

rapine masked as order, his vast maw
With Vengeance still uncloyed.

Is it possible that this kind of thing is still masking as poetry?—here begins a sonnet To the Prime Minister yet again:

Like your renown-clad namesake, who did slay,
Far across Time and its vast charnels drear,
If only with a legendary spear,
A fabled dragon, you in your midday
Did unto ravening things give battle, and they
Felt your light lance through all their scales!

Now, so we are informed, that spear is "pointed at the captive maiden's breast"—and so on to the end, reading a bit out-of-date today. May the kind fates deliver Ireland from her friends!

H. M.
Everybody is sentimental, even Mr. Yvor Winters. Emily Dickinson, he says, is dowdy; Emerson, sentimental; Whitman, an eventual dull vacuum; Sandburg, plasmodial delirium. I am not used to defending old gods, or new ones; but I can show, I think, that these adjectives indicate a sentimentalism that is not only Mr. Winters’ but the characteristic of the larger group of modern noticeable poets. It is not expansive Germanic sentimentality, to be sure; it is protective sentimentality, hard and slender. But it is no less sentimental, for it is based on a conceit, on a vain study of approach and manner. Its mode is not determined by content.

Whether New England hardness, which Mr. Winters reviews in *A Cool Master* in the February *Poetry*, is really the hardness that Mr. Winters is thinking about is doubtful. Whatever its hardness, the New England idea is primarily earnest—earnest frankly in the content of poetry—as Mr. Winters, to judge from his adjectives, can never be. When he can say cleverly, “This man has the culture to know that, to those to whom philosophy is comprehensible, it is not a matter of first importance; and he knows that these people are not greatly impressed by a ballyhoo statement of the principles of social and spiritual salvation,” it is clear that he is not expounding New England hardness, nor anything like it, but the
assumed hardness of sophisticated Gallic reaction. Poets—Emerson, Whitman, Sandburg—in whom the idea-content has a burning importance, may well seem to him blathering or sentimental, or beside the poetic point. In them the serious idea is not only an intellectual factor but a definitely esthetic component of the poem. Nor does Mr. Winters, in the face of the overwhelming human response to ideas, give any good reason why it should not be. Ideas have beauty.

Whence this solemn authority that the poet may tell only what he sees, not what he thinks? It comes from a protective, contractile impulse. Fear of the world beyond the near perceptions, or failure to appreciate, is its basis. It is “safety first” in poetry. Blunder and bathos threaten the poet who risks being bigger than his sensations, and these too often do overwhelm him; but the naive exposure that he makes in extending himself beyond protective certainties is necessary. He is “sentimental” perhaps, a “preacher,” a “philosopher,” a “peddler,” because he cannot always fuse his own being with that of his subject matter. He opens himself, as Emerson, Whitman and Sandburg unquestionably do, to the sarcasm of the tight, cool, hard poets who take no risks, but he also escapes their inevitable minority. As a productive unit, as an initiative, the poet will never be thus pigeonholed. All that is humane and interesting is poetic. All material waits only the poet with capacity and power to use it.

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"A pigeon’s wing may make as great an image as a man’s tragedy," says Mr. Winters. But the profound truth of the sentence is not the theme that Mr. Winters is defending in it. Emerson and Whitman, or for that matter the Vedas, reiterate this truth. It is the most beautiful of man’s comprehensions; and, as the identity of all things, is the very being of art and life. But Mr. Winters means nothing of this sort by his pronouncement. That would be to "sentimentalize," to preach, and to enter untastefully into the idea-content of poetry. Mr. Winters means by his sentence that greatness lies not in those things of which the poet has written, "but in the perfect balance, the infallible precision, with which he has stated their cases."

I use Mr. Winters for illustration because he reveals, rather more articulately than is usually considered good taste in his group, the ideational background of probably the larger number of modern poets. Theirs is an ungenerous principle from which there can be no great progress. It is an assumption for the protection of minority. And because these presumed limitations are emotionalized somewhat, I am justified, I think, in calling the hard, cool minorists—the modern French, our American expatriates in England, Mr. Winters, even Wallace Stevens—protectively sentimental. It is the cult of the craft, not of great art.

Let me suggest the code. First: Say little, but say it beautifully. Second: Be delicate; nicety is first. Third:
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Be fragmentary; it indicates detachment; a frail wisp of fact, a plaintive, inarticulate thread of feeling is enough.
Fourth: Be cool; sympathies are vulgar. Fifth: Be careful; the limitations of the poetic milieu are fixed.
This is the minor code or something like it, the world over. It is not classical, for its restraint has neither the amplitude nor the objectivity of the greater classic school. It is an introspective restraint, the last reserve of a decayed and romantic egoism. It is a hang-over, I think, from ante-bellum France. The indifferentism assumed by these poets is neither spiritual nor spacious; it is the cold chrysalis of individualism from which the butterfly has flown.

Devotion, not detachment, is the foundation of art, and devotion these modern minors have not. They have ignored the artistic value of ideas. They have tatted gracefully in silk, but they have hammered no rhythms in steel. Ideas—even moral ideas, and character, though abused and betrayed in much Victorian poetry, remain primary components of great work. They will remain so, despite Mr. Winters and his perceptualists, simply for the reason that their Platonic as well as their human beauty persists.

At least two major poets are writing today. They are Sandburg and Tagore. Different as they are, every poem of theirs, in its fusion of great and earnest content with personal form, denies Mr. Winters' thesis.

*Baker Brownell*
A New Poetry Society

A NEW POETRY SOCIETY

It would be difficult to enumerate the various evidences of increasing public interest in poetry, of at least a desire to give the art closer attention and better appreciation than it has had hitherto. The Poetry Lovers of America, a society inaugurated last year in Chicago, is one such evidence. Under the presidency of Mrs. D. Harry Hammer, it has had an auspicious and interesting first season, with five or six meetings at which modern poetry was read, and discussed from various points of view, the history, traditions and technique of the art being considered as well as its modern influences and aims. The club’s correspondence indicates wide interest in the subject, and other groups, through the Middle West especially, show a desire to be affiliated with it. The membership, of two hundred or more men and women, includes both professionals and amateurs. F. P.

NOTES

The April number of Poetry will be a Southern Number, the contributors representing the south-eastern section of the country, whose activities in poetry have been encouraged and stimulated during the past year by the Poetry Society of South Carolina, centering in Charleston. In addition to the poems, an editorial by Messrs. Du Bose Heyward and Hervey Allen will present the artistic point of view of the new-old South. These two poets will contribute a group of Carolina Chansons—ballads from the romantic history of the region; Miss Beatrice Ravenel, also of Charleston, will be represented, Mrs. Craig Barrow of Savannah, Mr. Marx G. Sabel and Mrs. Frances D. Pinder of Jacksonville, and others.

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Mr. Carl Sandburg, of Chicago, will publish his fourth book of poems in May, through Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Mr. Louis Untermeyer, of New York, also needs no introduction. His new book of poems, to be called probably Roast Leviathan, will be published in the late spring or autumn.

Hortense Flexner (Mrs. Wynnie King) has recently removed from Louisville to Philadelphia, her husband having accepted a job as cartoonist for the Public Ledger.

Mr. Morris Bishop, who is now living in Ithaca, N. Y., has appeared in Poetry before. Also Miss Sarah Unna, now resident in New York, who was a member of Mr. Bynner’s poetry class at the University of California three years ago.

Miss Marion Strobel, of Chicago, has been for two years associate editor of Poetry.

Miss Ruth Harwood, a native of Salt Lake City and now resident in Oakland, California, appears for the first time in Poetry. Miss Harwood took a poetry prize at the University of Utah in 1920, and the Emily Cook poetry prize at the University of California in 1921.

Alison Buchanan is a pseudonym.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Sour Grapes, by William Carlos Williams. Four Seas Co.
Verses, by Eulalie Andreas. Privately printed, New York.
The Quiet Courage and Other Songs of the Unafraid, by Everard Jack Appleton. Stewart Kidd Co., Cincinnati.
Shafts of Song, by James Latimer McLane, Jr. Norman Remington Co.
Songs from the Lyric Road, by Ruth Harwood. Privately printed.
The World-hoax and The Disillusioned Genius, by C. A. Paul Dachsel.
Privately printed, Portland, Ore.
Poems, by Eunice Browning. Privately printed, Sacramento, Cal.
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POETRY
A MAGAZINE OF VERSE
VOLUME XIX
Poetry
A Magazine of Verse

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October-March, 1921-1922
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Harriet Monroe

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Three 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 ninth time; to the anonymous guarantor who will present, for the eighth time, a prize of one hundred dollars; and to the Friday Club of Chicago, which has donated fifty dollars for a prize to a young poet.
We feel that these prizes are a most valuable service to the art.
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To have great poets there must be great audiences too.

—Whitman

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