

Vol. XXI

No. III

# Poetry

A Magazine of Verse  
Edited by Harriet Monroe

December 1922

Southern April  
by Amy Lowell  
Modern German Poems  
trans'd by B. Deutsch  
and A. Yarmolinsky  
Alter Brody, Harold Cook  
Pearl Andelson

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MuPolla

I have been Chairman of the Committee on Poetry for the New York State Federation, and have been giving a good many talks on poetry. I have found your magazine more real help than any other source of information—I refer constantly to my files for both poems and reviews.  
*Louise Driscoll*

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 **Poetry**  
A Magazine of Verse

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SOUTHERN APRIL

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

FIFTEEN years is not a long time,  
But long enough to build a city over and destroy it;  
Long enough to clean a forty-year growth of grass from  
between cobblestones,  
And run street-car lines straight across the heart of  
romance.  
Commerce, are you worth this?  
I should like to bring a case to trial:  
Prosperity versus Beauty,  
Cash registers teetering in a balance against the comfort  
of the soul.

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Then, tonight, I stood looking through a grilled gate  
At an old dark garden.  
Live-oak trees dripped branchfuls of leaves over the wall;  
Acacias waved dimly beyond the gate, and the smell of  
    their blossoms  
Puffed intermittently through the wrought-iron scroll-  
    work.  
Challenge and solution—  
O loveliness of old, decaying, haunted things!  
Little streets untouched, shamefully paved,  
Full of mist and fragrance on this rainy evening.  
“You should come at dawn,” said my friend,  
“And see the orioles, and thrushes, and mocking-birds  
In the garden.”  
“Yes,” I said absent-mindedly,  
And remarked the sharp touch of ivy upon my hand which  
    rested against the wall.  
But I thought to myself,  
There is no dawn here, only sunset,  
And an evening rain scented with flowers.

THE MIDDLETON PLACE

*Charleston, S. C.*

What would Francis Jammes, lover of dear dead elegancies,  
Say to this place?  
France, stately, formal, stepping in red-heeled shoes  
Along a river shore.

France walking a minuet between live-oaks waving ghostly fans of Spanish moss.

La Caroline, indeed, my dear Jammes,  
With Monsieur Michaux engaged to teach her deportment.  
Faint as a whiff of flutes and hautbois,  
The great circle of the approach lies beneath the sweeping grasses.

Step lightly down these terraces, they are records of a dream.

Magnolias, pyrus japonicas, azaleas,  
Flaunting their scattered blooms with the same bravura  
That lords and ladies used in the prison of the Conciergerie.

You were meant to be so gay, so sophisticated, and you are so sad—

Sad as the tomb crouched amid your tangled growth,  
Sad as the pale plumes of the Spanish moss  
Slowly strangling the live-oak trees.

Sunset wanes along the quiet river,  
The afterglow is haunted and nostalgic,  
Over the yellow woodland it hangs like the dying chord of a funeral chant;

And evenly, satirically, the mosses move to its ineffable rhythm,

Like the ostrich fans of palsied dowagers  
Telling one another contentedly of the deaths they have lived to see.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

MAGNOLIA GARDENS

*Charleston, S. C.*

It was a disappointment,  
For I do not like magenta,  
And the garden was a fire of magenta  
Exploding like a bomb into the light-colored peace of a  
spring afternoon.  
Not wistaria dropping through Spanish moss,  
Not cherokees sprinkling the tops of trees with moon-  
shaped stars,  
Not the little pricked-out blooms of banksia roses,  
Could quench the flare of raw magenta.  
Rubens women shaking the fatness of their bodies  
In an opulent egotism  
Till the curves and colors of flesh  
Are nauseous to the sight,  
So this magenta.  
Hateful,  
Reeking with sensuality,  
Bestial, obscene—  
I remember you as something to be forgotten.  
But I cherish the smooth sweep of the colorless river,  
And the thin, clear song of the red-winged blackbirds  
In the marsh-grasses on the opposite bank.

A SOUTH CAROLINA FOREST

Hush, hush, these woods are thick with shapes and voices,  
They crowd behind, in front,



Scarcely can one's wheels break through them.  
For God's sake, drive quickly!  
There are butchered victims behind those trees,  
And what you say is moss I know is the dead hair of  
    hanged men.  
Drive faster, faster!  
The hair will catch in our wheels and clog them;  
We are thrown from side to side by the dead bodies in the  
    road.  
Do you not smell the reek of them,  
And see the jaundiced film that hides the stars?  
Stand on the accelerator. I would rather be bumped to a  
    jelly  
Than caught by clutching hands I cannot see,  
Than be stifled by the press of mouths I cannot feel.  
Not in the light glare, you fool, but on either side of it.  
Curse these swift, running trees—  
Hurl them aside, leap them, crush them down!  
Say prayers if you like,  
Do anything to drown the screaming silence of this forest,  
To hide the spinning shapes that jam the trees.  
What mystic adventure is this  
In which you have engulfed me?  
What no-world have you shot us into?  
What Dante dream without a farther edge?  
Fright kills, they say, and I believe it.  
If you would not have murder on your conscience,  
For Heaven's sake, get on!

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THE VOW

Tread softly, softly,  
Scuffle no dust.  
No common thoughts shall thrust  
Upon this peaceful decay,  
This mold and rust of yesterday.  
This is an altar with its incense blown away  
By the indifferent wind of a long, sad night;  
These are the precincts of the dead who die  
Unconquered. Haply  
You who haunt this place  
May deign some gesture of forgiveness  
To those of our sundered race  
Who come in all humility  
Asking an alms of pardon.  
Suffer us to feel an ease, [trees,  
A benefice of love poured down on us from these magnolia  
That when we leave you we shall know the bitter wound  
Of our long mutual scourging healed at last and sound.

Through an iron gate, fantastically scrolled and garlanded,  
Along a path, green with moss, between two rows of high  
magnolia trees—

*How lightly the wind drips through the magnolias;  
How slightly the magnolias bend to the wind.*

It stands, pushed back into a corner of the piazza—  
A jouncing-board, with its paint scaled off,

A jouncing-board which creaks when you sit upon it.

*The wind rattles the stiff leaves of the magnolias:  
So may tinkling banjos drown the weeping of women.*

When the Yankees came like a tide of locusts,  
When blue uniforms blocked the ends of streets,  
And foolish, arrogant swords struck through the paintings  
of a hundred years:

*From gold and ivory coasts come the winds that jingle in  
the tree-tops;  
But the sigh of the wind in the unshaven grass, from  
whence is that?*

Proud hearts who could not endure desecration,  
Who almost loathed the sky because it was blue;  
Vengeful spirits, locked in young, arrogant bodies,  
You cursed yourselves with a vow:  
Never would you set foot again in Charleston streets,  
Never leave your piazza till Carolina was rid of Yankees.

*O smooth wind sliding in from the sea,  
It is a matter of no moment to you what flag you are  
flapping.*

Ocean tides, morning and evening, slipping past the sea-  
islands;  
Tides slipping in through the harbor, shaking the palmetto  
posts,  
Slipping out through the harbor;  
Pendulum tides, counting themselves upon the sea-islands.

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So they jounced, for health's sake,  
To be well and able to rejoice when once again the city was  
free,  
And the lost cause won, and the stars and bars afloat over  
Sumter.

The days which had roared to them called more softly,  
The days whispered, the days were silent, they moved as  
imperceptibly as mist.

And the proud hearts went with the days, into the dusk  
of age, the darkness of death.  
Slowly they were borne away through a Charleston they  
scarcely remembered.

The jouncing-board was pushed into a corner;  
Only the magnolia-trees tossed a petal to it, now and again,  
if there happened to be a strong wind when the  
blooms were dropping.

Hush, go gently,  
Do not move a pebble with your foot.  
This is a moment of pause,  
A moment to recollect the futility of cause.  
A moment to bow the head  
And greet the unconcerned dead,  
Denying nothing of their indifference,  
And then go hence  
And forget them again,  
Since lives are lived with living men.

*Amy Lowell*

## MONODY TO THE SOUND OF ZITHERS

I have wanted other things more than lovers . . .  
I have desired peace, intimately to know  
The secret curves of deep-bosomed contentment,  
To learn by heart things beautiful and slow.

Cities at night, and cloudful skies, I've wanted;  
And open cottage doors, old colors and smells a part;  
All dim things, layers of river-mist on river—  
To capture Beauty's hands and lay them on my heart.

I have wanted clean rain to kiss my eyelids,  
Sea-spray and silver foam to kiss my mouth.  
I have wanted strong winds to flay me with passion;  
And, to soothe me, tired winds from the south.

These things have I wanted more than lovers . . .  
Jewels in my hands, and dew on morning grass—  
Familiar things, while lovers have been strangers.  
Friended thus, I have let nothing pass.

*Kay Boyle*

SESTINA

To thee, O fairest of the world, my love,  
I send the messengers that fly with song,  
And bear their precious gifts from heart to heart.  
They leave my lips here in the fragrant night  
To seek thy casement, opened to the moon,  
Whose golden beauty moves the dreaming sea.

Awake from dreams, my love, as wakes the sea,  
Whose bosom stirs beneath the spell of love,  
And swells, enchanted by the urgent moon!  
Up through the flowery darkness flies my song,  
Like bird bewildered in the maze of night,  
To flutter at the portals of thy heart.

Unto my yearning heart, O tender heart,  
Be tenderer than is the yielding sea  
Unto the moon! For what romance hath night  
To offer, if it hold no flame of love?  
If love be not its echo, what is song?  
If love be absent, banish too the moon.

Tonight, O fairest, shines a lingering moon,  
Whose light makes lonelier the lonely heart.  
Arise, beloved! I will tune my song  
To the wild carol of the vagrant sea,  
And sing to thee a wilder song of love  
Than sings the sea unto its god of night.

*Henry Dumont*

The roses drink with joy the dews of night,  
Their pleasure secret from the placid moon,  
While I am thirsting for the dews that love  
Hath gathered purely to thy lips and heart.  
Thy heart, O loved one, is not as the sea  
That hath no memory of love or song.

Thy heart must answer to my amorous song,  
As to the nightingale its mate, this night,  
Where roses droop above the sleeping sea.  
Thy lips must hush my own before the moon  
Shall ease its longing near the sea's deep heart.  
Awake, dear dreamer, to the voice of love!

Oh, hear my song, before the lapsing moon  
Bereave the night; or I, with grieving heart,  
Must wander by the sea, bereft of love!

*Henry Dumont*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

IN CHINA

LULLABY OF THE OUTCAST

Child, born of my weeping, sleep.  
They have beaten me, and cast me out of the village—  
Sleep, my own.

Your father was a merchant who passed through the  
fields—

His sleeves were of silk and his hair shone in the dusk.  
Sleep, my son—may you never know pain.

The blossoming wheat shelters us;  
Far off, the village dogs bay to the night—  
Sleep, my own.

At dawn we will set out over the plain  
Toward the city of merciful strangers.

There I will bow down beside the great gate,  
Begging of all who enter in;

Till they, seeing you in my arms,  
Little one, little prince clothed in rags,  
Must pity us with a great pity and fling us alms.

Sleep on my heart, little son—  
May you never know pain.

NOON IN THE TEMPLE

Noons drop gently here, and steal on the winds away.



*Ruth Tenney*

Noons fall silently as flower-petals fall;  
From the quiet dream-lit hills they fall  
Into the court—petals of oleander falling:  
Noons of today, noons of yesterday,  
Fragrant noons of centuries ago—  
A hush in the wind, the soft tones of a gong  
Touched lightly like an ancient song  
Begun and never ended. It is so  
They come and rest awhile, and then are gone  
Upon the wind.

*Ruth Tenney*

#### LAST SONG

I will give everything, Death,  
Into your power;  
Love shall pass with my breath—  
(Except one hour).

I will give everything, Death,  
For your white sleep;  
Dreams shall pass with my breath—  
(One I will keep).

*Frances Morrison*

TWO SONNETS

DAWN

Mountains and hills in silhouette are drawn—  
Blue, on the green horizon's blanching rim.  
A dog barks and a cock crows, far and dim,  
Waking the sleeping town to stretch and yawn.  
A blue gum, delicate as lace on lawn,  
Across a brightening cloud has thrust a limb,  
And from the pine-tree's spire two magpies hymn  
The everlasting miracle of dawn.

For a brief space the brazen skies are blest  
With loveliness, and beauty on the hills  
Is perishable and plaintive as a song,  
Heart-faint and far away; and manifest  
Healing is in my heart for bodily ills  
That made the sleepless night an aeon long.

REVERIE

The dim-lit river mirrors skimming swallows  
Against the last of sunset's fading gold,  
And twilight shadows brim the waiting hollows  
With quiet beauty that no words may hold.  
Across my mind—unconjured, undirected—  
Travel desires and dreams like mirrored buds.  
Vague thought, and visions momentarily reflected,  
Evading all my clumsy nets of words.

*H. W. Stewart*

I am not indolent, but wherefore try  
To net these in a rhyme, only to shiver  
The jewels with the mirror? Let them fly  
Like phantom swallows on the tranquil river,  
And fade as fast—they are more beautiful  
Than muddy stirrings on a troubled pool.

*H. W. Stewart*

### ANGUISH

Nothing can chain the days—  
I have no time for dreams.

Stop these days, someone,  
So I may stretch my white body.

Why do you chain them by sevens?  
Why not by many hundreds?

I am irked at seeing them  
Laid forever, neatly, in rows.

Be the day gray or blue,  
You have named it.

Who calls that ball of fire the sun?

*Doris Campbell*

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TWO POEMS

STANDARDS

All things that are beautiful  
Fragile, mute and sensual,

Must be broken ere they be  
Clad in immortality.

Slanting sunlight on the grass  
Vanishes while clouds pass.

Like bright mirrors, lakes at rest  
Shatter on a swan's breast.

Quiet water and the sun  
Only then are known to one,

Only then, when lost, they find  
Their actuality in mind.

So, like sunlight, love must go  
That love's perfection we may know.

One must die, and then the other  
Of the two, the loved and lover.

Freed of separate bodies, they  
Are born as one in their new day.

Symbol then of love they rise  
Starry, lovely, to our eyes.

NEVER DID I DREAM

I never thought that I should walk  
In ecstasy the streets of town,  
Or find a heart more beautiful  
Than red leaves fluttering down.

I did not know archangels pass  
In human guise among the trees;  
And never, never did I dream  
That I should walk with these.

But by my side one went today;  
I saw, and I had speech with him:  
And I forgot, who ne'er forgot,  
How cold are streets, how grim!

*Harold Cook*

GIVING

You think I give myself to you?  
Not so, my friend, you do not see  
My single purpose and intent—  
To make you give myself to me.

*Nora B. Cunningham*

GRANDMOTHER

It was so hard to comprehend it all  
When she sighed casually to her daughter-in-law:  
"When I nursed Benjamin—length of life to your little  
one!—I also had trouble with the breast."

Or:

"Rachel—peace be upon her!—had just such hair as his."

So hard to understand

That death was no abstraction to this woman—

No awful mystery waiting to be solved

In some vague vapory heaven,

But something casual and familiar,

Something as close to her

As her own flesh;

Something belonging to her as an old possession.

And she looked down curiously at this gray shrunken  
thing bending over her child,

Clasping the diaper-pin between his little thighs

With the gnarled roots of her hands:

This thing who was a partner to the opulent Earth—

Five sons, two daughters, her investment—

Flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone and milk of her  
breast,

That was now earth of the Earth,

Put by

Within their common treasury.

Who was a sister to the trees:

*Alter Brody*

That spread themselves patiently in the air  
And in the ground;  
In whose branches the birds nest, at whose roots the  
worms;  
That blossom bountifully for the wind  
Asking no questions of it.  
To whom Death was like an unacknowledged husband,  
Whose seed had ripened secretly in her womb,  
Whose children were suckled securely at her breasts—  
Until he came one day and proved them his.  
Who was the grandmother as well  
To some grass and flowers and worms  
In seven plots,  
Scattered across two continents—  
And to her boy!

*Alter Brody*

#### AFTER STORM

The storm that must have spoiled the apple-bloom,  
The rain that kept me housed, the wind that chills  
The little birds, the thunder and the gloom,  
Return defeated to their far-off hills.  
Upon the roof their footsteps pass. A lull  
Falls on the noisy weeping of the eaves.  
Out is my fire and my book grown dull.  
The sun peers out upon the shining leaves.

*Louise Redfield*

PHILOSOPHIC DIALOGUE

*First Figure.* Mountains are simple—  
In the thumb-nail mind  
Of man illusion doubles to  
Illusion, in semblance of  
Complexity to hide  
Confusion.

*Second Figure.* None but knows  
Within six days  
He made the world,  
And on the seventh  
Sought repose.

The Evil, dying,  
Descend to Hell;  
The Good come  
Into the Kingdom.

*First Figure.* Infinite Logic  
Is too fine a  
Web for the myopic eye  
Of a fly.

*Second Figure.* None but knows  
Within six days . . .

*First Figure.* Cause follows cause without  
End. The hounds tear  
In a circle after a  
No-hare.



- Second Figure.* The Good come  
Into the Kingdom.
- First Figure.* For this is truth: the tail is  
Coiled back relevantly to the  
Teeth.
- Second Figure.* The Righteous have for goal  
Beauty of the soul.  
There is but  
This single beauty:  
In fear of God each  
Does his duty.
- First Figure.* Out of the logic of  
Compensation in a circle  
Autonomic, so much beauty to  
Spare: a sea-girl's  
Breasts; her purple hair.
- Second Figure.* . . . Righteous . . . goal  
Beauty . . . soul;  
. . . fear . . . God . . .  
. . . duty.

### WORKER IN MARBLE

*So I begin—  
More bitter chiselled words.  
Not one soft word  
To ease my heart.*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

CHAPTER

I

How long ago since I brought you into my heart!  
And you still stand,  
Cold effigy of love,  
Letting none pass.

II

Shadows  
In a wind;  
Two contend for place—  
How shall I know my mind?

III

Like an unhappy ghost  
I lingered  
In the dark corners  
Of his soul.

IV

His eyes  
Are gray  
And solitary  
As the sea.

V

Do not drop your head,  
So—upon your breast.  
My eyes hold all it was best  
I leave unsaid.

THIN REFUGE

Are you more than  
Man?

*Go!* I can  
Say, *Go!* or I can

Take the veil of  
Thought—fog-wall you  
Cannot break through.

OUT OF A WEARINESS

O love,  
Be rest; be calm.  
(I am wise!)  
Come like Death  
With quiet palm and eyes.

A TRIVIAL DAY IN EARLY AUTUMN

A China lily cup  
Upon a pool  
Lifts up  
Its bowl.

Over the pale sky  
Frail clouds;  
A butterfly  
About the garden flowers.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Subtle  
The wind  
Among  
The falling leaves.

The grass  
Is wanly brittle  
Beneath the feet  
Of those who pass.

SEA-GIRL

Star-light and moon-light  
Slip into the doorways  
Of the sea  
All night.

My hair is the sun-color  
Of the sand; but in an inland pool  
My eyes were cool  
As thin sea-air.

*Pearl Andelson*

## MODERN GERMAN POEMS

NIGHT

*By Wilhelm Klemm*

The river mutters to itself in the darkness  
Like an actor rehearsing his role by night.  
At intervals one hears Time's eyelashes flutter.

People are sleeping—some upon pillows, some upon white  
cliffs.

Some of them have immense terrible thumbs.  
Women toss their long hair across their faces.

Meanwhile grey castles slowly fall to ruin;  
Thin black grasses arise;  
Mountains uplift their white antlers.

Lord, give me a sign that you still live!  
I begin to freeze and to be afraid.  
It is already midnight. Hark!

The minster begins to sing in his brazen voice:  
An old sentinel full of strength and troth,  
Who, chanting, cries the hour and then is still.

Then night sinks deeper into dreamless dark.  
Only the river rehearses its spectral role:  
To be or not to be . . .

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

*By Rainer Maria Rilke*

What will you do, God, when I die?  
I am your jar (if cracked, I lie?)  
Your well-spring (if the well go dry?)  
I am your craft, your vesture I—  
You lose your purport, losing me.

When I go, your cold house will be  
Empty of words that made it sweet.  
I am the sandals your bare feet  
Will seek and long for, wearily.

Your cloak will fall from aching bones.  
Your glance, that my warm cheeks have cheered  
As with a cushion long endeared,  
Will wonder at a loss so weird;  
And, when the sun has disappeared,  
Lie in the lap of alien stones.

What will you do, God? I am feared.

AN OLD WOMAN PASSES

*By Franz Werfel*

An old woman passes like a rotund tower  
Down the street, stormed by a leafy shower.  
Soon she disappears, and panting, trots  
Where black mists in gusty nooks are blowing.

*Translated by B. Deutsch and A. Yarmolinsky*

Now she'll find a doorway, and be going  
Slowly up the creaking steps, where glowing  
Sluggish pools of lamplight lie in blots.

Now she goes into her room: no stir,  
No one takes her jacket off for her.  
Shaking hands and legs are cold as stone.  
Fluttering, weary, she begins to putter  
With her saved-up victuals and stale butter,  
While the fire lifts its feeble mutter.  
With her body she remains alone.

She forgets, while gulping down her buns,  
That in her old frame there once grew—sons.  
(Ah, the joy in slippers to be shod!)  
Now her own with strangers she is sharing—  
She forgets the cry when she was bearing.  
Rarely, in a press of people faring,  
A man calls her "mother" with a nod.

Think of her, O man, and think how we  
In this world remain a prodigy,  
Since we humans into time have hurled!  
How in the Unknown we dangle, gasping,  
Looming shadows all about us grasping  
Soul and body, crushed in their strange clasping.  
This world cannot be the only world.

When she glides, so grizzled, through the room,  
Oh, perhaps she feels it in the gloom.

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Sight is fading in her dim old eyes.  
Yes, she feels herself in all things growing,  
On her groaning knees she sinks down, glowing.  
As in a lamp's little flicker showing,  
The vast face of God begins to rise.

EVENING

*By Georg Heym*

The crimson day is steeped in Tyrian dyes;  
The stream runs white, washed with a fabulous glaze.  
A sail: one with the flying vessel, flies  
The skipper's silhouette, black on the blaze.

On every island autumn's forests lift  
Their ruddy heads where space spreads wide her wings.  
From dark defiles low leafy murmurs drift—  
Of woodland's music soft as cithern strings.

With outpoured darkness now the east is soaked,  
Like blue wine from an urn that careless hands  
Have broken. And afar, in mourning cloaked,  
Tall night on shadowy buskins mutely stands.

HOMER

*By Albert Ehrenstein*

I sang the songs of red revenge,  
And I sang the stillness of wood-shadowed waters.



*Translated by B. Deutsch and A. Yarmolinsky*

But no one companioned me—  
Rigid, lonely,  
As the locust sings to itself,  
To myself I sang my song.  
Now my steps vanish, grown faint  
In the sands of lassitude.  
For weariness my eyes are failing me,  
I am tired of comfortless fords,  
Of sea-crossing, of girls, of streets;  
At the gulf's edge I do not remember  
The shields and the spears.  
Blown upon by birches,  
By winds overshadowed,  
I fall asleep to the sound of a harp  
Whose music  
Joyfully drips from under another's fingers.  
I do not stir,  
For all thoughts and all acts  
Trouble the limpid eyes of the world.

ROCOCO

*By Richard Schaukal*

Heavy draperies, stiff and silvergrey;  
Busts of gods, that stare forth vacantly  
From blind eyes; rich convoluted clocks;  
Porcelain figures droll in shepherds' smocks,  
Set on gilt-legged tables, marble-topped;  
Ebon cats whose green eyes, never dropped,

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Blink, desirous, from the chimney-piece;  
Curtained small *causeuses*, as soft as fleece;  
Gay gilt chairs, and flowered tapestry;  
And upon a spinet, open, lies  
That most exquisite of melodies—  
The gavotte, whose yellowed margins show,  
On the right-hand page, a bit below,  
The curved dent of a marquise's nail.  
Her high-waisted little body sat  
Here, the while she played, lovely and pale,  
With arched brows, large blue mendacious eyes,  
Powdered hair she never dared to pat,  
Before gentlemen who faithfully  
Held to an houri heaven upon earth;  
Whose lace-ruffled wrists moved gracefully,  
Hovering nicely over satin vests  
To adjust frilled jabots on their breasts;  
Or who bent slim canes in dreamy mirth—  
Silver-knobbed, marked with enameled crests;  
Who with oriental perfumes scented  
Delicate adventures, and took pains  
To dismiss with adroit tenderness  
The old god, buried without distress,  
As with languid graces, well contented,  
They tripped round the grave where he must rest. . . .  
Who will open these locked gates to me,  
On this world of piquancies and pander,  
Madrigals and pale nuance and slander?

*Translated by B. Deutsch and A. Yarmolinsky*

FROM PHANTASUS

*By Arno Holz*

On a mountain of sugar-candy,  
under a blossoming almond-tree,  
twinkles my gingerbread house.  
Its little windows are of gold-foil, out of its chimney  
                        steams wadding.  
In the green heaven, above me, beams the Christmas tree.  
                        In my round sea of tinfoil  
are mirrored all her angels, all her lights!  
                        The little children stand about  
                        and stare at me.  
                        I am the dwarf Turlitipu.  
My fat belly is made of gumdragon,  
my thin pin-legs are matches,  
my clever little eyes  
                        raisins!

*Translated by Babette Deutsch  
and Avrahm Yarmolinsky*

COMMENT

THE CHRISTMAS SYMBOL

AS I write, the windows are wide open, and the russet-and-yellow leaves still linger on the city trees under an Indian-summer sun. But winter is coming—soon snowflakes will sift the boughs bare, and scurry through human senses and imaginings. Winter will drive us to cover, force us to take refuge indoors from the vastness of the world. We shall gather under roofs, around blazing logs, and enact the annual Christmas drama which challenges the immensity of space with its audacious assertion of the immensity of life.

Full of little symbols is this drama, for only through small symbols have we power to assert immensities. Minute sparks of life that we are, we can measure suns only by our own light and the infinite only by our feeble reach. We build a house to compress to a cell our tiny world, to bound it with walls and comforts, to shut out the keen winds and the questioning stars. We kindle a fire on the hearth to flatter our flesh with warmth against the encompassing chill of space and dreams. We gather together, we talk, we love, to cajole the stark loneliness of the soul. We create children and statues, pictures and poems, to assert the continuity of life, the immortality of thought. We order our little days and places into habits and harmonies and rhythms, to ward off confusion and futility, and make a pattern of beauty against threatening

chaos. We move darkly as in a dream, brightly as in a dance, carrying our little tapers of faith from mystery to mystery—our little tapers shining against the void.

And we please our fancies with delicate detail. We pluck a pine-tree from the forest to remind us of ancestral camp-fires; giving it a ceiling for the sky, tinsel for clouds and gay little lights for stars. We become children again to hang toys on its boughs, and happy little Christ-child legends drawn from the richly stored past of the credulous world. And through all the childish symbols we behold the mightier symbol: the Christ-life of humanity—its birth out of the virgin earth, its growth through harsh and toilsome ages, its search for truth, its faith in divine beauty, its tragic agony, its crucifixion and obliteration in darkness, and finally its ultimate resurrection in inex-tinguishable spiritual life.

*H. M.*

A NOTE ON MODERN GERMAN POETRY

Several strata, of various origins, colors and profiles, are distinguishable in contemporary German poetry. The bottom layer, where the process of fossilization seems already to have started, bears the marks of naturalism. The chief representatives of the naturalists were Detlev von Liliencron and Richard Dehmel, and the only surviving member of the school who is still both vocal and vital is that protean artist, Arno Holz. At the outset he proclaimed the doctrines and exemplified the practices of

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a group dedicated to an art impressionistic in form and social in purpose, an art which was on a diet of sordid commonplaces and indigestible *Weltanschauung*. Within ten years Holz was publishing a theory of poetic technique which must take its place in the general movement away from traditional versification, and before the end of the nineteenth century he had put forth the second fascicule of his *Phantasmus*—an immense, bizarre, only partially integrated work, still unfinished, which is at once an example and a justification of his “revolution of lyricism.” Here we find the poet listening, as he claims all poets must, for the rhythm beating through the mood which he aims to convey, the rhythm changing with each poetic motif, as the pulse changes with each emotional wave. In *Phantasmus* he strives to give us, in a miscellany of fragments, the many and various avatars of his wandering psyche. The scale of this work appears to be congenial to Holz, for it was followed by another huge extravaganza, *Blechschiemiede*, purposing to synthetize the whole modern world as *Phantasmus* purposes to synthetize the poet’s entire consciousness.

Not surprisingly, naturalism had only to reach its peak when the reaction against it began. This was toward the end of the century. Already a group of poets was forming a parallel to the *fin-de-siècle* coteries to be discovered elsewhere. In brief, symbolism was coming into its own in Germany. The reaction took two forms: on the one hand, there were the esthetes, careless of the moral preoccupa-

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tions of the elder school, ignoring ugliness and indifferent to the actualities about them; on the other hand, there were the mystics, who were religious rather than ethical, and who reconciled the ugly and the beautiful, the real and the supersensuous, after the fashion of mystics of all times and countries. The leader of the symbolists is Stefan Georg, and he has drawn about him a number of disciples, each of whom does distinctive and sometimes distinguished work. The exquisite, Richard Schaukal, belongs to this circle by virtue of his self-sufficient estheticism. He has a nice economy of material, and occasionally a method of suggesting emotion which reminds one of Browning. Like the English poet also, Schaukal delights in promenading through the ages, trying to surprise some intimate aspect of a vanished world. As for the mystics, the greatest of them is Rainer Maria Rilke, and yet there is perhaps no contemporary German poet so intensely aware of the things that touch the senses.

Rilke's early poems are lyrics rather pale and slender, and vague in perfume like cloistral lilies, and framing, as they should, the images of a dim Madonna. As the poet matures, his touch grows perceptibly firmer, even when he handles concepts as difficult and remote as the concept of a divine principle. The book of religious poems (*Stundenbuch*) which seems to have grown out of Rilke's brief sojourn in Russia, and which was published in 1905, expresses the mystic's supreme faith in the simple terms of the experience of the gardener and the carpenter. Only

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a man bent on seizing the last vestige of the visible, tactual world about him could find such perfect expression of the invisible, intangible world to which he surrenders his spirit. Rilke is a master-craftsman. His images are inevitable and ineluctable, his rhythms usually slow and always sensitive, his employment of rhyme as reverberant with mellow echoes as the striking of great cathedral bells.

The uppermost stratum of contemporary German poetry, and the one which is palpably in process of formation, owes its origin to the eruptions of war and revolution. The younger poets, while forming no self-constituted school, adhere to the tenets of expressionism, an esthetic and intellectual complex which has been authoritatively defined as "the spiritual movement of a period which places the inner experience above external life." It implies further a new assertion of ethical values, a profound metaphysical agitation and an underlying faith in the transubstantiation of reality by the sheer effort of the will.

Men like Ehrenstein and Klemm and Heym produce work that is typical of the attitude which underlies this post-war poetry. They are alike in looking toward the brotherhood of man and the federation of the world; they share the vision of an altered universe, which is reflected as in broken mirrors in their novel, abrupt, sometimes incoherent manner. Ehrenstein is seldom discovered in the placid mood of his *Homer*. Klemm, for all his earnest sympathies, is often esoteric in his intensely individual



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expression of them. Heym, who betrays the sensuousness of a Keats, fills his poetry with the shadows of the city and the terrors of apocalyptic forebodings.

The bruised and compassionate spirit which informs many of these poems finds its clearest voice in the work of Franz Werfel. This poet has been compared to Francis Jammes, and there is indeed a similarity between the two men, both having the simplicity of heart commonly credited to children and monks. But Werfel is primarily an urban poet, and of necessity alive to thwartings and ugliness which the French poet can ignore. The suffering which he recognizes in all life, even that of the brutes, summons a Christ-like pity, which takes upon itself the whole angry burden of evil. He is a man so deeply wounded that his stammering cry is sometimes uncommunicative. He takes for granted, moreover, a rare immediacy of sympathy which approaches the attitude of the eastern mystic, and this assumption does not always make for intelligibility. Withal, Werfel's humble homely poetry is on the whole stronger and more direct than that of most of his fellows. He remains the central figure in a generation of poets which is torn between a tense sophistication and a naive faith.

*Babette Deutsch*

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REVIEWS

SPOON RIVER TO THE OPEN SEA

*The Open Sea*, by Edgar Lee Masters. Macmillan Co.

The hackneyed truism that the rule of relativity is applicable to all things finds another exemplification in the case of the poet whose *Spoon River Anthology* stands as a challenge to all of its successors. Cannot he get away from it? Must it always pursue him?—for nothing less than a repetition of or addition to the *Spoon River* epitaphs could be really a continuation of the style for which that work has been so widely praised. Why not let *Spoon River* be *Spoon River*, *Domesday Book Domesday Book*, etc.?

Yet perhaps *The Open Sea* is the nearest approach to *Spoon River* which has as yet followed that volume. In this, as in *Spoon River*, all sorts and conditions of men speak out their minds from the past and tell their stories of sordidness or beauty. But it is an unlocalized *Spoon River*—humanity speaks up from Rome, from Illinois, from Indiana, from Babylon. For sordidness take, if you like, *The New Apocrypha*, with its grotesque irreverence for biblical authorities. I think the most orthodox have always had an unspoken feeling for the little fig-tree, cursed because it could not put forth fruit out of season; and Mr. Masters extends his sympathies to the owner of the tree, left without the kindly shade. And the grimly amusing tragedy of the farmer, who lived two miles from Decapolis, who faces ruin because of the loss of his hogs:

*Spoon River to the Open Sea*

Two thousand hogs as fine  
As ever you saw,  
Drowned and choked in the sea—  
I want the law.

Or for beauty take *Invocation to the Gods*, with its liturgical music and its sounding iteration; or these lines from a description of Hadrian's villa:

The tufa walls,  
Inlaid with yellow lichens, look like bronze  
Gold-filigreed. And through those rifts and breaks  
There are the trunks of ilex, gnarled and dark.  
Look! Nature mocks us. Hadrian is asleep  
These nearly hundred years. Does cyclamen,  
Crimson about these walls, grow less profuse?  
Or these anemones laugh less to the sun?  
Or bramble, honeysuckle, bougainvillea  
Desert the gardens of the emperor?

And for haunting charm of syncopation I wish that I had the space to quote the whole of *Ulysses*, a modern treatment of a very ancient subject:

Settled to evenings before the doorway  
With Telemachus, who sat at his knee,  
"Why did you stay so long from Ithaca,  
Leaving my mother Penelope?"

There is whimsical humor in the father's evasions and candors as he tries to answer the lad's curiosity as to his amorous adventures, and the great wanderer and connoisseur of women utters a universal truth as he finally explains his home-coming:

And the salt of a man turns to his doorway,  
He makes his will for his blood in the end.

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Were there nothing else in the book this would make it worth while.

As a famous French writer said once when asked his views on patriotism, "My country is the world, and my flag the flag of every nation under the sun"—so it may be said of Mr. Masters with regard to time, that all time is his. He is not like many a youth of today, who, with an arrogant gesture, waves aside all tradition, all the past. He chooses his subjects from Caesar to Corbett. And so, with the smell of gasoline in our nostrils and the roar of airplanes overhead, it is interesting to go back with him to the problems of Brutus and Antony; and the old questions of worlds and wars seem not so very remote from our world and our war. There is a variety of opinion as to whether the Brutus idea dominates this book for better or for worse. But it does dominate it—we find it running through many of the poems. However, it is interesting, not so much for the pictures and philosophies which it evokes, as for its historical truth of a mad Brutus blowing his madness to our own time.

It is always an easy matter for the superficial to dissect out here a line, there a phrase, with which to damn a piece of work. Mr. Masters' work is open to this sort of dissecting. He does not, with the fastidiousness of a Gautier, file and polish. He flings you his theme red-hot from the anvil. As in Wagner's operas, so in Mr. Masters' poems, there are long stretches of possibly tedious recitative; but read them, lest you miss some fine lines.

It seems to be a special intuition with this poet to recreate the atmosphere of the sixties. The poems which have to do with Lincoln, and the men about him in Illinois, may be open to criticism as drama, and even as a loosely wrought form of dialogue verse, but nevertheless they have a compelling force of their own because Mr. Masters knows his Illinois so thoroughly, and because its laws and traditions are so bred in his bone. There is no other author, American or English, who can approach him here. He makes you hear the actual speech, almost the intonation; he leaves a compelling portrait, which reduces Drinkwater's play to a shadow-picture.

These two lines, showing Alexander Stephens taking the blow of Lee's surrender, indicate with what vivid brevity Masters can reveal human suffering:

A sparrowhawk in the rain, breast torn away,  
His beating heart in view, his burning eyes!

This book includes a soul-shaking phantom-play called *The Decision*, which is full of memorable lines. We are plunged at once into the heavy atmosphere of dream, and of those voices which are the reality of dream. Telegraph wires are droning. We follow Lincoln in his sleep through his mental conflict before he has brought himself to take the irrevocable step of a declaration of war. This play is carried out with the downright force and tenderness which are characteristic of the poet, as he makes you feel the torturing struggle of a great soul; and the ending is the acme of dramatic power. Lincoln has made the decision

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in his dream, and he sleeps on. Then comes the awakening, as the secretary of war enters.

*The Secretary of War:* Fort Sumter has been fired on.

*Lincoln:*

Call the troops!

This is where Mr. Masters wins while many another fails: after you have read one of his poems, whether or not you have liked it in the reading, you go about your doings with an indelible picture in your mind. And in this our day, when so many poems look alike, sound alike, and leave a like jumble in one's memory, to place enduring stanzas in the mind of a reader is, I believe, to meet the test of being a great poet.

*Agnes Lee Freer*

TOGA-AND-BUSKIN POETRY

*Odes and Lyrics*, by Hartley Burr Alexander. Marshall Jones Co., Boston.

Often books come to us for review which seem to prove an immense and contradictory disparity between our ideas of the art and those accepted by many poets and critics of enviable culture: books which amaze us by their persistence in rhetoric, in imitative phrasing, in stress upon subject and message however trite and however unmagically expressed; books which make us wonder whether this is indeed the twentieth century of stript athletic purpose.

Here, for example, is Mr. Alexander's finely printed volume, opening with a forty-page *Ode on the Generations of Man*—an ode which, to be sure, was first published in

1910 and perhaps could hardly be written in quite the same style today. One has no objection to its cosmic message—it may be some poet's business to sing of man's development on earth from the Brute to the Dreamer. But one doubts if that poet, when he appears, will handle his great subject in quite the curious cumbersome over-trimmed manner of Mr. Alexander. The poem begins:

Earth!  
'Twixt sky and sky wide spun,  
The blue sky of the sun,  
The black abyss  
Of night and silence blent,  
Where to their slow extinguishment  
Fall fated stars, and the still years miss  
All measurement:  
Earth!  
Ancient of our days,  
Our life's great mother and of our mortal ways  
High matriarch,  
What destiny shall be  
Beyond thy bournes—or visionry  
Glad in phantasmic splendors or a stark  
And wakeless rest  
Sconed in thy stony breast—  
What dooming makes or mars  
Beyond mortality,  
Is given us to see  
But as we read aright  
Writ in our mid-earth life the mighty geste  
Of Nature, but as we guess the plan  
That wrought the mind of man  
And gave him sight  
Potent to gauge the pathways of the stars!

Of course, from any point of view recognizable here,

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this kind of thing is artistically vicious. It assembles all the furbelows ever mistakenly used in this art, and covers with them the lay-figure of a ready-made subject unvitalized by creative imagination.

Many of the shorter poems in the book are of later date, but the style would rarely prove it. They are full of "The ache and strain of aeons long ago," lines like—

Doth drive adown the sea.  
And she shall be a winsome maid.  
    America!  
Divinest bride  
Of Time . . .  
Yet to illumine that day,  
Forever young,  
Where Beauty beareth sway.

Or the incredible emptiness of the war poem *Dies Irae*, full of palaver like this from its second section, *The Flag*:

I behold thee, and my heart leaps high,  
Greeting thy rushing waves with answering wave  
Of blood resurgent, till my body rings  
With the clear hymn of liberty and thee,  
Flag, flag of my country!

Mr. Alexander, who is a distinguished folk-lore specialist in the faculty of the University of Nebraska, has written the text for a number of pageants, the latest being the *Ak-Sar-Ben Pageant* (the title is *Nebraska* reversed), which is to be given in Omaha this year. A rhetorical style seems to be the fashion for pageants—a fashion much to be regretted, as it tends to convince the people



who crowd to see and hear them that poetry is an art remote and formidable, which has to strut about in toga-and-buskin language. Probably Mr. Alexander's pageants will not tend to correct this error.

We pause over his book because the kind of misconception of the art which it typically represents is at the root of much academic misteaching of it in countless American colleges. No wonder so many wide-awake boys and girls swear off from poetry when they graduate!

H. M.

CAPRICES OF A FAUN

*Selected Poems and Ballads of Paul Fort*, translated from the French by John Strong Newberry. Duffield & Co.

Francis Jammes still holds to his provincial seclusion; Paul Fort has swung himself into the office of *Prince des Poètes*; and the illusion of the obvious has become the purpose of the French moderns. Men like Blaise Cendrars, Jules Romains, and Apollinaire demonstrate the illusion of the obvious obviously; Jean Cocteau caresses it asininely; and the friends of Tristan Tzara satirize it stupidly. Verhaeren being dead, one goes, for a living poet, to Paul Fort and expects other things.

"The art of a gay, deep-singing Frenchman." I take these words from Carl Sandburg's generous *Appreciation* printed in this volume. There is a hearty greeting in this; a kindly generalization. But being not over-persuaded by the disguise of Fort's rhymed verses written and published

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as prose, and allowing for the breadth of Mr. Sandburg's contemporary enthusiasm, I must force a first point by differing slightly. Paul Fort is indeed a true Frenchman, and he is gay; in the variety of his intoxication, the naiveté of his hurried exultation, in his elfish and child-like excitement over the delicately moody and elemental, and even over the obvious—in all of which manipulation exceeds and overruns the depth—Fort is undeniably a gay singer. Alert and aware, he touches all things and tries to include them in his song. But in justice to his land and his song, and in fairness to his position (that of *Prince des Poètes*), and in further justice to the poets of his land and of ours, he is not a deep singer. Like Rimbaud and Verlaine, but unlike Verhaeren, or his contemporary Francis Jammes, he is not "deep-singing."

Paul Fort is the old, old incarnation. He is a faun, who plays with realities as though they were illusions, capricious and aware. But he is a modern faun and he is not spiteful. Neither is he robust, or a satyricon of time. Fauns, in French literature, are a little out of date; they have been, in fact, slightly overdone and worn out. And, as becoming to its age, this faun is shedding its hoofs, and its sprightliness is on the verge of relapsing into a tender limp. Thus he has a deep and scattered sympathy, and he is inclined to be afraid. Except for the surface beauty which may flare, of strong things he is fearful, and he says:

Do not believe in death. . . . Through dark oblivion strikes a sudden beam—and death is all a gleam.

There is something of the evasive mountebank in this ageing faun. He has no vigorous denial, no honest distrust. His acceptance precludes refusal. His method, or his "technic," is an unnecessary one; it is a grave attempt to be original, a conscious excuse for himself. With this he becomes aware of an attitude and employs it profusely. He takes advantage of the acquired attitude as an escape, and he becomes the romping troubadour on a pilgrimage of the great evasion.

Paul Fort, then, is the joyful poet. But it is the joy of a beautiful abandon, a surrender to all things; and not the joy of pure spontaneity while singing the release of a personal force. Yet it is a healthy joy if it is not a vital one; and he is as careless as he is joyful. He mingles stateliness with abandon; he is graceful and ungraceful in the same poem, almost in the same line. This effusion of conscious grace and indifferent facility, together with a certain prolific and convenient efficiency in what is at times the most ordinary poetic phraseology, constitutes, in the main, the acknowledgment and the vogue of Paul Fort. Had these poems a difficulty in approach, had they a probing tenacity which comes from a definite focus, had they some singleness of purpose (they are too scattered), one would be less tempted to deal in disparaging words. On the whole, they are the rope-skipping of a child, a run into the waking spring, irresponsible and away. In this respect they are quite successful; and even important, if one is in the mood to philosophize that this is ultimately

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just as important as being concerned with deliberate things.

These selected translations by John Strong Newberry are, however, well done and well controlled. And, what is ever possible with Fort, and what to a translator must be very tempting, the poems are often improved upon. They are representative of his entire production, and they are adequate proof that were Fort writing in the English of America, were he competing with the contemporary poetic production of this country, his song would need a more intensified pain, something more than the mere enumeration of his delights, in order to gain for him the position which he has received from his own France.

*Virgil Geddes*

### CONCERNING POETS LAUREATE

*The Laureateship: A Study of the Office of Poet Laureate in England, with Some Account of the Poets*, by Edmund Kemper Broadus. Oxford University Press.

The development of the English laureateship, from the days of the Anglo-Saxon *scop*, court poet of a petty king, to the present day, is interestingly and accurately traced by Professor Broadus. The author knows his facts, and he knows poetry, thus making both his historical data and his critical pronouncements of real value. Never is he blind to the fact that the office, while possessing certain possibilities for accomplishment, "has more frequently magnified its holders than been magnified by them."

Many popular traditions concerning the laureateship are refuted by Professor Broadus. A number of early poets, such as John Gower, commonly considered in the succession of official laureates, had merely received the ceremonial crown of laurel (baccalaureate) when they took their degrees at the University of Oxford. The first of these academic laureates to receive official recognition at court was Bernard Andreas, who in 1486 was given an annuity of ten marks by order of King Henry VII.

Although in Queen Elizabeth's time poetry became "not merely the embellishment of the noble, but the path of advancement for the ambitious," there was no official laureate. It was in her time, however, that the popular conception of such an office developed, due, Professor Broadus holds, to three facts: the gradual rise of the English court as a centre of artistic interest; the development of a special retrospective interest in the life and times of Henry VII, at whose court Andreas had served; and the familiarity of men of letters with classical literature and tradition, and with the literature and life of Renaissance Italy. The result was that Ben Jonson and William Davenant successively were tacitly recognized as poets laureate, though not definitely appointed.

The official laureateship begins, the author states, with the appointment of John Dryden in 1670. Here is the succession from that day to this, as given by Professor Broadus; one wonders how many of them are known even to students of poetry: John Dryden, 1670-1689; Thomas

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Shadwell, 1689-1692; Nahum Tate, 1692-1715; Nicholas Rowe, 1715-1718; Lawrence Eusden, 1718-1730; Colley Cibber, 1730-1757; William Whitehead, 1758-1785; Thomas Warton, 1785-1790; Henry James Pye, 1790-1813; Robert Southey, 1813-1843; William Wordsworth, 1843-1850; Alfred Tennyson, 1850-1892; Alfred Austin, 1892-1913; and Robert Bridges, 1913. Professor Broadus discusses each in turn with generally sound criticism.

While there are some distinguished names in the list, why has the laureateship been filled for the most part by the inconsequential? In many cases it was not offered to men of distinction—Thomas Hardy, for example, “was not consonant with the laureate mood.” In other cases such men declined it, for probably the same reasons that led to the refusal of Thomas Gray, who wrote:

Though I very well know the bland, emollient, saponaceous qualities both of sack and silver, yet if any great man would say to me: “I will make you rat-catcher to his Majesty, with a salary of three hundred pounds a year and two butts of the best Malaga; and though it has been usual to catch a mouse or two, for form’s sake, in public once a year, yet to you, sir, we shall not stand upon these things”—I cannot say I should jump at it; nay, if they would drop the very name of the office and call me *Sinecure* to the King’s Majesty, I should still feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelt a rat about me. . . . The office itself has always humbled the professor hitherto (even in an age when kings were somebody): if he were a poor writer by making him more conspicuous, and if he were a good one by setting him at war with the little fry of his own profession, for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet-laureate.

Could the case against official patronage be better stated?  
*Nelson Antrim Crawford*

## CORRESPONDENCE

### MISS LOWELL ON TRANSLATING CHINESE

*To the Editor of POETRY:* Will you allow me space to correct a couple of misleading statements, in both of which I am concerned, in Mrs. Tietjens' second paper, *On Translating Chinese Poetry*, in your September number? The first is the attempt to refute the claim of our publishers that Mrs. Ayscough's and my translations of Chinese poetry constituted "the first time that an English version of Chinese poems has been at once the work of a sinologue and a poet." As evidence against this claim, Mrs. Tietjens cites Helen Waddell's *Lyrics from the Chinese*, which she says were based on Professor Legge's literal prose translations. But Mrs. Tietjens ignores the important words "at once" in the publisher's announcement. "At once" means at the same time, it means that the two parties to the transaction were simultaneously engaged; in other words, that they worked together. Professor Legge's monumental work on the *Book of Odes* was published in 1871; Miss Waddell's volume not until forty-two years later, in 1913. Professor Legge died in 1897, sixteen years before Miss Waddell's renditions appeared. It is possible that Miss Waddell made her renditions a considerable time before their publication, but it is scarcely likely that so long a period as forty-two years can have elapsed; it is even unlikely that Miss Waddell began her work before Professor Legge died; sixteen years

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is a long time for the gestation of a book, even a book of Chinese renditions. If we suppose that Miss Waddell did begin her renditions before Professor Legge died, it can only have been very shortly before, and it is not possible that Professor Legge, full of years and fame, should have "worked with" Miss Waddell over her embroideries on his long-published text, nor does Miss Waddell suggest anything of the sort. Elaborating on authentic Chinese texts is no new thing; Cranmer-Byng expressly states that his renditions were made from translations he had read. Mrs. Ayscough and I "worked together"; and, so far as I know, we are the first to have attempted such a collaboration, since followed by Mr. Witter Bynner and Dr. Kiang Kang-hu.

In a review of Mr. Waley's books and our *Fir-Flower Tablets*, in the July number of the *Edinburgh Review*, the author, a Chinese scholar, Chang Hsin-Hai, says:

It is true, I think, as Mrs. Ayscough says in the *Introduction*, that "it is the first time that English translations of Chinese poetry have been made by a student of Chinese and a poet working together"; and the work is certainly a success, in spite of the obvious difficulty in such a division of labor.

Mrs. Tietjens' second statement impugns my veracity, for she implies that the only thing I claimed for my versions—their literalness—is not so. Mrs. Tietjens cannot read Chinese any more than I can, and it would seem that she is not too familiar with the available literal translations, or she would not cite Miss Waddell's alteration of *The Ho* as a happy rendering of the original. It is:



*Miss Lowell on Translating Chinese*

How say they that the Ho is wide  
When I could ford it if I tried?  
How say they Sung is far away,  
When I can see it every day?

Yet must indeed the Ho be deep  
When I have never dared to leap;  
And since I am content to stay,  
Sung must be very far away.

Professor Legge's literal prose version is as follows:

Who says that the Ho is wide?  
With (a bundle of) reeds I can cross it.  
Who says that Sung is distant?  
On tiptoe I can see it.

Who says that the Ho is wide?  
It will not admit a little boat.  
Who says that Sung is distant?  
It would not take a whole morning to reach it.

Professor Legge admits that what he has called "a bundle of reeds" is given in the original by a character which means a single reed, but states that in amplifying it to a bundle he is following a certain Chinese commentator. So scrupulous is Professor Legge in cataloguing every departure from the original text. In his translation there is nothing about fording, or leaping, or being content to stay. Miss Waddell's last stanza departs entirely from the meaning of the original, which is a little odd if Miss Waddell carefully studied her Legge, for, in a note, the Professor gives the "narrative," as he calls it, of the poem. It is too long to be quoted here, and can be found either in Professor Legge's *Chinese Classics* or in our *Fir-Flower*

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*Tablets.* Suffice it to say that the lady was banished from Sung and is lamenting that although it is so near she cannot go there. I rendered the poem in this way:

Who says the Ho is wide?  
Why, one little reed can bridge it.

Who says that Sung is far?  
I stand on tiptoe and see it.

Who says the Ho is wide?  
Why, the smallest boat cannot enter.

Who says that Sung is far?  
It takes not a morning to reach it.

Mrs. Tietjens, comparing Miss Waddell's version with mine, allows propaganda to outrun discretion, for she says: "If one bears in mind the fact that the original is rhymed and patterned, does Miss Lowell's new free-verse version, with its American colloquialisms, seem an improvement?"

In the first place, my version is not in free verse, but in strict meter. It is in trimeter. The first line of each stanza is iambic; the second, iambic with an alternative anapest, in one stanza with two anapests, and a feminine ending. The pattern is perfectly regular. My slight departures from the order of Professor Legge's words were just to keep this pattern. In the second, where are the American colloquialisms? Certainly the very English Englishman who was Professor Legge, writing before 1871, can hardly be supposed to have made use of such. As to rhyme, the partiality for rhymed or unrhymed translations is merely a matter of taste. Personally I agree with

the Chinese gentleman above quoted, who, in a discussion of Chinese translation in general, states as his opinion:

It would be wiser therefore to do away with rhymes altogether, because it often happens that rhymes are retained at the expense of other far more important things. Not only does the structure of the original run the danger of being impaired, but the very simplest meaning is sometimes lost.

Query: Is rhyme the reason for Miss Waddell's extraordinary last stanza?

Later, Mrs. Tietjens says:

I cannot quite trust Miss Lowell. She has given us so many racial interpretations—Japanese, Indian and others—which were all essentially herself, that when I find that this too reads like her own poems I doubt their essentially Chinese quality. She has surely too vivid a personality to make a good translator.

Has she? Anyone who likes may see by comparing the original poems with my translations (done on the same principle as these Chinese translations) in my book, *Six French Poets*, where I had no collaborator, and where the French version can be read with its translation.

My "racial interpretations," as Mrs. Tietjens calls them, were not that to my mind. I used various atmospheres which attracted me, that was all. I expressly said in the preface to *Legends* that these were *my* versions, seen through *my* eyes. To play with an atmosphere is one thing; to translate is another. If Mrs. Tietjens will compare my *Legend of Porcelain* with *Fir-Flower Tablets*, she will see the difference, if prejudice will let her. It has already been pointed out by the well-known sinologue, Dr. Ferguson, in a review of our book in the *Journal of the North*

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*China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.* Also Mrs. Tietjens must realize that I have been studying Chinese and Japanese poets for years, and possibly I have learnt a little, a very, very little, from them.

If Mrs. Tietjens really distrusts me, it is that she is not sufficiently familiar with her subject. Will she permit a Chinese scholar, who is also a student of English, to reassure her? In the *Edinburgh Review* article, to which I have already referred, the author sums up his opinion of *Fir-Flower Tablets* by saying:

The translation is on the whole excellent. . . . It is not only literally correct, but it has also living qualities because, as rendered by an eminent poet, it has real poetic flavor. As with Mr. Waley, so with Mrs. Ayscough and Miss Lowell—they have given the world the best translations so far produced of some of the most representative Chinese poets

What Mrs. Tietjens is trying to do is to prepare readers to understand her sister, Miss Hammond's, studies in Chinese rhythms. But good wine needs no bush, and Miss Hammond, in attempting what has never been attempted before, is certain of a curious and eager audience. It is a brave endeavor, and should receive the sympathy of everyone interested in Chinese poetry. *Amy Lowell*

*Note by Eunice Tietjens.* My little excursion into the realm of Chinese translations seems to have started so lively a hare that I am quite outrun. Nor have I any inclination to follow Miss Lowell into the undergrowth of controversy, especially as the whole tenor of my article was merely a warning against thinking we understand the Chinese.

I should like to say, however, that I am extremely sorry if I have "impugned Miss Lowell's veracity." If any other reader took the single sentence, which is all I said about Miss Lowell's translation of *The Ho*,

## Miss Lowell on Translating Chinese

"If one bears in mind the fact, etc.," quoted by her in full above, as such an impugment I shall be much surprised. I cannot myself see any connection whatever between it and her veracity. I have never considered a complete literalness in giving the content all that is necessary in translating poetry, and in spite of the slight variation in Miss Waddell's translation from the literal sense, though not to my mind from the spirit of *The Ho*, I think it more magical English poetry than Miss Lowell's, and therefore essentially more truly representative of the Chinese original, which I am told is peculiarly haunting.

Nor do I understand why this purely literary preference should be taken as "propaganda" for my sister's studies in Chinese rhythms, which are primarily musical, and which concern themselves, in so far as they touch poetry at all, with a totally different phase of the subject. None the less I am grateful to Miss Lowell for her sympathy with Miss Hammond's work, and I am sorry she sees only "prejudice" in an attitude of mind which has crystallized only after a number of years of thought.

### NOTES

Miss Amy Lowell, of Brookline, Mass., requires no introduction. Her latest books are *Legends*, and (with Mrs. Florence Ayscouth) *Fir-flower Tablets*, the collection of translations from Chinese poets referred to in our *Correspondence* above. The Houghton Mifflin Co. are Miss Lowell's publishers.

Early next year Mr. Avrahm Yarmolinsky and his wife, Babette Deutsch, will issue, through Harcourt, Brace & Co., their anthology of translations, *Modern German Poetry*, which will include the poems here printed. The various German poets represented are sufficiently considered in Miss Deutsch's article.

Mr. H. W. Stewart, of Launceston, Tasmania, is the author of *Rhymes and Ramblings* (Alex. McCubbin, Melbourne, Australia).

Miss Pearl Andelson, of Chicago, will issue, this winter or spring, her first book of poems, *Fringe*, Will Ransom to be the publisher.

Mr. Harold Cook, of Cato, N. Y., has published verse in American and English periodicals.

Miss Louise Redfield is a young poet of Chicago.

The other poets represented appear here for the first time:

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Mr. Alter Brody, of New York, is the author of *A Family Album* (B. W. Huebsch).

Mr. Henry Dumont, of LaGrange, Ill., is the author of *A Golden Fancy and Other Poems* (Chappell Pub. Co., 1910).

Miss Frances Morrison, of Indianapolis, is the author of *Frannie's First Book*, privately printed in 1914.

Kay Boyle, of New York, the wife of Mr. Richard Brault, is now assisting Miss Lela Ridge in the American office of *Broom*.

Doris Campbell (Mrs. F. S. Sullivan), lives in Hollywood, Cal.; Miss Nora B. Cunningham in Chanute, Kas.; and Ruth Tenney (Mrs. Marcel Wolfers) in Tientzin, China.

We call the attention of our readers to a number of prize contests:

First, the Blindman Prize of \$250, to be awarded for the second time this year by the Poetry Society of South Carolina in Charleston. Open to any poet writing in English.

Second, the annual prize of \$100 offered by the New York *Nation* for the best poem submitted by an American before New Year's day.

Third, the three prizes offered for the second time by the Southern Methodist University of Dallas, Texas, noted in our editorial last month.

Fourth, the poetry competition of the Chicago Woman's Club, offering four prizes, the first being \$50, open only to residents of Illinois; with Feb. 1st as the time-limit.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

### ORIGINAL VERSE:

*Hidden Waters*, by Bernard Raymund. Yale Univ. Press.

*Saddle Songs*, by H. H. Knibbs. Houghton Mifflin Co.

*Fire Castles*, by Maurine Hathaway. Priv. ptd., Cincinnati.

*Mauna Roe and Other Poems*, by Ames Brooks. Princeton Un. Press.

*The Master-Mistress*, by Rose O'Neill. Alfred A. Knopf.

*The Barcarole of James Smith and Other Poems*, by Herbert S. Gorman.  
G. P. Putnam's Sons.

*The Box of God*, by Lew Sarett. Henry Holt & Co.

*Star Pollen*, by Power Dalton. Will Ransom, Chicago.

*The Keen Edge*, by Maurine Smith. Monroe Wheeler, Evanston, Ill.

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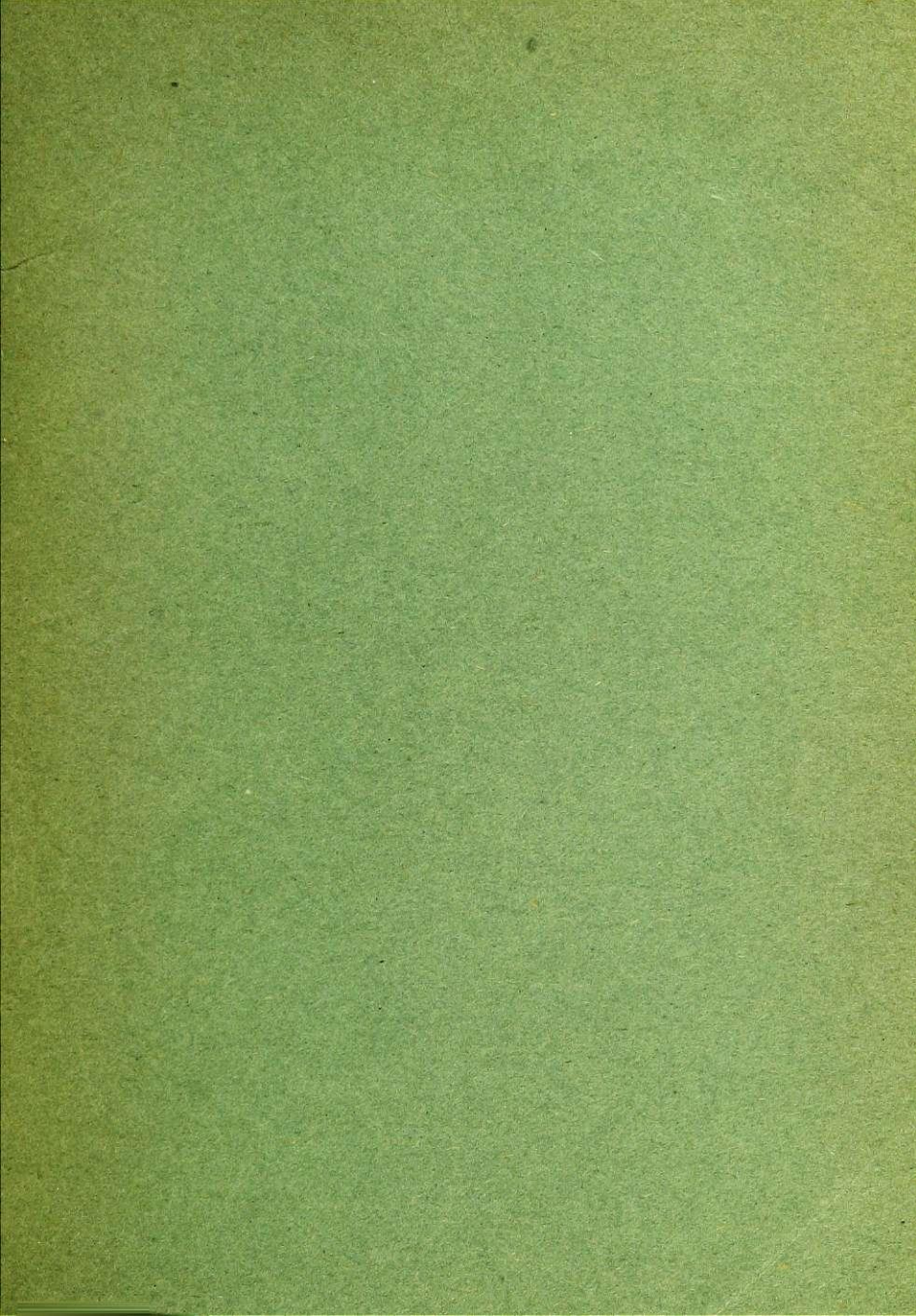
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