



PEGASUS

A Magazine of Verse

VOLUME I, NUMBER 6

January-February 1924

A NEW DIGITAL READING EDITION

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The final number of Volume I joins Pegasus's local and experimental circle to two much more widely known western poets. George Sterling's opening sonnet, 'Earth-Worms,' brings the California bohemian's cosmic scale to the magazine; Poetry Foundation records Sterling as a central figure in the San Francisco and Carmel literary worlds. Later, 'Old Mortality' is credited jointly to Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu, anticipating the collaboration in Chinese translation for which Bynner became especially known.

Those names do not turn the issue into a showcase of celebrity. Virgil Geddes, Agnes Cornell, Samuel Heller, Alice M. Fay, E. Richard Shipp, and Gertrude Kiper retain the magazine's characteristic interest in desert distances, moonlight, bodily states, and compact free-verse forms. The result is a useful cross-section of western literary culture in 1924: established figures, translators, and lesser-known contributors sharing the same spare pages.

SOURCES CONSULTED

- Poetry Foundation biography of George Sterling
- Poetry Foundation biography of Witter Bynner

TEXTUAL AND EDITORIAL NOTE

This edition is newly typeset from the supplied HathiTrust scan. Obvious OCR artifacts, broken words, duplicated drop capitals, and spacing errors have been corrected against the page images. Period spelling, capitalization, and unusual diction have otherwise been retained. Hyphens and em dashes have been checked against the printed pages rather than normalized into a single mark. Each poem begins on a new page, with its printed issue page and scan page identified, and every poet's name is placed immediately beneath the corresponding title.

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EARTH-WORMS

George Sterling

Perhaps, for all we say that they are blind,
They have their own fruition of the days—
Sunsets of matter, dawn of chemic rays,
And flowers of an empire undefined.
Mute are the tiny mouths, and yet they grind,
Century long, the huge globe's iron crust,
In that attrition of the needful dust
From which are made the thrones of flesh and mind.
We say their country is a darkened one,
Nor know what star is given them for sun;
But when we go to share that realm of night,
Humble as they and feebler shall we come,
Our hunger stilled, our lips forever dumb,
Our eyes no more in bondage to the light.

Issue p. 4 · Scan p. 4.

IN MEMORIAM

Charles Howard Marsh

(Charles Webster Crews, 1852-1923)

The torch of life is dimmed
And darkness like a shroud
Lies round his narrow bed.

Yet I cannot mourn for him
Who walks eternal uplands now in glory,
Free from a tired and hampered body,
Free as the wind that runs
Unfettered through the world
Whispering melodies to listening trees.

I cannot mourn his brave release;
He lived in rare nobility and simple faith,
The spirit of the pioneer coursing through his veins—
Life's Great Adventure has begun for him.

Shall we say that Time is stricken
When the leaves of autumn fall?
Lo! In the dead of winter
The sempiternal urge is swelling at the roots of life.

Already in the garden of the east
The golden lily of the King
Is bursting the bud of night,
And up the stellar steeps
Its yellow fragrance mounts,
Incense of the gods.

And so his soul
No longer weighted with the worn-out flesh,
Bearing that calm courage it had always known,
Mounts the steeps of light
In glad and gay abandon.

See! From out a starry oriel of heaven
High set within a spire of eternity,
He watches for our coming!

Issue p. 5 · Scan p. 5.

A DAY

Virgil Geddes

I am walking in the rain.

The rain is cold
With a slow, indifferent falling.
It falls with a curious abandon,
And I lift my face
To feel its careless motion.

The rain is rain, above me;
The earth is earth, beneath me;
I walk in the rain,
And it all resolves
Into a steady equilibrium.

All day I have been still-born,
Drawn between earth and sky
In a strange abortion.

I do not know what for,
But I have come out in the rain;
Not to die, perhaps to awake,
But surely, above all else,
To caress its damp effusion.

This is beauty of a kind
That precludes sight or sound;
The thrust of eager hands into a foam,
White, chilled as spawn.
A place of many loves,
Where I fall and gently follow.

Issue p. 6 · Scan p. 6.

THREE DESERT SONGS

Agnes Cornell

I

Vastness immeasurable

Silence:

Sky and sand are one

Silence:

I am begot and die and come again to earth...

Yet I make no move.

Vastness immeasurable

Silence:

Sky and sand are one

Silence:

Now a bird and another rise

And lose themselves in the horizon.

Silence:

I am begot and die and come again to earth...

Yet I make no move.

II

I often go that way at sundown

I know the way—

I know the way that takes the last shift of the hill.

From there on is nothing but the sheer horizon's rim—

Nothing but the silence—silence—

And my soul along the sand,

Or may be now and then a bird.

III

It wouldn't be there if I went back

And remembering would kill me:

Only the shadows would creep on the floor

And the wind cry at the door.

It wouldn't be there if I went back,

And remembering would kill me.

Issue p. 7 · Scan p. 7.

IN LESBOS

Samuel Heller

Sappho's dust is beauty,
That drifts forevermore;
Like flame of oelanders,
Like wind upon the shore.
Cyclamen and myrtle,
Vineyards where dark boughs blow—
These have remembered Phaon,
In Lesbos, long ago...

Issue p. 7 · Scan p. 7.

IN DREAMS

Samuel Heller

My flesh is flame that clears
To deeper fire;
Beauty has been my rapture,
All my desire.

After a thousand years,
I think that men
Will share this bit of music;
In dreams again.

Issue p. 8 · Scan p. 8.

COTE D'AZUR

Alice M. Fay

Impressions

The sea—a sapphire, and the cities
Are jewels flung upon a rocky coast—sapphires and gold
and flaming rubies;
Mimosa—trees
Of golden glory
Lighting up the world,
To our feet is hurled
Olympus' story.
Now for a day
King Carnival holds sway,
We can forget in a whirl of flowers and color and gladness,
Of fun and fantasy, wine and a little madness,—
But the mistral!
It is upon us all
Chilling
The summer world with sadness,
Killing
Joy, a bleak wind
Come to remind
Us that we must leave behind
The golden hours
The sunshine and the sea and the flowers.

Issue p. 9 · Scan p. 9.

OLD MORTALITY

Tu Fu · translated by Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu

Ten thousand valleys and ranges lead to the Ching Gate,
 And the village where the Lady of Light was born and bred.
 She went from the purple palace into the desert-land,
 And has now become a green grave in the yellow dusk.
 Her face—can you picture a wind of the spring?
 Her spirit by moonlight returns with a tinkling
 Song of the Huns on her jade guitar,
 Telling forever of her grief.

II.

Chu-ke's prestige transcends the earth
 And reverence obeys his face—
 Yet his will, among three realms at war,
 Was as one red feather against a flaming sky.
 He was brother of men like Yi and Lu
 And in time would have outdone Hsiao and Ts'ao:
 With the line of Han irretrievably ending,
 He wielded his mind for it, yielded his life

(Chu-ke Liang was the famous premier of Shu, who vainly tried to consolidate the Three Kingdoms. The four men named were celebrated early statesmen, the latter two being the greatest of the Han Dynasty.)

Issue p. 10 • Scan p. 10.

FRAGMENTS

E. Richard Shipp

A NIGHT IN JUNE

Beneath a sharp-cut midnight moon
The lilac waves her purple plumes;
Both time and place are opportune—
I hear the chime of wedding bells.

LONELINESS

The stars that sail on the sea
Shining from each curling wave,
Wink their eyes and beckon me
Standing lonely on the beach.

DOWN A COUNTRY LANE

A light for my wayward feet,
Candles burn in the midnight sky;
Golden flutes in a field of wheat
Croon an exultant melody.

SUNRISE

The silent king, riding bareback,
Flaunting his gold laced cloak,
Rushes swiftly to the attack
As the bewildered queen retreats.

THE LOBO CALL

Across the plain a grim voice rolls,
Echoes and re-echoes in the hills
Weirdly as the cries of lost souls—
An old sheep dog barks excitedly.

Issue p. II · Scan p. II.

MOON WRAITHS

Gertrude Kiper

I said
Peremptorily smiling,
“You’ll not go further
With me
Than your station
Such brilliant moonlight,
Such a tiny walk,
I love it
And I’m not afraid.”
I thought
“That kiss
You’re dropping
From your eyes
Will keep me company.”
“I can step off
A moving train,
Conductor!”
“Oh very well then
Thank you!”
I plunge into the moonlight;
I bathe, I swim, I float
In the moonlight.
I touch shore—
A stretch of shadow
Under leaf-thick trees.

His kiss!
The kiss he dropped
From his eyes
Dissolved—
In the moonlight.
Another block
No two!
Oh, the white.
Fullness of the moon
When you're alone!
I'll run
This curving street,
The moon wraiths
Circle in my path.
Cool, fluid fingers
Fasten round my throat
And swirling garments
Hold my legs together.
You moonlit wraiths
Of unfulfilled desires
You ghosts
Of dead ambitions
You phantom,
Burnt-out longings,
Bloodless, cool-faced—

Unclasp your fluid fingers
From my throat
And stop this swishing
Of your garments
Round my legs!
I ordered you cremated!
Shall I draw moonlight
From ten thousand moons
To burn you up again
And yet again!
Inside my room
I hurry to the windows
To shut the phantoms out.
Now, if they come
I'll laugh
To see them beat
And bruise themselves
Against the panes.
My room is full
Of moonlight,
I undress by it
I hang my garments
On the chairs to bleach
In the moonlight.

EDITORIAL AND BACK MATTER

Editorial — Ballads

The Ballad should be read with modern poetry. The poetry of any country is so closely united it is difficult to determine where balladry ends and modern poetry begins. Nearly every country has its ballad poetry,—it has existed for it has embedded in it the folk lore and traditions of the remotest times. Great traditions whether in song or story are rarely lost.

Few sayings are so famous as that remark of Fletcher of Saltoun: “I know a very wise man who believed that if a man were permitted to make all the ballads he would not care who made the laws of a nation.” This very wise man was, no doubt, a gentleman who knew the use of hyperbole; but it is possible that at that time there was an element of truth underlying the remark. For when he wrote books were few and the masses only tasted literature through the medium of the ballad. Nowadays few people read ballads and rarely are they sung. Granted the vaudeville stage produces an enormous amount of rhymed doggerel on some timely social or political topic, but however great their vogue they only last for a season and after a few years it would be impossible to procure copies from the publishers of those popular ballads.

It was different with the ballads of the olden days; they contained some love story, some traditional or historical tale—cherished stories and tales all of them—committed to memory and passed on to future generations. Many people feel, when they read Robin Hood or Chevy Chase, as Sir Philip Sidney when he wrote in his ‘Defence of Poesy’: ‘Certainly I must confess my own barbarousness. I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than by a trumpet; and yet it is sung by some blind crowder with no rougher voice than rude style, which being so evil apparelled in the dirt and cobweb of that uncivil age, what would it be trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of a Pindar.’ On the other hand, many of the love ballads are sincere and metrical and can be read without feeling Sidney’s barbarousness. Who could read the ballad of Lord Lovel without experiencing great emotional reactions? He goes away on his milk-white steed to visit strange countries. But languishing thoughts come to him after he has been away a year. He hastens back to find the town in mourning for his loved Lady Nancy. Then Lord Lovel, the ballad tells us, dies of sorrow. They are buried in different parts of San Pancras church, out of her bosom grew a rose and out of his a brier. The rose and brier grew to the top of the steeple and entwined in a lover’s knot, the symbol of true love. No doubt there are ethical defects in this story, but it has pathos,

This is the kind of literature we find in the selected “Legendary Ballads of England and Scotland,” one of the volumes of the Candos classics. In the Elizabethan period ballads constituted for the most part the literary food of the Drakes and the Raleighs, who, in those days, contributed no small share to the turmoil and unrest of the world. The ballad takes us back principally to the age of medievalism, where we can live for a space in the vigor and intensity of that age and its unbarbarous barbarism.

W. H. L.

COMMENT

‘William Butler Yeats has been awarded the Nobel Prize. Nearly every poet and critic will feel that this award is the right one. No matter whether the critics think Yeats “a creator of idealistic literature,” “the foremost literary figure in the Irish nation,” —he is not only that, he towers above his contemporaries as a poet, and in his earlier works he has achieved immortality. We do not think Yeats was given the prize because he was the central figure of the Irish Renaissance, or for his work in connection with the Abbey theatre, Dublin, as many of the eastern critics seem to agree, although these might have been factors in determining the award. We believe the commission awarded the prize to Yeats for his poetic genius, judging his work largely on its lyrical quality. Yeats is, perhaps, the greatest writer of lyrical poetry since Herrick.

The Southwest Magazine aims to foster the artistic and physical development of San Diego. A medium of this kind must be of incalculable benefit if used vigorously for the city’s and county’s benefit. May it not become a “booster” magazine but a magazine which will put forth truthfully the natural possibilities of “the harbor of the sun” and the surrounding country. The two numbers published start well; they are well-printed, the articles and stories are entertaining and interesting. This magazine should have the support of every citizen of San Diego.

The Overland Monthly, San Francisco, conducts a poetry page edited by Harry Noyes Pratt. Mr. Pratt is a poet and dramatic critic. The Overland Monthly could not have found a better man to conduct this page. Mr. Pratt is not a modernist and he chooses his material with conservative discrimination. He has already printed two poems “When Dark Days Come,” by Charles Granger Blanden, and “On The Dune,” by Mathurin Dondo, which we have clipped to read again. His “Impertinent Comment on Contemporary Periodicals” fills a want in western poetry circles. We wish Mr. Pratt success not only as the editor of Overland’s poetry page but also as a critic of the poetry magazines published in the west.

Pegasus, with this number, finishes its first year. We feel that Pegasus must now take its place with the older magazines of the country. We have overcome the setbacks, the discouragements, the competition of the other magazines, and we have shared in the joys, the encouragements and the friendships during our year of editing. We have been fortunate in our recognitions,—Pegasus is now a nationally recognized poetry magazine. We will celebrate Pegasus' birthday January 10, at 7:30 p. m., the place of meeting to be announced later. We invite all poetry lovers who would like to join us in the celebration to drop a postcard to Box 424, San Diego.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

CHARLES HOWARD MARSH and E. RICHARD SHIPP have appeared in previous issues of Pegasus.

VIRGIL GEDDES is the associate editor of *Modern Review*.

AGNES CORNELL, Los Angeles, has contributed to the *Dial*.

SAMUEL HELLER has appeared in the current magazines. He writes us he is moving to Florida.

WITTER BYNNER sends an appended note to the Chinese translations printed in this issue: "This and the following poem are two of five written under the one title, which is, more literally, "Pondering On Old Rums." The Lady of Light was the name of 'Wang Chao-chun of the Han Dynasty, a beautiful court-lady living at the palace of Emperor Ch'eng. Since there were too many girls there for the emperor to select from except by portrait, Mao Yen-shou made all their likenesses, painting them favorably or unfavorably according to the size of their bribes. The Lady Wang, failing to bribe him was made to look unsightly. And, when a chieftain of the Hans sent envoys to the emperor, offering to submit to the Han Dynasty if he might marry into the imperial family, the emperor chose, among those whom he did not desire, Wang Chao-chun and sent her word asking whether she would like to go. She agreed, preferring, say some, to be the only wife of the Hun rather than obscure in the Han palace. At the farewell feast Emperor Ch'eng found her, unlike her portrait, very beautiful. But it was too late: he had given his word to the envoys. So she married the Hun chieftain. When she died, she was buried, as she had requested, alongside the Chinese boundary, close to the Great Wall. And where she lies, the grass, which everywhere else on the Hun side is yellow, is as green as it is on the Chinese side."

ALICE M. FAY, New York, has contributed to Rhythmus and other magazines.

GEORGE STERLING needs no introduction to poetry lovers. The Bookfellows, Chicago, are publishing his new dramatic play "Truth" which will soon be ready for distribution.

GERTRUDE KIPER lives in La Jolla, Calif.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION,
ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, OF
PEGASUS, PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY AT SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, FOR
OCTOBER, 1923.

State of California, County of San Diego. Before me, a notary public in and for the state and county aforesaid, personally appeared W. H. Lench, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the editor of Pegasus and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to-wit:

That the name and address of the publisher, editor, managing editor and owner is W. H. Lench, P. O. Box 424.

That the owner is: (Give name and address of individual owner, or, if a corporation give its name and the names and addresses of the stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of the total amount of stock.) W. H. Lench, P. O. Box 424.

That the known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are (if there are none, so state): None.

W. H. LENCH, Owner.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 15th day of October, 1923.

EDITH G. BENJAMIN, Notary.

My commission expires Nov. 23, 1925.

If I seem touched with the mood of pessimism it is, be assured, justified to a degree and yet not so bad as it seems. One cannot wade through hundreds and hundreds of poems that are printed in the seventeen poetry magazines published in this country, and not be a bit discouraged at the dull routine of verse-making which so often makes up the contents of these publications.

William Stanley Braithwaite.

(Preface Annual Anthology of Magazine Verse, 1923.)

Press of The Plymouth Company San Diego, California