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The
LYRIC WEST

A Magazine of American Verse



IN THIS ISSUE

Nellie Burget Miller | Mary Sinton Leitch

William E. Scotten, Jr. | Alice Fay

Louis Wann and others

THE "NEW" SPOON RIVER

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The Lyric West

Vol. IV, No. 4

A Magazine Of Verse

January, 1925

Edited by Roy Towner Thompson and Grace Atherton Dennen

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The Lyric West

Editors: Roy Towner Thompson, Grace Atherton Dennen

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Nellie Burget Miller

I Bring You Silence, My Beloved

I bring you silence, my Beloved,
Song is all too poor a thing.

Silence of frost-veils sifted deep
In winter woods; the dreamless sleep
Of buried violets; the sweep
Of velvet dark and cloudless skies;
Silence of joy and sweet surprise
Within a new-made mother's eyes;
Silence of dawn in desert spaces;
Silence of prayer in holy places;
Silence of death on wondering faces.

I have stood before a perfect rose
Touching its beauty with reluctant hand
And found no single word of praise
A rose could understand—
How then shall I disclose
The white wonder of my days
With you? My empty words are fanned
To chaff, the chance wind blows
Them, vagrant, o'er the land.

I bring you silence, my Beloved,
Song is all too poor a thing.

Norma Miller

Lyric

I pray thee, light no beacons in thine eyes
For me, lest I, like some flight-weary bird
Winging above an ocean tempest-stirred
To blackened turmoil and wild savag'ry,
Should blindly seek the haven offered me
And fling myself as the worn migrant flies
To shattered death!

I beg thee leave me, rather, to the storm
Where ardent sweep of pinion may be free
At least to chance its strength with wind and sea,
Not falsely taught to seek a fatal rest
Where stone, unfeeling, walls to end the quest
And hurls from it the bruised and battered form
Devoid of breath!

Virginia McCormick

Magic

Out of the night a dawn,
Out of the day a star,
Out of life's blackened ashes,
A flame that streams afar.

Out of a withered bulb,
Newborn from earth's soft womb,
A tulip rears its crimson head:
Blow, bellows, on my fireless tomb.

Belle Cooper

Sonnet

To Alfred Edward Housman

This cultured don pursues his tranquil way
In college halls where no rude noises jar;
Yet keeps his mundane influence, like a star
Which earthward sheds illuminating ray.
With mellowing Time his locks have turned to gray.
Of Attic days he dreams: Diana's car
Once dipped to earth, and down a silver bar
On sandaled feet she slid ere dawn of day.

The gifts of Grecian gods she showered on him:
A tuneful, simple speech; reposeful life;
An open mind; a calm and thoughtful face;
A courage that delights in battle grim
When Duty calls; a wit like whetted knife;
A joy in service and a pride in race.

Maud Elfrid Uschold

Two Poems

HOME

There will be a high hill
To have my thoughts in keeping;
There will be a tall tree
To hang my wishes on;
There will be a hearthglow;
And, although I be sleeping,
A candle in the window
That shall burn till dawn.

ARRAIGNMENT

And what know you of watches in the night,
Long hours told on rosaries of tears?
Have you not always laughed the days to flight,
And threshed like winnowed wheat the ripened years?

Your breasts are hard as apples in the snow;
Your eyes are black as thunder in the south;
Your thoughts from me like winging swallows go;
What profit then for me to kiss your mouth?

Mary Sinton Leitch

Nightfall on the Lynnhaven

I love Lynnhaven river at this hour

Of dusk when streams are clearest; when the night,
Though tenderly concealing tree and flower,
Yet fills the water with translucent light.

The river shadows seem to take no more
Their being from the pines and willow trees
But, losing kinship with the darkening shore,
They turn to vague, enshrouded mysteries;—

Dim, muffled shapes — belonging to a past
That might have been — of yearning or despair;
Poor restless ghosts that now have found at last
Their rest, their peace, in that deep silence there.

Among the river reeds the solemn choirs
Of darkness sound, but in the tranquil stream
Are huddled still those wraiths of dead desires,
Those phantoms of illusion and of dream.

And now their wistful, shadowy hands are laid
In ghostly summons on me one by one,
Until with them my spirit seems to fade
Slowly to darkness and oblivion.

Two Poems

FLEET DESPAIR

How quickly laughter comes again,
When hope is dead!

The sky is grey,
The earth like stone;
No fragrance floats
By warm winds blown;
No bird can charm
On rapture's wing;
There is no joy
In anything;

How quickly laughter comes again—
Though love is dead!

FLOWER OF EARTH

Why did I turn from her grace
To lay my heart at your feet?

She was a frail fair flower
Standing aloof from the street,
Queen of the fern-sweet dusk
Where dream-drunk spirits meet.

You are nasturtium warm,
Pungently glowing and sweet;
Your vigor the vigor of earth
That pulses with joy in the heat.

That greets unafraid the dash of rain
As you sway to its rhythmic beat;
Earthborn, I choose a flower of earth,
Pungently vivid and sweet.

George H. Dillon

Three Sonnets

BEAUTY TREMBLED CLOSE

Girl, when you say that love is all — that love
Is all, and there is nothing when love goes,
Have you forgot how beauty trembled close
One time—a time when all the air above
The wide water was furiously white
With stars, and the glowing waves began to creep
On the pale sand, and we drew apart, and the deep
Far cries of water-birds spilled into the night?

And when the tremulous high time was come,
And our senses reeled, and our stammering minds
 went black
And terribly groped for a gull's ultimate bleat,
We were undone—have you forgot how numb
We were with beauty, how we went fumbling back
To some small room where our small love was sweet?

MANY SONGS

Lips shall be dumb, eyes silent as a star,
And all our song be stilled—our song that is
As swift and strange as shadowed waters are:
It shall be strongly scattered under this
Incredible ravishment, this perfect death
Which softly shall discharge the quiet gust
Of keen decay that banishes our breath
And leaves a handful of worm-wounded dust.

Yet we have found the silent songs most fair,
And we may wordlessly exult to know
Music more fine than any thread of air:
We shall go singing. Dimly we shall go
Down to the darkling ways, and we shall sleep.
Softer than death the many songs we keep.

TO A WOMAN

My words for you must rot unsaid someday
When my heart rots—I cannot speak them now;
I am grown suddenly rich in things to say,
Yet richly silent, and more wise, somehow.
And being wiser than my parents were,
I blithely share you my most frugal fig,
My poorest palest plum, my paltriest pear,
And let the apple tarnish on its twig.

For there are things too terrible to see,
Sharp as the lightning lift of a water-bird—
Swift scars that I have carried secretly.
And there are things too awful to be heard,
And I have heard them, too, and I know well
There are some things too beautiful to tell.

Claire Wilson

The Windmill

She stands outside the cabin door, a bride,
And gazes at the wild and wind-swept tide
 Of prairie grasses soft and undulate.
Her lonely heart, her pouting mouth rebel;
In fear she listens to the coyote's yell,
 And trembling, sighs, and chafes that this is fate.
But hillside cattle's bawl, or gaunt wolf's howl,
Or mournful hungry hound, or hooting owl,
 She hears not when the wind blows free;
Instead, the windmill's clank, a noisy hum—
A dreary moan—which to her has become
 A symbol of the plains' monotony.

The years have passed — and taken their demands,
And by the cabin door a woman stands
 Who waits and smiles; across the field she hears
Her children shout; sees little feet that run,
And by their sides that other dearest one
 Who through the years has shared her laughs and
 tears.
The sun in beauty drops to meet the plain,
The meadowlark is singing in the lane,
 Her heart leaps up in gladness, worries cease.
And over all the echoes from around

There comes the windmill's clank — a welcome sound

—

A symbol to her of the prairie's peace.

Bertha Roberts

Dreams

The hush of night,
 The unknowing dark,
A wordless prayer — no tears;
Only a nameless tugging at the heart,
And the aching throat,
And the slow hours

A dear remembered voice,
The fond protecting clasp of husband-arms,
Lips kissing away the seven-years' longing from my
 soul,
Breathing the while those tender names
Made for me in that long ago

Morning,—and God's gift of work-to-do.
 —Ah, dreams!

William E. Scotten, Jr.

Dawn

How would you have the day come

With a blaze of trumpets
While the guard is changed
Clanking in morion and breastplate
And grounded halberds echoing
 And you gaze as for the first time
 At your worn chains

Or with a temple bell
Rumbling somewhere
The patter of bare feet
Along the gutter
And the punkah sweeping suddenly
As furnace-breaths puff into the room
 And you reach out for the siphon

Or with the chattering of sparrows
In their leafy cubicles
On the ivied wall
Outside your bedroom window
While the yawning City stretches
Beckoning
 And you rise to follow
 As always

Elsa M. Tourelle

Hope

As lovely Hope sits brooding, bowed and blind,
Compassionate with the whirling globe's despair,
But with unbroken will lifting her prayer
Of solace for the hearts of humankind;
Flinging her music to the careless wind,
Against all odds, serenely unaware
Of its eventual destiny; no share
Of its beneficence to bless her mind:
So broods the mother o'er her universe,
Love-blind to all her children's waywardness—
The solitary string is gently brushed
As she plays on for better or for worse,
Until the pressure of her fear is less
And all her mother-anguish, spent and hushed.

Frank Mitvalsky

Five Poems

THE POET

He dreamed out ages in the sand
With vastness ringing in his ears;
His was no song to understand—
His was no song that mortal hears.

This old man plays with sticks and stones
Out where they keep the safe insane:
Rocks held to his poor ears have tones—
Why do we wise listen in vain?

SAND

I was a grain of sand so small
I never dreamed or hoped at all.
Until alone in a warm hand
I spoke a tiny word for sand.

I only made a glint reply
To that large strange inquiring eye—
I thought a poet could understand
The vast simplicity of sand.

OIL ON WATER

I have poured oil on water
And watched the ruffled rainbows spread.
I've seen the opaling trembling lines
Fuse gold and green and red.

One dusk when I was all alone
Sunset bent o'er an old canal;
In afterglow more hues were thrown
Than Earth and I can ever tell.

PICTURE OF A GIRL

Dalliance of wind-blown hair,
Collar ruffled and free;
Neck as subtle as despair
. . . . It all comes back to me.

You ask about the face—
You've seen a face that's fair?
I leave an aching space
For you to find it there.

PSYCHE

When first we came to that pool
Was it Psyche keeling there
Clothed in crystal cool
Wild garments of air?

But what did we care?
Conquer was our rule.
We muddied all the water there
And made a swimming pool.

Mary Brent Whiteside

Egyptian Evening

The hills at dusk are cameos,
 That fade in violet and rose,
And stars that knew the Pharaohs' tongue
Remain mysteriously young;
And though the Nile may hold the darkness of old pain,
 What time men wander devious ways and strange,
 And all their gods will change,
These stars remain.

Hathor is dead! They do not hymn
Her praises by the river's brim.
The orange flowers shake their scent
Far down the waters where she went,
And purple bougainvillea spreads a royal stain
 Across the night where men and kings have
 passed,
 Yet faithful to the last,
These stars remain.

Sallie Kinsman

Three Lyrics

BEAUTY

The moon lets down her trailing silver hair
Across the world.
One strand, blowing against my eyes,
Has blinded me with beauty.

FIRELIGHT

The flames are swift sharp spears,
Burnished, flashing,
Thrusting broad strokes of light into the room.
The shadows, rushing back, hide,
Quivering behind the chairs.

WIND

The night wind is a strong black charger.
The tree-tops bend under his feet;
 He shakes the stars from his mane,
And his neighs come echoing back from the distant
 moon.

Alice Fay

I, the Tao

Listen to Me

And I will show the way;

There is no darkness without light,—

Lo, I am night and day!

There is no fastened door, no missing key,

I am the mystery,

Come unto Me.

I am the Love of all the world, the tenderness
Of human ties;

The children's trust and parents' sacrifice;

The charity

That says, "Think only kindness,"

A friend's or brother's loyalty,

And I am Fate

When lovers meet and marriage comes and lips cling to
create.

I am the poet's dream,

The harmony

Of all the music and of all the spheres,

The painter's visionary gleam,

The illumined page,

The storied lore and heritage

Of all the years.

What matter if you hear Me in the wind
Or worship Me in flame?
I may hold any place within your mind
And go by any name,
And you may understand and feel and see
Or no, it matters not, for still I am in you and you in
Me.

Ruth E. Hopkins

Virgin Birth

My heart conceived a thought;
 And, like a dull cocoon, withheld it—
A worm, in darkness wrought;
Within a pod of sleep compelled it
 A prisoner to be
 Of long captivity.

The thought, though somehow stilled,
Was growing all the while in sleeping;
At last, its time fulfilled,
It struggled from its narrow keeping;
 Lo! my heart's joy to see
 The captive thing set free.

'Twas born a butterfly—
A deed that sought a way of light
On silver wing; and I,
Mother to Beauty, at its flight
 Mounted from common sod,
 Having conceived of God.

Alice Forté

Two Lyrics

DUSK

Caught between
Light and shade,
What is your name
Sweet maid?

Some call me Dusk,
But memories say
I am the shadow
Of night on day!

DAY

Little novice
Robed in hush,
Let thy palor
Bear the blush
 Of dawn.

Treading slowly
Sunlight's aisle,
Halt thy steps
A little while.

All too soon at
Twilight's rail
Shalt thou kneel
To take the veil
 Of night!

Sarah Hammond Kelly

There Is No Peace in Love

There was another Springtime,
 (Yes, dear heart, I know.)
There was another sweetheart,—
 Was it long ago?

And all your glad young kisses,
 (Love, what have I done?)
Youth's passionate caresses,
 Were for that one.

You tell me that is over,
 (Sweet, it is long past.)
Today you are my lover,—
 But am I the last?

For her I have no envy,
 (Dear, I love you best.)
You have come, all weary,
 To my arms for rest.

There'll be another Springtime,
 (Love, have you no trust?)
And, oh, your newer sweetheart
 Treads my heart to dust.

Josephine Johnson

Indian Giver

Life, you have taken all you ever gave me,
Against your might my strength could not avail;
Laughter and youth and love, you snatched them
fiercely.
Freedom and joy went down beneath your flail.

Faith in my fellow man you would not leave me,
And then, because I would not kiss your rod,
You sought of all your gifts the one most cherished,
And so you took away my faith in God.

Now I am empty-handed but undaunted,
I cry defiance with my latest breath.
Oh Life, have you forgotten in your triumph?
You *cannot* take away your gift of death!

The “New” Spoon River

Ten eventful years have rolled by since the first publication in *Reedy's Mirror* of the genuinely epoch-making *Spoon River Anthology*. It has been hailed as the stimulus to the “Revolt from the Village” movement in American fiction. Its wide reception gave its author an immediate national reputation, which he has assiduously maintained in the one-a-year record of his published books during the past decade. And, as if further to corroborate and justify the position of the caustic ironist and satirist, the War has made disillusionment the dominant spiritual mood.

* *The New Spoon River*, by Edgar Lee Masters. Boni & Liveright, N. Y., 1924.

It is the “Great Catastrophe” itself which Mr. Masters uses as the justification for “The New Spoon River.” The profound effect of the War on America is seen by the author in the transformation of Spoon River itself. The individual county seat has been blurred by the encroachment of the city, new means of communication have revolutionized the habits and thoughts of its inhabitants, the character of the population has been radically altered with the influx of foreigners. “These things,” says Mr. Masters, “as external evidences of the country’s transformation and as causes of a new set of feelings, ideals, and convictions, are interpreted in ‘The New Spoon River’; for, as many have died since the last book was written, an addition has been made to the old cemetery, in order to accommodate the ashes of the departed ones.”

Does this new series of sketches, one-third greater in number than the old, justify its existence on the basis of the announced purpose?

Comparison of the two books is inevitable. In the first place, the new sketches, as a whole, have much less specific

reference to the individuals sketched than did the old. In fact, hardly a single one of the original confessions but gave the impression of an authentic voice behind it. Fully one-third of the new sketches are utterances of Mr. Masters himself tagged loosely with the names of shadows of men. It is not merely that the mode no longer startles us; the gallery of types was too well combed in the first series to make possible the addition of any very great number of new and authentic types. There is thus in the new series, to a great extent, either duplication of themes under new names or the presentation of the author's own themes under "shadow" names of individuals that never lived in Spoon River. Another difference is the appearance of a great many foreign names in the new volume. In most cases, these sketches do present new themes and points of view— that of the German, Frenchman, Italian, Slav, Chinaman. There are also more sketches based on accepted commonplaces, such as those on Jacob Mordant, Maurice Westerman, John Misja, and Aaron Greene, though the thought of the last of these may serve as a keynote to the whole collection:

Who are the gods?

The gods are the thrice distilled principle of history,
Of which all the matter of fact has been interpreted.

Who are the gods?

The gods are the pure quintessential of understanding,
Judgment, wisdom,

From which passion, prejudice, ignorance,

Have been strained—

To these I appeal for justification!

A final point of difference is the occurrence of a considerable number of sketches that grow out of the experience of the War. But it is hard to see how more than

one-third of them (almost all in the first part of the volume) are one-whit different in tone from those in the earlier volume. In the latter half of the book one looks in vain for the "New" Spoon River. It is the old material with a new label.

Aside from these differences, and aside from the fact that the new series does not reward us with the inevitable gems like "Anne Rutledge," the methods and moods and themes of the *New Spoon River* are essentially those of the 1914 collection. The great majority deal with some form of tragedy in the individual; and anger, satire, irony are the prevailing moods. There are a few sketches in the humorous vein, such as those of Lincoln Reeth, Laura Santini, and the colored soldier, Erastus Wilson. Not more than a dozen show the tragic tension released, giving us glimpses of those who really attained or at least had the joy in the yearning for some positive attainment. If the tragic note of the earlier volume was painful to some, the reiteration of that note for a longer stretch will now seem monotonous.

Yet there are many sketches of genuine truth and beauty here. Very effective is the satire in "Ezra Fink" and "Levy Silver." Equally forcible are the attack on the public lust for the sordid in "Jay Hawkins"; the condemnation of democracy in "Col. John Clary" and "Mayor Marston"; the attack on mediocrity in "Horace Knight" and "Chandler Nicholas"; the arraignment of war in "Ike Sass" and "Unknown Soldiers"; the thrust at "women's rights" in "George Kramer"; and the "Judge not—" sketch of Lucille Lusk. Fundamentalism gets a rap in "Catherine Ogg" and "Haeckel Schmitt." The Parable of the Sower is effectively used in the sketches called "The Reese Lot." A fervent exaltation of Christ comes from Immanuel Reedy; and Yet Sing Low, the Chinaman, shows the irony of his conformity to American Christian civilization. On a more positive note are the sketches of Lionel and Arielle Grierson, who have attained mutual happiness; the defense of America's

Romance in "Meredith Phyfe"; the Symphony of the Republic in "Captain Robinson"; the yearning of the true poet in the utterances of Bertrand Hume, Teresa Pachowsky, and Albert Thurston; and the single poem of clear praise, that for Joseph Walsh. For vivid pictures, nothing can excel those of the assassination of Covington Chance, the suicide of Evalena Fayner, and the fall of the aviator, Lieutenant McGrew. Fresh, incisive thought is to be found in the sketches of Robert Chapin, Mary Borden, Lottie Chipp, Aristotle Dolegg, Saul Kostecki, Herbert Nitze, Ezekias Painter, Ezra Ramsey, Henry Zoll, the Miller, and Hosea Chambers. In the last of these we have Mr. Masters at his best:

You can be sure, ye living ones,
That every lie you speak or live,
However small,
Is like a brick or board out of line or plumb
In the house of your life;
And every lie that you speak or live
Will call for another lie in line or in plumb with that
lie,
Till your house will lean and stand awry,
Visible against gray clouds,
And against moonless midnights;
Visible even when the north star is hidden!

The *New Spoon River* does not quite satisfy as did the "Old." It cannot be truthfully said that it really presents the post-war town as distinct from the pre-war town. The book is justified in the twenty or thirty true poems that lift themselves from the bulk of its tragic monotony.

Louis Wann

Briefer Mention

SLANTS, by CLIFFORD GESSLER. Honolulu. *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1924.

This book presents the South Sea motif done in poetry that is vivid and sincere. The reader is inducted, both by the verse and by numerous sketches, into a sensuous, tropical atmosphere alive with color, where cocoanut palms lean over a jade lagoon inviting one to “linger . . . and ripen . . . and drop from the stem.” While the poems have much sameness, for the habitual reader of poetry they strike a decidedly fresh and individual note.

SIGN POSTS, by FAITH BALDWIN. Boston. Small, Maynard & Co. 1924.

Miss Baldwin’s poems arise out of human contacts. While there is a keen sensitiveness to outward, physical nature, almost always the joy and wonder of it are reflected through living persons. She is particularly happy in her poems about children, childhood, and fairyland. Her book might well have a place among the collateral reading books for the grammar grades.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON POEMS, *First Series*. Selected and edited by GLENN HUGHES. Seattle. University of Washington Press. 1924.

Interesting chiefly as the work of students in a verse-writing course conducted by the editor during the academic year 1923-1924 at the University of Washington. As might be expected in such a collection, much of the verse is thin and immature. Only three lyrics in the volume, those by Agnes Schnelling, are memorable. However, Mr. Hughes and the University of Washington are to be congratulated upon the fine encouragement they have given verse writing among their

students. We shall look forward to other series of poems with keen interest.

THE SUNNY SOUTHLAND, AND OTHER POEMS, by W. H. SCHULZ. Philadelphia. Dorrance & Co. 1924.

A book of poems dealing with the Sunny South.

CANDLELIGHT, by VIRGINIA WOODWARD CLOUD. Baltimore. The Norman, Remington Co. 1924.

A book of negro dialect verse.

Between Editor and Reader

Various notes and bits of news

Of last month's poems, Mary Brent Whiteside's "The Child in Galilee" met with high praise from all quarters. Other poems most highly commended by our readers were "Flowers of the Dust" by Virginia Lyne Tunstall; "Two Poems" by Joan Dareth Prosper; "Sonnets Plucked from the Heart of a Woman" by Sigrid Sittig; and "Rain is a Child" by Mary Louise Rankin.

Comments and suggestions from readers are always welcome. Although unfavorable comment is not pleasant, it is frequently the most useful sort an editor can receive.

Contributors

Of this month's contributors of verse, California supplies six, Virginia three, Illinois two, and Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Utah, one each. Exactly one half of these contributors are appearing in the magazine for the first time. George H. Dillon edits *The Forge, a Journal of Verse*, in Chicago; Sallie Kinsman is a student in the Anaheim (California) Junior High School; Josephine Johnson is a member of the well known Virginia group of poets whose excellent work is further represented this month by Virginia McCormick and Mary Sinton Leitch. The latter recently invited us to a feast of oysters on the banks of "her river," the Lynnhaven. To Miss Mary Brent Whiteside, of Atlanta, Georgia, we owe an apology for the prefix "Mrs." which we attached to her name in our last issue.

Announcement of Prizes

THE LYRIC WEST announces the following prizes:

The Sarah Bixby Smith Prize of fifty dollars will be given for the best lyric poem published in the fourth volume of the magazine, *i e.*, from October, 1924, to September, 1925, inclusive.

The Ben Field Prize of fifty dollars will be given for the best narrative poem published in the fourth volume of the magazine.

The judges for the above two prizes will be announced in a later issue.

The Charles Granger Blanden Prize of fifty dollars will be given for the best poem in blank verse published in the magazine during the year 1925. The judges for this prize will be: Charles Granger Blanden, the donor; Samuel Travers Clover, editor of the *Argonaut*; and Roy Towner Thompson.