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Vol. XIV No. V

Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

Edited by Harriet Monroe

August 1919

Many Evenings
by Conrad Aiken
Facets, by Eunice Tietjens
Songs and Catches
by Robert Graves
Whimseys
by Vachel Lindsay

543 Cass Street. Chicago

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POETRY has saved my life—with a check in time when all the rest of the world was unresponsive, and with a fine poem when all the rest of the world was dull.

From a young poet's letter

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POETRY *for* AUGUST, 1919

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Poetry
A Magazine of Verse

VOL. XIV
NO. V

AUGUST, 1919

MANY EVENINGS

PRELUDE

AS evening falls,
And the yellow lights leap one by one
Along high walls
And along black streets that glisten as if with rain,
The muted city seems
Like one in a restless sleep who lies and dreams
Of vague desires, vague memories, and half-forgotten
pain. . . . .
Along dark veins like lights the quick dreams run,
Flash, are extinguished, flash again,
To mingle and glow at last in the enormous brain
And die away. . . . .
As evening falls,

A dream dissolves these insubstantial walls,
A myriad secretly gliding lights lie bare.
The lover rises, the harlot combs her hair,
The dead man's face grows blue in the dizzy lamplight,
The watchman climbs the stair. . . . .
The bank-defaulter leers at a chaos of figures
And runs among them and is beaten down;
The sick man coughs, and hears the chisels ringing;
The tired clown
Sees the enormous crowd—a million faces
Motionless in their places,
Ready to laugh, and seize, and crush, and tear . . . .
The dancer smooths her hair,
Laces her golden slippers and runs through the door
To dance once more,
Hearing swift music like an enchantment rise,
Feeling the praise of a thousand eyes.

As darkness falls,
The walls grow luminous and warm, the walls
Tremble and glow with the lives within them moving,
Moving like music, secret and rich and warm.
How shall we live tonight, where shall we turn?
To what new light or darkness yearn?
A thousand winding stairs lead down before us;
And one by one in myriads we descend
By lamp-lit flowered walls, long balustrades,
Through half-lit halls which reach no end.

MELODY IN A RESTAURANT

The cigarette smoke loops and slides above us,
Dipping and swirling as the waiter passes.
You strike a match and stare upon the flame.
The tiny firelight leaps in your eyes a moment
And dies away as silently as it came.

This melody, you say, has certain voices—
They rise like nereids from a river, singing,
Lift white faces, and dive to darkness again.
Wherever you go you bear this river with you:
A leaf falls, and it flows, and you have pain.

So says the tune to you—but what to me?
What to the waiter, as he pours your coffee?
The violinist who suavely draws his bow?
That man, who folds his paper, overhears it.
A thousand dreams revolve and fall and flow.

Someone there is who sees a virgin stepping
Down marble stairs to a deep tomb of roses:
At the last moment she lifts remembering eyes.
Green leaves blow down; the place is checked with shadows;
A long-drawn murmur of rain goes down the skies.
And oaks are stripped and bare, and smoke with lightning;
And clouds are blown and torn upon high forests;
And the great sea shakes its walls.
And then falls silence. . . . . And through long silence falls
This melody once more:
Down endless stairs she goes, as once before.

So says the tune to him—but what to me?
What are the worlds I see?
What shapes fantastic, terrible dreams?
I go my secret way, down secret alleys.
My errand is not so simple as it seems.

ILLICIT

Of what she said to me that night—no matter.
The strange thing came next day.
My brain was full of music—something she played me;
I couldn't remember it all, but phrases of it
Wreathed and wreathed among faint memories,
Seeking for something, trying to tell me something,
Urging to restlessness, verging on grief.
I tried to play the tune, from memory—
But memory failed: the chords and discords climbed
And found no resolution, only hung there,
And left me morbid. Where, then, had I heard it? . . .
What secret dusty chamber was it hinting?
"Dust," it said, "dust . . . . and dust . . . . and sunlight . . . .
A cold clear April evening . . . . snow-bedraggled . . . .
Rain-worn snow dappling the hideous grass . . . .
And someone walking alone; and someone saying
That all must end, for the time had come to go . . . ."
These were the phrases; but behind, beneath them,
A greater shadow moved, and in this shadow
I stood and guessed. . . . . Was it the blue-eyed lady?

The one who always danced in golden slippers?—
And had I danced, with her, upon this music?
Or was it further back—the unplumbed twilight
Of childhood? . . . . No—much recenter than that.

You know, without my telling you, how sometimes
A word or name eludes you, and you seek it
Through running ghosts of shadow—leaping at it,
Lying in wait for it to spring upon it,
Spreading faint snares for it of sense or sound;
Until of a sudden, as if in a phantom forest,
You hear it, see it flash among the branches,
And, scarcely knowing how, suddenly have it.
Well, it was so I followed down this music,
Glimpsing a face in darkness, hearing a cry,
Remembering days forgotten, moods exhausted,
Corners in sunlight, puddles reflecting stars;
Until, of a sudden, and least of all expected,
The thing resolved itself: and I remembered
An April afternoon, eight years ago—
Or was it nine?—no matter, call it nine—
A room in which the last of sunlight faded;
A vase of violets, fragrance in white curtains;
And she, who played this same thing later, playing.

She played this tune. And in the middle of it
Abruptly broke it off, letting her hands
Fall in her lap. She sat there so a moment,
With shoulders drooped, then lifted up a rose,

One great white rose, wide open, like a lotus,
And pressed it to her cheek, and closed her eyes.
"You know—we've got to end this—Miriam loves
you. . . . .
If she should ever know, or even guess it,
What would she do? Listen!—I'm not absurd. . . . .
I'm sure of it. If you had eyes for women,
To understand them, which you've never had,
You'd know it too . . . ." So went this colloquy,
Half humorous, with undertones of pathos,
Half grave, half flippant . . . . while her fingers, softly,
Felt for this tune, played it and let it fall,
Now note by singing note, now chord by chord,
Repeating phrases with a kind of pleasure.
Was it symbolic of the woman's weakness
That she could neither break it—nor conclude?
It paused . . . . and wandered . . . . paused again; while
she,
Perplexed and tired, half told me I must go,
Half asked me if I thought I ought to go. . . . .

Well, April passed, with many other evenings,
Evenings like this, with later suns and warmer,
With violets always there, and fragrant curtains. . . . .
And she was right. And Miriam found it out. . . . .
And after that, when eight deep years had passed—
Or nine—we met once more, by accident.
But was it just by accident, I wonder,
She played this tune? Or what, then, was intended?

HAUNTED CHAMBERS

The lamp-lit page is turned, the dream forgotten;
The music changes tone, you wake, remember
Deep worlds you lived before, deep worlds hereafter
Of leaf on falling leaf, music on music,
Rain and sorrow and wind and dust and laughter.

Helen was late, and Miriam came too soon;
Joseph was dead, his wife and children starving;
Elaine was married and soon to have a child.
You dreamed last night of fiddler crabs with fiddles.
They played a buzzing melody, and you smiled.

Tomorrow—what? And what of yesterday?
Through soundless labyrinths of dream you pass,
Through many doors to the one door of all.
Soon as it's opened we shall hear a music:
Or see a skeleton fall.

We walk with you. Where is it that you lead us?
We climbed the muffled stairs beneath high lanterns.
We descend again. We grope through darkened cells.
You say: "This darkness, here, will slowly kill me—
It creeps and weighs upon me . . . . is full of bells.

"This is the thing remembered I would forget:
No matter where I go, how soft I tread,
This windy gesture menaces me with death.
'Fatigue!' it says—and points its finger at me;
Touches my throat and stops my breath.

"My fans, my jewels, the portrait of my husband,
The torn certificate for my daughter's grave—
These are but mortal seconds in immortal time.
They brush me, fade away—like drops of water.
They signify no crime.

"Let us retrace our steps: I have deceived you!
Nothing is here I could not frankly tell you—
No hint of guilt, or faithlessness, or threat.
Dreams—they are madness; staring eyes—illusion.
Let us return, hear music, and forget."

COUNTERPOINT: TWO ROOMS

He, in the room above, grown old and tired;
She, in the room below, his floor her ceiling,
Pursue their separate dreams. He turns his light,
And throws himself on the bed, face down, in laughter.
She, by the window, smiles at a starlight night.

His watch—the same he has heard these cycles of ages—
Wearily chimes at seconds beneath his pillow.
The clock upon her mantelpiece strikes nine.
The night wears on. She hears dull steps above her.
The world whirs on. New stars come up to shine.

His youth—far off—he sees it brightly walking
In a golden cloud . . . . wings flashing about it. . . . .
    Darkness
Walls it around with dripping enormous walls.

Old age, far off—or death—what do they matter?
Down the smooth purple night a streaked star falls.

She hears slow steps in the street; they chime like music,
They climb to her heart, they break and flower in beauty,
Along her veins they glisten and ring and burn.
He hears his own slow steps tread down to silence.
Far off they pass. He knows they will never return.

Far off, on a smooth dark road, he hears them faintly.
The road, like a sombre river, quietly flowing,
Moves among murmurous walls. A deeper breath
Swells them to sound: he hears his steps more clearly.
And death seems nearer to him; or he to death.

What's death?—she smiles. The cool stone hurts her elbow,
The last few raindrops gather and fall from elm-boughs,
She sees them glisten and break. The arc-lamp sings,
The new leaves dip in the warm wet air and fragrance,
A sparrow whirs to the eaves and shakes its wings.

What's death—what's death? The spring returns like music;
The trees are like dark lovers who dream in starlight;
The soft grey clouds go over the stars like dreams.
The cool stone wounds her arms to pain, to pleasure.
Under the lamp a circle of wet street gleams.
And death seems far away—a thing of roses,
A golden portal where golden music closes,
Death seems far away;

And spring returns, the countless singing of lovers,
And spring returns to stay. . . . .

He, in the room above, grown old and tired,
Flings himself on the bed, face down, in laughter,
And clenches his hands, and remembers, and desires to die.
And she, by the window, smiles at a night of starlight. . . . .
The soft grey clouds go slowly across the sky.

MULTITUDES TURN IN DARKNESS

The half-shut doors through which we heard that music
Are softly closed. Horns mutter down to silence,
The stars wheel out, the night grows deep.
Darkness settles upon us; a vague refrain
Drowsily teases at the drowsy brain.
In numberless rooms we stretch ourselves and sleep.

Where have we been? What savage chaos of music
Whirls in our dreams? We suddenly rise in darkness,
Open our eyes, cry out, and sleep once more.
We dream we are numberless sea-waves, languidly foaming
A warm white moonlit shore;

Or clouds blown windily over a sky at midnight,
Or chords of music scattered in hurrying darkness,
Or a singing sound of rain. . . . .
We open our eyes and stare at the coiling darkness,
And enter our dreams again.

Conrad Aiken

FACETS

COMPLETION

My heart has fed today.
My heart, like hind at play,
Has grazed in fields of love, and washed in streams
Of quick, imperishable dreams.

In moth-white beauty shimmering,
Lovely as birches in the moon glimmering,
From coigns of sleep my eyes
Saw dawn and love arise.

And like a bird at rest,
Steady in a swinging nest,
My heart at peace lay gloriously
While winds of ecstasy
Beat round me and above.

I am fulfilled of love.

ON THE HEIGHT

The foothills called us, green and sweet;
  We dallied, but we might not stay,
And all day long we set our feet
  In the wind's way.

We climbed with him the wandering trail
  Up to the last keen, lonely height—

Where snow-peaks clustered, sharp and frail,
  Swimming in light.

Sheer on the edge of heaven we dwelt
  And laughed above the blue abyss,
While on my happy lips I felt
  Your windy kiss.

You were the spirit of the height,
  The breath of sun and air.
A bird dipped wing, and, swift and white,
  Peace brooded there.

PARTING AFTER A QUARREL

You looked at me with eyes grown bright with pain,
  Like some trapped thing's. And then you moved your head
Slowly from side to side, as though the strain
  Ached in your throat with anger and with dread.

Soon you had turned and left me, and I stood
  With a queer sense of deadness over me;
And only wondered dully that you could
  Fasten your trench-coat up so carefully—

Till you were gone. Then all the air was thick
  With my last words that seemed to leap and quiver.
And in my heart I heard the little click
  Of a door that closes—quietly, forever.

PRAISE FOR HIM

And if I find you beautiful, what then?
Shall I not take my pleasure in the line
Of your clean chiseled nostril, and the fine
Crisp curve your hair makes on your forehead? Men
Are plenty who are dull and dutiful.
I owe you thanks that you are beautiful.

And if your spirit's vividness is such
That with the swiftness of a flight of birds
Rises the covey of your colored words,
Where is the song shall praise you overmuch?
I hold no brief for pious lividness;
I thank you for your spirit's vividness.

And if your soul—"Is there a soul?" "Perhaps;
At least admit it as a way men speak."—
Your soul then, lonely as a mountain peak
And naked as a fawn, if it can lapse
Sheer outward from the rim of things I see,
Well! Still I'm thankful for your liberty.

AT THE BANQUET

Above the wine and cigarettes,
  Below the jest that flies,
I catch with half-amused insistence—
A throb of music in the distance—
  Your eyes!

They knit the wine and jest together
  In deeper harmonies;
With my own thoughts they interlace
Like some strange contrapuntal bass—
  Your eyes. . . . .

The words we speak say all—and nothing.
  In them no mystery lies;
Only, between my soul and sense
Steal, half amused and half intense,
  Your eyes.

DEFEAT

I have seen him, and his hand
Has that slow gesture still.

My tutored heart
That had gone quietly these many months
And happily, securely, beat its way
Glad to be free of the old instancy—
My heart betrayed me.
Cowardly it stopped;
And then it leaped,
And the old Panic hoofbeats thundered in my ears.

Oh, is there then no peace for me
When old love will not die?
And shall I conquer all things,
Thrusting up, through the intolerable pain of growth,
Until my soul

Leaps wingéd to the sunset's rim—
Only at last to break myself on love,
And fall a-trembling like an aching girl
Because he has a beautiful, slow hand?

THE TEPID HOUR

In such a tepid night as this
  Strange formless sorrowings lie hid,
Like melancholy in a kiss,
  Like what we dreamed in what we did—
In such a tepid night as this.

From out some shadowy depths of me
  Vague longings struggle, dreamer-wise.
They stir and moan uneasily,
  Then sleep again, too weak to rise
From out those shadowy depths of me.

Life holds me by so frail a thread
  That scarce I feel the drag of it.
Alive I seem, and yet half dead.
  But quick or dead I care no whit,
Life holds me by so frail a thread.

I would not snap the thread, and yet
  Light as it is I grudge its hold.
'Twere broken with no more regret
  Than lingers round a love grown old.
I would not snap the thread, and yet. . . . .

Eunice Tietjens

THE SOUL OF SUMMER

Incessant chatter of blackbirds over the flags,
Sinuous falls of the swallows and sudden turns,
Short flights, preoccupied, of the robin mothers—
This is the living summer, this is summer.

The fine dust drifts in the torpid air, sluggish—
A faint-blue shadow veil hung before green,
A dry hush on the grass stalks, on the corn stalks—
Lazy dust-drift of the heavy summer.

This is summer fulfilled, this is the summer
Of waiting wings, still wings in passionate tremor.
This is the summer when torpor blossoms to storms
And throbbing wings burst out to the height of the wind.

I too know the summer, I know the summer
Of light poured on the soft white of her neck;
I know the hair that flashed in the summer sun.
I know the summer whose laughter pierced my heart.

MARY, MARY, MY LOVE

Why are you trembling so,
Mary, Mary, my love?
Why are your hands so cold,
Your hands that burn my lips?

And the night is throbbing with us,
Mary, Mary, my love;

But your little hands are cold,
Your hands that have set me aflame.

I know why you tremble so,
Mary, Mary, my love.
I know why your hands are cold,
I see your eyes aflame.

And we are one in the silence,
Mary, Mary, my love.
We are one in your trembling,
One in our hearts aflame.
We are one in the night,
My Mary, Mary, beloved!

Edward Sapir

ON INDIAN LAKE

Apple trees on a low hill
  And the dead sun behind;
The water red and still;
  No sound, no wind.

Sudden the booming flight
  Of coots upstirred;
Overhead, in the early night,
  The moon, white bird.

Charles L. O'Donnell

THREE SONNETS

SANCTUARY

How is it faith outstrips the doubting word,
Leaving the skeptic brain in overthrow—
And, swift as arrow from the archer's bow,
Flies up, and ever upward, like a bird?
Today the heavy mists of doubt are stirred
By distant currents, winds that softly blow;
As if a promise given long ago
Were faintly whispered and as faintly heard.
I sometimes think that high above Earth's dome
Our hopes from turret to dream-turret soar,
And like gray pigeons build their nests and mate.
There Beauty harbors them when they turn home
From their wide circling, and forevermore
Their sanctuary is inviolate.

RITUAL

Kneeling, I worship at that holy shrine
Where Love returns when the beloved is gone:
Where night, the sea, and one dark Gothic pine
Breathe their old covenants of golden dawn.
Again I hear the reverberant plaintive tides
Chanting their litanies upon the dune,
And dream I await you where the sea divides,
Cleft by the silver pathway of the moon.

Though when the eastern rim of heaven pales
I shall arise alone, uncomforted,
Now, like a jewelled censer, night exhales
The perfumed incense of a dream long dead;
And your rapt spirit, like an organ, pours
Its glad hosannas on long-echoing shores.

THE DEATH OF AN ARTIST

"I tire of looking at the sea," he said.
"The composition's bad; it needs a tree
Within the line of vision where the red
Of sunset pales before immensity.
There's too much water and there's too much sky
Without a frame to hold them in their place,
And not enough of shore to rest the eye
Or any little thing to shatter space.
If I were painting it"—he suddenly smiled—
"You'd come upon it almost unaware;
Down avenues of green your soul, beguiled,
Would yield the sea a glance and find it fair.
How swiftly then the spirit would go free! . . . .
I tire," he said, "of looking at the sea."

Florence Kilpatrick Mixter

SONGS AND CATCHES

DICKY

Oh, what a heavy sigh!
  Dick, are you ailing?
Even by this fireside, Mother,
  My heart is failing.

Tonight across the down,
  Whistling and jolly,
I sauntered out from town
  With my stick of holly.

Bounteous and cool from sea
  The wind was blowing,
Cloud shadows under the moon
  Coming and going.

I sang old heathen songs,
  Ran and leaped quick,
And turned home by St. Swithin's
  Twirling my stick.

And there, as I was passing
  The churchyard gate,
An old man stopped me: "Dicky,
  You're walking late."

I did not know the man;
  I grew afeard
At his lean lolling jaw,
  His spreading beard,

His garments old and musty
  Of antique cut,
His body very lean and bony,
  His eyes tight shut.

Oh, even to tell it now
  My courage ebbs!
His face was clay, Mother,
  His beard cobwebs.

In that long horrid pause,
  "Good-night," he said;
Entered and clicked the gate—
  "Each to his bed."

Do not sigh or fear, Dicky!
  How is it right
To grudge the dead their ghostly dark
  And wan moonlight?

We have the glorious sun,
  Lamp and fireside.
Grudge not the dead their moonshine
  When abroad they ride.

HAWK AND BUCKLE

Where is the landlord of old Hawk and Buckle,
And what of Master Straddler this hot summer weather?
He's along in the tap room with fat cheeks a-chuckle,
And ten bold companions all drinking together.

Where is the daughter of old Hawk and Buckle,
And what of Mistress Jenny this hot summer weather?
She sits in the parlor with smell of honeysuckle,
Trimming her bonnet with white ostrich feather.

Where is the ostler of old Hawk and Buckle,
And what of Willy Dodger this hot summer weather?
He is rubbing his eyes with a slow and lazy knuckle
As he wakes from his nap on a bank of fresh heather.

Where is the page boy of old Hawk and Buckle,
And what of our young Charlie this hot summer weather?
He is bobbing for tiddlers in a little trickle-truckle
With his line and his hook and his breeches of leather.

Where is the she-goat of old Hawk and Buckle,
And what of pretty Nanny this hot summer weather?
She stays not contented with mickle or with muckle,
Straining for daisies at the end of her tether.

For this is our motto at old Hawk and Buckle—
We cling to it close and we sing all together:
"Every soul for himself at our old Hawk and Buckle,
And devil take the hindmost this hot summer weather."

Robert Graves

THE CUPBOARD

What's in that cupboard, Mary?
  Which cupboard, Mother dear?
The cupboard of red mahogany
  With handles shining clear.

That cupboard, dearest Mother,
  With shining crystal handles?
There's nought inside but rags and jags
  And yellow tallow candles.

What's in that cupboard, Mary?
  Which cupboard, Mother mine?
That cupboard stands in your sunny chamber—
  The silver corners shine.

There's nothing there inside, Mother,
  But wool and thread and flax,
And bits of faded silk and velvet,
  And candles of white wax.

What's in that cupboard, Mary?
  And this time tell me true.
White clothes for an unborn baby, Mother—
  But what's the truth to you?

Robert Graves

WHIMSEYS

KALAMAZOO

Once, in the city of Kalamazoo,
The gods went walking, two and two,
With the friendly phoenix, the stars of Orion,
The speaking pony and singing lion.
For in Kalamazoo in a cottage apart
Lived the girl with the innocent heart.

Thenceforth the city of Kalamazoo
Was the envied, intimate chum of the sun.
He rose from a cave by the principal street.
The lions sang, the dawn-horns blew,
And the ponies danced on silver feet.
He hurled his clouds of love around;
Deathless colors of his old heart
Draped the houses and dyed the ground.
O shrine of the wide young Yankee land,
Incense city of Kalamazoo,
That held, in the midnight, the priceless sun
As a jeweller holds an opal in hand!

From the awkward city of Oshkosh came
Love the bully no whip shall tame,
Bringing his gang of sinners bold.
And I was the least of his Oshkosh men;
But none were reticent, none were old.
And we joined the singing phoenix then,

And shook the lilies of Kalamazoo
All for one hidden butterfly.
Bulls of glory, in cars of war
We charged the boulevards, proud to die
For her ribbon sailing there on high.
Our blood set gutters all aflame,
Where the sun slept without any heat—
Cold rock till he must rise again.
She made great poets of wolf-eyed men—
The dear queen-bee of Kalamazoo,
With her crystal wings, and her honey heart.
We fought for her favors a year and a day
(Oh, the bones of the dead, the Oshkosh dead,
That were scattered along her pathway red!)
And then, in her harum-scarum way,
She left with a passing traveller-man—
With a singing Irishman
Went to Japan.

Why do the lean hyenas glare
Where the glory of Artemis had begun—
Of Atalanta, Joan of Arc,
Cinderella, Becky Thatcher,
And Orphant Annie, all in one?
Who burned this city of Kalamazoo
Till nothing was left but a ribbon or two—
One scorched phoenix that mourned in the dew,
Acres of ashes, a junk-man's cart,
A torn-up letter, a dancing shoe,

(And the bones of the dead, the dead)?
Who burned this city of Kalamazoo—
Love-town, Troy-town Kalamazoo?

A harum-scarum innocent heart.

THE MODEST JAZZ-BIRD

The Jazz-bird sings a barnyard song—
  A cock-a-doodle bray,
A jingle-bells, a boiler works,
  A he-man's roundelay.

The eagle said, "My noisy son,
  I send you out to fight!"
So the youngster spread his sunflower wings
  And roared with all his might.

His headlight eyes went flashing
  From Oregon to Maine;
And the land was dark with airships
  In the darting Jazz-bird's train.

Crossing the howling ocean,
  His bell-mouth shook the sky;
And the Yankees in the trenches
  Gave back the hue and cry.

And Europe had not heard the like—
  And Germany went down!
The fowl of steel with clashing claws
  Tore off the Kaiser's crown.

DAVY JONES' DOOR-BELL

A Chant for Boys with Manly Voices

(Every line sung one step deeper than the line preceding)

Any sky-bird sings,
Ring, ring!
Any church-chime rings,
Dong ding!
Any cannon says,
Boom bang!
Any whirlwind says,
Whing whang!
The bell-buoy hums and roars,
Ding dong!
And way down deep,
Where fishes throng,
By Davy Jones' big deep-sea door,
Shaking the ocean's flowery floor,
His door-bell booms
Dong dong,
Dong dong,
Deep, deep down,
Clang boom,
Boom dong.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS DEACON

(A song to be syncopated as you please)

Black cats, grey cats, green cats miau—
Chasing the deacon who stole the cow.

He runs and tumbles, he tumbles and runs.
He sees big white men with dogs and guns.

He falls down flat. He turns to stare—
No cats, no dogs, and no men there.

But black shadows, grey shadows, green shadows come.
The wind says, "Miau!" and the rain says, "Hum!"

He goes straight home. He dreams all night.
He howls. He puts his wife in a fright.

Black devils, grey devils, green devils shine—
Yes, by Sambo,
And the fire looks fine!
Cat devils, dog devils, cow devils grin—
Yes, by Sambo,
And the fire rolls in.

And so, next day, to avoid the worst—
He takes that cow
Where he found her first.

THE HORRID VOICE OF SCIENCE

"There's machinery in the butterfly;
  There's a mainspring to the bee;
There's hydraulics to a daisy,
  And contraptions to a tree.

"If we could see the birdie
  That makes the chirping sound

With x-ray, scientific eyes,
We could see the wheels go round."

And I hope all men
Who think like this
Will soon lie
Underground.

MY LADY IS COMPARED TO A YOUNG TREE

When I see a young tree
In its white beginning,
With white leaves
And white buds
Barely tipped with green,
In the April weather,
In the weeping sunshine—
Then I see my lady,
My democratic queen,
Standing free and equal
With the youngest woodland sapling
Swaying, singing in the wind,
Delicate and white:
Soul so near to blossom,
Fragile, strong as death;
A kiss from far-off Eden,
A flash of Judgment's trumpet—
April's breath.

Vachel Lindsay

COMMENT

EDITORIAL AMENITIES

NOWADAYS we are frequently reminded of "the poetic renaissance," as the journalese of the day puts it. Apparently this renaissance has admittedly arrived, for its initial creative stage has already yielded—so fast do we travel in this motor era—to the secondary critical stage when a multiplicity of books are written "about it and about." Mr. Lowes' *Convention and Revolt,* Mr. Untermeyer's *New Era,* Mrs. Wilkinson's *New Voices,* and a trail of volumes much less valuable, volumes middling to worthless—these offer amazing evidence that something has been going on during the past seven years since POETRY unlocked the gate.

How misty and moss-grown a gate it was in the autumn of 1912 few of the ardent spirits who rushed through need take the time to remember, still less the editors and reviewers who ambled after them. But now and then an incident reminds us. A month ago, for example, the newspapers, far and wide, announced the award of "the annual Pulitzer Prize for poetry" to Carl Sandburg and Margaret Widdemer. The truth is, of course, that there is no "Pulitzer Prize for poetry;" that when Joseph Pulitzer—a most representative American—died in 1911 poetry was so negligible and neglected that he did not recognize its existence as a modern art.

Thus his will, which enriched his School of Journalism at Columbia with one-thousand-dollar prizes for everything

else under the sun—for the best novel of the year, the best play, the best editorial, etc.—committed the absurdity of omitting the highest of the literary arts. When the newspapers unconsciously try to rectify his error by giving his name to a prize for which Mr. Wheeler, president of the P. S. A., with great difficulty secured the cash, they are merely acknowledging the absurdity of the omission. If Mr. Pulitzer had died a few years later, he not only would not, but *could* not, have made the mistake: by that time poetry was in the air—the great journalist, like all the world, would have had to breathe it; and in his will its name, like Abou ben Adhem's, would have "led all the rest."

If POETRY opened the gate and carried the banner through, it has not kept its lead without numerous challenges. Every month or two a new special magazine is born and we welcome it to the field on the principle of the-more-the-merrier—for the field is large and no one magazine can gather all the harvest. It doesn't afflict us much if the newcomers show ignorance, or at least a polite disregard, of our presence; or turn upon us, from their various eastern points of vantage, each a coldly superior eye.

Contemporary Verse thus appoints itself "the best of the poetry magazines," to the joy of the sapient *New Republic,* which, weary of its own too-numerous editors, attributes this self-confessed supremacy to *C. V.'s* lack of either editorship or standards. And the modest Philadelphia monthly proceeds thus to corner the market and obliterate the rest of us: "*Contemporary Verse* alone, of the new poetry magazines,

endeavors to express broadly and simply the best phases of American idealism."

Youth announces with appropriate enthusiasm, "For a long time there has been felt the need of a magazine which would do for the allied countries in the field of poetry what our Governments are doing in the political realm:" as if POETRY had not printed poems from sixteen nations of the old and new worlds, and *Youth* had been appointed official spokesman of neglected peoples.

And *The Lyric,* or *The Lyric Society,* proclaiming itself "the only American organization devoted to the interests of the vision-bearers of America," "undertakes the job of organizing the readers of poetry" at five dollars a year apiece—have we not been trying for years to do it for two?—and even offers to buy three books a year at five hundred per to fill three poets' pockets, promising to distribute their editions to subscribers—those coy "poetry-lovers" who, like Viola, are too prone to conceal their love.

All these and others—yes, and *Others,* our gayest contemporary, which has always loyally concealed its despair over our old-fogeyism—all these and others, whether they like us or not, may be less rivals than aids; every banner means a new ally in support of the Cause. They are helping to spread the gospel, to gather the "great audience." By hammering away in school (or college) and out, in print and by word of mouth, they—we—may at last make the great world understand that a poet has a right, like other artists, to live by his art; that the art requires public recognition and sup-

port—even to the point of numerous prizes, scholarships, free club-houses or institutes, even to the point of eager publishers selling many editions.

And what of the critics? What of the "literary editors"? Are they doing their share—they whose function it is, not only to give the public what it wants but gently to make the public want what it should? Mostly they are full of good-will, genuine even when puzzled; but they don't express it often enough or loud enough. They don't give each of our numbers a column-and-a-half review, and call upon the "reading public" to weigh each new poet in scales of gold! And sometimes he, the critic, knows it all with a finality which is the despair of specialists. Most people admit that adequate criticism of a symphony, a painting, an edifice, of an airplane, a locomotive, or even a rag-doll, requires not only special aptitude but a certain preparatory training. But any typewriter-strummer who has read *Hiawatha* in the eighth grade thinks himself fully equipped as a critic of poetry, quite competent to denounce all the poets of this century and enforce his anathema by contrasting them with Shakespeare and Keats, or even with David and Solomon!

Every day the mail brings us expert testimony of this kind, not only from Podunk but from Philadelphia and even London. And we who have specialized in this subject for years stand convicted of wilful idiocy before a larger public than we can hope to reach with our side of the story.

At a banquet recently given in Chicago, Congressman James R. Mann, that noble pillar of the past, referred with

illuminating candor to "the old order which has temporarily passed away." But there are moss-backs in poetry who would scorn to admit that the old order has passed away even temporarily; moss-backs who stoutly deny that the poets of this age of enormous change may have things to say, and ways of saying them, quite different from those immortalized by the masters of the past. *H. M.*

THE POETRY OF THE FUTURE

Now that the war is over, the world's youth is approaching freedom again, still weary perhaps with the struggle, but with an intense eagerness for life. And out of this intensity should grow poetry, not, perhaps, large in bulk but yet enough for us to be able to say to future generations: "We hooligans who fought for those long years in the mud and in spiritual darkness could yet make a few songs to test your emulation."

I do not know what form this poetry will take; very possibly the great living poets of to-day are in poverty and obscurity, unknown to any of us. But I do know what form I should like it to take; I know the sort of poetry I should like to see written by this generation, a generation which has not been altogether ignoble.

First of all, I want this poetry to be aristocratic, not in any trivial, monarchical or plutocratic sense, but in the root sense, as the free, equal citizens of a Greek republic were aristocrats. It must be the expression of distinguished minds in a distinguished manner. The "republic of letters" can

have no use for Bolshevism; though all within its boundaries are equal, it cultivates good manners and at least avoids scrupulously those whose presumption leads them to assume a capability they do not possess.

Secondly, I want this poetry to be human. There is no excuse for affectations or prejudices or any sort of narrow-mindedness. I want to see human nature expressed by people who are sensitive enough to sympathize with it and talented enough to express it. I am so utterly weary of the little person who has never lived, never loved passionately, never hated, never seen death, never known anguish or gaiety or any real emotion—so weary of that person's little rhymes or *vers libre*. The coal miner who says, "It's bloody in them bloody mines," is more of a poet; and a coal miner who could express to us adequately the real emotions of his life would be a poet. He would be *ipso facto* a citizen of the aristocratic republic!

Thirdly, I want this poetry to be competent. Doesn't everyone know the "poet" who by some slight eccentricity of clothing or behavior convinces himself that he is "different"? And who moreover is far less competent at his job than any of the merely "industrial" people he dares to despise? Try and make a table without learning how, try and drill a company without learning how; and observe the mess. Are we to assume that poetry, which is almost the most difficult thing in the world to create, can be created without "knowing how"? I said before, "Poetry has no rules"; but a poet must know how his predecessors achieved their results, he must find out for himself how it was that

the poets he admires obtained the effects which move him. If he does nothing else he will achieve the negative result of knowing what not to do. These people in the past did not just say to themselves: *"Tiens,* I will be a poet—*c'est une idée!"* and then sit down and produce the *Ode to a Nightingale* or the *Ballade de la belle Héaulmière.* There was, of course, that indefinable thing we call "genius" to begin with, but there was also the conscious work, the conception of poetry as an art.

Fourthly, I want to see this poetry "individual." I want about it that personal flavor which is a guarantee of sincerity. If we hear someone read Swinburne or Heine we know at once that one master only could have written this, we know it by the "feel" of the thing, the music, the personality behind it. I should like the future to be as sure about the poets of to-day as we are sure of the great men of the past.

Fifthly, I should like to see this poetry develop along the lines which it has taken in the past few years. I should like to see all the possibilities of *vers libre* explored and exploited; I should like to see it richer, more controlled, more shapely; I should like it to express all the moods and emotions of men, the cities of to-day no less than "the glory that was Greece," the things that are steadfast as well as the things that fade. I should like to see *vers libre* developed in competent hands into a varied medium, as lovely as the old poetry was lovely, but more virile, more essentially artistic. I should like also to have the capabilities of our language for the writing of quantative verse tested and experimented upon

by poets who are also musicians, as the Elizabethans were. And, in conclusion, I should like the impossible—an interested public with sufficient taste to know if a work is well or badly written, sufficient liberality of mind to appreciate novelty when it has talent, and sufficient liberality of purse to afford its poets at least as much remuneration as its boot-blacks and policemen! *Richard Aldington*

REVIEWS

CONVENTION AND REVOLT

Convention and Revolt in Poetry, by John Livingston Lowes. Houghton Mifflin Co.

In the last few years so much has been written in defense of radicalism in poetry, so much has been said of the hampering restrictions of what is regarded as conventional, conservative verse, that now perhaps it becomes necessary to defend the classics against what we may call the "New Academism" of the radicals! Such a defense (although of course the classics do not really need defense—they are permanent and defy abuse) has now been prepared by Mr. Lowes. What he has done is to reinstate the classics as the radicals of their day and age; to show that conventions are created by usage and acceptance, but that as these conventions cease to be inspired by the breath of life they must be discarded or rehabilitated and new ones created in their place. He has thus shown that although revolt has always the aspect of novelty and complete modernism, it is historically ancient and re-

current in the great tradition of verse. It is no yawning gulf, no precipice incapable of being jumped or bridged, and cutting off all approach from the rear or front. It is rather a law of growth, to be balked at the cost of life itself. It is evident therefore at the outset that Mr. Lowes is not out of sympathy with the radicals, nor yet unduly startled or alarmed by them. At the same time he is not without a background, as too many critics of modern verse have been, especially many of the radicals themselves; and the wisdom inspired by this background has given him a wise tolerance and even temper in discussing his subject, too often lacking in partisan criticism of the present new movement.

Beginning with the roots of convention, which are of the essence of art itself—the acceptance of illusion rather than the experience or fact, the need of a communicative medium, the use of the symbol for the thing; then examining the growth and decay of conventions, the question of how far originality may dispense with or accept conventions, the inevitability of reaction; Mr. Lowes goes on to consider in detail the problems of poetic diction, rhyme, metre and *vers libre,* prose and verse rhythms, the incursions of prose, and other important phases of the subject in relation both to the tradition and to the "new poetry"; finishing with a chapter on the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

One of the most interesting and provocative of all his chapters is that on *Rhyme, Metre and Vers Libre,* in which he shows that the restrictions of metrical verse are far less than the inexpert might imagine. Here his distinction be-

tween the two rhythms of verse that follows a regular metric pattern, or rather his exposition of these two rhythms, is more clearly stated than I have ever seen it elsewhere. After admitting that "metrical verse imposed restrictions upon the freedom of ordinary speech—which is merely to say, in other words, that verse is a convention of art, whose very essence is restraint," he goes on to show that this restraint is not after all unduly rigid, as follows:

> Now there is a fundamental fact which the protestants, if I understand them, overlook. Upon the length or the development of the larger, infinitely varying rhythmic units, metre does not impose any limitations whatever. These are free. They are merely taken up into and merged with another rhythmic movement. Let me make clearer what I mean. The movement of regular verse is a resultant, a resolution, of two rhythms, one of which, taken alone, tends towards restraint. There is in verse, on the one hand, the metrical unit —that is to say, for our present purpose, the line. There is, on the other hand, what we may designate as the sentence rhythm or cadence. If the line length and the sentence rhythm uniformly coincide (as they do in some of Pope's couplets, for example) we get monotony, deadly and intolerable. If there is only the sentence cadence, without the beat of the line, there is variety, but it is merely the variety of your speech and mine, when charged with emotion in varying degrees. Metrical verse, that is not sheer doggerel, is built upon the harmony of both. Behind the endlessly weaving rhythms of the sentence cadences beats steadily, in the best verse unobtrusively, the rhythm of the line.

By this too it may be seen why verse that scans accurately may yet have no rhythm whatever, a fact too generally ignored by the prosodists!

It is unfortunate that one has not the space for a complete exposition of Mr. Lowe's book; particularly one would like to dwell on his chapter, *Originality and Conventions,* in which he shows that originality consists in its power to re-

create beauty out of old conventions quite as much or more than in its power of invention. "The supreme test of originality is its power to give us the sense of a footing on trodden and familiar ground, which all at once is recognized as unexplored." One would like to quote at length many passages equally illuminating and suggestive, but one can only conclude with the advice to all poetry lovers—radicals and conservatives alike—to read the book themselves. It has but one fault; the bad habit of indulging in quotations to illustrate a point, when such quotation is unnecessary and really detracts from, rather than enforces, the statement; but this is a very minor annoyance.

Mr. Lowes has covered many if not all the points under discussion during the last few years; he has gone over the battlefield without omitting any of the scars, and with full recognition of the strategic merits of both sides. He renders no decision, and although one instinctively feels that his taste is conservative, it is a very liberal conservatism, and he accepts willingly and enthusiastically all that the radicals have to offer. Indeed, he is even a little too timid and temperate about expressing himself on just what the "new poetry" may add or fail to add to the great tradition. We are too near, he says, to judge our contemporaries. A hundred years from now the good will have been sifted from the bad: "The happy lecturer will find the house swept and garnished, and will have the simple task of discoursing on the early-twentieth-century classics; but I shall not anticipate his list!" But that is just what we wish Mr. Lowes would

do. Why the timidity? Certainly it is not shared by Mr. Lowes' confrère, Professor Phelps of Yale, who has manifestly failed at the job. Mr. Lowes on the contrary has shown himself in this book abundantly qualified to furnish us with just what is so sorely needed—disinterested, fresh, purely aesthetic, competent (and therefore authoritative) criticism of the poets who are writing today. Must we have only Griswolds, and worse, for the unhappy lecturer of a hundred years hence to refer to? Now that Mr. Lowes has prepared this excellent general groundwork, we wish that he would go on and give us a series of lectures, in like detail, on the subject of our contemporaries.

A. C. H.

A PRIZE-WINNER

The Old Road to Paradise, by Margaret Widdemer. Henry Holt & Co.

One is tempted to examine this book with unusual care, because it has just received the emphasis of a prize. Or let us say half a prize—perhaps an even greater honor, since thus Miss Widdemer's name is paired with Carl Sandburg's. For this book and *Cornhuskers,* as we announced last month, divided the prize of five hundred dollars awarded by the Poetry Society of America and Columbia University for the best book of verse published in 1918—a circumstance which reminded us that POETRY had not yet reviewed it.

The book contains much graceful verse and a few lyrics of higher quality, songs which lack only the final poignancy

to lift their too cultivated feeling into passion, their ripple of music into magic. The best, in my opinion, are the love-song, *I did not know* (from POETRY for October, 1917), the simple and moving *Prayer for the New Year* (save for an agonizing error of grammar), *The Dark Cavalier, Interim, Garden Dream,* and *Poem for a Picture* (of children at play on a French battlefield), of which we quote the beginning and end:

"When I was a child,"
  You shall tell one day,
Children, on these blackened fields
  Gallantly at play,
"All the quiet sky
  Burst in death aflame;
One day I was young—
  Then . . . the Horror came."

. . . . . .

Dauntless in your rags,
  Insolent in mirth,
Laughing with young lips that know
  All the griefs of earth—
God, who loves a high heart well,
  Will not let you fail—
You are France, who laughs at Hell—
  France, who shall prevail!

Is the book prize-worthy?—Well, hardly, since the prize would not only try to level it with *Cornhuskers,* but to lift it above Mr. Masters' *Toward the Gulf* and Mr. Aiken's *Charnel Rose,* besides a number of books in more radical forms—Miss Lowell's *Can Grande's Castle,* Sherwood Anderson's *Mid-American Chants,* Dr. Williams' *Al Que Quiere,* Wallace Gould's *Children of the Sun,* and others.

With few of these books would Miss Widdemer's stand any chance in a properly arranged professional competition. In the whole volume she says nothing new, nor does she say anything old in a new manner or a manner convincingly spontaneous and personal. Her book is full of echoes—echoes from the Celtic, from old balladry, from *The Shropshire Lad* and poets even more modern; and now and then one detects the tinsel quality of assumed emotion—an offering-up of the popular thing to a public too easily pleased, as in *The Singing Wood* and *Other People*. The book is, indeed, too much what the public wants—so many war poems, so many love songs, a few about fauns and elves and Pierrette and a young girl's dreaming, with now and then deep thoughts of death and worshipful salutations of God. Everywhere the accepted thing, the usual emotion and melody; never an original or adventurous idea, never a pang of wild joy or bitter suffering, never a strain of strange and haunting music. The award of a prize—or even half a prize—to this book shows that at least one mind and a half of the committee of three prefers to keep the American muse in a proper and submissive conventional mood.

It may be objected that the old subjects—love, war, death, dreams—are the perpetual stuff of poetry, and are likely to be to the end of time. Yes, but they must be hunted and captured anew by each individual singer; they cannot be taken from another hand or passed over a counter. No butterfly's wing so easily loses its freshness at an alien touch. It is not a question of form—the simplest old forms will do.

Some of Orrick Johns' country rhymes, Sara Teasdale's best love songs, Edna Millay's wistful little lyrics, have this quick pang in them which Miss Widdemer's just miss. It is a thing difficult to define, but it makes all the difference.

H. M.

IRONICS LIGHT AND DARK

Ironica, by Donald Evans. Nicholas L. Brown, New York.

Like a proud parrot preening his feathers is the art of Donald Evans—smooth, showy, adroit; fifth-generation tropical chained to a northern perch. Its ornamental green-and-scarlet, though a bit quaint in these after-the-war days, has not quite lost its flare—let us shake the dust off one or two *Ironica* to prove it:

> Her breath suspired in a little sigh.
> Of plausive aspect, with upturned eye,
> She begged a boon from Him on high—
> A softer breeze for her butterfly.

Or this one:

> He held his stick as though it were a sword;
> He held his head as though he were the Word;
> He held his mouth as though he had been heard;
> He held his eyes as though naught had occurred.

The irony is not always so light as this; in fact, *At the Bar,* the twenty-four-page poem which opens the book, misses the poignancy of tragic narrative by only a hair's-breadth—perhaps by only a certain deft elegance of touch, as though one should search a battlefield in a dress-suit. The end of the story is just a bit too neatly turned for the larger amenities of perfect art.

Almost Mr. Evans persuades us back into the *fin-de-siècle* 'nineties. Yet he is aware of the new era—far-faintly aware of change. For he greets it at the end of this book in this *Bonfire of Kings:*

> Kingship is passing down the yellow road,
> And crowns are dangling from the willow tree;
> Royalty flees to seek a last abode
> With the other outcasts of eternity.
>
> The palaces are burning, for bad kings
> Have brought the breaking of the whitest dream
> That man has ever dreamt—imaginings
> That bathed the throne with a diviner gleam.
>
> The mob is jigging to a ribald air
> That mocks the dying pulse of sovereignty;
> Humanity is singing everywhere
> All men are equal. Dupes of democracy!

In a small pamphlet, *The Art of Donald Evans* (N. L. Brown), Cornwall Hollies plays up his subject with rather naive exaggeration. *H. M.*

JOURNEYMEN POETS

The Madman, by Kahlil Gibran. Alfred A. Knopf.

Lanterns in Gethsemane, by Willard Wattles. E. P. Dutton & Co.

A Family Album, by Alter Brody. B. W. Huebsch.

Outcasts in Beulah Land, by Roy Helton. Henry Holt & Co.

City Tides, by Archie Austin Coates. George H. Doran Co.

"There be books that I have heard praised, and that highly"—I am tempted to apply to certain volumes Hamlet's

splenetic remarks about certain players; for, in spite of the approval of megaphonic critics, "I have thought that some of Nature's journeymen had made them" instead of true sons of the muses.

Thus I confess myself something of a skeptic in regard to Kahlil Gibran, whose "parables and poems" in poetic prose have been conspicuously printed and praised. His book shows an adroit use of parallelism, and a rather oriental-sounding symbolism cleverly applied to modern affairs and points of view. Perhaps the best of it is in such a parable as *God,* which presents the gradual change from fear to love in mankind's ideal of worship; or in the irony of *The Sleep-walkers* or *The Perfect World,* which touch off prevalent insincerities. But the symbolism is too expository, and its high-sounding easy wisdom too often boils down into platitudes. The book annoys by its prosy and somewhat pompous triteness, as in *The Greater Sea,* or this briefer parable:

> The Good God and the Evil God met on the mountain top.
> The Good God said, "Good day to you, brother."
> The Evil God made no answer.
> And the Good God said, "You are in a bad humor today."
> "Yes," said the Evil God, "for of late I have been often mistaken for you, called by your name, and treated as if I were you, and it ill-pleases me."
> And the Good God said, "But I too have been mistaken for you and called by your name."
> The Evil God walked away cursing the stupidity of man.

If Auguste Rodin actually called this Syrian poet "the William Blake of the twentieth century," as the slip-cover reports, I can only smile in remembering, from personal

acquaintance with the great Frenchman, his serene amiability toward all fellow-artists; and in this case it was the fellow-artist—the limner, not the poet—that Rodin's alleged remark must have referred to. But even Mr. Gibran's drawings, though much more interesting than his parables, are a long way off from William Blake.

Willard Wattles has written a few fine lyrics—there are even one or two (especially *The Builders—I*) in *Lanterns in Gethsemane.* But as a rule the religious poems in this volume do not escape triteness of sentiment, or attain poetic beauty of form or phrase. The long philosophizing Christ-monologues are particularly ineffective, whether uttered by or to the Man of Nazareth; and that sermon on the war, *The Seventh Vial,* escapes prosiness in only a couplet or two.

Two or three poems, and those brief ones, attain something like lyric expression of a fresh and personal devotional mood—*Prayer,* and one or two quatrains, and this *Absolution:*

> Once I was bound in slavery,
> But now my sins have set me free.
>
> No matter what the songs have sung,
> It is my sins have kept me young;
>
> When cruelly my heart inclined
> My own dead sins have made me kind.
>
> It's some are blind, and some are wise;
> But only sins have gentle eyes.
>
> 'Twas little recked the brittle thong
> When my sins woke to shake me strong;
>
> And when I face the certain grave
> It is my sins have made me brave. . . .

In Heaven beside the jasper sea
The sins of Christ will pardon me.

Louis Untermeyer stands sponsor for Alter Brody's *Family Album,* both in his introduction to the book itself, and in his own critical volume, *The New Era;* and one may sympathize with his ascribing to Mr. Brody "sincerity and sensitivity" and keen racial feeling—a distinctly personal experience and point of view. The trouble is, nowhere in this book of carefully lined-up free verse can one trace a poet's instinct for poetic rhythm, and rarely a poetic quality of imagination. The line-divisions are purely empirical—the book has the feeling and movement of prose from beginning to end. Sometimes the prose is vivid, as in *A Sunlit Room;* sometimes tiresome, as in *The Neurological Institute,* but however reflective or descriptive, it escapes the musical magic of poetry. Here, for example, is *Lamentations,* which Mr. Untermeyer especially praises, but here printed without disguise:

In a dingy kitchen facing a Ghetto backyard an old woman is chanting Jeremiah's Lamentations, quaveringly, out of a Hebrew Bible.

The gaslight flares and falls. . . .

This night, two thousand years ago, Jerusalem fell and the Temple was burned. Tonight this white-haired Jewess sits in her kitchen and chants—by the banks of the Hudson—the Lament of the Prophet.

The gaslight flares and falls. . . .

Nearby, locked in her room, her daughter lies on a bed convulsively sobbing. Her face is dug in the pillows; her shoulders heave with her sobs—the bits of a photograph lie on the dresser. . . .

Roy Helton is another of Mr. Untermeyer's favorites; at least he is accorded a few leaves of laurel, if not a wreath

complete like Mr. Brody's. An analysis of *Outcasts in Beulah Land*—if we had time and space—might be fruitful in revelations of the difference between the real thing and a facile imitation. Mr. Helton, as the accommodating slip-cover confesses, "writes of beggars and millionaires, shop-girls and 'ladies,' honest folk and thieves, the here and the hereafter"—all with engaging impartiality. And his art reverses the magic of the alchemist, for everything he touches turns to tinsel.

If Mr. Brody's free-versified prose is fraught with a message from the ghetto, that of Archie Austin Coates carries no such burden. Neither rhyme nor the newer forms can make anything but journalism out of the lightly satirical poems in *City Tides*. The touch is not deft and delicate enough to lift any of them to the graceful immortality of a *vers de société* anthology. All this in spite of the fact that POETRY once gave a page to *Lavender,* for which may the muses forgive us! In spite also of Mr. Charles Hanson Towne, whose *Introduction* hails Mr. Coates as "a new poet of the city, wise with a wisdom beyond his years, blest with vision and comprehension." *H. M.*

ANTHOLOGIES

There must be a large public for poetry, or the crop of anthologies would not outrun, as it does, the capacity of this magazine. It is out of the question to review adequately, indeed well-nigh impossible to mention, all the verse collec-

tions, many of them narrowly specialized, which reach this office. There is *Your Dog and My Dog,* for example (Houghton Mifflin Co.) with dog poems from Byron and Scott to W. M. Letts, but incomplete since it omits Orrick Johns, who writes the most doggy dog-poems in the language. There is *To Mother* (same publisher), which, introduced by Kate Douglas Wiggin and reinforced by Whistler's familiar portrait, offers a round hundred poems of filial or maternal devotion. There are Mrs. Waldo Richards' *High Tide* and *Melody of Earth* (also the Boston firm)—the one sub-titled *Songs of Joy and Vision,* and the other *Garden and Nature Poems*—which, with singular catholicity of somewhat sentimentalized taste, gather together good, bad and indifferent "poems of today" in an amiable effort to increase the cheerfulness of the world.

And there is no end to the war anthologies. Six or eight of them POETRY reviewed in August, 1917 and 1918, but many others are on sale or in press. One is *War Poems from the Yale Review* (Yale University Press), with nineteen poems from seventeen poets—Frost, Masefield, Fletcher, Letts, Untermeyer, Noyes, etc.: some of them good, but none of supreme authority. Another is *Humanity or Hate: Which?* (Cornhill Co.)—German and French war songs translated into rather perfunctory rhymes, and contrasted as symptomatic of the German Soul and the French Soul, by Harvey C. Grumbine. *The War in Verse and Prose* (T. S. Denison & Co., Chicago) is a collection of floating newspaper verse mostly, collected by W. D. Eaton in order to preserve

its popularity. And *Carnegie Tech War Verse* is an ingratiating little pamphlet by Professor Haniel Long's doughboy students, led by Francis F. Hogan and Richard Mansfield II, who both died in service.

Then there are the more inclusive student anthologies, all containing promising work, all showing a wide-spread activity and interest among undergraduates, whether the various faculties sympathize or not. The most comprehensive of these is *The Poets of the Future,* edited by Henry T. Schnittkind (Stratford Co.), which has now reached its second biennial volume, gathering its interesting material from the various college periodicals. An English effort to introduce and stimulate youthful talent is the *Oxford Poetry* annuals (B. H. Blackwell). The same enterprising publisher of old Oxford gives us also *At a Venture: Poems by Eight Writers;* also, once a year or so, a small volume called *Wheels,* which is a brief collection of poems by the newly emerging poets whom he delights to introduce.

More familiar to our readers, as representing the new poets or groups of them, are the *Georgian Verse* anthologies (Poetry Bookshop, London), of which three volumes have now been issued; *Some Imagist Poets*—the much discussed three annuals (Houghton-Mifflin Co.); the very intriguing *Others* anthologies, representing the radicals (Alfred A. Knopf)—of which *A Pagan Anthology* (Pagan Pub. Co., N. Y.) is a far-away faint echo; and Mr. Braithwaite's annual *Anthology of Magazine Verse* (Small, Maynard & Co.), with its over-generous inclusions and its empirical

Baedeker-like exactitudes of stars and double and triple stars to aid the innocent seeker for poetic treasure. And last but not least we must not omit our own indispensable anthology, *The New Poetry* (Macmillan Co.), already in its eighth edition.

And the local collections—like *The Chicago Anthology, The Book of New York Verse,* and *Sunflowers,* Willard Wattles' Kansas anthology (these already reviewed); as well as the more recent *Golden Songs of the Golden State* (A. C. McClurg & Co.), selected by Marguerite Wilkinson to present the claims of California. And *Notre Dame Verse* perhaps belongs here, though its locale is a university and the poets are its alumni. Now that the procession of states and towns has begun, there can be no end to it.

We have also subject anthologies, like the all-inclusive *Book of Lincoln* (George H. Doran Co.), and *Christ in the Poetry of Today* (Woman's Press).

As for more general anthologies, they also are numerous. Volume V of Thomas Humphry Ward's *The English Poets* (Macmillan Co.) is now ready, with British and Canadian selections "from Browning to Rupert Brooke," but including no one now living—a collection whose first volume was issued long ago with a general introduction by Matthew Arnold. Also, each poet gets a special "critical introduction" written by some more or less noted admirer.

One wonders what is the principle of selection in a book like this; but whatever it is, any modern poet may take comfort to find so much trivial and stodgy verse dug out of the

past and set up in the company of its betters—for even second-rate modern stuff is more alive and less wordy than much of this volume. Why disinter Richard Watson Dixon, for example, or Thomas Gordon Hake, or Sir Francis Doyle, Baronet? Our old Victorian friends are represented by their more familiar poems, and one new friend, William Barnes, is well worth while, whether he writes in plain English or the difficult Dorsetshire dialect.

A comprehensive anthology of four thousand pages, representing almost everybody from the Elizabethans to the Imagists, is *The Home Book of Verse* (Henry Holt & Co.). This was originally published in 1912, with the idea of reprinting in ten years. But the editor, Mr. Burton Egbert Stevenson, now explains that the recent "astonishing renaissance in English and American poetry" made imperative the present new edition, and he has inserted many of the new poets among their elders—for the book is arranged according to subjects. In spite of its sentimental title, this anthology, which is well indexed, seems a pretty good thing of its all-inclusive kind.

And there are period anthologies, like Samuel White Patterson's *Spirit of the American Revolution as Revealed in the Poetry of the Period,* a competent study with extensive quotations. Another of these, much more inviting, is an admirable collection of fourteenth-to-seventeenth-century English verse called *Corn from Olde Fieldes* (John Lane Co.), reviewed in POETRY for May.

This brings us to our concluding group of anthologies—

the translations, some of which are valuable. The present keen interest in Chinese art of all kinds has compelled E. P. Dutton & Co. to reprint *The Lute of Jade,* L. Cranmer-Byng's well known, and on the whole excellent, renderings of Chinese classics; and we have also James Whitall's recent versions through the French of Judith Gautier, in *Chinese Lyrics from the Book of Jade* (B. W. Huebsch); and the admirable new translations by Arthur Waley, *170 Chinese Poems,* of which Alfred A. Knopf has just issued an American edition—a book which demands separate attention. Wholly admirable are Mrs. Livesay's vivid *Songs of Ukraina* (E. P. Dutton & Co.), long since praised in POETRY. Less important than these, because less vitally translated, though still interesting as opening windows into other lands, are *Armenian Poems,* translated by Alice Blackwell (Robert Chambers, Boston), and sold for the Fund for Armenian Relief; *A Harvest of German Verse,* done with sympathy and sometimes with distinction by Margarete Münsterberg (D. Appleton & Co.); and Charles Wharton Stork's rather perfunctory *Anthology of Swedish Lyrics* (American-Scandinavian Foundation, New York).

From this too brief summary our readers will perceive that almost any kind of verse-collection in English, in almost any department of the art, is now at their disposal. And we cannot close without saying a good word for the two-volume collection of modern French poems, *Poètes d'Aujourd'hui,* published in Paris by the *Mercure de France,* and now in its eighteenth edition. *H. M.*

VILLON AGAIN

The Jargon of Master François Villon, by Jordan Herbert Stabler. Houghton Mifflin Co.

This book is in large octavo, printed in rare type on hand-made paper, and its pages are decorated with beautiful borders and quaint pictorial initials. The first half of the book is given to the English translations, the second half to the original French versions of these seven ballads. Mr. Stabler is to be congratulated upon the zeal with which he conducted his researches into the realms of the well-nigh impossible, and upon the artistic quality of his results.

> The church loves a sinner
> As a good man his dinner,

and so François Villon has lived for us through more than four centuries and a half, not only through his verses, but in fiction and out, off the stage and on, in the character of the gentleman burglar—clever, cultivated, often arrested, and with always a friend at court to save his neck from the noose. The author tells us that the seven ballads appear to be advice and warning—"Sermons they have been called"—to his companions, the brothers of *La Coquille,* and that they are supposed to have been written about the year 1461. But sermons would seem to be a somewhat equivocal term in which to speak of these ballads. Warning is certainly sounded; for Villon knew well whereof he wrote and could paint the hangman in vivid colors. But the advice

he gives is mostly an urging of caution upon thieves in their manner of thieving, as in this fragment:

> And now for this: Beware, beware,
> Companions, robbers, thieves, and all;
> And for the trysting place take care,
> Where rests the band within your call.
> Who seeks to rob by acts too bold
> Will not succeed as well as he
> Who lays his plans with care, I'm told,
> To trick the ones less wise than he.
> But ofttimes they are tricksters too,
> And archers also wear disguise;
> And ye are caught and hung, 'tis true,
> By those ye rob who are too wise.
>
> *Envoi:*
> Prince, beware, hard times come fast,
> Take all that comes before your eyes;
> Be not imprisoned at the last
> By those ye rob who are too wise.

According to Mr. Stabler, the jargon of Villon in these seven ballads was probably known only to the friends of the *Coquillards,* to whom they were addressed. And this seems to be more than probable. For a comparison of this with the language employed in his other verses, for instance, in *Le Petit Testament, Le Dit de la Naissance de Marie, Le Grand Testament,* etc., shows the latter to have been written in the current French of Villon's period, while these seven ballads are so veiled in his peculiar slang as to be almost incomprehensible. The author admits that much of it is impossible to translate, and that this is why he has been so free in his English. *Agnes Lee Freer*

NOTES

All but two of this month's contributors have appeared before in POETRY. Our readers need no introduction to Mr. Conrad Aiken, of Boston, whose latest book is *The Charnel Rose* (Four Seas Co.) and who will issue soon a book of critical essays. Nor to Mrs. Eunice Tietjens, of Chicago, who has recently returned from journalistic and Red Cross work in France; her second book of verse, *Body and Raiment,* will be published this autumn by Alfred A. Knopf, who will also issue a new edition of *Profiles from China.* Nor to Mr. Vachel Lindsay, of Springfield, Ill., who hopes to finish soon *The Golden Book of Springfield* for autumn publication. Florence Kilpatrick Mixter (Mrs. George W. M.) of Moline, Ill., will soon publish her first book of verse. And Rev. Charles L. O'Donnell, of Notre Dame, Ind., who served as a chaplain in France in the A. E. F., has appeared in various publications.

Captain Robert Graves whose present poems are his first to appear in POETRY, was born in London in 1895, the son of A. P. Graves, the Irish writer. His first sheaf of poems, *Over the Brazier,* was published by the Poetry Bookshop in 1916, while he was serving in France as captain in a Welsh line-regiment. After being severely wounded, left for dead on the field and so reported, he returned to England and soon after published *Fairies and Fusiliers* (Alf. A. Knopf). With his friend Mr. W. J. Turner, he is literary co-editor of *The Owl.* Captain Graves hopes to lecture in this country this year under the Pond bureau.

Mr. Edward Sapir, born in Germany, emigrated to the United States at the age of five. After specializing in linguistics and ethnology at Columbia, he took charge of the Division of Anthropology of the Geological Survey of Canada, and now resides in Ottawa. His first book of verse, *Dreams and Gibes,* was published in 1917 by the Poet Lore Co.

. . . . . .

From the present number, the publication date of POETRY will be advanced from the end of each month to about the twentieth, each number antedating its month by about ten days.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Poems, by James Griswold. The Scribner Press, New York.

Theodore Roosevelt—A Verse Sequence in Sonnets and Quatorzains, by Russell J. Wilbur. Houghton Mifflin Co.

Verse 1914-1918, by Gregory Scott Robbins. Privately printed, Pittsburgh.

Hidden Path, by Ned Hungerford. Privately printed, Rochester, N. Y.

The Hound of Heaven, by Francis Thompson. Four Seas Co.

The Solitary, by James Oppenheim. B. W. Huebsch.

The Beloved Stranger, by Witter Bynner. Alfred A. Knopf.

Day by Day, by Patrice Oliver. Privately printed by The Roycrofters, E. Aurora, N. Y.

ANTHOLOGIES AND TRANSLATIONS:

W. B. in California—A Tribute. Privately printed, Berkeley, Cal.

The Forest Ranger, collected and edited by John D. Guthrie. Richard G. Badger.

Treasured Nature Lyrics, selected by Alice Wilson Wilcox. Richard G. Badger.

One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems, translated by Arthur Waley. Alfred A. Knopf.

PROSE:

New Voices, by Marguerite Wilkinson. Macmillan.

Painting, by W. A. Sinclair. Four Seas Co.

Nowadays, by Lord Dunsany. Four Seas Co.

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