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NO. 1

The LYRIC WEST

A Magazine of American Verse



IN THIS ISSUE

Charles F. Lummis | Pauline Barrington

Grace Atherton Dennen | Anna Porter

R. W. and others

SIMPLICITY IN POETRY

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The Lyric West

No. 1

A Magazine Of Verse

April, 1921

Edited by Grace Atherton Dennen

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The Lyric West for April, 1921.

Grace Atherton Dennen, Editor and Publisher.

Mary Ritchie, Business Representative.

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THE LYRIC WEST is a magazine of verse designed to foster the poetic development of the expanding West, though it will at all times be an open market for the work of all verse writers of all places. Those who believe in the purpose and power of such a magazine are invited to become Guarantee Subscribers by the payment of ten dollars toward a Guarantee Fund.

Ernestine Schumann-Heink

When God had banished His Imagelings
From Eden's Heaven-on-earth,
Condemned to wrest from a desert's breast
Such bread as their sweat was worth,
He gave them—repenting their minds unlit—
Two seeds from the very Tree;
“Plant these,” he said, “that your souls be fed;
And the Fruits ye shall bring to me.”

So side by side in the sands of Life
Those mated seeds they set;
And the one was HOPE, and the one was LOVE,
And here they are springing yet.
But their growing won that waste to bloom
With the full-flowered Human Heart;
And their Fruit, that is dedicate to God,
That fruit is their daughter, Art!

Art—like the Soul—is of many lives,
And longer than Life is long;
Form, and Color, and Wedded Sound—
But the Flower of its flowers is Song!
Now some they sing for the itch of gold,
And some to be praised again:
But One wings sure with her Song and Self
To HOME in the hearts of men!

Singer, that under her heart has felt
The wakings of men-to-be;
Wide-armed Diva whose mothering Art
Folds us for sons as free—
Sons-in-troth will we pledge us all,
Grateful in love and strong,
And memory green to our Big-heart Queen
Of the Motherhood of Song.

Pierrepont Willard

Along the Bayous

Sleep keepeth not her tryst;
But through my window, as the rails click by,
The languorous night stretches soft arms
That soothe and bless;
And, because no star's beam
Pierces the grey canopy,
A million fireflies—
Little brothers of the stars—
Flash their uttermost.
And gaunt trees, swathed in tattered moss,
March swiftly by,
Regiment on regiment,
Like ragged soldiers homing from the wars.
Sleep keepeth late her tryst,
And the stars fail,
But lo! I am content.

Gaydiang

Eight to six each working day,
Cataloguing curtain cords,
Dun-colored and drab and gray:
No one chides me or applauds.

Cataloguing curtain cords!
I am fifty-eight years old:
No one chides me or applauds:
My thin shanks are always cold.

I am fifty-eight years old.
Humping over my neat page
My thin shanks are always cold.
I begin to feel my age.

Humping over my neat page
I am sometimes not quite well.
I begin to feel my age
When I find I cannot spell.

I am sometimes not quite well.
Surely I am getting on
When I find I cannot spell!
I must get my lexicon.

Surely I am getting on.

Tsch, tsch, how the time slips by!

I must get my lexicon. . .

E. f, g,—g—a—u—y—

Gaydiang, Gaydiang!

That is a curious word.

It looks so bright and alive,

Leaping up from the page.

It is an Annamese word;

There is a picture, too—

It is a kind of Chinese junk,

A curved-deck, snub-nosed heathen boat

Aslant on a bending sea.

Gaydiang. Gay—di—ang!

A rich and a splendid word

With a ringing and rousing sound!

An idle fancy, but really I

Have a frivolous thought I'd like to be

For a turbulent, wind tossed hour afloat

On the bending deck of a bounding boat

Under a stinging sky!

“Then, blow ye winds, high-ho!

A-roving I will go!

I'll stay no more on England's shore,

So let the music play—ay—ay!

I'm off by the tum—tum—tum,

To cross the tum—tum—tee—”

Gaydiang! Gay—di—ang!
On a heaving sapphire sea,
Riding and sliding the peaked waves,
Touching a deep-voiced jeweled gong
Till the slant-eyed slaves leave off their song—
Powerful, slant-eyed, crimson slaves—
To fetch my delicate tea.

Almond eyes and a peach blow skin,
My love, my lady is on my arm!
Then, blow ye winds, high-ho, high-ho!
Her mouth is sweeter than secret sin,
Eyes of jet and ivory chin,—
Her throat is pearl and her breath is warm,
My lady, my love is on my arm!
Pink little fishes dart down below,
The sky is on fire and hot winds blow,
The wind and the sea and I are kin,
And I shall fend her from friend or foe,—
My love, my lady is on my arm!

Gay and glittering overhead,
Gay and glittering under the keel;
Life is purple and gold and red,
Life is leisure and toil is dead
And I feel—feel—feel!
Gay and glittering peaked waves,
Gay and glittering gaydiang!
My lady, my love, my crimson slaves,
My gay, my gay, my gay—di—ang—

Tsch, tsch, how the time slips by!
I must hasten back to work.
B, f, g,—g—a—u—y—
I was never one to shirk.

I must hasten back to work,
Cataloguing curtain cords.
I was never one to shirk.
No one chides me or applauds.

Cataloguing curtain cords,
Dun-colored or drab or gray!
No one chides me or applauds,
Eight to six, each working day.

Ernest McGaffey

Molly by the Shore

I left the farm on Hurley's banks
And shut my cottage door,
To cross the bogs and shake a foot
With Molly by the shore.

And every leaf that brushed my face
The self-same message bore,
Ye'll soon be down at Gormanstown
With Molly by the shore.

The plover's cry came down the fields
As once it did of yore,
Saint Patrick's day a year away
With Molly by the shore.

I met her by the Irish sea
Blue-girdled to its core,
And all my soul was in that stroll
With Molly by the shore.

A piper played "Miss Monaghan"
A lilt I'd heard before,
And in and out I danced about
With Molly by the shore.

Her step was light as thistle-down
That floats the meadows o'er,
My heart went wild as any child
With Molly by the shore.

I could not tell you how she looked
Nor what the dress she wore,
I only knew the sea was blue
With Molly by the shore.

And when beneath the turf I'm laid
I'll dream of you Asthore,
And long to dance another reel
With Molly by the shore.

Ernest McGaffey

Ballade of Mary Queen of Scots

Daughter of James and Mary of Lorraine,
I who am prisoned and condemned to die,
Long on these dungeon stones have patient lain
And heard the watchful jailers pacing by,
A spectral glimpse of flying scud have I
And stars at midnight from the dusk set free,
By God's just grace thus kindly given me,—
And this is all; except that grey as glass,
Up rise the ghosts of my dead lovers three
And point accusing fingers as they pass.

I see the block where Chastelard's life stain
Sank as he fell; the headless trunk to lie,
While quick the wood his arteries did drain
Lapping like hound whose jaws are lean and dry;
And Darnley, strangled near the ruins high
By Bothwell's minions when he sought to flee;
Cozened and murdered by my sole decree.
Yea! thus as lights which haunt some fell morass,
Up rise the ghosts of my dead lovers three
And point accusing fingers as they pass.

I hear the chords of Rizzio's clear strain
Drop down, wild-plaintive as the lap-wing's cry,
A world of longing in the sweet refrain
And blended in with its toned ecstasy,

Cerulean frescoes of Italian sky,
Cloud-castles, and the foam-harps of the sea;
The dream is gone; Aye! if a dream it be!
While quickly fled as rain-drops on the grass
Up rise the ghosts of my dead lovers three
And point accusing fingers as they pass.

ENVOY

Prince! round my donjon, winds in elvish glee
Rail as they shake the lightning-blasted tree;
And as the clouds in moonlit grandeur mass,
Up rise the ghosts of my dead lovers three
And point accusing fingers as they pass.

Pauline Barrington

Sequence

1. WINGS

Life said, “My child, I have one wish for thee,
What shall it be?”

I said, “Above all else I long for wings.
Ah Life, be good to me!”

I thought, Wings wide and free
That circle, soar and sweep,
And rush high in the wide clear spaces
Of the air, where still peaks
Watch and never sleep.

Life gave me wings,
A sparrow’s wings,
Brown littleness.
Had I not asked for wings. . . WINGS!

2. THE MIRROR

The room is candle lit,
The fire burns clear,
Violets in dull copper faint and wait.
Like the mirror in its old Venetian frame,
I, too, reflect an empty room,
Waiting for you to fill it.

You come,
But with you thru the door,
The fog enters, too,
And fills the room.
Cold with night-chill,
It mists the mirror with a veil of white,
Only one corner left uncovered,
Reflects your hand,
Fine and strong and sure;
The hand that holds me,
How and why . . against all willing!

You are gone,
The fog curled after you thru the door.
The mirror and I reflect an empty room,
Save one corner where the trace
Of your hand remains,
The hand that holds me,
How and why . . against all willing!

3. THE HILL

The hill was high.
The way was rough and steep.
I found to travel well I had to go alone,
I left you there behind.
It seemed strange to be so light and free!
I liked to feel the muscles strain, to find
Each step digging into the earth, making a path,
Pushing up higher and higher.
Twice I looked back but did not turn, I began to tire,

The climbing had soiled my hands and bruised them
too,

But I was free and I had forgotten you.
When I reached the top, the great clear place
Where the sun and clean winds brushed my face,
Sharp and keen and living, then I remembered you.
With the sun and wind you had come to claim me, too.

4. INTERIM

You on one side in your corner,
I on the other with my back against the tiles,
Between us the hearth stretches miles.
The others in an after-dinner-golden blur,
Are sipping coffee and liqueur.
Smoke wreaths them about,
In frail patterns, weaving in and out.
The fire
The candle flame
Your eyes
Oh to live . . . just once to live!
The others sip and laugh and walk
Around the room and talk—talk—TALK.

5. THE HOUSE

They have just left.
They came to see if the house
Were worth a loan.
How the different hurts stared,
Broken plaster
Pencil markings
Finger prints on white paint
Worn spots, shabby places,

And every corner with its dust.
The house was indifferent,
Even curious to know these persons,
New and outsiders.
In this house I had built,
I felt myself a transient,
Perhaps my time is up!

Neeta Marquis

To the South

My home lies in a southern land,
Where blue days fill the radiant year
Like irises which straightly stand
Within a vessel crystal-clear,
So bright, so blue, they do appear!

Aloft, the bougainvillea flames
In purple splendor to the sun,
While roses of a thousand names
The gamut of rich odors run,
And mingle as there were but one.

And I can look from shimmering sands
To seas where golden calms occur,
And catch the fragrance of far lands
Beyond the amber sunset-blur,
Like frangipanni, cloves, and myrrh.

Amid the palm-fronds clashing free
I hear the singing wind by night,
While stars from depths like porphery
Beam down with faces lustrous-white
To fill the vision with delight.

This is my home! And if my star
Should lead to some bleak northern wold,

Where somber forests reach afar,
All silver-dim and sad and old,
And pallid snows lie hushed and cold,
My hungry heart would tell its days
A prisoner in a hostile land.
My eyes would turn their constant gaze
Back to the sweep of this warm strand,
And pray for sights to understand!

Neeta Marquis

March Song

Let us go a-poppying, up the slopes of March!—
Here below the cañon where the dark oaks arch,
There above the lupines with the tall oats twined;
Let us go a-poppying, up the moist March wind!
Poor, indeed, the March-time when the poppy's cup,
Brimmed with ardent sunshine, is not lifted up!
Like a regal coinage see the petals fling,
Shaken from the pockets of the spendthrift Spring!
Never comes a March-time when the poppies burn
That my fingers toward them do not reach and yearn;
Nor will dawn a springtime but my heart will seem
Still to go a-poppying, up the slopes of dream.

Estella M. Williamson

The Violincello

In the stillness of the mountain
Where no human foot had trod,
Stood a tall and stately fir tree
Intimate with thoughts of God;
Sentinel of many decades,
Evergreen though crowned with snow,
Time had tempered it with music
Where no hand had drawn the bow.
It had caught within the fibres
Of each wide and wooded ring,
All the musical vibrations
That the Spring and Summer bring;
All the decrescendo pulses
That the Fall and Winter know,—
Lullabies and rare concertos
Where no hand had drawn the bow.

Birds had sung within its branches
Rhapsodies that filled the air,
Brooklets danced in happy measures
Breezes hummed an evening prayer;
All the music of the mountain
Of those days of long ago,
Left their echoes to awaken
When a master draws the bow.

For the One who gave the echoes
 To the keeping of the tree,
Gave to man the love for music
 And the key to set it free;
Led the artisan to fashion
 From the fir of long ago,
The reverberating cello—
 Made the hand that draws the bow.

Made the hand with touch of magic
 Waking, through the sylvan rings,
Something from the fir that echoes
 In the human heart and sings.

Sings, while from the vibrant cello
 Siren-like there seem to flow
Melodies that come from heaven
 When a master draws the bow.

Belle Cooper

Sonnet

To Rudyard Kipling

Hail, laureate of the Mystic-Seven Seas,
O'er which thy Britain keeps a watchful eye,
From frozen poles to th' unchanging summer sky,
Lest isles, and bays, and great dependencies
Might suffer wrong! She holds the golden keys
To every distant port where seamen ply
Across the dragon waste; though gales blow high,
Her sea-craft breast them like the summer breeze.

Hail, celebrant of British Empire vast,
From snows Canadian unto Ceylon hot,
From mid-Pacific continent and isles
To where the sun on Southern Africa smiles;
The glorious burden of the Empire's lot
Thou singest with a prophet's trumpet-blast!

Grace Atherton Dennen

A Song of Three Harbors

I make a song of three harbors, three harbors that look
to the west,
Out to the dim, far places that ancient gods have
blessed.
One feels the breath of Arctic seas and one, of the
desert sands,
And one has opened its golden gate to the craft of a
hundred lands.

The winds that blow from three harbors finish a mighty
span,
Bringing the far-led race of men back where the trail
began,
And the ships that sail from three harbors, like links of
a chain unrolled,
Carry the newest of all things new to the oldest of all
things old.

Westward the rush of nations, westward the march of
power,
From the first pale dawn of history to the new,
prophetic hour;
From the first man-slave begotten to the last man-god
who dies,
They have seen the hue of promise in the light of
western skies,

Men look to the east for the dawning, to the west for
the things that are done,
But where shall we look, my brothers, when east and
west are one?
When we've reached the end of the Western trail, and
the goal of a myriad feet,
And how shall we read the meaning when the circle is
made complete?

Snow Longley

Protest

In Spring.

Oh, books are good, and wisdom's love
Lurks in the printed page,
Waiting for youth to share the store
Garnered by age.

But sun and stars and love and play,
These too have power to bless;
Masters, ye choose the long, long way
To happiness.

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Snow Longley

Mid-Atlantic

Sky and sea, with a void between

Where great winds sweep,

And the God I had lost in the haunts of men

Here on the deep.

Grace Wallace

The Account

I gave you, Enemy,
So much good hate
That all my hate is gone:
Before, I gave you love. . .
Likewise, passion is done:
Thus I owe you a greater debt
Than ever I may pay,
Since love and hating done, I've time
To think and pray.

Grace Wallace

Visitors

Wouldn't it be strange if there were angels after all,
Such as Jeanne D'Arc and Fra Angelico beheld;
And Saint Genevieve, whose frail prayers turned back,
 'tis said,
The horde of Attila from her dear Paris' walls?
Angels, John Bunyan entertained in Bedford Jail,
And William Blake held concourse with them in the
 fields at Peckham Rye;
John on Patmos saw their wings of flame,
And simple soldiers said that at the Marne
A legion turned the invaders of France.
Now wouldn't it be strange if we knew nothing
Of a vast life that circles over life?

Ben Field

Salton Sea

O glittering, heartless, fearful sea!
A man's last stand upon your shore!
On Canyons lean and gray mesquite,
Where travelers die and spirits flee
And on the waves death hovers o'er,
The scarred hills grin from their retreat.

No birds are joyous on your breast,
Nor tree nor flower adorns that beach:
A glistening, sparkling, cruel light
Comes stabbing from the awful west
And dances, while the eyes beseech
The hastening of the desert night.

O Salton Sea! dead apples yours,
'Till man defied your Circean chain
And saw the waste through prophet's eyes.
Now waves the harvest green and lures
Hot love to mate, while brawn and brain
Have forced a gate to Paradise.

Anna Porter

Septains

FAR NIENTE

Grey
The lichened wall,
And the still, silver lizards.
Silver olives against the blue.
Silver, beneath them, the white-blossoming bean patch.
White butterflies floating low
Like astral petals.

HAUNT

Ilexes,
Clipped and safe,
Prisoning the pathways.
Calling waters beyond the hedge.
Luring to dim shrubberies Itylus' poignant trill.
White beckonings in the shadows' dusk,
Of pagan tempters.

THE VOICE

The folk
Is speaking,
Your fields have fagged us;
Your gold cloth has twisted our limbs;
Bowed are our backs by the stones of your scornful
 palaces,
The drugged folk, rousing from stupor,
Is beginning to speak.

Florence Parker Bornholdt

Poem from “The Wild Heart”

THE MALIBU HILLS

I know a sweep of sunny hills where the curve of a
coral sea
Curls and infolds the feet of the hills in a laughing
ecstasy
Riffles and runs and is never still in its leap of gaiety.

I know a greening slope of hills that lie like maidens
fair
Wrapped in a sheen of gossamer dawn with flower
stars in their hair,
While sea mists lift their lips of love and kiss them
sleeping there.

The sun peers down and the poor hills lie, barren and
brown and bold,
The hills grow gray and fold their hands like women
dried and old,
And keen winds ride with the fog in their teeth when
the heart of the sea is cold.

Thru the change of the year, the sea and the sky, the
riding of wind and storm,

The hills wait there like patient souls who each has her
sorrow borne,
Her dreams, her drought, her gray dead year with bent,
unyielding form.
Then the warmth of the Spring, and the thrill of the
rain drops seeking the sod,
The yearning of seeds, the coaxing of sun and the little
glad leaves that nod
A welcome to light, a greeting to hills and a
thankfulness to God.
Down thru the canyons the rivers run swift messengers
of Spring,
Telling of grass-love, tree-love, hill-love, in the
tumbling rocks they bring
And the sea curls there to listen to the hill-songs that
they sing.

Florence Parker Bornholdt

For I Was Wed Today

I've a sun-lit path that's leading
 To the dawn-sea far away;
I've a song that's laughing, pleading
 Like a joyous dance of play;
I've a heart that sips unheeding
 From the dew cups of the day.
I've a hope that strikes the heart strings
 Muffling soft a minor key,
And the music 'neath its fingers
 Is a newer melody,
Like a strange, wild joy that's rushing
 With its arms outstretched to me.
I've a love like dawn a-stealing
 Up the sky-slope of my day,
While its rays are anthems pealing
 Thru the cloistered valley gray,
And my love with love is kneeling
 For I was wed to-day.

Anonymous

Evening Primroses

Silent upstarting by the dusty way,
In twilight fields swift-gathered tall and gray,
They lift their torches pale from dusk to dawn,
To light the wanderer when the sun has gone.

G. A. D.

Editorial Comment

To start a magazine of poetry, to call to life through the magic of words the expression of a great art, to create a commodity where none existed before, and to win for it interest, enthusiasm and warmth of welcome— this has proved a really wonderful experience. It has revealed to those who have been so happily engaged during the last month that the love of poetry blooms eternally in the human heart amid surroundings likely and unlikely, not confined to any one section or group. For some time past it has seemed to the editor that here in the west beyond the Great Divide, much excellent verse has found a voice but no hearing. The west has been struggling for self expression in poetry as well as music and the drama, and recognition has been slower to come to the poet, he has not had the right medium through which to reach the public, nor been able to create for himself the sympathetic atmosphere in which his art flowers most perfectly.

Years ago Poetry: a Magazine of Verse, undertook to create in the city of Chicago such an organ of poetic expression and such an atmosphere of poetic sympathy. Farther east in Philadelphia, Contemporary Verse sought to serve the same artistic purpose. What these two sterling magazines of verse have done for the encouragement and development of poetry in other parts of the country, The Lyric West aims to accomplish for the verse writers beyond the Rocky Mountains. It will not confine its pages to verses on Western subjects, for the sources of poetry are as wide as the sweep of the horizon, as deep as life itself; neither will its contributors be entirely western writers. We hope that all American makers of verse will sometime want to find their work in its pages. Its policy will be simple and straightforward, its watchword, sanity.

Whatever contains genuine poetic thought rhythmically expressed, whether in the older, regular forms or the new and freer forms, will find welcome and appreciation.

With due humility, yet with a justifiable confidence we present to the public this, our initial number of The Lyric West. We feel that there is a need for it, a place for it, and therefore a future for it.

"As a stranger give it welcome."—G. A. D.

R. W.

Simplicity in Poetry

Writing is a distinct effort, even to those who do it most easily and successfully. Even the slightest creative effort is an event—and it offers an almost irresistible temptation to do justice to the occasion in long words and involved sentences. The inevitable result is “fine writing” and a lack of simplicity which destroys beauty.

Our spoken language is brief, vigorous, full of lively idioms and picturesque phrases. Our written language shows effort, often Herculean effort. We are so anxious to be clear that we multiply explanations; so eager to make our style beautiful that we rob the language of all its adjectives until the verses lie buried beneath whole pyramids of lofty and involved phrases and the effect is lost.

Great poetry is always simple. When certain lines sing their thought to you in such easy music that you are sure you might have written it yourself, look out—you have probably stumbled upon something extraordinary. The effort is entirely concealed, the result is perfectly attained.

When Kreisler’s bow glides over the strings as lightly as a butterfly’s wings, seeming to shake from them drops of melody, like pearls, you are hardly convinced that he is doing anything remarkable. It seems absurdly easy, scarce a perceptible movement of the wrist. But try to imitate one of those trills or cadenzas. Then you realize something of the perfection of his art.

Charles Dana Gibson draws a complete figure, instinct with life and beauty, with a single stroke of his pencil. Easy, you say. Behind that one powerful, perfect pencil stroke lie years of patient training and endeavor.

So in literature. That poet is greatest who most completely effaces himself and his art, who paints a vivid human experience in vivid lines, then stands aside that the world may see it unhindered. A line, a stanza is most perfect when it says least, for where words stop the imagination leaps forward to complete the thought and the imagination will create for us more wonderful pictures, more exquisite music, more intensely human dramas than the hand of man ever can. Simplicity sets the imagination free.

“Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard Are sweeter;
therefore ye soft pipes, play on; Not to the sensual ear, but
more endeared, Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.”

R. W.