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NO. 1

The
LYRIC WEST

A Magazine of American Verse



IN THIS ISSUE

Lilian White Spencer | Jessica Nelson North

Nancy Lee Howe | Jack Hyatt, Jr.

William Foster Elliot and others

BEING MODERN WITH SOPHOCLES

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The Lyric West

Vol. II, No. 1

A Magazine Of Verse

April, 1922

Edited by Grace Atherton Dennen

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Lilian White Spencer

Santo Domingo-Easter

(Sonnets of Santa Fe)

The mesa is a cloister floor, the sky,
A blue cathedral, earth praise echoing,
As brown cowled hills that wake from winter sing
Dawn alleluias in a chorus cry
Of tawny harmonies. Their dun notes vie
With warmer tones of desert, greeting spring
Where hoary rites have learned new worshipping.
It is the risen Christ they glorify!

Amid austere monotony of clay,
The drab pueblo broods on lost romance
Until fiesta woos her grief away.
At Easter, through adobe portals prance
Her vivid people. With them rainbows stray
And color stalks, triumphant, in the dance.

Now, on the stolid bosom of the square
The braves, a thousand jewels, scintillate
In garb whose laughter loudly mocks the great,
High mission cross, that stabs this shining prayer
With shadow. Dusky maids and mothers stare,
Awed in their exile from the sacred state,
But small proud chieftains bob and alternate
With little shuffling sisters. These may dare.

One, watching, sees an ancient orient
Among the women; living Bible dreams
In this old west, where, on a battlement,
The like of Rachel mourns and yonder seems
A look of Hagar down on Abram bent;
Rebecca, there, with brimming olla, beams.

Claribel Weeks Avery

Rose and Gardener

I thought myself the happiest rose
That ever breeze caressed—
To draw my beauty from the sod
The Gardener's foot had pressed.

I gave myself to bud and bloom
And dreamed that, by and by,
My blossom children in His hands
Or on His breast might lie.

* * * *

When Heaven was hid behind her veil
And Earth was torn in twain,
They made from me a crown of thorns
To mock Him in His pain.

Saidee Gerard Ruthrauff

For April

A whirr as of spinning on many looms—
God weaving rainbows
And making them ready
For April.

The wondering bleating of tiny lambs
On a far, white star—
Folded of angels in snow-white fluff
For April.
Cupids are busy with mating songs—
Sending them down through the high, high blue
To find the love filled hearts of birds,
For April.

Down in the heart of dear old Earth
There's a sound as of flowers and light green things
Climbing—climbing to the light—
For April.

Grace Atherton Dennen

April Magic

April

Riot of gold and green and rose
Illumines and then overflows
The costly chalice of the year.
Hidden by winter's icy brim
No hint of glory could appear,
Waiting its hour, suppressed and dim—
Till over the edge one bubble crept,
A wave of yellow sunlight curled,
Till the whole spring time overflowed and swept
The world.

April, and a holiday—one day
One flower, culled from the wreath that April wears,
And thrust in the cap of youth. In brave array,
Fresh from a winter on the ranch he fares
And seeks the town. Twelve flaming hours ahead!
He means to cram them full of every pleasure
The roaring streets afford him without measure.
Rampant desires, of the long winter bred,
Hunger of youth that clamors to be fed.
And will not be too nice about its feeding.

Then he sees her beside a gate,
Wind-blown and ruddy, never heeding
That April sun has kissed her brow,

Or bosom curving white as snow.
She wears the look of those who wait—
Wait for the call of life that passes,
Waiting too long and longing over-much,
A wakening flower that opens at a touch.

One look at her, and all the spring
Comes flooding through his heart.
He knows the one un-looked for thing:
The wild, the mad, triumphant thing
To set this day apart.
He wheels his lean brown horse about
And down the street with sudden shout
He rides to meet her where she stays.
Youth rides to youth.
O April days!
O flame of spring that sets the heart elate,
He comes to pause beside her at the gate.

He bends to read within her eyes
Her glad confusion and surprise.
For life itself is calling now,
She meets it with uplifted brow.
Her face, her form are rapt and glowing,
As one whose waiting finds an end,
A lovely, inner radiance growing, growing—
He stops abashed, while heart and brain contend
To solve the mystery. For her wonder look
Passes him by as though he had not been,
She has not known him there nor felt nor seen.
A fast closed book,

Whose pages never should be his to read.
For just beyond him, where his baffled gaze
Follows her own, the village postman stands,
Handing to her a letter, and her hands
Flutter to meet it. All his length of days
He'll go remembering her uplifted face,
Never for him its sweet ineffable grace,

Sanctity like a veil
Covers the pure brow pale,
And love so deep, so holy and so tender
That back he shrinks, half blinded by the splendor,
And turns away.
The boistrous passion of his holiday
Falls from him. Troubled in his soul is he,
His crude young soul, that stands abashed to see
The veil lifted from love's sanctity.

Harold Vinal

Spring Beauty

I have been hurt too much by lovely things;
Tall, lonely candles in a quiet room,
Books, birds and music, starlight in the gloom—
My heart has lived and died because of Springs.
Now jonquils bloom again beyond the town,
And daffodils wave lightly where I pass,
The meadow ways are wild with tangled grass
And all the mountains wear a golden crown.
O God, your beauty is too great for me,
I can no longer bear your splendid moon,
Your stars, your sky, your deep and passionate sea;
Have I not wept my heart out late and soon.
Grant me one little hour to be free—
Or if you will, give me an afternoon.

Harry Noyes Pratt

The Gardener

I tend the flowers:

Humble my lot and yet content am I
Within my garden; here beneath His sky
God's flowers grow.

And all along the hillsides where
Their fragrant blossoms kiss the gentle air,
And soft winds blow,
I daily toil. And yet no toil is mine,
For this my work is done for Love divine.

I tend the flowers:

I watch them grow and bloom and bear their seed.
The soft rains fall to meet their daily need
Soft shines the sun.
The white clouds drift across the summer sky,
And slow their drifting shadows pass me by,
As waters run
A-down the gentle slopes. I tend God's flowers
And happy watch them grow 'midst sun and showers.

God's gardener, I:

No worm or weed I have to combat here;
No drouth or storm is ever mine to fear,
Or winter's wind.
Each day new growth, new bloom is mine to see,
Nor fading, blossoms here eternally.

And here I find
My work, my place; content I am to toil
Beneath God's sky; within my garden's soil
I tend the flowers.

Jessica Nelson North

Bulbs

I am so full of a story I cannot tell,
A knowledge barren of words!
Something it holds of small, melodious birds,
Breast-deep in grass.
It has to do with bulbs that start and swell,
That burst, that say to the black earth, "Let me pass!"
I am so full of a story I cannot tell.

If there should be a garden set with song,
With warm hearts beating in the musky earth,
When all the roots began to stir and strain
And April came with blade and spur again,
What welcome birth
Would leap from out a silence winter-long!
If one could have a garden set with song!

Kate Randle Menefee

How They Grew

God breathed—
And then in shady places
Came violets
With twilight faces.

God smiled—
And on the hills' front porches
Came golden rod
With sunlit torches.

God laughed—
And then in garden spaces
The roses came
With all their Graces.

Vivian Aten Long

Nasturtiums

Yellow orange-red shadings
In a green bowl,
You speak to my light-hearted soul;
While the serious soul of me waits
For statelier blooms,
Arising from delicate vases in high-paneled rooms.
They breathe of the hot-house; but you,
—Oh, tintings of henna, of lemon, of gold,
(I know you of old)—
Are frivolous-souled !

Lillian Sutton Pelee

Shirley Poppies

Shirley poppies,
Dignified though delicate,
Haughty heads lifted high
On slender, downy stems,
Fully conscious of their fragile loveliness.
Some few are modest and stand demure,
With a color all their own.
But some I am positively sure
Powder and rouge their faces;
Naughty Shirley poppies.

Snow Longley

April Illusions

I saw a wind-spiced petal
Float through the air;
But fancy said: "A butterfly
Goes sailing there."

And then I saw a butterfly,
An airy, vibrant thing,
Methought some errant blossom
Had taken wing.

Nancy Lee Howe

Blue-Bird Time

A whimsical fancy to-day
Came and clutched me—
My work was prosaic—
I was hanging a curtain—
And lo! it took on
A beauty, mosaic.

The flit of a blue-bird close by,
Was the cause of
My sudden deflection
Again youth and love hovered near,
As I glanced
In the love-bird's direction.

Spring again! Glorious spring-time!
And I, on its
High-tide, was swirled
To skies, crimson—rose—azure—cobalt,
Where a bit of
Soft fleeciness curled.

Rose-time and love-time—compelling,
And I yearned with an urge
That was pain,
It was mate-time and nest-time,
Whose message

The blue-bird was bringing again.

The lilt in my heart ne'er was fashioned

Of earthy things, like

Unto these

Of this work-a-day life I was living,

But of cob-webs—

Moon-beams—and soft breeze.

Can it be? Yes—that tree next the garden—

The rascal is

Choosing—for certain

But of course—love was here

All the time;

Let me see—Was I hanging a curtain?

Eleanor M. Denny

The Book of the White Birch

Along their branches, kissed by April sun,
Green-syllabled, the laughing lyrics run.

In summer's glowing dawn their white souls glance
Through tender blurring mists of young romance.

Dim, waning leaf-shades as the brief days pass
Trace tragic drama on the crisping grass.

Naked and pure, their delicate tracery
Writes Beauty's scripture on the wintry sky.

Nancy Buckley

“At Shut of Evening Flowers”

I glide across the street in cloak of dreams,
And knock upon your little door. It seems
To open swiftly to my eager hand,
And there, as in the old sweet days, you stand.

I touch your fragrant lips so tenderly,
I hear the murmured words you speak to me,
I see your eyes filled with the wistful smile
That made my joy for such a little while.

Then music melts along the golden air,
All filled with scent of roses faint and rare,
And as the veil is lifted from the past,
Our hearts remember dreams that could not last.

Portia Martin

IN THE-MOON-OF-RED-BLOOMING-LILIES

I was a bird at sunset time poised in mid-air on silent
wing.

To throbbing flame I sped,
wings stained with glory,
fell before it,
and dropped, singing,
over the world's edge.

A child in the night's darkness,
I climbed into a treetop
to regard the stars.

I was a tree at dawn,
the wind among my leaves
vibrant with songs of birds.
I towered in exaltation to the sky.
My topmost branch
enmeshed the morning star.

Portia Martin

Aspens

I

The mountain side from base to summit
quivers with aspens,
green, green,
millions of emeralds
set in silver.

Breezes race across the mountain
and the leaves ripple into waves,
green waves,
foam silvered,
flashing, swirling, tossing,
dancing in the sun.

II

The aspen covered mountain
gleams in autumn sunshine,
shivers with wind-swept beauty,
dances,
dances in the face of desolation,
dances, ever dances,
flaunting in desolation's face
the golden challenge of approaching spring.

Esther Clark Hill

The Fog

The gray world, the gray world,
That clouds the face of Spring;
That clothes in nebulous white shrouds
Each near familiar thing—
Even the river's voice sounds strange,
Sullenly murmuring.

No warm light finds the gray world
Of filmy veils and spray;
The clinging beauty of the fog
Has shut the hills away;
God's living sun has died and left
This lovely wraith of Day!

The gray world, the ghost world—
The winds lie where they list
While Spring comes shyly veiled in gray
To keep her April tryst.
O you who died before this day,
What loveliness you missed!

Jack Hyatt, Jr.

The Beggar

Blind . . .

Yet I can see . . . see their faces

As they pass by—

See and feel

Their very thoughts and dreams

In the shuffle and tramp and swing and glide

Of their feet.

There . . . a young girl, shy,

Wistful, wondering,

Dreaming . . . perhaps some day she too will have a

man

(As she watches couples arm in arm stroll by)

While her older sister

Skilled in the ways of the world,

Smiles

And wishes she could corral the nerve to tell

The kid,

But resolves to let her learn.

Why spoil happiness when

Sorrow comes all too soon?

Blind .

Yet I can see . . . see the lines

Faded hair, stooped shoulders, soft, hopeful mouth

Of that little old woman with the cheap shoes,

Tattered skirts,

As she waits for her trolley,
Uncertain . . . whether to spend
Her last nickle
On that two mile ride to home
Or to walk . . . and save
The nickle . . . save it for
Jimmie.
He is such a good boy . . . her only son,
And he wants tobacco every day,
And cannot find work, it seems.

I see . . . what she does not . . . not . . .
 want to see:
That Jimmie
At this very moment is losing
That nickle many times over with the five cards of old
While the little faded woman walks.

Blind .
Yet I can see . . . see the light
Curly hair over this poet's
White brow as he
Wanders by . . . _ hatless;
His eyes seeing everything, yet seeing
None.
For he does not speak, «he pauses before me and
 searches his
Pockets and smiles slowly, wonderfully,
He hasn't a bit of money to his name
And is sorry . . . for he would have dropped
All he had in my tin cup,

And even though it were his last penny
I can see
That if I offered it back to him,
He would push my hand away with a grin
And say: "You need it more than I do, old man."
Others, if I offered to return what they give would
 shout "faker!"
But not the poet
Who, with a friendly touch on my shoulder,
Passes on.

Blind
Yet I can see . . . see the metal flash
On the left breast of grey-maned Dave Brady
Who stands, even longer than my oft-weary feet
May stand,
 At the corner of this street
 Directing . . . bullying . . . smiling
 Traffic . . . giving scowl for scowl
 To taxi drivers,
 Salute for salute for the passing cars,
 Smile for smile for maidens fair
 And equally old . . . a helpful hand for the young
 With ever a gentle thought of
His own family . . . in those three rooms
 Dark . . . the second floor
 With hardly enough pennies for them all.
Thru these long years Dave has given everything
And received naught
Other than his "pay" . . . thanks . . . slow promotion.
Sometimes I wonder . . . how does he stay

Honest ?

It must be because he is HER man.

Blind

Yet I can see . . . this great shiftless

Hulk called man

With the unhealthy pallor of his face of

Good living but bad,

Waiting in the shadow of that shoe store

For her to come,

When he will stretch forth hungry talons

Bruising her young flesh . . . as it has

Always been bruised,

And emptying her purse with a grunt

While . . . ever after he moves on

Comes the slim, burning-eyed youth

Hunting for him . . . this great, shiftless

Hulk called man,

Who has taken THE girl . . . youth, confident

That some day he will . . . find

The Hulk; then to kill.

Someday I will shout to him

And he will not be too late . . . then I will see

What SHE and I have been praying to see

For months.

Blind

Yet I can see . . . and do

That which none others care or seem to see

A face so beautiful

Cast in mold the like of which
Has never been, nor will,
Eyes, sorrowful . . . telling all
A voice sweeter than the fall
» « Of waters o'er rocks so cold.

Always this face before me
Lifting me,
Living with me,
Loving with me,
Hating with me,
Smiling with me,
Praying with me,
Perhaps to die with me—
Yeal. . . evn FORme
As once before, long years ago.
I close my eyes now in weariness
And see this face; calm, peaceful, loving,
Bringing me new life
And though all others pass on,
Blindly, unheeding,
I, The Beggar, can see
That THIS is God.

Jack Hyatt, Jr.

Marie Emilie Gilchrist

To the Burrowing Kind

Wild furry folk that walk under the wood,
What of your earthly highways and byways,
What of your life in that strange neighborhood,
What of your timorous manners and shy ways?
Silky-soft mole, are your tunnelings barred
To the field-mice that flee from the reapers of grain?
May you enter the hole where the woodchuck stands
guard,
Or journey a piece through the brown rabbit's lane?
When the wintertime comes and the earth stiffens up
Do you all go to sleep in a leaf-padded cavern,
After drinking a bumper of may-apple cup
Brewed on the hearth of some underground tavern?
Cray-fish, whose chimneys are builded of clay—
Call you the little red foxes your brothers?
Do burrowing creatures know darkness from day,
And do you have air-holes so nobody smothers?
Come, I'll strike root like a weed at your door,
Conscious of every earth-whisper that blows,
Just to grow wise in the underground lore
That each busy burrowing animal knows.

Marie Emilie Gilchrist

Dawn Wind

The wind went singing by at early dawn
Bacchante-wise with shining outspread hair
On bare and springing feet she lightly trod
The freshened reaches of the upper air.
Chanting her song of distances and heights
Full-toned at first, then whisperingly lulled,
And half-adream, I smiled to hear the sound
Of mystic music strangely intervalled.

Helene Searcy

Personality

You seem to swing in from the windy beach
Bringing salt- scented air,
Just coming up from the white sand's reach,
The sea-smell still in your hair.

I know that you come from a dingy street
Where toilers grow dingy, too;
Where did you find those foam-light feet?
Who lifted that chin for you?

Helene Searcy

April Dawn

Red daisy-buds shut tight,
Warm gray behind the hill,
A curving, clear lark call,
One pale star shining still

Then on a western peak
A cap of gold creeps down
Until it is a cloak
That reaches to the town;

Until it is a crown
Upon your copper hair,
And God smiles through the dawn
And smiles are everywhere.

Joseph Auslander

The Bright Blasphemy

Come, let us close the book!
It cannot make us wise—
We who have learned to look
Each other in the eyes. . . .
Come, let us once more look
Each other in the eyes!

What the world thinks of this—
Or that—we know, we know;
Of Lesbia's last kiss;
Mad mouth of Romeo;
Francesca's little kiss,
And Paolo.

That passionate syllabus
The graybeards all condemn:
Love splendidly impious
Laughing at them!
Superbly impious
We laugh at them!

Joseph Auslander

Someday Your Beauty Will Frighten Death

Someday your beauty will frighten death, I know,
Even as it frightens me this instant; so
Someday death will find your cool white hands
And tremble dizzily and let you go,
And reach out like a blind thing that withstands
The first sharp throb of fear till it expands
And will not be withstood: then let the slow
Crushed sunlight of your hair slip from its bands.

And he will shrink back, struck to impotence
By that strange gradual attack of light;
And you will fill with radiant vehemence
The bleak sepulchral passion of that night. . . .
I know your beauty will frighten death; I know
Death trembling dizzily will let you go.

Ellen Coit Elliott

Prima Donna of the Negro Jazz Orchestra

I am the lemon-lily queen.

Midnight crepe-myrtle is/my hair,
My face curves down to my pointed chin
Betwixt my golden earrings like a warm seckle pear.

My tunic is a withered buff rose.

Palely my arms fall down.
The fiddles leap behind me, a thin flute blows,
Cr-r-racks a sudden trombone, then all notes drown

In the drum's eager rustle. Juggling the sticks
Brown Joe tosses an aristocratic head—
Bow to right, smile to left, flourishing the tricks

Of some fancy colonel his grandmother never wed.

My walk is a poplar blown,
Gift of a moon-white dame
Whose star-white son left me besides
My golden color of shame.

The tom-tom is throbbing in my heart
And the orchestra's catching surges;
I sing you foolish airs—
That burst with shadowy dirges.

I voice my wild black mothers:
 I drone them cool and low;
I croon the winds that blew and ceased
 A thousand years ago.

I wail my captive fathers,
 The violins complain;
I hone for a passionate wilderness
 And the pelt of tropic rain.
I beat my hands and cry,
 The 'cellos moan and quiver
I fling my curse to, a far-off sky
 Over a jungled river.

I lift my arms and lean
 To the white song's white embrace,
But I yearn to a thousand lovers
 Of my black forgotten race.

The sooty leader sways,
 The violins flicker and hum,
The wood-winds speak, the cornet brays,
 Joe is in a frenzy at the drum.

And I am the tea-rose queen,
 Daughter of milk and wine;
Like a willow blown I bow and I bow,
 And my ear-rings tremble and shine.

Hellen H. Holladay

Vanity

Eve in the Garden of Eden
Woke on a silvery night,
Waded out into the moon-shine,
Craving the source of the light.

Eve in the Garden of Eden
Followed the moon like a fool
Till God dropped it down in a meadow,
A world at her feet in a pool'!

Eve in the Garden of Eden
Shook the star-dust from her hair
Over the moon in the water;
Watched it float glimmering there.

Eve in the Garden of Eden
Dreamed. of a glorious role;
Creation hung in the balance,
Proudly she squandered her soul! aeen H. Holladay.

Being Modern with Sophocles

Sophocles remarked a long time ago in a somewhat petulant criticism of Euripides, and James Branch Cabell remarked very recently in a highly illuminating analysis of contemporary tendencies, that realism is invariably death to art, no matter what it may be to entertainment. Between these men lies considerable territory; much water has sought the ocean, and many poems have melted as unobtrusively into oblivion since the Greek poet said of his rival: "He paints men as they are; I paint them as they ought to be." So many things and theories have changed since then that we are now coming to realize what was true at the beginning—that our world is forever one of "becoming," the only adequate symbol for which is the mathematical description of a quantity approaching infinity. Therefore, when we meet with an idea that has persisted throughout these more than twenty centuries of flux and reflux, and which during the period has never lacked firm adherents among the greatest minds, that idea seems at least to merit serious consideration. Not but what we today prefer a more philosophical phrasing of the old Greek's dictum. We say nowadays, not "men as they are" and "as they ought to be," but men as they look, and as they are. Christianity taught us to look within; and the mystics—notably Blake—supplied the term to define that for which we are to look. "The Real Man" Blake called him; and thus, by a common enough paradox, the word realism might easily come to have a nobler significance than it wears at present. But it is safer to avoid paradoxes, and use the word in its accepted sense. The aim of realism is to depict things and people as they look; the aim of true poetry, which is forever the uncompromising enemy of realism, is to depict them as they are. Realism reflects manners, fashions, the phrases of the hour; poetry, the emotions and ideals which have persisted and will

persist—the basic, racial values, the things which matter because they have always mattered and always will. Science, which has shown us so plainly that appearances are not to be trusted, might have dealt realism a cruel blow, had it not supplemented this contention with another which pleased the realists much more—the contention that nothing is to be trusted. If that be true, then one might as well concern one's self with appearances; and so the realists have apparently thought. But is it true? Science itself is beginning to doubt it; and the poets, who have always doubted it, are chuckling wickedly thereat. One hears now among psychologists much talk of “intuition,” and the untrustworthiness of conscious intellection. William Blake must be smiling to himself: a hundred years ago he told the world exactly that, and no one would listen. A hundred years ago he advanced his doctrine of the Real Man, and now the psychologists are laboriously finding him in the “subconscious.” Time brings about amusing revenges. But the meat of the whole argument is simply this: that today it is thoroughly scientific to talk about the inner reality and the outer appearance; and when I tell a learned specialist in mental therapeutics that I am convinced there are other channels of knowledge than the conscious intellect, he does not sneer, but murmurs sympathetically: “True, and they seem to be alone trustworthy.” Shall not the poet take heart at this? Shall he not believe that at last the cycle which runs from intuition through its negation to the total failure of all else, and so forward to a conscious recognition and employment of it, is at last about to be completed? Can he not see the faint dawns of a day in which the “higher simplicity” shall be an accomplished fact? In the light of all this, your realist becomes one hopelessly behind the times. Your true modern is he who is not a little behind or even abreast of the procession, but he who is a little ahead. And so it comes about, in the revolution of cycles too large for us to

measure, that to be modern now is to think with Sophocles—or, if you prefer, with James Branch Cabell. But, as he thinks with Sophocles, it amounts to the same thing, and the issue cannot easily be evaded. Realism is death to art because it stifles the Real Man with trivial and useless accretions of materiality. True art strips away all this lumber, and gives the Real Man breathing space and room to swing his pen or paint brush. Realism does not help us to be free; it merely scrawls charming designs on our fetters. Art will free us, if we will permit it; and all faithful expressions of the Real Man are art. It dovetails beautifully ; and the most comforting thing of all is that the poet at last has the scientist on his side, though very few members of either party are yet aware of it. But one looks forward to the developments of the next century almost with awe.

Notes

We welcome Joseph Auslander as a contributor to our pages. Mr. Auslander is one of the editorial board of *The Measure*. He is at present residing in Paris. Jack Hyatt, Jr., makes his initial appearance with *The Lyric West*. His work is well known, both poetry and fiction, and he has appeared in the best magazines. Portia Martin has published poems in *Poet Lore* and *The American Poetry Magazine*. Marie Emilie Gilchrist and Helene Searcy and Ellen Coit Elliott represent a group of younger writers who are doing excellent work. Miss Searcy and Ellen Coit Elliott are at Stanford University, Miss Gilchrist is at Smith College in Northampton, Mass. Poems especially mentioned from the March issue are *Montana Wives* by Gwendolyn Haste; *The Girl of the Loneliness*, by Elliott C. Lincoln; *There's a Wide Sky*, by Nora B. Cunningham; *Color*, by Esther Yarnell.