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The LYRIC WEST

A Magazine of American Verse



IN THIS ISSUE

Richard Burton | Ada Kyle Lynch

Gene Stratton Porter | Lillian Barker Beede

Virginia Burton Bradley and others

TO A HUMMING-BIRD

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The Lyric West

No. 3

A Magazine Of Verse

June, 1921

Edited by Grace Atherton Dennen

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The Lyric West for June, 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.

Richard Burton

Apercus

AIR FLEETS

On humming argosies of air,
What swift, bright Quest is this they dare?
They spurn the earth, long ages trod,
Buoyed by the upward-urge to God.

OUT OF AN OLD BOOK

I opened, read: lo, like a sun
Out of that dusty ancientry
A dead man's word illumined me—
Beauty is dateless, Life is one.

THE SKY-LINE

Man builds his barriers, obscures the light
That only waits the word to glad his sight;
But heaven is overhead, though far and high:
The sky-line changes,—there is still the sky!

BENEATH

Words spoken? Garments that perforce we don.
Beneath, the thought, the dream, that makes or mars:
And only God to know, where He looks on
From some high vantage-place,—beyond the stars.

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Anonymous

Fragments

INTERLUDE

After the feverish fret of the day,
Your music at twilight
Is like the cool tinkling of a mountain waterfall
Under the stars.

LUMINESCENCE

Brighter last night than the lemon-green flame of the
new moon
Was the fire of your presence
Beloved.

Harry Noyes Pratt

My Poverty

We've wandered far and far afield,
My poverty and I;
He holds me close in waking hours,
At night we closely lie.
No meal is mine but he must share,
Nor grace nor thanks for bread.
He shares my cloak, he takes my staff,
The hat upon my head.
Oh, poverty and I are friends;
For many a year and long
He's shared with me the tears of youth—
He joins the old man's song.
No home have I; he shares with me
The broad fields and the sky.
He holds me close, my only friend—
My poverty and I.

Earl Robinson

Youth Intrepid

Be not alarmed at youth seeking pleasure
With bold disregard for the atrophied laws;
Defiance betraying a strength-savored grin in it,
Frank, rugged laughter belieing all sin in it,—
Civilization veneers Freedom's treasure:
The new generation but challenges flaws.

Think not that Folly has made a mad seizure,
(The obvious curtain that strategy draws),
Unconquerable Youth with the spirit to win in it,
Pricks the world-bubble at spots that are thin in it.
Legislate cavil, and regulate leisure:
Inevitability mocks you,—and gnaws!

Ada Kyle Lynch

A Study in Black and White

Prune Orchards in Bloom in Sotoyome Valley

The prune trees are laden with blossoms,
So profuse that the stark, black limbs
Hold their arms erect
With their leaves in check
To uphold their burden white.
O, black-pillared aisles in the orchards!
O wonderful paths of black earth!
You could wander all day in the mazes
Of this study in black and white.

Lines

I am so tired
My heart is beating fast.

My body shivers,
It is because I am so glad.

Little brown leaves
are falling gently.

The park is beautiful
in its bareness.

The wind is blowing,
I shiver as I go.

And the benches,
the green benches,
seem not green.
I retrace my steps,
and ahead I see
A silver pond
radiating frostbeams.
How warm you are,
Little fishes.

The bosom of a mother

is warm, too,
as she clasps her
First born babe.

Neeta Marquis

The Alien

A slender slip of maple tree
Lives in a garden near to me,—
A young exotic visitor
Of virginal simplicity.

Acacias droop beside her there,
With sumptuous golden bloom to spare,
While close, above pink camphor-tips,
Proud palms rear glistening crests in air.

When all the world is blithe with spring
She is a vital, winsome thing—
A dainty silver-plumaged bird
That flutters to be on the wing.
The tears of March, the smiles of May
Speak love to her. Sweet winds that play
From plum to oleander pause
To pass the floral time of day.

She makes but modest show, it's true,
When jacaranda's tents of blue
Unfold above the shimmering lawn
For days of loveliness too few;
Or when a fringelike crimson fall
Of eucalyptus-flower shades all

The quiet walk, as if it were
A Hindu prince's parasol.

But when bold summer-suns have shone,
With winged September lately flown,
While rare October's noons blaze white,
The maple tree comes to her own!

A flame of glory wraps her round—
Those lambent hues in jewels found—
As if a god had kissed her red
And made the garden magic ground.

I go like any pilgrim then
To gaze on her, and gaze again:
This alien, of nativity
Afar removed from tropic ken.

I, drenched in beauty all the year—
Warm amber, rose, pomegranate clear—
Abate my breath and bow my heart;
I find transcendent beauty here!

Helen Runyon Belknap

The Grand Canyon

It seems some vast transition place
For passing soul;
The breeding space,
The silences that roll.
Depth below depth the shadows lie,
Soft purple birds.
Height above height dim bends the sky
Like music with no words.
They wait—these rocks of giant form;
Like lights of rose,
Shadows of storm,
Or spirits of repose.
Here springs a strength that does not cease;
Indwelling grace,
Triumphant peace,
Flows from this mighty place.
I feel as though it had been made
For souls just free.
Through light and shade
They sweep—eternally.

James M. Warnack

Trees at Night

Peaceful and calm, like resurrected saints,
Lifting their arms aloft to greet the stars,
Slowly they rise from earth and stand serene,
Wrapped in the silver draperies of night.

Shadowy outlines on the walls of space,
Beneath the moon in majesty they stand—
Silent companions of the darkling hours
That slumber gently on the breast of time.

Perhaps they stand to guard the destinies
Of many noble souls, as yet unborn;
Perhaps within their ghost-like forms abide
The mystic ministers to future men!

Perchance they dream the dreams of all mankind;
Perchance they think the thoughts that all men think.
And yet, like spirits old and wise they seem,
Untouched by storms of joy, and dead to pain.

Beautiful, uncomplaining, speaking not,
They seem to challenge all the fevered world—
Peaceful and calm, like resurrected saints,
Wrapped in the silver draperies of night.

Gene Stratton Porter

Escaped

In green pastures of lake bed, beside bass-weed forest.
Big mouthed black bass, steel spined, alert, round eyed,
Snapped up, tortured, sluggishly swimming minnow;
Shot his wild line limit over muck bed and sand shoal,
Arose, smashing the sky mirroring surface to spray,
A drawn bow spat a broken barb into the sunlight—
Escaped!

Cooing bird of grey satin, tender eyed and pink billed,
Daintily picking bits of scattered cheat and broken
corn,
One coral foot over-stepping an innocent circle of
horsehair;
Sky-planing wings beating unconscious earth in wild
terror,
Breast feathers floating in air in ultimate struggle,
Where it cut deepest the strained hair parted—
Escaped!

Savage black bear, blade-footed, hunger nosed,
Sniffing the canyon for ant house and bumble honey,
A bleating kid, quivering, frantic chained bait,
A mad hunger rush, a crash into a concealed pit,
Foaming mouthed battle against walls of sheer granite,
One wire rooted crevice of advantage—
Escaped!

A life house of miraculous white bone framework,
Wired with red veins, muscle furnished, velvet
 carpeted,
A fair dwelling, past earth in delicate workmanship,
Flame scorched, wave tormented, blizzard bitten,
Helplessly rocking where tornado meets quicksand,
An open window, silent wings spiraling skyward—
 Escaped!

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House o' Dreams

I'd like to build my house o' dreams beside a friendly
wood

I think I'd like to have a shining river running by;
A deep, clear river, mirroring the flowers on its banks,
And sliding over golden sands, where sleepy trout
might lie.

And, since, in dreaming, I can have the whole thing to
my mind,

It always should be afternoon, a golden summer's day,
Just warm and sweet, with skies as blue and deep as
beauty's eyes—

The trees the tints of autumn, and the flowers the
bloom of May.

My House O' Dreams? You know the type, before I ask
you in;

The window-seat is on the west, where sunset light
steals thru.

The great stone fire-place just breathes of comfort and
romance—

It might turn cold, towards evening, in the land of
dreams-come-true.

The book-shelves burst with all the things I've not had
time to read;

The pictures on the wall are ones I've always wished to
see.

The furniture was built and carved off in the

Far-Away—

Imagination crated and consigned it here, to me.

So, when the day is long, and vexed, and I'm too tired
to sleep,

I shut my eyes, and try to see my river running by;

And soon I cross the flowery fields, and sight the
friendly wood,

And spy my little house o' dreams, beneath a sunset
sky.

I'm looking very peaceful now—you'd think me fast
asleep;

I'm curled up in the window-seat that faces to the west.

The world is full of rosy lights, and fragrances, and
peace;

I hear my magic river gently singing me to rest.

Emily Ferl

The Eye Is Not Filled With Seeing

Chiefly the difficulty was with sight.
The mind could catch ideas, untangle thought,
Knew nice distinctions to a subtle shade,
Was confident of its self-aptitude
And the remainder spirit lived by this.
But when he used his eyes trouble began;
Not so much conflict, rather mystery.

There was the ocean. He had gazed intent
With lids drawn back or narrowed, and been left
With that blue water coming up the beach
And the old wind along the sea side world.
Though “multitudinous sea” he understood,
“The homing tide,” “the heaving battle plain,”
“Leviathian,” “Tehom,” out of the sea—
Fine glorious speech, yet what his eyes beheld
Was more and different, was the ocean’s self;
Yet not its very self—that baffled him.

And he had seen tall eucalyptus stand
Black against living light at the day’s edge,
Then slowly turned to spy out something more,
Or stood desirous still, with waiting eyes.

He really sought for vision, not for things;
And found it. It came clearest one dear night.

Past quiet darkness and the midnight air
He found his soul's doors open, consciousness
Flowed all-pervasive through the universe,
Pervaded him. In a wide place of thought,
Active and vivid, born into a light
Not of the sun, a presence, a design,
Not of molecular substance, he lived on
In intense peace, in deepest gratitude,
A seer for mankind, vision satisfied.

Jessie Yarnell Kimball

A Miracle

The sun rose slowly in his majesty
Above a mountain with its snowy crown.
Sublime and calm, he looked out on the brown
And trackless waste of burning, sandy sea;
No life was in that vast expanse, no tree,
Nor shrub, nor human soul; the sun went down
In floods of molten flame, which seemed to drown
The boundless space in a glory wild and free.

A little seed borne in upon a gale
Lodged in a crevice on this chaos drear;
The soil and rain and sunshine did not fail,
But nourished it in love from year to year.
The sun bursts on that hoary head of snow,
Upon a forest old and grand below.

Mary Day Winn

The Magnet

The Farmer's Wife Speaks:

Quick, shut the door behind
You. How the wind
Rages and screams!
It almost seems
Resentful of our living here. Bend low
And let me brush the powdery snow
Out of your hair—
Though still, God knows, I'm leaving there
Whiteness enough.
How hard and rough
This churlish land
To those who've labored, heart and hand,
To make it smile!

*(Over the mission's crumbling wall
Showers of golden roses fall;
In Palm-fringed parks the old men play
At checkers all the sunny day.)*

"I wonder, are the winters really colder,
Or is it just that you and I are older?
Do you remember
Our first winter here, that bleak December
Forty years ago? ... Ah me... Ahme...

*(The scent of orange blossoms sweet
Blows down Pomona's shady street
Below Del Mar the white-caps run
In laughing lines to meet the sun.)*

“Old Caesar didn't follow you today.
Watch his tail thump the floor, as if to say,
‘Too old . . . Too old to gallop in the snow;
Better to lie beside the fire and dream,
Until I go!’”

*(Stillness beneath the pepper trees,
Save for the drowsy hum of bees.)*

Lillian Barker Beede

The Cordilleras

(At Antofagasta, Chile)

Like lines of gray-robed nuns that tell their beads
With voiceless prayers, the Cordilleras stand
Unsmiling 'neath the semi-tropic sun,
That sears and burns the thirsty desert land;
Enfolded in the purple distances,
The Mother Andes lifts her snow-crowned brow,
And breathes a benediction o'er her band
Of silent Sisters, who renew their vow,
While underneath their dusty cloaks of gray,
Each clasps the wealth of ages to her breast,
And sees the searching centuries go by,
Into the ever-luring golden west.

Grace Wallace

Dream-Tracks

I sped along the track of an old dream
And stopped within a grove's uplifted shade;
The sun's rays lying on the languid leaves
Spattered the ground with myriad fairy forms;
Before me rose a house long known in dreams:
Blotted there gainst the portal's shadow-garment,
I watched the wee, wild, winged things in the trees;
A Juno-bird illuming emerald grass,
Preened there and glittered in majestic calm.
I lifted the bronze knocker, curious carved,
Whose tongue, if it had had one, could have told
Old scandalous tales of lawless violence—
Eclipses of rude leaders by meek men
When finally they tired of being meek.
The knocker's brazen voice ran through the house,
Struck, ricocheted on grey, gloom-paneled walls;
My heart beat out the query old as I,
"Shall I see her at last?" The door swung wide.
A bedizened lackey flashed from door-way space.
Caparisoned in things a lackey wears—
Silk, scented velvet, buckles and gold lace.
He gazed into the tree-tops, turquoise-eyed,
Insensate seeming as a comic mask,
While waiting for my mission. I inquired,
"My glowing vision . . . Would she see me now . . .
In view of my long waiting for her sake?"

He opened his intently folded mouth
Then, on a sudden, fading, took with him
Grove, palace, Juno-bird, wild creatures, hope.

The drooping sun drove gold into my room:
I wakened, gazing into nested trees.
My saffron dinner-gown and peacock fan
Lay near, while jonquils overran green bowls.
Across the bright lantana garden-hedge
The neighbor's butler, wooden-faced, in love,
Regaled my gold-haired Nora with some tale
Then, on a sudden tinkling of a bell,
He vanished, swallowed up by the grey house.

Alice Whitcraft Forsyth

The Rose, the Wind and the Rain

The Wind

Said to the Rose,

“Come, dance with me.”

The Rose,

Who had coquetted with both the Wind and the Rain,

Answered, blushing,

“I have promised myself to the Rain.”

But the Wind, laughing boisterously,

Caught her in his arms

And whirled her away.

Then the Rain in anger

Pelted the Rose with heavy drops—

Savagely he pelted her,

Till one by one

Her lovely garments fell away,

And at last

She stood naked,

Shivering,

Dismayed,

In the arms of the Wind.

Now the Wind

Cast her aside with mocking laughter

And sought another dancing partner,

One newly blooming.

The Rain mingled his tears with those of the Rose
At the havoc he had wrought.
Too Late!

Pauline Barrington

Redondo by the Sea

DAWN

Gray-all-gray.

The fish seller rises from his poor bed.

He is greeted by the old sounds, the same evil smells.

He opens his shop on the end of the wharf.

He hoses out the scales and entrails left from the day
before.

The fish boats come chugging one by one

across the oily water, bringing their catch to market.

Slowly, in the East the gray changes to a pale rose.

It is dawn.

MORNING

The morning sun shines on the children

building houses of sand on the edge of the sea.

The men play games. They watch the women,

The young women under their orange umbrellas.

The sea sends gentle foamy waves to the shore,

beckoning them to come and bathe;

she yearns to chill their warm blood,

to salt them white with bitter spray.

She sends her undertow to draw them to the deep,

the deep where she is waiting.

AFTERNOON

The sun glares.

The merry-go-round shrills its tune—

“Come, I have a ring of gold for you,
catch it if you can.”

The toboggan, the mystic maze, the man with the
wheel—

All offer rides,

rides that are the “greatest things on earth.”

All for a nickel.

A nickel! The price of bread—

But what is bread to the joy of motion?

The sea sighs of eternity under the booth,
the stifling booth of the medium, who is foretelling the
future.

TWILIGHT

The sea is tranquil.

The evening star rises serene in the pale yellow sky,
above the red lantern of the setting sun.

The little waves make a rushing sound,
loving the shore.

A man, a woman, a dog, black silhouettes
against the shining sea.

A word, a laugh, they pass.

The lights on the wharf throw gold reflections.

NIGHT

At last, night silently cradles this small city by the sea in her arms.

She covers its toys and dwellings with soft dark
mystery,

passionate, restless, full of shadows.

She watches youth curving and circling
to the dum-dum—dum-dum—dum-dum-dum
of the casino drum.

She hears mingled with the moan of the sea
the sputtering of the last star as it snuffs out.

Through the steep streets a taxi rolls swiftly away
afraid to meet the dawn.

Virginia Burton Bradley

To a Humming-Bird

Oh swift dainty creature, diminutive bird,
Inconstant and tremulous thing,
What fairy has showered your plumage with gems
To blaze in your breast and your wing?

You flick and you flash, waking jewels to flame,—
Rich rubies with emeralds vie;
The alchemist Sun turns your bronzes to gold
That gleams as you hover and fly.

Now over the brim of some fresh spicy cup,
You poise in a restless repose
To feast on the quarry of insects that lie
Ensnared by the sweet overflows.

Elusive, yet daring, oh rain-bow rayed bird,
With songless, wee, gem-girdled throat,
Gay herald of summer, your vibrating wings
Staccato their rhythmical note.

Let eagles in pride sail the limitless skies,
Let thrushes and mocking-birds sing,
Go, circle your way where the butterflies float,
An animate jewel a-wing.

Comment

The west doesn't want to be civilized. It wants to keep its old romance,—to ride trail, play poker, joke and shoot to kill, all in a thunderous rhythm and with a gay heart, responsive to all it perceives. In Arthur Chapman's poems of an Arizona town plenty of shots are fired, plenty of blood is spilled, but none of it sordidly, for the only thing the town hates is the creeping insidious east. Civilization is sent back, good-humoredly, to where it belongs, if it cannot match with equal courage the rough nobility of life in the cattle lands. The author of "Cactus Centre" (Houghton Mifflin) is at his best in the more interpretative and less narrative poems, for he knows the country well, and can make even a mere easterner understand it when he does not paint it over too thickly with local color. This quotation from a recent review of a book of western poems seems to hark back a long way, over ancient trails. Who believes any longer in "Mere Easterners" and an "uncivilized West" which hates and banishes anything which savors of culture? Does it take a Great War every few years to show us that we are all Americans, sharing common experiences and common ideals? There used to be a North and a South. The healing touch of time has closed the line of division. Now there is only an East and a West. For this division there is no historical justification. It is one of those shadowy things which being hunted down to its grim lair is found to have no real existence except in the minds of those who believed in it. All kinds of flowers compose a bouquet; all varieties of dishes make up the meal which tempts the epicure; all forms of verse constitute the complete American poetry. Is it not absurd to say that Americans can not meet on common ground because a mountain range divides them? The vision of the poet, wherever he finds it, is the glory of his country. The newer and fresher the vision, the greater the glory. The sincerity is all.

“Creeping, insidious East,” come and bring us the flower of your culture and we will give you in return glimpses of our wider spaces and the thoughts born of them. When both are gathered together in a volume of mighty proportions and ripened experience, the name of the volume will be American Poetry. It is a great pity to keep alive these sectional differences. Give every poet, every other artist, every farseeing soul his fighting chance against those two immensities, time and space.

Notes

The next issue of THE LYRIC WEST will be a double summer number, to appear about July 20th. It will be generous in size and material and will contain many kinds of verse from writers new and old. One of the achievements of this June number of THE LYRIC WEST is to have tempted Gene Stratton Porter to express herself through the medium of poetry. We find in her lines the same keen sympathy and understanding of nature which constitute the greatest charm of her prose writing—and something more, the rugged strength of a generous soul struggling with a great medium. Richard Burton speaks to us in four quatrains which have all of his well known beauty of thought and rythm. It is with a feeling of keen pleasure that we give the lines of this great poet and critic a place on the front page of our June issue. Again we have a group of interesting new writers who have things to say and a vigorous way of saying them. Four of them, Grace Wallace, Pauline Barrington, Neeta Marquis, of Los Angeles, and Emily Ferl, of Redlands, California, have appeared before in our columns, but there is an insistent and appealing quality in their verse which has made a place for them again in this June issue.

Advisory Committee

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Richard Burton