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NO. 5

The
LYRIC WEST

A Magazine of American Verse



IN THIS ISSUE

Nora B. Cunningham | Virginia Lyne Tunstall

Edith D. Osborne | Virginia Stait

Pauline Barrington and others

POEMS

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The Lyric West

Vol. II, No. 5

A Magazine Of Verse

September, 1922

Edited by Grace Atherton Dennen

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A Voice

The voices of my fathers cry in me:
“Thou art our mouthpiece; see thou keep thyself
To this high task, and deviate no whit:
We loved, we worked, we suffered, thou must speak.
Turn not aside for pleasure or for pain
But march straight onward to the destined goal.

Look how the long-repressive years have piled
The burden of thine urgent utterance—
A surging flood that breaks at last in thee.
Old dreams and yearnings, stifled questionings,
Stern, steady strength and patience linked with love,
And aspirations dulled by daily toil.

In thee the flowering of the mighty root
Gathering the forces of the fertile earth
To feed the hue and fragrance of thy song,

Love shall pass by thee, rapt upon thy task
Describing him; black sorrow shall stab deep
Into thy heart, and bitter loneliness
Shall be thy comrade in a phantom world.

The years shall leave thee empty-handed still
Except for dreams, the dreams we give to thee,
And thou shalt be no woman, but a voice.”

Biography

Senator Joseph M. Cutler stares from page
three-seventy-five of the History of Yellowstone
County,
With his nicely clipped beard and moustache,
And the wrinkles smoothed out of his face,
And his fine tailored coat setting trim on his
shoulders—

“Joseph M. Cutler, born in Illinois, came to Montana
in 1875 and engaged in ranching.”

Joe Cutler, do you remember
The smell of the sage as it drove with the rain through
the cracks in the cabin?
The roar of the Yellowstone, savage—churning—
Eating—eating—crumbling off huge bites of young
farmland,
The shuddering terror of the cattle,
The smashing deluge of that first spring?

“After being admitted to the bar in 1884 he practiced
law in Billings. Elected State Senator in 1898.”

Fighting Joe Cutler, do you remember
The day you and Skunkem Bill stole up Dry Creek
after wolf skins?

Can you see the dusty dead buffalo grass,
The tangled rosebushes and willows?
Can you see that clump of cottonwoods?
There!
Who are they?
Crows?
Ah, God—no!
Joe Cutler, do you remember
How you lay with the body of Skunkem Bill huddled in
the tangled willows and rosebushes,
Until those that were left galloped away,
And that night slipped down the river
With your heart pounding at the voice of the wind,
And the chuckle of the water?
“Senator Cutler is a stanch Republican and always
takes an active and leading part in the various
campaigns
of that party.”

Fighting Joe Cutler, do you remember
The night of the roundup down near Prewett’s
roadhouse—
Prewett, the creeping snake, the breeder of evil?
There were some that stayed at the roundup that night
tending the cattle and horses?
Were you one of them, Joe Cutler?
Or were you one of those, who in the wavering early
light
Crept back to the camp on the creek
While Prewett lay on the floor of his roadhouse, a little
dark hole in his forehead?

“He is a member of the Masonic fraternity, being a Shriner, also a member of the Commercial Club, the Country Club, and a Rotarian.”

Fighting Joe Cutler, don't the skies ever call you?
What do you do when at night the wild ducks clang
across the dark?

There are trails, Joe Cutler, that have never been
ridden,

Bronchos that have never been broken.

Fighting Joe, what is it happens when a man settles
down?

Does something go away and leave him?

Or is it there all the time, hidden under those neat
whiskers and that carefully tailored coat?

Charles Wharton Stork

Naughty Nell

There came a knock at the door of Heaven

And the knock was firm and light.

St. Peter he opened the window grill

And looked on a puzzling sight:

A maiden sweet as a swaying bough

Of apple buds pink and white.

He scratched his forehead and looked again:

No doubt but the girl was fair,

She lowered the lids of her blue-bell eyes

With a half impenitent air,

And the smile that lurked in her pouting lips

Had little to do with prayer.

“Name?” he inquired in formal tones.

“Nell Bassett,” the answer fell.

“If you please, I thought I might come and knock

Before I was dragged to hell,

Though there’s small use looking my record up,

For my nickname was Naughty Nell.”

“Ah! Bassett, Eleanor” hummed the saint

As he blinked at his book. “That’s I,”

She answered. “I’ve never done much good,

But I didn’t have long to try.

I’d always meant to begin some day

Before I came to die.”

“But here I find that you lost your life

In the fever that came this year,
Nursing a child whose mother died
While the rest kept away in fear.”

“You wouldn’t have had me let it starve,
The poor little lonely dear!”

“And you were the girl that fought Bill Jenks

When he came home drunk one night,
And his wife screamed ‘Help’, but never a man
Durst enter the house for fright.”

“Why, who was gladder of that than Bill
Next day when his head was right?”

“Be still, please, Nell. Your case is clear,
Your faults are but light and few;
Here’s a page and a half of kindly deeds
That your short life found to do.

I need not hold you a minute more
From the bliss that waits for you.”

The door swung wide, and a sudden glow
Of radiance blossomed out,
The air was rich with the scent of myrrh,
With song and triumphal shout;
Yet over the face of the dazzled girl
Came a look as of fear and doubt.

“Please, but it’s all a mistake, I’m feared,”

She stammered; "I wasn't good.
I always did what I chose to do
As often as ever I could,
I never moidered and vexed myself
The way I was told I should.

"Are you sure that all of my sins are down,—
The time that I ran away
From prayers with Ned into Folsom Wood
And tarried there all the day,
And he kissed my lips that kissed again
By the streamside as we lay?"

"Whatever was sin is entered here,"
Said Peter, and smote his book,
For his temper was short, the worthy saint.
But when he had cast a look
At the trouble that shadowed the girl's clear eyes,
All anger his heart forsook.

"Please help me," she faltered. 'I know it's wrong,
But I feel a bit naughty still.
I want to frolic and race and dance,
Not sit and do God's will,
Will there anybody like me be there,
Or is everyone staid and chill?"

Then Peter laughed—he could do no less—
"Why, Nell, are you then afraid
That Heaven will be like a country town
At church or on dress parade,

That tongues are still and thoughts are chill
And everyone dull and staid?

“The beams of light that spread on earth
When your clean spirit shone
Were darted from the crystal depth
Of the Eternal Throne.
Hark to the rapture shouts of praise
To Him Who sits thereon!”

His ancient youthful voice was still,
Too weak to utter more,
And Naughty Nell bowed silently
To marvel and adore;
Then, calm with ecstasy, she rose
And passed through the shining door.

G. William Fitzwilliam

On Recollecting the Names of Certain Ladies Mentioned in the Odes of Horace

Oh, lovely Latin ladies, long long have ye been dead,
And many rains have fallen, and many springs have
shed
Their fading almond blossoms upon your earthen bed,
But in lilting, lyric measure your names come back to
me—

Lydia, and Lyce, and laughing Lalaze.

I have forgotten much of Latin phrase and meaning,
Forgotten much of youth and Rome with high walls
gleaming,
Forgotten much of mirth, and lost my love of dreaming,
But the best I have remembered—your names’
felicity—

Phyllis, and Pholoe and laughing Lalaze.

Eda Lou Walton

Moon-Child

Indians found you in the grass.
Moon-child,
They tossed you to me in the pass,
I hold you to my barren breast,
The Above, he sent you here for rest,
Moon-child !
But I have seen a white woman
Before my tipi creep,
She did not call or hail me,
She thought we were asleep,
But I have heard her cry for you,
I have seen her weep:
You are not mine, but hers, alas,
Moon-child.

Eda Lou Walton

Prayer Against Witchcraft

Chief of Women, Witch,
You who have my spirit body,
Possessed of half-moons from my nails,
Possessed of my fallen hair,
You have called it down to you,
For my spirit body follows
After any part of me.

Slayer of Alien Gods,
And Child of Waters,
You who are most potent,
Seek her out,
Procure from her those things of me
Binding my spirit body to her.
Bring it back to me,
Do not leave me a Half-man!

Virginia Lyne Tunstall

Spinster Songs

I

I mind me it was this very room,
I was making bread at the table there.
“It’s a fine wife that you’ll make,” he said.
Then she came by with her curly hair.
Queer how life goes. Why, I might have
A man and a brood of boys and girls,—
If she had only made the bread,
And I had had the yellow curls.

II

A single woman’s a lonesome thing.
Sometimes I’m lonely day and night.
I miss, when the world’s on fire with spring,
Another face in the candle light.

And yet when I see some lad I knew,
With a wife who’s tired to death of him,
I know that dreams that never come true
Are better than dreams all broken and dim.

III

It's a mournful tune the rain is making,
Over and over, over and over.
Will it never have done at my window?—
Where is your lover? Where is your lover?

And why should I know or care where he is?
Except for the rain I'd not be thinking
Of him. "Good riddance!" my people said—
"He with his lights o' love, and his drinking!"

"Good riddance," they said. Lord, Lord how it rains!
I should be thankful enough for a cover
Above my head and a fire to warm me.
Over and over. Where is your lover?

I had my pride as a girl should have;
I have it still. If I am crying,
It's the rain. I'll shed no tears for him,
And his smiling lips that were made for lying.

It's a mournful tune the rain is making,
Over and over, over and over.
While the fire burns low, and the ashes fall.
Where is my lover? Where is my lover?

Lillian Hartley

Ideals

Tattered and torn, I have mended them often,
Yet I cling to the remnants, tho dreams fade and die;
Hopeful that someday harsh judgment will soften,
And will bring back to me what the fates now decry

Faded romances, so faithfully tended,
Lest they flicker and die like the spark that is blown;
Idols, Ideals as carefully blended
As the seeds of the flowers the gardner has sown.

Patiently waiting, still guarding my treasures,
Like a miser who hoards what he never can use—
All but relinquishing life's sweetest pleasures,
And sore burdened with doubts I seem never to lose.

Tattered and torn, they are mended so often
With the hopes, and the fears, that are “wages of sin”;
Fain would I give them a burial coffin,
Yet I nourish them back in my bosom again.

John Russell McCarthy

The New Clerk

There is a deal of fun in playing hookey
With just your gang, say Pete and Jim and Bill,
And playing Indian up on Piney Hill
Or swimming down at clay-bank, where the river
Dug just for you a dandy swimming hole:
You've seen it since in many a dreaming stroll.

Well, Johnny Mead was such a boy as you
In some ways. Fond of water, too,
And proud to take a beating for a swim.
And Leather-Stocking was the role for him
When “hookey” was the word and all the gang
Sought Piney Hill before the school-bell rang.
You know there's just one leather-stockings man
While all the rest are Indians—subtle plan
Which let him tramp the hillside all alone
And sit and dream upon old Hawk-Eye's stone.

A year of course is just so many days
Whether a fellow studies books, or plays.
So came a time—a family has a need—
When someone found a job for Johnny Mead,
At trudging bundles for the local store:
Each week, two dollars; promised somewhat more
In a year or two, when he became a man.
And Johnny had a very happy plan

Of rising to be clerk and getting paid
A dollar every day. He was afraid
The old clerk might not die so very soon,
Bald-headed though he was, like a full moon,
And bent and very shaky when he tied
The bundles up.

But luckily he died
Just four years after Johnny went to work.
And so at last young Mead became a clerk
And got his dollar every working day,
With no more time for dreaming by the way
As he came back from taking soap to Greens.

And he forgot the castles and the queens
And all the knights on stallions gay with gold,
And ladies fair and tournaments of old.
Forgot the blare of trumpets and the roar
Of white batallions growing red with gore
Of terrible enemies and he forgot
The grinning pirates and the lonely spot
Where, after battles many and grim and bold,
They drank their wine and hid their chest of gold.

There is a time when looking at a maiden
(Who used to smile but now just drops her eyes)
Will thrill you through until your being cries
To touch her, hold her, keep her from the others.
And you are jealous of old Jim and Bill
And walk alone at night upon the hill.

But Mary was not very hard to win.
It took three years to get her argued in.
(Rachel, you know, took seven.) And Johnny now
Had been advanced, and earned ten dollars flat
For every week. The gossips would allow
That there was “promise in the boy at that”,
And some day he might even own the store.
And rents were low, and food was little more,
And clothes, well, very little would do for two.
Oh, they would get along, and nicely, too.

And now no dreaming when he went to bed
Of cities gleaming white and gold and red,
And flaming motors screeching through the glare,
And fame and fortune waiting for him there.

For Johnny, junior, came that very year,
And cries by night, and little gurgling dear
At noon, made time go quickly for a while.
And Mary met him always with a smile
That made him mighty happy with his lot:
Wrapping and wrapping—and here and there a knot.
Wrapping and wrapping and wrapping, and here and
there
A knot to tie. And so the quick days wear
Away to years, and so the swift years grow
To ten and twenty, and a little snow
Creeps into the red of his hair.
And five fine daughters more than common fair
Are wooed and won by this and that young man,

And they start forth with many a wondrous plan.

And Mary is bent and withered now and grey,
But smiling yet, with something sweet to say
At noon and night-time.

Jim, the neighbor's boy,
Trudging the bundles, has a secret joy:
The old clerk surely will die very soon,
Bald-headed as he is, like a full moon,
And bent and very shaky when he ties
The bundles up; so Jimmy dreams and sighs—
For Jim will be the new clerk when he dies.

Hilda Laura Norman

The Pomegranate Flowers Are Scarlet

The Pomegranate flowers are scarlet
Like scarlet satin shoon,
And merrily they dance and dance
From night till dawn till noon.

The Pomegranate flowers are scarlet
Like Spanish dancers bright,
And twirl their scarlet petticoats
From dawn till noon till night.

The Pomegranate flowers are scarlet
And they flame upon the lawn
Like the flaming tongues of Pentecost
From noon till night till dawn.

Jack Hyatt, Jr.

Ching Loo Dreams

Pitter—patter—pit
Yellow feet slipping back and forth.

“Mark this collar;
It is new
And goes with that white shirt, a married
Man is he—I can tell by
His socks.”

Some day, some day, I will
Go back—back to
Yen-San,
Land of Lovely Dripping Moons,
Back to her,
Princess of Laughter
Silks shall be hers and lacquers old,
Jewels and a house—one hundred
Dancing girls
To chase away the weary shadows in her eyes
—make them Pools of Merriment.
Dancing girls to amuse her.
And I with her
Thru the all too short, short
Night of Slumbering Shadows.

“This shirt; it is Pink Nose’s;

Dirty! He only owns two
And wears them each two weeks and then four days
—sometimes he loses his ticket,
But always I know his shirts, and his nose.”

Some day, some day, I am going
Away from these hot irons,
Clouds of steam.

—San Jo is boiling
My rice;
A tiny vapor eddies from the pot, the black pot,
Mingled with the steam,
Washing clean,
The dirt of human bodies:
Dirt—dirt—dirt—

Pitter—patter—pit,
“Thirty-seven cents.”

When I return, heads will bow
And I will sit
With robes, scarlet and green, hands clean
All day;
—do naught but eat and sing and dream
And watch, untiring,
My Princess of Laughter dance for mine eyes
Alone.
And when the Moon of Moons
Sleeps for the Hours of Night
I will take her in my arms
—her lips will meet mine,

Taking all—Little Dove of Mirth.

“Eh-h-h—that rice tasted good.”

Now, to smoke
And rest for much awhile, to dream
Of soft leaves spread
 For her and me
 As we
Move in the Floating Shadows
Before the Lilting Waters of Ten-Ye-Sal
 —move lazily, dreamily, ever more—

“Collars ready, Thursday.”

Next week, next week, I leave
By the Great Bird on the Waters
Across the Sea
 —which smiles with me
If I can but turn
A lucky card, tomorrow a day,
At Sen-Ko-Pee’s Palace
On the Street of Slanting Shadows.

Pitter—patter—pit,
Yellow feet slipping back and forth.

Edith D. Osborne

Portraits

The Scrubwoman.

Bent and wrinkled and worn and old,
Her faded hair that once was gold,
Blows unchecked in sorry wisps
Beneath her tattered brim.
There in the dark hall she stands,
Her apron, tightly rolled.
Clutched in her shapeless hands
All reddened with the cold.
A shambling man came by,
She turned to walk with him;
A faint glow in her eye.
And as I turned away
I heard her say—
 “Well, I was hired.
 Ten floors tonight, Jim, Ten!
 Here’s th’ money. God! I’m tired!”

The Matinee Girl.

Her lips are far too bright a red,
Her blouse is cut a shade too low;
And shows a white young bosom, bare
To wintry winds that sharply blow.
Her skirts rise almost to her knees,
The white flesh plainly shows
Beneath the thin transparent silk
That weaves her winter hose.
Her smooth young cheeks are daubed with paint,
Her eyebrows shaved to scimitars;
(Thank God, she could not spoil her eyes—
Those starry, clear young eyes of hers!)

William Foster Elliot

In Your Dressing Room

(To Ve Ba.)

I wonder if you hear the unsaid things—

My reborn dreams that cry to you for wings,
The delicate dreams bewailing their mischance
Of words to feed on?

When I saw you dance,
For some brief moments Time was torn across:
A glimpse of Beauty moving with the gloss
Of older sunshines on her perfect limbs
Came through—a visionary morn like one
That falls to young leaves from the early sun.
Ah, robed in loveliness,—as fades a cloud,
Serenely thoughtless of how overbowed
The slim grass from its silver largesse lies,
Your passing must be from my ears and eyes;
But there are deathless rumors in my heart,
Which speak by echoes from your body's art
Of trysts unmade and ardors unfulfilled,

Of passions starved, and loves which love has killed
To make its peace with earth ;—your grace, besides,
Summons lost hopes, and is a hand which guides
Them back to havens of a tawny shore,
Where hours and loves that lived with me before
In gladness of joined rhythms leap and run

Toward low white cities open to the sun;
And pass through quiet streets to where is set
A shrine I have not seen, but worship yet.

A shrine that for its seekers holds this curse:
In every finding to become the hearse
Of every kiss foregone and passion turned
To gilding of its ritual ;—all that yearned
And put aside, that loved and still was dumb,
When totaled, make a melancholy sum
Most like these written words I would have spoken,
A pageant spoiled, a grim and hollow token
Scrawled over with death's seal, and seen to hold
Dry bones, not life's response of liquid gold.

And so I hope you hear the unsaid things—
The dreams of you that vainly cry for wings,
The delicate avowals whose mischance
Is irretrievable. . . .

There, go and dance!

Annie Higgins

Postponement

I might take a walk,
I might go to town,
If I wasn't certain
What streets go up and what go down;
And if the same old houses
Didn't line the way,
Gossipy and stary,
As though they meant to say:
"Wonder what takes Annie Higgins
Into town today."

Annie Higgins

Song Against Art

I might read a poem
That would sing to me,
Only I'm afraid the poet
Would tell of longing for the sea,
Would speak of wanting the salt wetness
And the contact with the wave—
Might even mention that the ocean
Is a good place for a grave.

I'd like to read a poem
And to hum it in a tune,
But I don't want to think of roses
And I don't want to feel the moon.
I don't want to think of things I've thought,
Not of the rain, nor wind, nor sun—
And I don't want to be reminded
I am wanting anyone!

Joseph Andrew Galahad

The Round

“No thing is lost—
No thing, not anywhere,
That ever was a part of love and strife:
No thing that cost
A tear—no thing that’s fair.
No thing that’s had one day of earthly life!”

You said. And I still hear,
More clearly than the sound
Of things that flow about me ceaselessly,
Your voice. I think my ear
Has caught the endless round,
Of all that’s born and reared through memory.

I would, I like to think,
Not change (had I the power)
The subtle message that you left. You meant
A thing from which I shrink!
Yet found I, in that hour,
A help for all black hours, quite heaven sent!

No thing is lost—
No thing, not anywhere,
That ever was a part of love and strife:

No thing that cost
A tear—no thing that's fair.
No thing that's had one day of earthly life.

Narcisse Wood

Antinous

(A statue at Delphi.)

In sullen sweetness he stands, the fairest frail boy of
the world,
His languid head downbent with the hyacinthine
curled
Heavy load of his hair, in grape clusters shading his
face
Still dreaming, even in marble, over his body's grace.
The rhythm of limbs that spring, like a silver birch on a
hill,
Eternally poised to move, eternally still.
Wrapped in a dream of his beauty, unshaken by
clashing years,
He is grown too languid for love, too mournful for tears;
And the stone that was white as a star when the
sculptor's chisel sang
Is stained with the colours of Time, till the weight of
curls that hang
Over his brow, are tarnished to gold that an Emperor
knew
And his limbs are flushed as a sunburnt peach to his
own sweet hue. . . .
So the greatly beloved lives, his beauty a flame in the
mind
When the ancient pitiful sins are blown as dust down
the wind.

Candle Light

There is a candle lit
And I must tend its flame,
Though all the skies are flecked with stars
And dark winds call my name.

I've drawn the shutters close
And turned the lock once more,
But still the wind is calling me
And tugging at the door.

Ah, wind! Blow out the stars.
And call me not by name,
For I shall need a steady hand
To tend my candle flame.

Virginia Stait

The Return

They brought her back . . .

Past each forgotten thing that now stood out,
The only things that we could think about;
Past days when we had seen her trudge along
In just a ragged gown, yet with a song,
On childish lips, hasped how, that could not say
How she had fared—a long decade away.

They brought her back . . .

Past memories we knew not that we kept
But that awaken now, because she slept—
A little thing she was, with bare, white feet,
That went on errands up and down our street;
A something that our charity might reach,
Sometimes—when dogs did not for bread beseech!

They brought her back . . .

But we knew of a thousand things—no less—
That came with her—things no one would confess.

Stanton A. Coblenz

After Life

(A Former Soldier Speaks.)

Amid mysterious fields of fog and night,
Where move thin spectral forms beneath no sun,
We met when every battle cry was done,
We who had slain each other in the fight.
Staring with bloodless faces ghostly white
And eyes where hate with kindness strove and won,
We felt old murderous fury new-begun,
And clashed once more with mad destructive might.

Then what amazing things we viewed or dreamed!
What startling visions, as we leapt to strike!
Our souls stood up together—so it seemed—
And oh, they were alike !—so much alike
That now, through all the crowded Shadowland,
My foe and I walk meekly, hand in hand.

Grace Wallace

Bourrico

I met a fellow-donkey on the road

Who gazed on me straining beneath my load,
My drooping head, my wrenched and sweated flanks
Attesting to my Driver's want of thanks
He lifted his oiled and modulated voice.
"Hi-han!" said he, "how strange appears your choice:
You toil beneath the sun from dawn to night,
My life is one continuous delight."

I lifted my tired eyes to his fresh face:
Somewhat there was of true exalted grace
Set in his eyes. "By my blest father's tribe,
To what, dear fellow, do you now ascribe
The steep diversity of our two fates?"

He eagerly replied, "Your hardship states
How great your need of high philosophy.
Once that is realized, these woes I see
Will vanish as the night-dew from the grass
When the sun-rays' golden fingers through it pass."
Much more he said which I do not recall,
But we stood talking until near night-fall.
"Now by my father's fore-lock and his ears,"
I cried at last, embracing him in tears,
"I am converted to your faith; but lest
I back-slide when my Jen the acid test

Proposes, as she will, I shall submit
A test—a most pragmatic one—to fit

Our case.” “Go on,” the noble fellow cried:
“I am prepared.” “What I propose is this:
Let you and I shift places: you will miss
Little since in spirit you are free—
And I shall have the opportunity,
Lolling on grass, to learn philosophy.”
“The test which you propose is fair, my friend;
I will accept, and thus my faith defend.”
Just then a red sun dropped out of the west;
The door of Dig ’n Whistle banged with zest,
And there emerged, pursued by loud guffaws
Of strong and lusty-throated jack-a-daws
The man I owned as master. “Hic-cup-hee!”
His small steel eyes gleamed at me evilly;
His breath was reeking fumes of moon-shine brew,
And all the viciousness he ever knew,
From his restricted forehead gleamed anew.
He flung an oath at me, then would have sprung
Upon my back and with sharp heels me spurred:
—I dodged with a strange rashness, begged a word.
He greeted the proposal with a sneer
That he transfer me to Bourrico’s gear;
Then quick observing the well-fed estate
Of that beatific donkey, grew elate,
Quickly effected the inspired exchange
And rode him off, leaving me free to range
The world, crop daisies and drink stars. Joy spun
My head at the new freedom I had won.

They led me past the cross-roads; on until
We stopped before a richly patterned grille;
Then up a winding palm-fringed road we passed,
And halted where an oleander cast
Blossoming fragrance on a low-tiled roof
Which was to shelter me hence, ears and hoof.

A year passed by. Again the flowering-tree
Of oleander dripped its scent on me.
As I stood nibbling lush pink blooms before
The opened upper of my stable-door
I thought of that strange night a year ago
When Bourrico and I'd compacted to
Live each the life of other. Weaving Fate
Had strangely twisted life-threads thus to mate
Me with my present ease and happy state.
The old life seemed now a dark night-mare past,
Only the present durable to last:
I stretched my neck to reach a luscious flower;
The door, unlatching, opened to my power.
Soon I was trotting down the winding road
Urged through the night by some mysterious goad
Incomprehensive. Next, I stood before
The liquor-tavern, Dig 'n Whistle's door
And by its light (for it stood open wide)
I saw Bourrico with Jen at his side.
His sharp protruding ribs and shabbiness
Contrasted with my sleek coat; none the less
In his clear-visioned eyes burned still the flame,
While Jen's miraculously gentle look

Astounded me; it nearly my breath took.

“This Bourrico,” said I to myself then,
“Is among asses as a Christ to men,
A soul exalted, scourged and purified,
Perfection by Old Evil vainly tried,
His sins of donkey-nature crucified.”
A sharp desire like hunger or great thirst
Sudden my soul invaded and immersed
In ecstasy of longing to attain
Initiation purified of stain.

A bulky shadow filled the door-way then,
And Malovino lurched out drunk as when
He used to goad me home through driving rain,
So stiff with cold each step was burning pain.
Bourrico’s face took on that look seen best
In paintings of a martyr’s supreme test.
Clear-eyed he gazed above Earth’s hapless mire
Out toward the star to which he might aspire;
His meekness grew with Malovino’s curse:
—One felt he did that violence immerse
In blessing, and its venom-nature change.
As they moved out into the night, twas strange!
I could not follow them, although I tried;
I lifted up my voice: the effort died
Before sound reached the air. “ ’Tis well,” I thought,
“I would attain before I’d patience wrought!
But I shall study this philosophy

That gives bound slaves the quality of free.
Next year I'll be, perhaps, a wiser ass;
But, the time being, I shall loll on grass."

Comment

A Note for Poets

(Conducted by Pauline Barrington)

In that oddly titled volume of poetical criticism, *Scepticisms*, Conrad Aiken devoted a suggestive chapter to the “mighty line”,—to those exalted moments in poetry for which we are incurably on the lookout, whether in poems brief or long, lyric or epic in character. His conclusions, his broad generalizations, are well worth the pondering by poets. He said in part: “They are the moments for which indeed we read poetry; just as when listening to modern music, however complex and dissonantal, it is after all the occasionally arising brief cry of lyricism which thrills and dissolves us. When the subconsciousness speaks, the subconsciousness answers.” In much of our recent poetry this unassailable truth, it seems to me, has been almost entirely lost sight of, but it persists inviolate for all true lovers of poetry. Genuine poetry is today, as always, a series of lofty moments or the perfect rendering of a mood. The so-called new mode in poetry cannot do more. The newness is merely a rich fresh leaven introduced into the medium itself, not into the immemorial spirit of poetry. The medium, of course, is language and its organic elements. If we dissociate our commonest daily speech, we find therein priceless fibrous threads of poetry, swiftly colored by the varied play of human contacts and emotions. Ordinarily the sympathetic reader does not winnow the language web of poetry into its components; to him an idiom is not an idiom but an exulting poetic moment. However, any thorough inquiry into the aesthetic of poetry will show us that we never get very far away from the roots of language. A poetic moment, what is it save a group of words fused together in the crucible of a

splendid emotion? Creatively used, vitalized by the pure breath of genuine emotion experienced by a living poet, a certain row of words, a vivid phrase, a new twist given to a worn turn of speech, may later on become naturalized as an idiom by a whole people. We have witnessed this alchemy taking place most vividly in the case of such poets as Dante and Shakespeare. If poets will bear this in mind, as critics must (and the responsibility rests more with the latter than with the poets themselves), we may hope to arrive at a usable aesthetic for poetry. Poetry is the tranquillized expression of emotion—tranquillized only in order that the emotion may be conveyed or rendered. The reader or listener feels the emotion first of all; the moment after the mind steps in and stores away the emotion along with the richness or the felicity with which it has been expressed. It seems to me that beauty in art grows out of a consummate fusion of these two processes. Obviously, as Mr. Aiken points out, every line a poet writes cannot be perfectly tranquillized ; delicate nuances will inevitably suffer and be lessened in the rendering. This may be because the emotional tension of the reader is unequal to the pace set by the creative emotion of the poet. In any case, such a goal is hardly to be aimed at. Over-ripeness is likely to be cloying. Filling every rift with golden ore will give us the beauty of Endymion, but it will be less satisfying than The Ode to the Nightingale. And this brings me to the subject of mood in poetry. In Endymion, it will be generally admitted, there is but an imperfect blending of isolated ecstatic lines with the pervasive mood of the poem; in The Ode to the Nightingale, on the other hand, the blending is quite satisfying and complete. Mr. Aiken gives in his discussion scarcely enough importance to the value of mood. The lofty moments must be subtly woven into the congruous mood of the whole poem or the effect aimed at is scattered and lost. Lyricism is the very essence of poetry, but lyricism with all its

modulations, its gradual orchestral rise and relapse. Lyricism is at the opposite pole from the ornate, the rococo, in poetry. The ornate elements hinder the pure expression of the vibrant emotion that seeks outlet in unerringly chosen symbols, the symbols being words and their infinite combinations. When genuine feeling is present, the flame of creativeness burns away all such dross and tinsel, and the pure emotion, stirring to life the aimed-at mood, is duly transmitted to the fit reader. By the "fit reader" is meant one whose imagination is cultivated and harnessed, so to speak, to the 'emotions of life in the rough, as well as to beauty in art. A plastic sensitivity to life is indeed the prime essential to an appreciation of poetry; for at their highest, beauty and life, poetry and life, are indissolubly one.

—*Pierre Loving.*

Robert Frost and the Ann Arbor Fellowship in Creative Art

The experiment of turning a poet loose on the campus of a big university with the idea that the result would be beneficial to both poet and community was tried out last year at the University of Michigan. The requirements of the Fellowship in Creative Art held by Robert Frost demanded nothing but his presence in Ann Arbor during the academic year. But the success of the fellowship was to be judged from benefits received by both poet and campus; the idea being that the poet would be free to write and that the students would derive something from the fact that an American poet of the first rank was living in Ann Arbor and occasionally mingling with them and encouraging those who were interested in writing. The Detroit Free Press recently printed some opinions regarding this experiment, so remote from the conventional trend of educational theory and practice, and quoted a letter to President Burton from the English department setting forth "the impressions of its members regarding the honorary fellowship provided by the generosity of Mr. Osburn and the effect upon the university of the incumbency, during the present year, of Mr. Frost," and concludes "that the benefits accruing to the university are incalculably greater than could reasonably have been expected." The article also quoted an editorial from the Michigan Daily, the student newspaper, which leaves no doubt as to the benefits received by the students through contact direct and indirect with this quiet seeming poet "whose eyes hold a certain skeptic twinkle, and whose hand goes out in friendly greeting everywhere." The editorial comments on the remark made by President Burton at an alumni dinner "that he was uncertain as to who was the most popular man on the Michigan

campus at the present time, Coach Yost or Robert Frost, and says: "The Coach, as the leader in that field of activity

which holds a supreme attraction for red-blooded young manhood, has ever been and will continue to remain the idol of college students, but when one is able to say, even in a light vein, that this popularity is being shared by a poet, then it must begin to dawn that the university is developing into a well-balanced institution where students reverence intellectual as well as physical prowess." But what about the benefits received by Mr. Frost? He says he is willing to return another year and gives his reasons in the following interview: "Well, for one thing, I've had a good time here," he answered. "I like to sit around and talk. I've done a lot of it here and made a lot of friends. And then, too—and this is my serious reason—I want to give the creative fellowship further trial. I would like to prove that such a fellowship can be a success, because if it works here it will work all over the country." "I have a plan for combing all departments for people who are interested in writing, for forming these people into groups and having them meet at my house evenings or afternoons for two or three months each semester. It would be an informal gathering of people interested in literature. "Then I would try to arrange my time so that I might be more free to do my own work. I cannot work unless I am utterly free. When I sit down to write I must see before me a few days of undisturbed concentration." Can't the Pacific Coast do as much to encourage the development of artistic endeavor as the great Mid-West has done at its largest university?

—*Katherine G. Smith.*

Poems

(By Marianne Moore. London. The Egoist Press.)

We are not dreamers but explorers while reading Marianne Moore's beautifully printed small book of poems. Exploring a strange country of new unfamiliar paths, our way blocked by obscurities that are a bit difficult to understand, we plod on, however, finding stretches of a clean wind-swept country, interesting and keen, and a feeling of wings lifting us from the ground.

Here is a part of her comment on "Poetry":

I too dislike it: there are things important beyond all
this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one
discovers that there is in
it after all, a place for the genuine.

* * * * *

. . . In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,

. . .

the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness and
that which is, on the other hand,
genuine then you are interested in poetry.

There is "stoutness of heart" about that which we have not
found in a lot of the saccharine stuff written in poetry's name
today. No one has written a lovelier lyric than the "Talisman":
Under a splintered mast,
Torn from ship and cast
Near her hull,

A stumbling shepherd found

Embedded in the ground,
A sea-gull

Of lapis lazuli,
A scarab of the sea,
With wings spread—

Curling its coral feet,
Parting its beak to greet
Men long dead.

Marianne Moore has made intricate patterns of her moods. She has made complexity effective and though difficult to understand and a bit irritating she is always interesting.

—*Pauline Barrington.*