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The
LYRIC WEST

A Magazine of American Verse



IN THIS ISSUE

Constance Lindsay Skinner | Ellen Morrill Mills

Weare Holbrook | Helen Thurston

Mark Turbyfill and others

THE LIVING FRIEZE

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The Lyric West

No. 5

A Magazine Of Verse

September, 1921

Edited by Grace Atherton Dennen

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Constance Lindsay Skinner

Song of David Before Saul

I

I sing the song of the Earth.

II

Dark, dark was the void
Of the world-mind
And silent the dark of its nothingness
As a sterile womb
That had never conceived but the shade of a dream—
The shade of a dream that vanished
In the moment of birth:
Yea, in the hour it was brought forth, it was no more.

III

The Mind of the Lord looked forth
In revealing light;
And, lo, where the tomb of the dark had been
Rolled the Earth—
A crystal ball in a sapphire sea
That sings in the milkwhite hollow
Of the cup of His clouds.
O Soul that tremblest in night,
O sense that searchest the dark,
Lift, Lift!
Lift thy lips to the morning rim
Of His chalice,
That spilleth the stream of life
With a plenteous love;
As the tender rain of the Springtime
On the emerald march of the hills,
By the windings of Jordan.

IV

Oh hear now, and search
In the reasons of God
For the Truth that shall tell us
Why he hath made the Earth
Who hath the Heavens to dwell in!
Incline now the ear of thy soul
To the infinite Word of the forests,
Of the great lake-waters,

Of the hills that turn 'neath His finger
As the living pages of His psaltery.
Hear the Word of the Sea
With its moon-flying spume
And the deep sonorous surge
Of its purpose:
And the Word of the great white wind
Loosed from the Arm of the Throne.
List! White and swift it bloweth
The promiscuous balm of healing,
Thro' all the singing splendor
Of leagues of trees fire-kindled
From the dawn of our world to the Dawn to come.

V

Blow, blow thy winds, Elohim!
Thy healing winds, O Father in Heaven,
Show us Thy Truth: reveal us!
Lift! Lift!
O heart of the King
From the dust of a fallen dream!
The Word of His winds hath spoken
And the ash of an alien power
Is blown and dispersed
By the moving Light of His Law!

VI

Saul, Saul,
Stand forth that which thou art:
The image of God,
The Son of His Being!
Cast thy sceptre and crown,

Let the throne of thy world-pomp decay
The things of the flesh are past—
Dust to Dust, and Death to its own death.
The Spirit who dwelleth in Heaven,
Our God and our Father!
Hath made the great globe for a path for His Son;
Yea, He hath revealed us—
The Christ-man walketh the Earth!
Lift, Lift,
To thy greater dominion:
Faithful is He who calleth thee;
Arise, thou Eternally Royal,
Arise, Son of God—MAN!

Alice Whitcraft Forsyth

September Dusk in the Arroyo

In soft September gloom a world asleep
'Twixt the last gleam of day and night-blue deep,
Wrapped 'round and smothered in the evening lull—
That momentary hush that falls, sad, dull,
And like some presage on the spirit creeps,
Some ominous import. On the breathless steeps
The liveoak, and the laurel at its feet
Are dry and crisped with summer's drouth and heat.
There is no bird-call, sound of joy or grief,
No hum of insect, not a whispering leaf.
Is there a hint of earthquake in this pause?
This poignant silence, has it awesome cause?

Below, along the dry arroyo floors
The drooping, twisted, gnarled old sycamores
And sapling cottonwoods their heavy scent
Exhale in sighs, as if their breath were spent.
No lulling water drowns in the sedge;
No lush green grasses spring along the edge,
But dusty fox-tail, brown and brittle-dry,
A stinging scourge, waits always closely by.

O mocking forecast, this of death in life!
The waking stars gleam with denials rife
As night-blue deepens; one soft wisp of breeze
Follows another through the waiting trees;

A tiny footfall rustles the brown grass;
Odors of sage and sumach drift and pass;
Sweetness of dim stramonium and primrose
And pungent mimulus, it ebbs and flows
Mingled with far-off garden scents that come
From late petunia and chrysanthemum.

A hundred fluting voices wake the night
And rouse the whispering echoes, zephyr-light.
Wood-dove and poorwill utter plaintive call;
Owlet, and tree-toad, and night-insects all
Wake to the floods of life, glimpsing again
The thrilling first faint promise of the rain.

Georgia Rowles

Duette

DAWN

Vast planes of smoke gray silence stir,
Low drifting clouds like smoldr'ing fire
And thru the leaves the birds' wings whirl.

 The snail curls in a pearl tower.
Fair dawn lifts up her ruby bars,
 Rivers of rose thru amber float;
For night has told her beads of stars
 And dropped them from her ebon throat.

DUSK

Day colored hills to violet turn,
And claw winged bats forsake their lair;
God pins a flow'r, the young white moon,
 In dying Twilight's dusky hair.

Dorothy Page

Autumn

The grass is dried by the first hot wind
And death has touched the hills;
Paled the mallows' pink, and thinned
 My ranks of daffodils.
One locust's sharp, sardonic beat
Marks the crescendo of the heat
With endless darts and shrills
Of sound . . . God! How his senseless tune
Echoes about in this breathless noon!

Ethel Brooks Stillwell

The Call

There's a young land green and golden,
In the middle west I know,
Where the wine o' life is holden
And the sweet winds blow.

There are rainbow fires of Endor
For the souls that understand,
Leap of life and youth and splendor
In the green home land.

Oh, the plains are calling—calling,
And the heart is out of me,
But I know the sea's enthralling,
And I can not leave the sea.

Ellen Morrill Mills

The Little Road

Did you ever notice a little road
That you didn't wonder where it led?
Whether—after the cool, green wood—
It chanced on the dell where your dream-house
 stood?
Maybe—beginning dusty and rough,
It keeps up the pretense just long enough
To tire those who haven't the clue,
And leave the adventure—and end—to you?
Maybe it leaves the highway to follow
Up, swooping up like the flight of a swallow—
 Till valley and town lie dim below,
 And Time flies far on the winds that blow.
There you may find a nook for your dreaming,
 Seeming,
 Just planned for you from the Eden-glow.

So the little road cries to me: "Follow, follow,
Maybe you'll find that your dreams are hollow,
Maybe you'll see—but follow, follow,
Come with the faith of the homing swallow,
Or, to your death, you will never know."

Ernest Dexter

Waved a Blade

Waved a blade, tall and darkest green,
Narrow, limber only that 'twas tall;
A million blades surrounded it. Between
This and the world and all
Round and about the windings of the slough;
And the wind, the west wind blew
Through all the waving screen.

Take not the eye from this tall blade.
It will be lost in the wide everglade
Never to reappear, a height
Scarce reared above its fellows, light
Caught in a braid
Woven of shadows where a leaf has swayed.

A slender thing,
Arched, half in spiral twirled, aswing,
Aslant, slow beckoning,
Encumbered by a jostling throng,
Rippling with wind waves like an untamed song,
Content merely to be,
Playing one part—the whole an ecstasy.

Charles Goodman

Autumn Rain

The pavement drenched in street-lamp light,
A highway running out of sight,
Shines ominously clear.

The raindrops prancing on the street
Remind me of departed feet
That danced the dance of death.

The thin, long strings of autumn rain
Are like the century of pain
That rack an invalid.

And when this rain will cease God knows:
All I know is, the wild wind throws
Steel knives into my face.

Charles Goodman

Forget-Me-Nots

A bunch of pale forget-me-nots
Was lying on the street,
Unseen by all and trampled on
By unsuspecting feet.

I looked at them, and saw a ghost
Come trailing down the night—
A ghost whose limbs were very fair,
Whose love was very light.

Estelle Heartt-Dreyfus

Sketches

ACACIA BRANCHES

Acacia boughs like ghosts of grey
Against a sky of night,
You gently sway in the light
That falls from out my doorway,
Your delicate tracery is etched upon my memory
forever.

GRATITUDE

I found you, poor faded rosebuds,
Plucked off your mother bush
I chipped your stems and gave you drink
Just there upon my table;
Today you bloomed
And through the open window
A gentle breeze brought me
The gift of your fragrance.

Rolfe Humphries

On the Overland

SLEEPING PASSENGERS:

A queer compound of hollows, edges, bumps,
They sprawl in ugly, Godforsaken lumps
With never a sign of soul.
Whatever holy ghost they have to guide them
Must have retreated way down deep inside them
Like a gopher down his hole.

AND SPEAKING OF GOPHERS:

The train roars on another dusty mile
And he resumes possession of the track
With cheerful countenance that seems to say,
“Sure, go ahead and take the right of way,
I’ll let you have my railroad for a while,
Only be sure to give the darn thing back.”

OBSERVATION:

Orange and crimson fade away,
Flame to ashes. A cloud of grey,
A great grey cloud, like a great grey wing
Broods quietly over every thing.
Blue dust of darkness fills the hollows
But the pale light still hovers high
With a flock of clouds like little swallows
Hurrying homeward through the sky.

Vaguely wavering, with the night
Comes coolness. And the pale, high light

Shimmers and shades from gold to green
Like a distant sea, far seen, far seen.
Never a sound, nor ever a motion
Where dark sad hills meet the unreal ocean—

* * *

The only meanly discordant noise is
The passengers' harsh and hushless voices.

Weare Holbrook

Risus Eram Positis . . .

Propertius: III, xxv

CYNTHIA, the party that you gave last night
Was (I shall use a very mild word) gay,
And it was rather fun to watch men play
Upon the floor like babes, to see girls fight
With roses—screaming, pelting, pink-and-white.
But when the east ripped open into day
The revellers vanished, leaving me to pay
The check. I ask you, Cynthia, is it right?
These parties may give pleasure to your friends,
And generosity (forgive the platitude)
Is noble, but the utter worm who spends
His money for the food, should have his due.
I'm weary of this misplaced gratitude—
I'm tired of hearing others kissing you.

Weare Holbrook

Ergo Tam Doctae . . .

Propertius, III, xxiii

My writing tablets! All of them are lost,
And lost with them much excellent writing, too.
Stolen, perhaps, yet what would rascals do
With my old tablets neither gold-embossed
Nor well boxed? I would give ten times their cost
To have them back and once more to pursue
Some vagabond intention tracking through
The wax and leaving lyrics where it crossed.
And now, beneath the lines my Cynthia scored,
A miser may be ciphering his hoard,
Making a ledger of my very heart.
Run, boy, and advertise in every mart
That any writing tablets found, are mine,—
Propertius, address, The Esquiline!

W. H. Bainbridge

The “Siller” on the Plate

Midst the braes of “Bonny Scotland,”
Garbed in heather’s purple bloom,
Nestles peacefully a village,
“Bracken Dell” its “nom de plume.”

In this village all were thrifty,
And, on Sunday, pious too;
But from “village sot” to parson,
Each his neighbors’ failings knew.

Then one day an innovation
Brought a change upon the scene,
’Twas the advent of a parson,
Young, and innocently “green.”
His first Sabbath service ended,
The collection gathered in,
Seemed a poor remuneration
For a week of fighting sin;

So by way of education
In donation-coaxing ways,
Deacon Saunders told the parson
How they worked in former days.

“It was thus your predecessor
Kept the wolf outside the gate,

He just started the collection
With some 'siller' on the plate."

So the contribution started,
On the following Sabbath morn,
With some siller on the platter
From the parson's pocket torn.

But, alas, for trusting mortals!
The sad truth I must relate,
When its rounds had been completed,
There was nothing on the plate!

Then the deacon, in his wisdom,
Thus admonished parson Green:
"With the wiles ye're not familiar,
Of this wicked world, I ween.

Nor those of your parishioners,
Guid, honest folk, enoo',
But our auld parson always made
His siller fast wi' glue!

Hazel Farkasch

September Nights

1

The vine-covered porch
With its cozy swing
Stifles me in its niceness.

2

Water jewels from the garden hose
Glisten avidly
Under early moonlight shafts,
Which float upon the heavy air
In silence.

3

Across the street
The cutout muffler on a Hudson six
Scrapes through my nerves
And leaves them raw
For waves of heat
To fester.

In the icecream parlor
Down the street
Perspiring couples sip thin lemonade
Through slender straws
And clasp moist hands
Ecstatically
Beneath the table.

Helen Howat

CHALLENGE!

My heart is a frowning castle
That stands in a cleft of the rocks,
But lush are my secret valleys,
And many and sleek my flocks.

So winding the path and narrow,
So rough the ascent and steep,
That up from the easy highway
But few have essayed to creep.

A stumble has checked the sluggard;
The coward been put to rout;
One secretly reached the portal
But the seneschal blared him out.

Within, there are light and music—
A welcoming feast is spread,
With roses and wine and laughter,
And I wait at the table's head!

Alone so, the music irks me,
The banquet's a weary form,
So come like an army with banners
And carry my heart by storm!

Eleanor Hammond

An Old Italian Aria

“O mio Fernando”—

The sad old aria lingers in my ears

As if its plaintive story were my own.

I know how the king’s favorite loved the monk.

Her sad, distraught entreaties, “Go—save yourself!”

Might be my own.

“O mio Fernando—Oh my Ferdinand!

I love you and I want you more than life

But you are bound—I am unworthy! Go!”

The passion and the hopeless anguish

Keeps sobbing in my ears—

Because I know—

I know so well—

To give up love is bitterer than death!

“O mio Fernando—”

Eleanor Hammond

Oliver Manning

The “Snowy Peaks” Unveiled

In the great valley of the Sacramento,
Through the long summer days,
The distant circle of the dim horizon
Is veiled with soft gray haze.

Only the plains where'er the eye to eastward
Searches the wide expanse;
Only the shimmer where delusive waters
Of midday mirage dance.

Ever the dust impalpable arises
Tingeing the sky o'erhead,
Or sometimes smoke of distant mountain fires
That sunrise turns to red.

The southeast wind at last as days grow shorter—
Then the first storm of rain
Sweeps from the sky the veil of haze disclosing
The Snowy peaks again.

And all the glory of the far Sierras
Is to the sight revealed
That summer's long and ardent days and rainless
Had in the haze concealed.

Tow'ring to heaven in their majestic grandeur

That changes as the sun
Brings in its course fresh aspects of new beauty
Until the day is done.

Helen Thurston

Thistledown

Tiny wingéd galleons
Sailing ether seas,
Steering by the compass of
 The ever-changing breeze.
By what navigation
 Are your harbors reached?
On what shining seas sands
 Are your cargoes beached?

Helen Thurston

Butterflies

Gossamer wings of varied hues—
Spun of the threads that fairies use.
Delicate things
That drift o'er the flowers
Like rainbow mists that follow show'rs.
Butterflies' wings.

Helen Thurston

Cob-Webs

Cob-webs, cob-webs in the sun
Tents of nomads, deftly spun.
Patterns from fantastic looms,
Pitched at night o'er clover blooms.
Froth-like whisps of silver threads,—
Frosted quilts for fairies' beds.
Airy veils from scented bowers,—
Bridal trappings for the flowers.
Jeweled banners of the breeze
Wrought of cunning tapestries.
Out of such frail warp and woof—
Has been fashioned life—forsooth.

Robin Romany

A Longing

My heart and soul are longing
For a cottage by the sea
Or a cabin in the mountains
Where the winds are running free:
I would get away from sidewalks,
And the sound of those who plod,
For my brain is overflowing
And I want to talk to God.

Where swift human currents mingle
And the work-wheels never stop
Just a single voice could never
Reach the silent listening top:
But, in nature's unlet spaces
The acoustics are so fine
That the softest note or whisper
Thrills the ear that is divine.

So, my heart and soul are longing
For the sea and untilled sod,
For my brain is overflowing
And I want to talk to God.

Harold Vinal

A Song for April

As light as winds that play about the trees,
As swift and lovely as a cloud in flight,
As still as song that lifts against the night,
As strange as lights that dance upon the seas.
Is lovely April when she walks the hills,
Waking the shadows and the moonlit ways,
When warm things tremble in the misted haze,
Wind flowers and the quiet daffodils.

If I should never see the Spring again,
Or watch its beauty melt to mystery
I shall remember April when she came,
A tall star in her hand for a white flame,
The ripple of the laugh she woke in me
And the wild song that fluttered in the rain.

Florence Parker Bornholdt

My Art Looks Up

My Art looks up to the Art of God;
My Art lifts up its hands,
For breaths of His fragrant greatness,
For intimacy with His plans,
For glimpse of His Artist soul at work
Among the waiting lands.

Poems of silent places, songs of the sentient seas,
Tender thrilling of music among the gossiping trees,
Books of the fields spread out on the lap of the
browsing hills,
Sculpture of winds on lava cliffs, paintings in mirrored
ills.

Colour is flaming with flowers, poppies and golden rod,
Colour of sun thru the slant of the rain and brown in
the strength of the sod;
Colour and warmth and love are wrapped in the velvet
of night
And darkness and dawn, they are the gentle
twin-truths of the light.

Forms of the dunes that shift where the bright sand
flower clings,
Striving for root 'twixt the wind and the wake of the
sea that flings

Forms of foam on the shore embroidering the form of
the land,
While the flower shrinks as the waves reach up to the
restless form of sand.

Songs, O Art of Mine, Harken! Songs where the
harebell swings,
Songs from aerial kingdom lilting on blue-gold wings;
Whisperings, cooings, coaxings, thrills of the cardinal's
call—
Morning's astir at the edge of the wood and Heaven's a
madrigal.

Around me are form and colour with rhythm back of
the whole;
I know the rhythm of beauty is naught but the rhythm
of
Soul—
I know for the love of His Art, He lives out a beauty He
knows
And tints the song of the singer and tunes the lips of
the rose.

My Art looks up to the Art of God with the faith of a
little child
Surely this beauty is art, art beauty undefiled
Surely the soul of man by an ultimate love is stirred
And art is infinite Spirit that's found a finite Word.

Comment

On the Prevalence of Poetry

The poems included in this September number are of such diversified forms and subjects and represent contributors from such widely separated parts of the country that we feel as our prospectors when, digging to release a bubbling spring of clear water, they unexpectedly tap an underground stream. We of the West are seldom surprised at what lies below the surface of our soil; finished or potential, calm or chaotic, we turn it all into wealth, material or spiritual. It is at a time when all the people are reading poetry and most of the people are writing poetry that the pre-eminence of spiritual life triumphantly asserts itself. America has guarded her spiritual life from the world's inspection so carefully as to give rise to the suspicion that she has none. But a chance look into any editor's drawer of any literary magazine would reveal a remarkable state of things. A leading bookseller told us that the demand for volumes and magazines of poetry last month was greater than could be supplied, exceeding the demand for fiction. What does it mean? Such a statement holds all the possibilities of a climb along an azalea-bordered mountain trail on a June morning.

An Appreciation of the Poetry of Madge Morris Wagner

By Caesar A. Roberts

Many California poets have reached the heights, but Madge Morris dwells upon them by right of lineal heritage. There is directness of strength and sureness of touch in her pen.

The Colorado Desert is a poem upon which the vivid Kipling might have rested his own fame. In this mighty land of silence Madge Morris has written,

“Where some one drank thy scorching hotness, and is
not,

God must have made thee in his anger, and forgot.”

The companion poem, Yucca Land, is strikingly expressive.

“The rim of the desert is the Yucca Land,
Behind it the snow-peaked ranges stand.

Beyond it and out the desert lies—

And as far as the line of the tenting skies.”

When the mariner hears a song of home, the old longing wakes and cries and he sails and sails with fierce hope to his boyhood land. And reading these lines, he who has dwelt on the great, gray, lonesome plains, finds that the green hills, the cooling mists and the rush of waters dissolves from the screen, and he sees again the austerity of its space, the thin, sparse, vegetation fighting for its hold on the sands; the wild life hiding under the purple sage; waiting until the garish day fades in the west into the velvet darkness, spangled with the stars and cooled with the caress of the night winds; and the late moon coming over the vastness, like a message of propitiation and peace, satisfying the soul until it has no

longings but to dwell in Yucca Land in peace and in content.

In The Woodman's Philosophy, there is a touch of pleasantry that brings a smile.

“Not with saber and cannon, and banners unfurled,
The new Alexander will conquer the world;
He'll have sweat on his brow and a smile on his lip
And when fortune begins through his fingers to slip
He'll spit on his hands and take a fresh grip.”

This longing for the actual contact with the implement of labor, is evidenced by a fact occurring on the wharf at New York some years ago. A sturdy young Irishman, out of work, applied for a position as deep sea diver. All accoutered he sank; all was well for a little time, when a tugging of the life line brought him to the surface; his helmet removed he exclaimed: “Take it off; take it all off; who dares to give a working man a job where he can't let loose and spit on his hands and take a fresh holt? Take it off and give me the pick again.”

It is a great loss that with her strength Madge Morris has not written more of the dramatic. Mark how cant and creed, and prejudice and dogma, must scatter like dead leaves before the trumpeting of the quatrain, Intolerance.

“What know you of my Soul's inherent strife,

By that calm faith untried which wells in thine—
How can you from the knowledge of your life
Write out a creed for mine?”

The Living Frieze

by Mark Turbyfill. Although this is Mark Turbyfill's first book, his name is already known favorably among writers of the "new" poetry. Certain poems in this volume have appeared in *Poetry*, *a Magazine of Verse*, *The Little Review*, *The Chicago Evening Post*, *The New York Tribune* and other fine mediums. They contain a strange beauty and originality and a sturdy strength of expression. It is essentially the poetry of impressions, and many of these impressions reveal the unexpected depths in the commonplace, a novel viewpoint, a whimsical humor. It is a volume full of promise. The following lines best illustrate these points.

Chicago

“O city of beauty,
They have spoken without understanding;
They have called you evil!

“O city of beauty,
Maybe it is only my heart you have shaken
With your sadness of rose evenings,
And the shadows falling
In the misty evening
Under the bridges.

“Your avenues are velvet and symmetrical,
As speech slow-moving.

“O city of beauty,
I come not with vain enumeration!
For in the untrod night
I have looked upon your rapt
Presence.
There was a whiteness as of wings stirring.”

Notes

We wish that our space were twice as great. So many good things are crowding into our desk with every mail, that we should love to publish all at once. This month we have given most of our space to new writers, with a few well-known names to assure them of good company. The Lyric West would be very glad if its readers would send us the names of any poems especially enjoyed in any issue. Some have already done so. This will be a satisfaction to us and an encouragement to the writers of the poems.

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