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No. I

Poetry

A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe
April 1921

The Box of God
by Lew Sarett
Three Sonnets
by Arthur Ficke
Lee Wilson Dodd
Elinor Wylie

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

Ferdinand Schevill

Vol. XVIII

No. I

POETRY for APRIL, 1921

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APRIL 1921

THE BOX OF GOD

I: BROKEN BIRD

O broken bird,
Whose whistling silver wings have known the lift
Of high mysterious hands, and the wild sweet music
Of big winds among the ultimate stars!—
The black-robed curés put your pagan Indian
Soul in their white man's House of God, to lay
Upon your pagan lips new songs, to swell
The chorus of amens and hallelujahs.
In simple faith and holy zeal, they flung
Aside the altar-tapestries, that you
Might know the splendor of God's handiwork,
The shining glory of His face. O eagle,
They brought you to a four-square box of God,
Crippled of pinion, clipped of soaring wing;
And they left you there to flutter against the bars

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In futile flying, to beat against the gates,
To droop, to dream a little, and to die.

Ah, Joe Shing-ób—by the sagamores revered
As Spruce the Conjurer, by the black-priests dubbed
The Pagan Joe—how clearly I recall
Your conversion in the long-blade's House of God,
Your wonder when you faced its golden glories.
Don't you remember?—when first you sledged from out
The frozen Valley of the Sleepy-eye,
And hammered on the gates of Fort Brazeau—
To sing farewell to Ah-nah-quód, the Cloud,
Sleeping, banked high with flowers, clothed in the pomp
Of white man's borrowed garments in the church?
Oh, how your heart, as a child's heart beating before
High wonder-workings, thrilled at the burial splendor!—
The coffin, shimmering-black as moonlit ice,
And gleaming in a ring of waxen tapers;
After the chant of death, the long black robes,
Blown by the wind and winding over the hills
With slow black songs to the marked-out-place-of-death;
The solemn feet that moved along the road
Behind the wagon-with-windows, the wagon-of-death,
With its jingling nickel harness, its dancing plumes.
Oh, the shining splendor of that burial march,
The round-eyed wonder of the village throng!
And oh, the fierce-hot hunger, the burning envy
That seared your soul when you beheld your friend
Achieve such high distinction from the black-robés!

And later, when the cavalcade of priests
Wound down from the fenced-in-ground, like a slow black
worm

Crawling upon the snow—don't you recall?—
The meeting in the mission?—that night, your first,
In the white man's lodge of holy-medicine?
How clearly I can see your hesitant step
On the threshold of the church; within the door
Your gasp of quick surprise, your breathless mouth;
Your eyes round-white before the glimmering taper,
The golden-filigreed censer, the altar hung
With red rosettes and velvet soft as an otter's
Pelt in the frost of autumn, with tinsel sparkling
Like cold blue stars above the frozen snows.
Oh, the blinding beauty of that House of God!—
Even the glittering bar at Jock McKay's,
Tinkling with goblets of fiery devil's-spit,
With dazzling vials and many-looking mirrors,
Seemed lead against the silver of the mission.

I hear again the chanting holy-men,
The agents of the white man's Mighty Spirit,
Making their talks with strong, smooth-moving tongues:

"Hear! Hear ye, men of a pagan faith!
Forsake the idols of the heathen fathers,
The too-many ghosts that walk upon the earth.
For there lie pain and sorrow, yea, and death!

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"Hear! Hear ye, men of a pagan faith!
And grasp the friendly hands we offer you
In kindly fellowship, warm hands and tender,
Yea, hands that ever give and never take.
Forswear the demon-charms of medicine-men;
Shatter the drums of conjuring Chée-sah-kée—
Yea, beyond these walls lie bitterness and death!

"Pagans!—ye men of a bastard birth!—bend,
Bow ye, proud heads, before this hallowed shrine!
Break!—break ye the knee beneath this roof,
For within this house lives God! Abide ye here!
Here shall your eyes behold His wizardry;
Here shall ye find an everlasting peace."

Ah, Joe the pagan, son of a bastard people,
Child of a race of vanquished, outlawed children,
Small wonder that you drooped your weary head,
Blinding your eyes to the suns of elder days;
For hungry bellies look for new fat gods,
And heavy heads seek newer, softer pillows.
With you again I hear the eerie chants
Floating from out the primal yesterdays—
The low sweet song of the doctor's flute, the slow
Resonant boom of the basswood water-drum,
The far voice of the fathers, calling, calling.
I see again the struggle in your eyes—
The hunted soul of a wild young grouse, afraid,
Trembling beneath maternal wings, yet lured

By the shrill whistle of the wheeling hawk.
I see your shuffling limbs, hesitant, faltering
Along the aisle—the drag of old bronzed hands
Upon your moccasined feet, the forward tug
Of others, soft and white and very tender.
One forward step . . . another . . . a quick look back!—
Another step . . . another . . . and lo! the eyes
Flutter and droop before a flaming symbol,
The strong knees break before a blazoned altar
Glimmering its tapestries in the candle-light,
The high head beaten down and bending before
New wonder-working images of gold.

And thus the black-robcs brought you into the house
Wherein they kept their God, a house of logs,
Square-hewn, and thirty feet by forty. They strove
To put before you food, and purple trappings—
Oh, how they walked you up and down in the vestry,
Proudly resplendent in your white man's raiment,
Glittering and gorgeous, the envy of your tribe:
Your stiff silk hat, your scarlet sash, your shoes
Shining and squeaking gloriously with newness!
Yet even unto the end—those blood-stained nights
Of the sickness-on-the-lung; that bitter day
On the Barking Rock, when I packed you down from camp
At Split-hand Falls to the fort at Sleepy-eye;
While, drop by drop, your life went trickling out,
As sugar-sap that drips on the birch-bark bucket

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And finally chills in the withered maple heart
At frozen dusk: even unto the end—
When the mission doctor, framed by guttering candles,
Hollowly tapped his hooked-horn finger here
And there upon your bony breast, like a wood-bird
Pecking and drumming on a rotten trunk—
Even unto this end I never knew
Which part of you was offering the holy prayers—
The chanting mouth, or the eyes that gazed beyond
The walls to a far land of windy valleys.
And sometimes, when your dry slow lips were moving
To perfumed psalms, I could almost, almost see
Your pagan soul aleap in the fire-light, naked,
Shuffling along to booming medicine-drums,
Shaking the flat black earth with moccasined feet,
Dancing again—back among the jangling
Bells and the stamping legs of gnarled old men—
Back to the fathers calling, calling across
Dead winds from the dim gray years.

O high-flying eagle,
Whose soul, wheeling among the sinuous winds,
Has known the molten glory of the sun,
The utter calm of dusk, and in the evening
The lullabies of moonlit mountain waters!—
The black-priests locked you in their House of God,
Behind great gates swung tight against the frightened
Quivering aspens, whispering perturbed in council,

And muttering as they tapped with timid fists
Upon the doors and strove to follow you
And hold you; tight against the uneasy winds
Wailing among the balsams, fumbling upon
The latch with fretful fingers; tight against
The crowding stars who pressed their troubled faces
Against the windows. In honest faith and zeal,
The black-robos put you in a box of God,
To swell the broken chorus of amens
And hallelujahs; to flutter against the door,
Crippled of pinion, bruised of head; to beat
With futile flying against the gilded bars;
To droop, to dream a little, and to die.

II: WHISTLING WINGS

Shing-ób, companion of my old wild years
In the land of K'tchéé-gah-mée, my good right arm
When we battled bloody-fisted in the storms
And snows with rotting scurvy, with hunger raw
And ravenous as the lusting tongues of wolves—
My Joe, no longer will the ghostly mountains
Echo your red-lunged laughter in the night;
The gone lone days when we communed with God
In the language of the waterfall and wind
Have vanished with your basswood water-drum.

Do you recall our cruise to Flute-reed Falls?
Our first together—oh, many moons ago—

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Before the curés built the village mission?
How, banked against our camp-fire in the bush
Of sugar-maples, we smoked kin-ník-kin-ník,
And startled the sombre buttes with round raw songs,
With wails that mocked the lynx who cried all night
As if her splitting limbs were torn with pain
Of a terrible new litter? How we talked
Till dawn of the Indian's Kéetch-ie Má-ni-dó,
The Mighty Spirit, and of the white man's God?
Don't you remember dusk at Cold-spring Hollow?—
The beaver-pond at our feet, its ebony pool
Wrinkled with silver, placid, calm as death,
Save for the fitful chug of the frog that flopped
His yellow jowls upon the lily-pad,
And the quick wet slap of the tails of beaver hurrying
Homeward across the furrowing waters, laden
With cuttings of tender poplar . . . down in the swale
The hermit-thrush who spilled his rivulet
Of golden tones into the purple seas
Of gloam among the swamps . . . and in the East,
Serene against the sky—do you remember?—
Slumbering Mont du Père, shouldering its crags
Through the crumpled clouds, rose-flushed with after-
glow . . .
And dew-lidded dusk that slipped among the valleys
Soft as a blue wolf walking in thick wet moss.
How we changed our ribald song for simple talk! . . .

*"My frien', Ah-déek, you ask-um plenty hard question:
Ugh! W'ere Kéetch-ie Má-ni-dó he live?*

W'ere all dose Eenzhun spirits walk and talk?

*Me—I dunno! . . . Mebbe . . . mebbe over here,
In beaver-pond, in t'rush, in gromping bullfrog;
Mebbe over dere, he's sleeping in dose mountain . . .*

*"Sh-sh-sh! . . . Look! . . . Over dere . . . look, my
frien'!*

*On Mont du Père . . . he's moving little! . . .
ain't? . . .*

*Under dose soft blue blanket she's falling down
On hill and valley! Somebody—somebody's dere! . . .
In dose hill of Mont du Père, sleeping . . . sleep-
ing. . . "*

And when the fingers of the sun, lingering,
Slipped gently from the marble brow of the glacier
Pillowed among the clouds, blue-veined and cool,
How, one by one, like lamps that flicker up
In a snow-bound hamlet in the valley, the stars
Lighted their candles mirrored in the waters . . .
And floating from the hills of Sleepy-eye,
Soft as the wings of dusty-millers flying,
The fitful syllables of the Baptism River
Mumbling among its caverns hollowly,
Shouldering its emerald sweep through cragged cascades
In a flood of wafted foam, fragile, flimsy
As luna-moths fluttering on a pool . . .

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

*"Caribou, you hear dat? . . . somebody's dere! . . .
Ain't? . . . in dose hills of Mont du Père . . . sleep-
ing.
Sh-sh-sh! . . . You hear-um? . . . dose far 'way
Flute-reed Fall? . . .
Somebody's dere in Mont du Père, sleeping . . .
Somebody he's in dere de whole night long . . .
And w'ile he's sleep, he's talking little . . . talk-
ing. . . ."*

Hush!—don't you hear K'tchée-gah-mée at midnight?—
That stretched far out from the banks of Otter-slide
To the dim wet rim of the world—North, East, West?—
The Big-water, calm, thick-flecked with the light of stars
As the wind-riffled fur of silver fox in winter . . .
The shuffle of the sands in the lapsing tide . . .
The slow soft wash of waters on the pebbles . . .

*"Sh-sh-sh! . . . Look, Ah-déek! . . . on K'tchée-gah-
mée! . . .
Somebody—some'ing he's in dere . . . ain't? . . .
He's sleep w'ere black Big-water she's deep . . .
Ho! . . .
In morning he's jump up from hees bed and race
Wit' de wind; but tonight he's sleeping . . . rolling
little . . .
Dreaming about hees woman . . . rolling . . . sleep-
ing. . . ."*

And later—you recall?—beyond the peaks
That tusked the sky like fangs of a coyote snarling,
The full-blown mellow moon that floated up
Like a liquid-silver bubble from the waters,
Serenely, till she pricked her delicate film
On the slender splinter of a cloud, melted,
And trickled from the silver-dripping edges.
Oh, the splendor of that night! . . . The Twin-fox stars
That loped across the pine-ridge . . . Red Ah-núng,
Blazing from out the cavern of the gloom
Like the smoldering coal in the eye of carcajou . . .
The star-dust in the valley of the sky,
Flittering like glow-worms in a reedy meadow!

*"Somebody's dere . . . He's walk-um in dose cloud . . .
Look! . . . You see-um? . . . He's mak'-um for hees
woman*

*De w'ile she sleep, dose t'ing she want-um most—
Blue dress for dancing! . . . You see, my frien'? . . .
ain't? . . .*

*He's t'rowing on de blanket of dose sky
Dose plenty-plenty handfuls of w'ite stars;
He's sewing on dose plenty teet' of elk,
Dose shiny looking-glass and plenty beads.
Somebody's dere . . . somet'ing he's in dere. . . ."*

The green moons went—and many many winters.
Yet we held together, Joe, until our day
Of falling leaves, like two split sticks of willow

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Lashed tight with buckskin buried in the bark.
Do you recollect our last long cruise together,
To Hollow-bear, on our line of marten traps?—
When cold Pee-bóan, the Winter-maker, hurdling
The rim-rock ridge, shook out his snowy hair
Before him on the wind and heaped up the hollows?—
Flanked by the drifts, our lean-to of toboggans,
Our bed of pungent balsam, soft as down
From the bosom of a whistling swan in autumn . . .
Our steaming sledge-dogs buried in the snow-bank,
Nuzzling their snouts beneath their tented tails,
And dreaming of the paradise of dogs . . .
Our fire of pine-boughs licking up the snow,
And tilting at the shadows in the coulee . . .
And you, rolled warm among the beaver-pelts,
Forgetful of your sickness-on-the-lung,
Of the fever-pains and coughs that wracked your bones—
You, beating a war song on your drum,
And laughing as the scarlet-moccasined flames
Danced on the coals and bellowed up the sky.

Don't you remember? . . . the snowflakes drifting down
Thick as the falling petals of wild plums . . .
The clinker-ice and the scudding fluff of the whirlpool
Muffling the summer-mumblings of the brook . . .
The turbulent waterfall protesting against
Such early winter-sleep, like a little boy
Who struggles with the calamity of slumber,

Knuckling his leaden lids and his tingling nose
With a pudgy fist, and fretfully flinging back
His snowy cover with his petulant fingers.
Out on the windy barrens restless bands
Of caribou, rumped up against the gale,
Suddenly breaking before the rabid blast,
Scampering off like tumbleweeds in a cyclone . . .
The low of bulls from the hills where worried moose,
Nibbling the willows, the wintergreens, the birches,
Were yarding up in the sheltering alder-thicket . . .
From the cedar wind-break, the bleat of calves wedged warm
Against the bellies of their drowsy cows . . .
And then the utter calm . . . the wide white drift
That lay upon the world as still and ghastly
As the winding-sheet of death . . . the sudden snap
Of a dry twig . . . the groan of sheeted rivers
Beating with naked hands upon the ice . . .
The brooding night . . . the crackle of cold skies . . .

*"Sh-sh-sh-sh! . . . Look, my frien', . . . somebody's
dere! . . .*

*Ain't? . . . over dere? . . . He's come from dose Land-
of-Winter! . . .*

*Wit' quilt he's cover-um up dose baby mink,
Dose cub, dose wild arbutus, dose jump-up-Johnny . . .
He's keep hees chil'ens warm for long, long winter . . .
Sh-sh-sh-sh! . . . Somebody's dere on de w'ite sa-
vanne! . . .*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

*Somebody's dere! . . . He's walk-um in de timber . . .
He's cover-um up hees chil'ens, soft . . . soft . . ."*

And later, when your bird-claw fingers rippled
Over the holes of your cedar Bée-bee-gwún
Mellowly in a tender tune, how the stars,
Like little children trooping from their teepees,
Danced with their nimble feet across the sky
To the running-water music of your flute . . .
And how, with twinkling heels they scurried off
Before the Northern Light swaying, twisting,
Spiralling like a slender silver smoke
On the thin blue winds, and feeling out among
The frightened starry children of the sky . . .

*"Look! . . . in de Land-of-Winter . . . somet'ing's
dere! . . .*

*Somebody—he's reaching out hees hand! . . . for
me! . . .*

*Ain't? . . . For me he's waiting . . . Somebody's
dere! . . .*

Somebody he's in dere, waiting . . . waiting . . ."

Don't you remember?—the ghostly silence, splintered
At last by a fist that cracked the hoary birch,
By a swift black fist that shattered the brittle air,
Splitting it into a million frosty fragments . . .
And dreary Northwind, coughing in the snow,
Spitting among the glistening sheeted pines,

And moaning on the barrens among the bones
Of gaunt white tamaracks mournful and forlorn . . .

*"Sh-sh-sh-sh! . . . My Caribou! . . . Somebody's
dere! . . .
He's crying . . . little bit crazy in dose wind . . .
Ain't? . . . You hear-um? . . . far 'way . . . crying
Lak my old woman w'en she's lose de baby
And no can find-um—w'en she's running everyw'ere,
Falling in snow, talking little bit crazy,
Calling and crying for shees little boy . . .
Sh-sh-sh-sh! . . . Somet'ing's dere . . . you hear-um?
. . . ain't? . . .
Somebody—somebody's dere, crying . . . crying . . ."*

Then from the swale, where shadows pranced grotesquely
Solemn, like phantom puppets on a string,
A cry—pointed, brittle, perpendicular—
As startling as a thin stiff blade of ice
Laid swift and sharp on fever-burning flesh:
The tremulous wail of a lonely shivering wolf,
Piercing the world's great heart like an icy sword . . .

*"Look! . . . Quick! . . . Ah-déek! . . . Somebody's
dere! . . .
Ain't? . . . He's come—he's come for me—for me!
Me—me, I go! My Caribou . . .
Dose fire—dose fire she's going out—she's cold . . .*

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

*T'row—t'row on dose knots of pine . . . Mee-
gwétch! . . .*

*And pull 'way from dose flame—dose pan of sour-dough,
If you want eat—in de morning—damn-good flap-
jack . . .*

*"Sh-sh-sh-sh! . . . Somet'ing's dere! . . . You hear-
um? . . . ain't? . . .*

*Somebody—somebody's dere, calling . . . calling . . .
I go . . . I go—me! . . . me . . . I go. . . ."*

III: TALKING WATERS

O eagle whose whistling wings have known the lift
Of high mysterious hands, and the wild sweet music
Of big winds among the ultimate stars,
The black-robcs put you in a box of God,
Seeking in honest faith and holy zeal
To lay upon your lips new songs, to swell
The chorus of amens and hallelujahs.
O bundle of copper bones tossed in a hole,
Here in the place-of-death—God's fenced-in ground!—
Beneath these put-in pines and waxen lilies,
They placed you in a crimson gash in the hillside,
Here on a bluff above the Sleepy-eye,
Where the Baptism River, mumbling among the canyons,
Shoulders its flood through crooning waterfalls
In a mist of wafted foam fragile as petals

Of windflowers blowing across the green of April;
Where ghosts of wistful leaves go floating up
In the rustling blaze of autumn, like silver smokes
Slenderly twisting among the thin blue winds;
Here in the great gray arms of Mont du Père,
Where the shy arbutus, the mink, and the Johnny-jump-up
Huddle and whisper of a long, long winter;
Where stars, with soundless feet, come trooping up
To dance to the water-drums of white cascades—
Where stars, like little children, go singing down
The sky to the flute of the wind in the willow-tree—
Somebody—somebody's there . . . O pagan Joe . . .
Can't you see Him as He moves among the mountains—
Where dusk, dew-lidded, slips among the valleys
Soft as a blue wolf walking in thick wet moss?
Look! . . . my friend! . . . at the breast of Mont du
Père! . . .
Sh-sh-sh-sh! . . . Don't you hear His talking waters . . .
Soft in the gloam as broken butterflies
Hovering above a somber pool? . . . Sh-sh-sh-sh!
Somebody's there . . . in the heart of Mont du Père . . .
Somebody—somebody's there, sleeping . . . sleeping . . .

Lew Sarett

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STILL COLORS

VELVET SHOES

Let us walk in the white snow
In a soundless space;
With footsteps quiet and slow,
At a tranquil pace,
Under veils of white lace.

I shall go shod in silk,
And you in wool,
White as a white cow's milk,
More beautiful
Than the breast of a gull.

We shall walk through the still town
In a windless peace;
We shall step upon white down,
Upon silver fleece,
Upon softer than these.

We shall walk in velvet shoes:
Wherever we go
Silence will fall like dews
On white silence below.
We shall walk in the snow.

"FIRE AND SLEET AND CANDLE-LIGHT"

For this you've striven,
Daring, to fail:
Your sky is riven
Like a tearing veil.

For this, you've wasted
Wings of your youth;
Divined, and tasted
Bitter springs of truth.

From sand unslakèd
Twisted strong cords,
And wandered naked
Among trysted swords.

There's a word unspoken,
A knot untied.
Whatever is broken
The earth may hide.

The road was jagged
Over sharp stones:
Your body's too ragged
To cover your bones.

The wind scatters
Tears upon dust;

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Your soul's in tatters
Where the spears thrust.

Your race is ended—
See, it is run:
Nothing is mended
Under the sun.

Straight as an arrow
You fall to a sleep
Not too narrow
And not too deep.

SILVER FILAGREE

The icicles wreathing
On trees in festoon
Swing, swayed to our breathing:
They're made of the moon.

She's a pale, waxen taper;
And these seem to drip
Transparent as paper
From the flame of her tip.

Molten, smoking a little,
Into crystal they pass;
Falling, freezing, to brittle
And delicate glass.

Elinor Wylie

Each a sharp-pointed flower,
Each a brief stalactite
Which hangs for an hour
In the blue cave of night.

ATAVISM

I always was afraid of Some's Pond:
Not the little pond, by which the willow stands,
Where laughing boys catch alewives in their hands
In brown, bright shallows; but the one beyond.
There, when the frost makes all the birches burn
Yellow as cow-lilies, and the pale sky shines
Like a polished shell between black spruce and pines,
Some strange thing tracks us, turning where we turn.

You'll say I dream it, being the true daughter
Of those who in old times endured this dread.
Look! Where the lily-stems are showing red
A silent paddle moves below the water,
A sliding shape has stirred them like a breath;
Tall plumes surmount a painted mask of death.

Elinor Wylie

AGE AND YOUTH

How little wisdom in how many years—
How little wisdom and how much of pain!
And now the slack knees tremble, the eye blears,
And mist-wreaths blur the mirror of the brain.
And Memory, in her niche, with fumbling fingers
Plucks at old dreams mislaid which crumble soon;
And there is naught she touches now that lingers;
And her lamp smokes and dims, a clouded moon.
And Youth, a long way off, looks sidewise over
Into the place of shadow, and stops singing
The immemorial lay of Love's true lover;
While, for a space, Hope's hand grows tried of clinging
To his limp hand, and droops careless and cold
Along the grass—and even Youth seems old.

And even Youth seems old? . . . But Youth *is* old,
Old as the springtide, as the April flowers.
Youth's infinite history is a tale thrice told—
Aeons but mask them in Youth's counted hours.
That rosebud, and the dew upon that rose,
Lack but the memory of all ages past;
The wavering snowflake knows not—but God knows
The winters it has lasted and shall last!
Yes, Youth is old . . . and Age is ever young—
A new thing in its season, a new thing;
New, and more terrible than ever tongue

Lee Wilson Dodd

Of fool or poet has dared to say or sing!
Yet not more terrible than Youth, that seems
A dreamer's dream of some dead dreamer's dreams.

RIDDLE

You would be free!
Would you be free
If you were free?
Is the wind free,
Or the wind-worn sea?
Or sun-tied earth,
Or the earth-tied moon?
Is Ariel?
Is Caliban?
Is Satan in Hell?
Or God in Heaven?

Riddle my rune,
Little man!

Lee Wilson Dodd

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"E BE THAN"

They come weeping,
They raise their voices,
Women meet them
As they ride from the plain.
The band is home,
But none rejoices—
For many men
Return not again.

The chief leads them;
Yet, heavy-hearted,
He slowly rides
From the wide, shining plain.
Warriors mourn
The friends departed—
For many men
Return not again.

Women follow;
The children, weeping,
Straggle along
Through the dust of the plain,
Many mourning
Friends or fathers—
For many men
Return not again.

Carroll Lane Fenton

Priests, chanting
The sacred death-song,
Raise dull grave-poles
High above the wide plain;
Men mourn
Sons and cousins—
For dead men's souls
Return not again.

Carroll Lane Fenton

SONG

Hills are all aflower,
Skies are all afire—
Fool was I to sorrow
For a dead desire!

Lo, the April marvel
Stirs the earth again:
Break, my heart, of beauty,
That would not break of pain!

H. Thompson Rich

TO A NEW ENGLAND GIRL

Ah, you have taken my hot delight
In France and stripped it of its wings;
Broken the swift Icarian flight
Of untoward imaginings
That sought a sun hardly my own.
And you have winged and brought me down
Through sudden ecstasy to rest
Upon your white New England breast,
Where love is fragrantly austere
As those deep-bosomed hillsides are
That slope down to Franconia,
Full-blossoming in early year.

TO AN AUTHENTIC PRIEST

He weighs me down, this Christ of yours.
He weighs me down—his arm is on
My elbow in the streakèd dawn;
Oppresses he my evening hours;
Still he outshines the manifold
Bright rays that centre in my heart.
Much loveliness I knew grows cold
The while his threatening fires start
To gnaw at this old edifice
Of sturdy lusts. Outsavors he

Edward Townsend Booth

The savor of my ancient bliss.

He tempts me to apostasy.

Edward Townsend Booth

THE INTRUDER

Across my book your hand augustly reaches—

Thrusts it away.

I turn impatient to the window, watching

The tossed trees' play,

March sunshine glinting on a chilly rain-pool

That snow-banks frame.

A lusty wind comes gusting on its errand

And names your name.

Captive, defeated, having striven I yield me

To thought awhile;

Letting the sunlight on the roughened waters

Bear me your smile;

Hearing the mischief-making wind that named you

Question afresh

If spirit find in spirit full contentment

Only through flesh.

Grace Stone Coates

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THREE SONNETS

PERSPECTIVE OF CO-ORDINATION

The circles never fully round, but change
In spiral gropings—not, as on a wall,
Flat-patterned, but back into space they fall,
In depth on depth of indeterminate range.
Where they begin may be here at my hand
Or there far lost beyond the search of eye;
And though I sit, desperately rapt, and try
To trace round-round the line, and understand
The sequence, the relation, the black-art
Of their continuance, hoping to find good
At least some logic of part-joined-to-part,
I judge the task one of too mad a mood:
And prophecy throws its shadow on my heart,
And Time's last sunset flames along my blood.

WORLD BEYOND WORLD

Two mirrors, face to face, is all I need
To build a mazy universe for my mind
Where world grows out of world. I dizzily find
Solace in endless planes that there recede.
The fifth plane-world, soft-shimmering through the glass—
Surely it has a light more bland than ours.

Arthur Davison Ficke

And in the far ninth hides a whirl of powers
Unknown to our dull senses. I would pass
Down the long vista, pausing now and then
To taste the flavor of each separate sphere,
And with each vast perspective cool my eye.
Whom should I meet there? Never living men!
What should I love there? Nothing I hold dear!
What would the end be? Endless as am I!

LEAF-MOVEMENT

From its thin branch high in the autumn wind
The yellow leaf now sails in upward flight;
Hovers at top-slope; then, a whirling bright
Eddy of motion, sinks. The storm behind
With gusts and veering tyrannies would uphold
Even as it downward beats this gorgeous thing
Which like an angel's lost and shattered wing
Against the grey sky sweeps its broken gold.
Another eddy, desperate or in mirth,
Brings it to rest here on the crackled earth
Where men can see it better than on the bough.
What quite preposterous irony of wind's-will
Touches it where it lies, golden and still,
And once more lifts it vainly heavenward now!

Arthur Davison Ficke

COMMENT

DRINKWATER ON ABERCROMBIE

MR. JOHN DRINKWATER, during his recent visit to Chicago, threw out a challenge to the advocates of the "new movement" by saying, during one of his club lectures, "Lascelles Abercrombie is the most important poet under forty-five now writing." To be sure, he expressed the opinion tentatively, remarking on the futility of any attempt at finality in contemporary criticism—on the impossibility of ranking an artist while he is still in active career. And it must be admitted that to many of his hearers the eminence decreed to Mr. Abercrombie was a convincing example of this futility.

We all express opinions, but, unless blind egotists, we do it with Mr. Drinkwater's modest reserve; offering them as a passing and perishing comment, a stick thrown on the current rather than a tree planted to outlast its violence. And so, while agreeing heartily with Mr. Drinkwater as to the unfinality—if one may coin a word—of contemporary opinion, let us take up what we consider his over-praise of Mr. Abercrombie, and try to justify a contrary point of view.

Mr. Abercrombie is distinctly, even slavishly, in the Victorian tradition. Tennyson and Swinburne are his immediate progenitors, with such traces of remoter ancestry as they have handed down. He loves to wander in the old protected gardens, amid a lush overgrowth of verbal foliage,

a heavy atmosphere of rank rhetorical perfumes. He represents the extreme of all those qualities of aesthetic motive and style which the more progressive modern poets, from Yeats and Robinson to Ezra Pound and Carl Sandburg, have been leading us away from—qualities which express, not the strength of “the tradition,” but its feebleness and excess, not its growth but its decay. Let us illustrate by quoting a rather long passage from *Emblems of Love*. It is Sappho who speaks, the brief and magic Sappho, who, though remembered for only thirty lyric lines, has tempted more poets to platitudes than even Helen of Troy herself. We quote three sentences—the first two-thirds of her monologue:

This bright earth
Maketh my heart to falter; yea, my spirit
Bends and bows down in the delight of vision,
Caught by the force of beauty, swayed about
Like seaweed moved by the deep winds of water:
For it is all the news of love to me.
Through paths pine-fragrant, where the shaded ground
Is strewn with fruits of scarlet husk, I come,
As if through maidenhood's uncertainty,
Its darkness colored with strange untried thoughts;
Hither I come, here to the flowery peak
Of this white cliff, high up in golden air,
Where glowing earth and sea and divine light
Are in mine eyes like ardor, and like love
Are in my soul: love's glowing gentleness,
The sunny grass of meadows and the trees,
Towers of dark green flame, and that white town
Where from the hearths a fragrance of burnt wood,
Blue-purple smoke creeps like a stain of wine
Along the paved blue sea: yea, all this kindness
Lies amid salt immeasurable flowing,
The power of the sea, passion of love.
I, Sappho, have made love the mastery

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Most sacred over man; but I have made it
A safety of things gloriously known,
To house his spirit from the darkness blowing
Out of the vast unknown: from me he hath
The wilful mind to make his fortune fair.

We hear a number of old favorites discoursing thus eloquently in *Emblems of Love*—Helen, Vashti, Judith and Holofernes, a pair of warrior cave-men, and finally the typical He and She of an achieved millennial world. In this last of the dialogues, before the *Marriage Song* and *Epilogue*, "She" clothes her passion in the following lofty lines:

What hast thou done to me!—I would have soul,
Before I knew thee, Love, a captive held
By flesh. Now, only delighted with desire,
My body knows itself to be nought else
But thy heart's worship of me; and my soul
Therein is sunlight held by warm gold air.
Nay, all my body is become a song
Upon the breath of spirit, a love-song.

To match this nobly rotund declaration of love, one must go back to Tennyson's lover in *The Princess*, whose passion so overwhelmed him that he cried:

Nay, but thee—
From yearlong poring on thy pictured eyes
Ere seen I loved, and loved thee seen, and saw
Thee woman through the crust of iron moods
That masked thee from men's reverence up, and forced
Sweet love on pranks of saucy boyhood; now
Given back to life, to life indeed, through thee,
Indeed I love.

It took twenty more lines to clinch the affair with Tennyson's princess, and Mr. Abercrombie's He and She are even more expansive.

Drinkwater on Abercrombie

Mr. Untermeyer calls Mr. Abercrombie's type of product "metaphysical poetry." Without inquiring whether this phrase is a contradiction in terms, one might insist that *Emblems of Love* contains very little of either poetry or metaphysics, that it is merely a turgid, long-winded artificializing of certain grand old tales which only genius of a high order can touch to new beauty. To me the dullness of it is not atoned for by magic of sound or phrase, or by that swift breathless rightness of imagery with which the true poet surprises us. Mr. Abercrombie offers plenty of images—carefully thought out, elaborately wrought similes and metaphors set forth in his heavy, slow-pacing iambics according to the most approved classic rules; images which we follow at a respectful distance and without a thrill. Here is one, from the speech of a "tramp" in the dialogue *Blind*, in *Interludes and Poems*, published in 1908:

Fool, I have been
One of the mutiny that attempts God
And to take landing on the side of Heaven,
For foothold on the slippery peril of wall
Reaching and tearing at God's sheer resentment,
Still to be thrown down by the towering glass
A litter of upturned faces, gesturing
Against the calm front of his Sabbath's wall,
The desperate height of shining builded scorn.

Interludes and Poems, issued when the poet was only twenty-four, might be excused as one of the solemn follies of youth—youth over-educated and reeking with "metaphysical" wisdom. The five dramatic *Interludes* have each a large, profound, and usually tragic subject-motive, under

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which the pompous verse staggers, heavily overburdened. One is hardly convinced when God himself utters a speech of nearly fifty lines, beginning—

Simple this prayer is, smelling sweet to me,
Therefore I take it and begin my power:
Yea, I will largely let thee out of here,
Of being beautiful, otherwise tiring thee.

Nor does *The Seeker* persuade us when he says:

I have achieved. That which the lonely man
Spoke of, core of the world, that Self, I know.

with seventy lines more to explain the achievement.

At twenty-eight the poet should have matured somewhat, but *Emblems of Love* shows him still more deeply involved in the tangled meshes of an intellectually theorized and heavily artificialized art. He might have persisted in that manner to the end if the "new movement" hadn't begun about that time; for even in England the new movement, as expressed in Harold Monro's *Poetry and Drama* and the Georgian anthologies, meant something simpler than Mr. Abercrombie's style had as yet achieved. In the first *Georgian Poetry* we find his dialogue—between a sea captain, a doubting Thomas and a mysterious Stranger—a little more tolerable, though it moralizes tediously; and in the second his play, *The End of the World*, shows the beginning of an effort at modern diction and a less involved style—a necessary change, since the people are ordinary publicans and sinners. The play is stiffly talky, however, and its motive is too slight for all the pother of reflective or didactic speeches.

Drinkwater on Abercrombie

Deborah, published in 1913, is another evidence of a change of heart. Even though still clogged and rhetorical, the style seems almost bare in comparison with the works above quoted, as the following passage shows:

That was not wind!
That was a hound's tongue! Deborah, you heard?
The beagles out of hell are loose in the wind,
The Gabriel hounds are running wild tonight!
Oh now, God rest the little one's soul—he died
Unchristened, and the Gabriel hounds are out!
Here we two sit and warm us at the fire,
And yonder in the darkness and the wind
The little soul of Miriam's still-born child
Runs crying from the mouths of the Gabriel hounds!

Deborah is a good example of the tragedy deliberate, descriptive and static, so to speak; tragedy which is willed by the author rather than decreed by fate, in which the characters are pulled by strings instead of impelled by their own mysterious and unreasoning volition. The plot—or rather the three plots, for the three acts fall apart—is perfectly reasonable, indeed too reasonable. But it lacks spontaneity, the breath of life; and therefore we are not convinced when Miriam and Deborah run out into the deadly marsh.

Mr. Abercrombie seems to the writer the extreme example of the kind of thing that is the matter with much modern English poetry. His over-intellectualized motives, and his lush and leaden involved style have been admired too much by the Georgians. And so we feel impelled to record our divergence from Mr. Drinkwater's publicly announced opinion.

H. M.

REVIEWS

NECTAR AND SYRUP

Collected Poems, by Walter de la Mare (2 vols.) Henry Holt & Co.

A fit of admiration for de la Mare's works has upset the U. S. A. and her newspapers. But every newspaper article I have read is a weak jumble, done in a strange attitude of self-defense. One of the last champions of rhyme is passing—if this chance is lost, rhyme is to be an entirely lost proposition: this is what they seem to say.

This chance is not completely lost. Walter de la Mare is a good rhymers, one of the very best of today. Indeed, he is probably the sweetest rhymers of today. His *Peacock Pie* poems and his *Poems for Childhood* are clever and darling. They are not the drooling child-poems one often meets with. They are good old-fashioned child-poems and a little more: there is a naively mystical note in most of them, and bright new humor.

And so *Listeners*, *Motley* and the previous book, *Poems 1906*, contain poems that have a hauntingly sweet music, and others the mysticism of which is real, sweet and naive; also landscapes delicately drawn, like this one:

Snow at break of day,
On fields forlorn and bare.
For shadow it hath rose,
Azure and amethyst;
And every air that blows
Dies out in beauteous mist.

But too many other poems strike us as Maxfield Parrish's pictures do; they are at first sight lovely; but then, to more scrupulous eyes, this loveliness becomes falsity. They are embellishments rather than works of beauty. The naiveté of them is studied, and they are childish where they should be simple. The truthfulness of the image is sacrificed for the sake of vividness, with the effect that a short-lived vividness is attained which dies under scrupulous eyes. Thus the famous moonlight poem, where everything is silver even to the paws of the sleeping dog and the snout of the running rat, is essentially a falsified picture. Stripped of truthfulness, all that remains of it is a sometimes pleasing jingle.

As for his much discussed use of hackneyed words, symbols, colors, music—inasmuch as this is the age-old vice of poets and scribblers, there is nothing to say in de la Mare's defense. And inasmuch as our times have witnessed a quite wonderful movement towards complete newness in poetry, Mr. de la Mare, for this serious fault of his, may be called unoriginal. It is extenuating that the quaint delightful music of some of his poems gains in quaintness by the use of words which, if hackneyed, have a certain traditional flavor. But the worst of it is that this use of hackneyed language and forms springs from a lack of faith in today; and moreover it is made possible by the fact that nothing very actual concerns Mr. de la Mare, for were he concerned in things that require to be expressed in a modern language he would use it. Here we find fairies and witches of the old type, we find knights and damsels instead of guys and janes. Why not give us

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today's witches? There are some. And why not give us, if not guys and janes, today's knights and damsels? There are some.

However, the critic should not say, "Why not?" He is concerned in the work of art as it is and not as it should be. Well, let us admit then that we have seen these witches, these damsels, these knights before, in a hundred books of the past. De la Mare is a repeater. Not a bad one, but for that reason he is just so much less a poet. He is a poet of abstract sentiment chiefly. And in this abstraction we detect a lack of roots, a lack of force. Even most of his landscapes are, as we have said, embellishments of old models; and the only human beings in these books are some characters from Shakespeare.

Like many poets, Walter de la Mare belongs in the class of sentimental rejecters of reality and today. His mysticism, what there is of it, is therefore a weak thing, a negation rather than an exuberance. His music has the melodious sweetness of a luxury, rather than of everyday song.

Among his best child poems we find this:

Ann! Ann!
Come quick as you can!
There's a fish that talks
In the frying pan.
He put up his mouth
And moaned "Alas!"
Oh, most mournful—
"Alas, alack!"
Then turned to his sizzling,
And sank him back.

We must say it again, some of these child poems are as delightful as Mother Goose's. *E. Carnevali*

ONE POET

Advice, by Maxwell Bodenheim, Alfred A. Knopf.

The Forerunner: His Parables and Poems, by Kahlil Gibran, Alfred A. Knopf.

Neighbors, by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. Macmillan Co.

The Birds and Other Poems, by J. C. Squire. George H. Doran Co.

Songs While Wandering, by A. Newberry Choyce. John Lane Co.

There are three Englishmen, one Syrian and one American in this list; and patriots may stand up and cheer, since the single American has written the only book among them that is worth any serious consideration. I shall postpone my comment upon it to the end.

Mr. Choyce sings some old songs while wandering. His chief distinction seems to be that he was wounded in action, and has just completed a lecture tour through our West, South and Middle-west. The publishers themselves think so, for they let these important matters take first place in their wrapper description and add a few perfunctory words about charm, lyric qualities, etc. To these casualties were added a small gift for rhyming, and a grateful heart. So we have variations on the theme of God's own country, rocky mountains, peaceful valleys, descriptions of soulful meetings

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with a Mormon maid and an Indian princess, and other tender damsels, varied with nice longings for Home (England, in the sheltering sea, etc.) and Mother. It is quite as if the English Captain in Shaw's *Great Catherine* had traveled here, and appreciatively burst into poetry. The only comfort one can get is that Mr. Choyce is evidently quite young and has years of self-awareness before him.

In language that is simple and apt, that even rises to a quiet poignancy, a pervading suspense that is truly stirring, Mr. Gibson's *Neighbors* is a gathering of those intimate biographies that catch a life-time on one pivotal perception. This, the larger part of the book, gives it some distinction. If read too consecutively, impressions are dulled by a monotony of theme and treatment. Mr. Gibson is skilful in weaving his spell, but he cannot escape it himself; one finds the same emotions underlying, the same moods pervading all the poems. In the end one rises from the book, having fed upon fare touched with a faint savour of the bread of Elysium; and been made hungrier thereby. The other poems are mainly occasional pieces of little importance.

We have had conductor-music, and now we have editor-poetry. J. C. Squire presents charming, well worked, intelligent poems which show discrimination and taste. I have the impression, in reading his book, of skilful parodies upon some unknown and invisible poet. There is disproportionate intellectuality, but it entertains and stimulates even if it tends merely to wear a path around old emotions. It is, after all, something to get the careful expression of a highly

cultured, versatile man, whose words have restraint and authority if not the compulsion of genius. The first impression is of admiration for work well done, for the faultless architecture of his metaphors, and the unobtrusive efficiency of his rhythms.

Parables and prose poems like those in *The Forerunner*, by Kahlil Gibran, will have all the unpopularity of sermons outside the pulpit. The form itself, that of free, self-responsible utterance, gives an irritating finality to the content, which a world grown skeptical is tempted to snub. There is in this book neither the stark authenticity of prophecy, nor the beautiful crystallizations of a creative imagination. What we have here is pompous dramatizations of only half-individualized platitudes; sounding sufficiently sad-true, through a mist of fine language, to catch the attention with mirages. The accompanying drawings, in dim shadow-shape and vague lines, give a fine touch of completeness to the book, supplying a somewhat needed justification for the text. Incidentally, this volume should be praised as a specimen of bookmaking. Mr. Knopf has been conscientious in making out his list; and he has been careful, as other progressive publishers have not, to give each book an appropriate format.

Mr. Bodenheim's book is a garland of persistently new flowers, so different that a myth might be made of the strange sap in these short stems, of the new designs made by the cluster of the petals, the new color, new flesh; and of the truly terrifying fact that there are no roots—or at least none that are visible or palpable or explicable.

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We know that Bodenheim's faith is an exaltation of form "—out of his own mouth" if we were inclined to a polemic. What philosophy has not been enunciated a thousand times, what beauty has not been celebrated over and over, what sunrise, sunset, moon, sea, or mountain has not been published into notoriety by a timeless following of rhapsodists! Nothing that a man can touch but is mottled over with fingerprints. The business of the poet then, if he is not to add merely a new and more or less unrecognizable parody, is to mold his material into a new shape, to give creative individuality a play in fashioning an ultimate appearance.

Actually Bodenheim has done more. He has found new themes, going to neglected or forbidden realms to find them. And he has come to them with a new attitude, enabling him to equip his foundry with new molds.

In doing this, in not making his poems a personal synthesis of instinctively selective preferences, in seeming to have written suddenly and on impulse, without drawing matter and manner from confessed admirations or self-fertilizing memories, Bodenheim has actually proved himself an original poet. He has broken through where so many others have wandered in circles, have taken vague new paths and come dishearteningly back to their starting-places; where so many others, less self-sufficient, have fallen into impotent night-radiances of disintegration.

A new attitude is a rare achievement, and originality an enviable state of blessedness. One may well believe that new words and new meanings are needed for its expression,

and forgive the inversions, ellipses, forced embraces, exaggerations and diminutions, of his vocabulary. But it has its penalty. To what conflagration Mr. Bodenheim's fire may lead to is impossible to say, but its flame is small and illuminates a little space only. One misses in his work exactly that contact with a literary evolution which enables lesser poets over cleared fields to cover wider areas.

It is impossible to miss or fail to enjoy the exhilaration of this verse. Like the composers who have transformed music, who have swelled the orchestra with new instruments, who have added to each section whole new gamuts, and in daring new combinations have made the orchestra more articulate: so Bodenheim is widening the scope of words; his verbs are quivering with new gestures; his adjectives are suffused with new and subtle colors; his nouns cry out new names; his pronouns enter strange new relationships; and the juxtapositions of phenomenal contrasts and harmonies have added new sounds, deeper and more sonorous, or shriller and more piercing.

But just as the new composers as yet are finding it hard enough work to utter the new sounds, and have hardly begun to sing songs with them; so Bodenheim has, in my opinion, found it hard enough work to fashion the new meanings of words, without attempting to say much with them. His poems, be they about grass-blades or men, have a final common appearance; because their subjects are not inspirations, but serve, like the string in the chemical precipitate, merely to focus crystallization. Any string would do as

well; and to provide himself a store of strings we find the poet tending to make catalogues; he gives advice impartially to a large list of things and it occurs to me that he would give the same advice to any fortuitous association of subjects; that Bodenheim had to give advice, and it didn't matter to whom. So we find him drawing a series of portraits. So we find him wearily stretching out to the stock figures—to prostitutes, Pierrots, etc.

There is no quarrel with this. It seems to be Mr. Bodenheim's destiny to break the molecules of words into atoms of meanings, and to indicate crudely the possible new associations. No doubt other poets will use them for greater speech.

Isidor Schneider

TEACHER-POETS

The Roamer and Other Poems, by George Edward Woodberry. Harcourt, Brace and Howe.

Sonnets from a Prison Camp, by Archibald Allen Bowman. John Lane Co.

When one reads Dr. Woodberry's poems, the question arises, why does this man's work occupy so high a place in the minds of many supposedly discriminating people? There is even a Woodberry Society—the only society dedicated to a living American writer. Yet Dr. Woodberry's poetry is merely the careful, well-wrought work of a cultivated gentleman, trained in literary traditions and familiar with the world of books.

I wonder if the explanation is not to be found in the prevalent American theory that because a man is successful in one field he is necessarily to be treated with reverence in every other field. The average citizen believes that because Henry Ford has made millions of dollars building automobiles he is an authority on the single tax, the Jews, the theory of relativity, the internal problems of Santo Domingo, and the doctrine of transubstantiation. The relatively learned gentlemen who comprise the Woodberry Society may not swallow such bunk as that, but they share mildly in the popular hallucination. Dr. Woodberry was a great, even a delightful, university teacher. A census of the Woodberry Society would probably show a comfortable majority impressed originally with their hero's pedagogical ability and personal charm. He was a great teacher; ergo he is a great poet.

Dr. Woodberry's latest volume contains a long spiritual narrative, *The Roamer*, in blank verse; a sonnet sequence, *Ideal Passion*; and a number of other sonnets and lyrics. Technical excellence a-plenty is found in all the poems; so is conventional but sincere idealism. What is lacking is intensity. There is about the emotions an unearthly pallor. Austerity, the quality which the poems most nearly approach, is just missed—and missed because they are lit not by the consuming white flame of experience, but by the clear, cold, steady light of intellectual reflection.

Sonnets from a Prison Camp is also the work of a teacher. Dr. Bowman, now professor of philosophy in Princeton

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University, was an officer in the British army and was taken prisoner by the Germans. The hundred or more sonnets dealing with his experiences are too numerous unless exceedingly good, which these are not. They are interesting, but they give an impression mainly of craftsmanship. There is too much emphasis on ethical and esthetic theory—not surprising in a professor of philosophy. Moreover, the sonnets tend to form an explicit rather than an implicit narrative, whereas the sonnet sequence, being a succession of lyrics, is best adapted to the opposite.

Nelson Antrim Crawford

TWO BOOKS OF REFUGE

Black Marigolds, translated by E. Powys Mathers.

The Dark Mother, by Waldo Frank. Boni & Liveright.

There be two deluges, everlasting. One is the deluge of new poetry, which one may witness at the POETRY office; the other is the deluge of new novels from England, aggravated by the indigenous rain.

This month we, the lovers of poetry, stand on a rock out of the one deluge; and on a raft over the second deluge. The rock is a little yellow pamphlet, decorated with strange black scrawls, *Black Marigolds*; the raft is a novel, *The Dark Mother*, by the author of *Our America*.

Whoever thought of Sanskrit? Whoever heard of Chauras? And who is E. Powys Mathers?

Here is one of the most beautiful poems I ever read. It

Two Books of Refuge

is the love poem of Chauras, a young man of nineteen hundred years ago, dying for having loved the king's daughter.

If I see her body beaten about with flame,
Wounded by the flaring spear of love. . . .
Then is my heart buried alive in snow.

Seeing the stupendous wealth of expression in this ancient poem, so beautifully rendered by Mr. Mathers, we dreamed that in those days there were only poets living in a beautiful world, only poetic words to be spoken. But the pitiful struggle of the beautiful is eternal; and here too we have a glimpse of it, where eternal love and death are sung:

They chatter her weakness through the two bazaars,
Who was so strong to love me. And small men,
That buy and sell for silver, being slaves,
Crinkle the fat about their eyes; and yet
No Prince of the Cities of the Sea has taken her,
Leading to his grim bed. Little lonely one,
You clung to me as a garment clings, my girl.

A delightfully quaint flavor is given to the poem by the slightly ungrammatical expressions and punctuation. In the translator's own words: "I have tried, by not letting my verse become a coherent lyric poem in the English sense, to keep its disjointed air."

This is one of those cases in which we cannot do better than quote:

I see her—far face blond like gold,
Rich with small lights, and tinted shadows
Over and over all of her. . . .
Her scented arms
Lay like cool bindweed over against my neck.
When slow rose-yellow moons looked out at night,

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To guard the sheaves of harvest and mark down
The peach's fall, how calm she was and love-worthy!

The salt of the whispers of my girl,
Murmurs of confused colors as we lay near sleep;
Little wise words and little witty words,
Wanton as water, honied with eagerness.

We may recall, here, another beautiful love-death, that of Wagner's Tristan and Yseult. The experience that became song for Chauras cost him his young life.

A brief notice only of the other book. The reason why we so much as mention *The Dark Mother* here is that we have found in this book what is very seldom to be found in a novel—poetry.

It is a book of sensitive health. The symbol for the first fifty pages might be a tall-stemmed flower quivering in a sweet even breeze. There is such delicacy, mixed with such extreme health, that we are reminded of the antennæ of insects:

The air moved toward the mountain; the waves and the trees and the earth moved toward the mountain. All the world moved gently upward toward the mountain like a tide. The mountain moved downward toward earth, spilled water and spread trees in it.

This David is a man of perfect senses, perfect eyes:

And David saw the breathing of the woods, the warm comfort of trees that had grown up together and knew their silences. They were clothed in a sweet sanctity of resolve and repose. They took the rain with faint bowed heads.

Lovers of poetry owe at least an acknowledgment to this book of honest prose, which is full of beautiful words—a real gardenful.

E. Carnevali

CELTIC FAIRIES

Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland (2 vols.), collected and arranged by Lady Gregory, with two essays and notes by W. B. Yeats. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Irish Fairy Tales, by James Stephens, illustrated by Arthur Rackham. Macmillan Co.

The Boy Apprenticed to an Enchanter, by Padraic Colum, illustrated by Dugald Stewart Walker. Macmillan Co.

Although the books here listed are not strictly in POETRY'S province, their highly imaginative content places them so near it that we must recommend them briefly to our readers.

Lady Gregory's beautiful and scholarly work presents the raw material out of which the modern Irish poets, headed by Synge and Yeats, have shaped masterpieces, and from which their successors will continue to draw so long as there are Irish poets. In setting forth thus the "Celtic consciousness of an imminent supernaturalism," the distinguished editor uses the names and the exact language of the individuals who tell the tales, giving thus to her book the value of direct testimony, as well as the vigor and beauty of that folk-diction which Synge has immortalized. The scope of the work is indicated by such sectional sub-titles as *Sea Stories*, *Seers and Healers*, *The Evil Eye*, *Banshees and Warnings*, *Friars and Priest Cures*. Mr. Yeats' essays and notes are of course not only competent but sympathetic.

Mr. Stephens' beautiful book is a poet's retelling of some of the old Celtic folk-tales, tales handed down from long ago in the manner Lady Gregory's collection makes us under-

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stand. It goes without saying that the tales are shaped into compact form by this close stylist without loss of simplicity and charm. And Mr. Rackham's illustrations are a return to his best manner and most imaginative mood.

This book and Mr. Colum's are for children in the sense only that some of the world's best literature has been so intended; but no grown-up who loves imaginative and poetic folk stories should deny himself the pleasure of such work by poets at play. One is "apprenticed to an enchanter" in reading Mr. Colum's book; and his paraphrases of the classic epics—Homer, the Norse sagas, etc.—may also be recommended to any child, young or old, as examples of vivid and beautiful imaginative prose. H. M.

A LITTLE SCHOOL FOR THE ELECT

The Little School, by T. Sturge Moore. Harcourt, Brace and Howe.

The little school for which Mr. Moore writes his lovely book is obviously the sort of school that an artist like Mr. Moore would plan. Its teacher would be a painter or engraver or poet, while the pupils would be girls and boys with the vision and the appreciation of the developing artist.

Naturally this is not the kind of school or book that children nourished on the red and yellow humor of Rudolph Dirks or even the monotonous wholesomeness of *The Youth's Companion* will greatly care for. It is too quiet, too reflective, too full of beauty. But this fact is not against it. The child with parent or teacher of sense and apprecia-

tion will find in the volume—perhaps not “realms of gold”, but at least places where blow the many winds, always things of mystery to children and not to children alone; where, as Mr. Moore himself says,

None comes, none goes,
But the wind knows.

And the man or woman will find in the poems as much as the boy or girl; indeed, to almost any child, without guidance, the book is likely to be a bit recondite. *N. A. C.*

HOMESPUN

Rhymes of a Homesteader, by Elliott C. Lincoln. Houghton Mifflin Co.

This is a book of western verse, much of it of the homely familiar kind in dialect which passes current as good newspaper verse. It is hard to establish a line by which one can say of verse of this sort: This is a counterfeit of the genuine homespun, and this, on the other hand, is the real stuff. Several of the poems in this book rise above the counterfeit and approach the real thing, but the majority are written down with that careful colloquial carelessness which fails of its effect just because of its too apparent condescension. The naiveté of genuine folk homespun is not assumed. An author may achieve the folk quality because he is naive really; or he may achieve it through conscious simplicity; but not merely through rhyming dialect or colloquial non-chalance.

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One may be severe on this score, because Mr. Elliott's best poems are so far beyond the rest. *Wheel Tracks, The Homesteader, The Sheepherder, Forty Below, The Chinook,* and *The Third Year* give promise of a much finer development of the author's talent. A. C. H.

MR. BYNNER'S SKIT

Pins for Wings, by Emanuel Morgan. The Sunwise Turn, New York.

Mr. Bynner must have had a beautiful time with himself working out these thumb-nail caricatures. There are too many for them all to be clever, of course; but a few have the delicate tang of wit.

"A hamadryad in the tree of knowledge" is not bad for Miss Millay, or "Overalls rhyming" for Walt Mason. "A cardinal on a merry-go-round" is still better, perhaps, for Mr. Chesterton. "A graphophone in the morgue" is only a half-success for Edgar Lee Masters, and "A colored postcard as Hamlet" does not quite hit off adequately the cruelly battered egoism of Cale Young Rice.

But the masterpiece of wit which would excuse a volume of failures, the portrait complete and satisfying which leaves nothing more to be said, is this of George Edward Woodberry:

Grape-juice
In the Holy Grail.

A word of praise also for Mr. Saphier's line-drawings, and for one or two of Mr. Opffer's sketches. H. M.

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

BOND OR FREE?

They are still talking about free verse—both pro and con; although the champions of both sides insist that the discussion is closed, and the poets continue to do as they please and get their poems printed. We commend to Mr. Tom Daly and other fulminators the following contribution to the controversy from a recent number of the *Mercure de France*. It is part of the theatrical review of Dec. 15, 1920, by Maurice Boissard:

To say that rhyme is poetry, that there is no poetry where there isn't rhyme, is to express the worst poetic routine. Let's take an example—José-Maria de Hérédia, if you will. You know the sonnets of *Trophées*. God knows that those lines rhyme, but is it poetry, in the true sense of the word? Not in the least. It is versification—extremely brilliant, we admit, but still mere versification. It is made for the eye, for the ear, not for the spirit or the soul. It is a sequence of *tours de force*, a show of patience, suggestively like certain complicated trinkets manufactured with tiny shells by meticulous maniacs. Do you want a more general argument? You certainly have read poems by foreign poets translated into French line by line and without any rhyme because the translator had in mind only the thought of being faithful to the significance of the poem itself. Have you felt the penetrating charm of these translations?—a charm due solely to the feeling expressed, to the landscape described; charm that the lack of rhyme left untouched, or even increased, by means of those essentially poetic elements: vagueness, imprecision, indecision, all that which is poetry itself. Rhyme, with its dryness, its regularity, its monotony, its mechanical quality and exterior brilliance, would have left nothing of that beauty; or at any rate would have decidedly impaired it. Rhyme is nothing but a poetic make-up, a way to look like poets for people who know no better than to make verses; and it is high time to follow the advice Verlaine gave, to *tordre enfin le cou à ce bijou d'un sou*.

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Not only rhyme is not poetry, but moreover it is an encumbrance, an obstacle to poetry; for its sake the poet falsifies his inspiration.

Probably Mr. Daly's favorite magazine is *Scribner's*, for we read in one of its recent advertisements:

The four or more poems contained in a representative number of *Scribner's* are joyous, lyrical, and well-conceived. Such themes as the bird on the bough, summer in Arcady, the little silver strip of road, are preferred over grave or mournful subjects. Yet all poems must conform to a high standard of dignity and distinctiveness.

CORRESPONDENCE

CONCERNING "KORA IN HELL"

Dear POETRY:—Writers, quite as much in the countries of older art tradition as in America, may be divided into two classes: one the professionals, whose concern is style, technique, finished achievement; the other, those who attempt at least to explore and develop new experience. The former class restrict themselves generally to quite conventional themes; or, if they are very daring, develop for themselves new themes—about which they write "verses"—ultimately hardening into a manner, inherited or their own, and softening in so far as ability to penetrate deeply goes. Limiting ourselves strictly to America, we may mention such poets of the first class as Masters, Sandburg, Aiken—the list need stop short of only a very few names. Particularly with Sandburg may one be sure that he will take an image, and consciously sustain and develop it, long after he has lost poignant feeling for the validity of the image. He is a

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professional writer. He has learned, in his own manner to be sure, how to use the image, the metaphor, the brutal truth, and the sentimental humanitarianism. So, starting out with the statement that the moon is a pot of gold mud, he must have that gold mud spread over worldly possessions, and of course at last a love-woman. He, and many others, seem to feel that it is necessary to write—if not an authentic poem, to write anyway. Unless from an impulse to say something keenly felt, writing is without justification.

Of this first group few pass from their adolescent rebellions and miseries into a more spiritual type of searching. Their discovery of experience is limited to material environment—the corn-fields, the marching men, small-town viciousness, the hog-butchers of industrialism. Outside, and perhaps controlling the forces back of these externalities, are more fundamental forces which they do not sense, forces which have a universal application, while retaining also a strictly local significance. The experience of the locality is after all that of the universe. The history of any individual relates itself with startling similarity to that of the age.

Today is a time of the breakdown of faiths amongst the so-called "sensitized" and "intellectuals." With the coming of the theory of evolution the more sublime metaphysical theories were gradually abandoned; pragmatism, with its doctrines concerning the usable realities, followed on to lubricate the joints of a mechanistic universe. However, where a few began to doubt the value of these "practical" answers before the war, literally thousands now doubt. Why

should we believe in evolution which does not explain involution, or the quite evident lack of progress? Have we anything to prove that physically and spiritually the human species is not on the retrograde? What is morality?—is non-morality a possibility? Dogmatized, it becomes at last a degenerate morality—must all ethics be individualized then? Many questionings, cynicisms, scoffings and doubtings attack all former judgments, and demand that their defenders prove their basis, and indicate clearly that it is something other than blind faith, or inward hunger rhapsodized into a proclamatory religion made out of dream-stuff. Ecstatic faith and prophetic exaltation are too primitive to be explainable in the religious instinct—for, say Whitman—to satisfy the diagnostic mind, and the psychologist.

Whatever certain groups or individuals may think or feel, the civilized peoples of the world are groping for some basis of faith: a faith in the mere value of living out their lives rather than a religious explanation of existence. But there is a new difficulty in their groping: they no longer trust logic, sequence, order—the intelligible, rational, deducible.

It is writers who are sensitive to this baseless way of accepting life, or rather tolerating it because life is what we have, who are developing the so-called "modern forms." Both *modern* and *form* are words that signify too much traditionally, and too little actually. To qualify, let me say I mean by modern that which is of the quality of today, displaying sensitive consciousness of the age's attitudes and

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philosophies. By form I mean method of expression and conveyance, and I have no concern with any structural form—metrical, rhythmic, or geometric.

James Joyce with his prose first indicated the modern form. Possibly his style could be traced back to the oftentimes incoherent Rimbaud; the likeness here is purely a mode—the texture, quality of perception, attitude, and substance are quite different: the one has the mature detached mind; the other tossed himself with the seething of adolescence into the field of sophisticated discovery, and perhaps when adolescence and its ragings were over he would have relapsed into quite conventional or mediocre writing.

In America William Carlos Williams, and he beginning only with his improvisations entitled *Kora in Hell*, is conscious of the new form in relation to the dubiety of the day. Not agnosticism, for the agnostic will say "I can't know" decisively; we are simply doubting, and doubting whether we are right in doubting. There is in this book the spasmodic quality of the active, imaginative, alternately frightened and reckless, consciousness. One will search in vain for sequential outline; it is incoherent and unintelligible to—may I say the ordinary mind, though I dislike the superior implication of self which the phrase carries with it? (Since minds are so elusive, none is actually ordinary.) It is incoherent and unintelligible to those people with lethargy of their sensing organs. They look for the order and neatness of precise, developed thought. It is not there. *Kora in Hell* is accepted as a portrait of Williams' consciousness—a sort

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of retouched photograph. He is not distinctly located to himself—it's a "Should I, or shouldn't I, and what if I don't?" It's a conscientious sensitive mind, or life organism; trained in childhood to staid and tried acceptances and moralities, trying to be open, and to think, sense, or leap to a footing which more acceptably justifies the life-process than any of the traditional footings seem to.

To me *Kora in Hell* is immeasurably the most important book of poetry that America has produced. I find in Whitman a hardened exaltation, which proclaims rhapsodic dogmatism—the result of physical well-being, of the freedom of open air, space, and green fields. Admirable in its day, but the day is by for those of us who live in cities such as New York and Chicago, and who perhaps have never seen a real prairie or the mountains of the Great Divide, and who sleep in tenement-house bedrooms several stories up from the soil which flavors Indian imagism and produces sweep-of-the-corn-sap-flowing rhythms. And we will not accept the statement that "it is regrettable we have never had these things." Our situation is our situation, and by the artist can be utilized as substance for art. There can be no turning back to the soil, to the Indians—literature is not thus consciously developed. We are here, in the cities of smoke, subways, tired faces, industrialism; here with the movies and their over-gorgeousness, and the revues and follies which gradually inject their ultra-coloration into vaudeville; here where it is deemed necessary to applaud "art things"—Mozart and Schumann music, established classics which fall

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dully upon our hyper-neurotic senses. Be the conditions hectic, heated, artificial (are economic, political and social forces then "not natural"?) they are the conditions of a great portion of the country.

For those who wish poetry to create some sublime beauty, which to others grows irksome since it is necessary to turn from its sublimity to the reality of existence, William Carlos Williams' *Kora in Hell* will mean little. To those however who rather like to have the record of somebody else's conscious states by which to check their own, with which to respond and commune, it will mean a great deal. The writer, not caring for literature as literature; not knowing what function it performs in life other than that of a mental decoration if it does not get into, reveal, and sensitize people to, new experience; believes, however, that no book previously produced in this country has been so keenly, vividly aware of age conceptions, qualities, colors, noises, and philosophies as *Kora in Hell*. It is a break-away from poetry written by poets who set out to be poets. It is adventurous exploration.

Robert McAlmon

NOTES

Mr. Lew Sarett, whose interpretations of Chippewa life are familiar to our readers, is now a resident of Evanston, Ill., being in the faculty of Northwestern University. His book, *Many Many Moons*, was published last year by Henry Holt & Co.

Mr. Arthur Davison Ficke, of Davenport, Iowa, has recently returned from his eight-months' sojourn in China and Japan. His latest book of verse is *An April Elegy*, published by Mitchell Kennerley in 1917.

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Mr. Lee Wilson Dodd, who lives near New Haven, Conn., is the author of a number of plays and two books of verse. Of these the later is *The Middle Miles and Other Poems* (Yale University Press, 1915).

Mr. H. Thompson Rich, of Rutherford, N. J., has contributed to various magazines.

The other poets of this number appear for the first time in *POETRY*, and none of them has printed a volume as yet, so far as the editor is aware.

Elinor Wylie (Mrs. Horace Wylie), who lives in Washington, D. C., has contributed to other periodicals.

Mr. Edward Townsend Booth, of New York, served with the A. E. F., and later went to *Ukrainia* to do relief work.

Mr. Carroll Lane Fenton, whose specialty is paleontology, is now working at the Walker Museum, University of Chicago. He is a member of the U. of C. Poetry Club.

Grace Stone Coates (Mrs. Henderson Coates) lives in Martinsdale, Mont.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Punch: the Immortal Liar, by Conrad Aiken. Alfred A. Knopf.
Verses, by William Grant McCoolley, Jr. Privately printed, Milwaukee, Wis.

Pools of Glass and Other Poems, by Cyrus Caswell Johnson. Privately printed, Los Angeles, Cal.

Cactus Center, by Arthur Chapman. Houghton Mifflin Co.

The Broads—1919, by Hugh Money-Coutts. John Lane Co.

Forgotten Shrines, by John Chipman Farrar. (Yale Series of Younger Poets.) Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn.

Star-dust and Gardens, by Virginia Taylor McCormick. Plimpton Press, Norwood, Mass.

Borderlands, Kitchener of Khartoum and Other Poems, by Benj. C. Moomaw. Privately printed, Barber, Va.

The Choice of Paris and Other Poems, by D. C. Chase. Privately printed, Cedar Rapids, Ia.

The Attic of the Past and Other Lyrics, by Louis Ginsberg. Small, Maynard & Co.

Outlaws, by Nancy Cunard. Elkin Mathews, London.

Breakers and Granite, by John Gould Fletcher. Macmillan Co.

Poems, by Mary Allen Keller. Privately printed, Yorba Linda, Cal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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