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NO. 7

The LYRIC WEST

A Magazine of American Verse



IN THIS ISSUE

Lew Sarett | Jo Hartman

Caroline Ainslie | Ronald Gordon

R. T. T. and others

JAPANESE HOKKU

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The Lyric West

Vol. IV, No. 7

A Magazine Of Verse

April, 1925

Edited by Roy Towner Thompson

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The Lyric West

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Lew Sarett

Angelique

Twenty-one Moons-of-Berries, and Angelique,
Nurtured to ripeness in the wild black earth
Of St. Hilaire by summer suns and rains,
Waxed like a wild goose plum upon the bough,
From brimming bud, to blossom, into fruit.
Despite the frosts that life had visited
Upon her youth — her father, mother, brothers, all
Had vanished with the sickness-on-the-lungs —
She struggled to survival into beauty.

At twenty-two she found the will to live
In a high sweet dream of loveliness to come,
A dream of home, of a swinging cradleboard
Bearing its fretful cargo from a sea
Of trouble into the port of cool sleep;
Oh, Angelique would mother anything,
A homeless cat, a dog, a broken bird.

At twenty-three the rich maturity
Of full-blown womanhood revealed itself
In every rounded line of hip and bosom,
In every limb that pulsed with ardent wine.
Upon the tree of life she hung, in reach
Of the hand of any passing harvester —
A ripe wild plum, grown full with amber sap
As thick and clear beneath the billowy skin

As a globe of pure wild honey against the sun,
So heavy with life upon the bended twig
That any breeze might shake it from the branch.

But breezes in the parish St. Hilaire
Were few enough, and harvesters were fewer,
What with the lumber-jacks away on drives
In distant logging-camps, and the voyageurs
Trading for pelts, or out on timber-cruise.
Thus Angelique remained upon the bough,
Powdered with bloom as any untouched drupe,
Until the government dentist, Gene Magruder,
Came with the crew of federal engineers.

Magruder was a connoisseur of fruit,
Truly a horticulturist of parts —
And smooth as darkly quiet water flowing
Over a beaver-dam. Oh, he was good
To contemplate, celestial in the eyes
Of guileless Angelique, when mimicking
The moods of heroes in the cinema,
He posed for her at evening in the pines,
Bathed in a purifying flood of moonlight, —
Moonlight that draped him in a spotless robe,
And put upon his pallid face the look
Of an acolyte before a glowing candle.
More beautiful he was in lonely night,
When rippling his fingers on his cedar flute,
He stirred to life within a woman's breast
A nameless poignant yearning, the wistful will
To mother something, someone — a bird, a fawn,

An acolyte before a glowing candle.
And when at last, with patch of open throat
Silverly throbbing like a mating thrush's,
He poured his torrential ardor in a song
That dripped the melancholy of his hunger —
Oh! never a thing of throbbing human flesh
Could long withstand the beat and break of it!
Never a woman but would yield a moan,
And clutching at her breast with trembling hands,
Sink down upon the earth.

So Angelique! —

As when a wild goose plum, mature for harvest,
Shaken among the leaves by a flitting thrush,
Lets loose its tenuous hold upon the twig
And drops to earth, a windfall for the world.
And if a woman, lonely, heavy with seed,
And hungry for a moment of romance,
Assured of the fulfillment of a dream
Of swinging cradleboards, and reassured
That in the Moon-of-Falling-Leaves the curé,
Father Bazile, would bind them with the banns
And sanctify their evening of delight —
If such a woman, in this circumstance,
Yield to the law of gravity, what man
Of wisdom in the ways of nature will put
His heel on her, or stone her with contempt!
So Angelique! — among the murmuring pines
That rim the valley of the Beaverbrook. . . .
While parish St. Hilaire was dark with sleep. . . .
When the hollow mocking laughter of a loon
Echoed within the silver bell of night. . . .

In the Moon-of-Falling-Leaves, upon the banks
Of Beaverbrook, lone Angelique maintained
Her patient vigil, started to the door
With every coming footfall on the trail,
Caught her warm breath with every crackling twig —
As, one by one, the frosted maple-blades,
Floating their bronze upon the wistful blue
Of smoldering autumn, eddied to the sod,
Banded their warmth against a long, long snow.
When the last leaf sank and the maple-tree was bare,
And never a thrush remained upon the bough,
Worn Angelique, grown desolate of hope,
Nursing a dream of cradleboard to come,
And fearful of the thrust of village eyes,
Withdrew herself; secluded in a nook —
A cabin dark with rambling tanglewood —
Safe from the hiss and venom of village talk
That glided, snake-like, on her heels when she
Went forth in day, she gave herself to dreams,
Visions of loveliness to come, tomorrow. . . .

In St. Hilaire old Angelique abides,
Harried and bruised, a windfall for the world,
As any fallen fruit upon the ground,
Broken and pocked by the bills of many birds,
Under the foot of every passing woman,
Under the foot of every passing man.
In St. Hilaire the crone drags out her moons,
Companioned by the slender souvenir
Of a high sweet moment of romance, a seedling

Sprung from a dream gone into yesterday.
Oh, he is beautiful, in the blue of moonlight.

Lew Sarett

George H. Dillon

New Century

They tired in their vague task of touching God,
For He was higher than their highest hill,
And higher than their highest bird's abode,
And higher than Eternity. And still

Rainy, recurrent April came, persisting,
And wound her silver ladders down the air,
And they were newly driven, and they go twisting
Once more, as always, up the endless stair.

Velma Byers Hutchinson

A Marriage Ceremony

I remember that the room was very silent
As the priest's voice rose and thinned,
And that outside, the long September grasses
Whitened as they flattened in the wind.

I might have been thinking of my mother
And of her wedding long ago;
Of how she would grieve that I had married
And no one there to know.

For my mother was married with orange blossoms
And the clamor of a wedding feast,
While for me — in the silence of a little room
Rose the softly mumbled words of a priest.

I should have been thinking of my lover
As he stood beside me there,
And for the long, white night to follow
Should have whispered a hurried prayer.

But all that I remember is the silence
As the priest's voice rose and thinned,
And that there was a sheen like silver
On the grasses as they flattened in the wind.

Georgia Rowles

Garden Magic After Rain

THE RENDEZVOUS

Lost on the wet grass
Of this fairies' ring, two gold
Shoon — turned to poppies!

TOAD-STOOLS

Why call you toad-stools-
Better the ivory tents
Where fairies have lain.

THE SNAIL

Down the lane of red
Tulips, sheens his caravel
Of brown speckled pearl.

TO A BLUE BUTTERFLY

Why so vain of your
Bright blue wings? My thoughts have eyes
That see past the stars!

* There is a note on Japanese *Hokku* in the prose section.

Mary Brennan Clapp

Two Poems

ETHER

“Count, now!”
“A-one, a-two,
A-three, a-four!”
“No more.
She sleeps.”

“Again, now!”
Then a prick, a sting,
A plummet of pain
Cleaves in twain
Still deeps!

This is how
Death dies.
And pain keeps
The balances,
Tittle and jot,
Of *am* and *not*.

I THINK LOVE —

Some said love was a snare, —
Wild white petals somehow held in gossamer,
Just a puff of dust when the winds turn cold.

And some said love was a dare, —
Young hearts jousting for something to do,
Like the brave, silly knights in days of old.

But I think love is like a candle by the stair,
The railing makes queer shadows,
But the steps go up and on.

What shall I find when I climb up there?
A baby sleeping in a dim, sweet room!

Clifford Gessler

Portrait

Rain, and the fresh scent of spring
are in your slender beauty;
you are a birch tree, you are a silver maple in
the
sun.

Your words patter like raindrops . . .
Like sunlight between leaves glides the bright pattern
of
your smile, and in the hush I hear the swift
wings
of your thought . . .

Fling back your hair, bird-girl! Tilt
the fragile chalice of your laughter!

Jo Hartman

Sea Moods

O singer, weave a wistful melody
From drowsy thrumming of the sea at rest,
While harps strike silverly within its breast
The echoes of youth's sweet, lost minstrelsy;
While calm it lies . . . a gorgeous mirrored lake
Of misted turquoise gods might hold in pawn
(A Raphael's brush, gold-dipped, could scarce have
drawn

Such pageantry).

For soon 'twill rise and shake —

A green-grey dragon hissing in the wind —
The slim white sails that listlessly are streaming;
The curving stretch of pebbled shore line grind
To puny-sanded dunes, its wild waves teeming
With terror, mystery, sound where song is still —
A wanton given to some mad love's will!

Frances Wierman

The Husband of Lady Godiva

True it is, women are deceivers!
They make us think them soft, submissive, dull;
And on a sudden — catch us up!
When I dared *her*
I reckoned on her spurning me
And pestering me no more
With her lousy hungry herd.
Yet — there she rides —
Naked, except for her bright hair;
Her body as it were molded of new cream
And sweetly curved as a little shell.
But she seems *covered!*
I could tear off her clothes
But never strip her of *that*. It makes her more
 impregnable
Than the highest tower of my castle.
It would stay whole
An I could crack her every bone!
Greater than modesty,
Proof against threat or weapon, —
I can hear words, feel swords, see blood,
But what *she* has, I cannot grasp!
I'll keep my promise
(Though I shall roar and curse and stamp)
And after this crazy ride

I will be wary!

By God, I'll be in fear of being cut

By that diamond, bedded in white velvet!

Anna George de Mille

The Record

Engraven with the routings of my life
I feel my soul a thing apart from ME,
To hide from you and even from myself,
For fear that seeing it, I may feel shame.

Thus, if I be not honest with a friend,
Or if I deal not cleanly with a foe,
Yet do I know that though I loudly win
The world's applause, I have to face my soul.

And when you flatter me with honeyed words,
Help me to make excuses for my faults —
Still in the dark accounting hours of night
I see the score, what I have gained or lost.

So do not try to write my part, dear friend,
For I must play it in my own strange way;
A judge more stern than you is keeping count,
The record I may not elude — my soul.

Norma Miller

Two Lyrics

MORNING

A slender young birch quivering
 in the pale light . . .
A last defiance to Phoebus
From the bow of Diana!

PRIDE

Pride is a noble garment.
 See, one may put it on
And lift his head serenely
 Until his guests are gone.
And even in the bleak halls
 When guests have gone away
One draws it close about him
 So long as there is day.

Paul Tanaquil

Two Sonnets

RECTOR'S LADY

She sees to it he fills his belly, mends
His curious clothes, knits him ungainly socks,
Directs his efforts to portentous ends,
Winds up his real and figurative clocks.
They have a son — that fact alone attests
How he and she could possibly have lain
In love together. One of God's weak jests
Baptised their fruit with water of the brain.

She dreamed of leaving them; now she has grown
Wed to disgust. Meanwhile he consecrates
All energy to serve a god she hates
(If hatred can possess a heart turned to stone!)
Had I been she, once young and fair to boot,
I would have rather been a prostitute!

SEA-CAPTAIN

He sailed the seas for forty-seven years;
They were to him clear as an open book,
He had been ship-wrecked thrice, once off Algiers,
Then off the Scillys, then off Sandy Hook.
The Germans twice attacked him; he escaped,
And for reward was cited to the King;
His fortune definite, his future shaped,
He was to have retired some time last Spring.

His voyages were run to the last trip,
Home, safe at anchor in the shallowest bay
Of the Atlantic, as he left his ship,
The gangplank swayed . . . tipped, sudden . . . fell away
He hurtled dumbly through the air, this clown,
Landing in water one foot deep — to drown!

Roberta Holloway

A Song of Shadows

Daughter of darkness I, who dwelt apart,
Roaming the far mid-margins of the world.
Out of the void I came, where silence whirled
Its pulsing monotone around my heart.
And in that land was never moon, nor star,
Nor any slender stray of broken light —
Only the desolation of the night
And black, abysmal shadows spreading far.
Out of a lonely land I came; and you
Held out your arms to me, and warmed me there
Upon your shining breast, and filled my hair
With a rich cloud of kisses. Then you drew
My feet, like white birds ruffled in the rain,
Into your hands, and made them smooth again.

Out of the dusk I saw dawn's flower blow,
And day break in a song across the night;
And if my flesh be fair, sweet son of light,
The wonder of your love has made it so.
You were the god who bent your gracious head
And laid your golden beauty at my breast.
Small gift indeed — that I have brought you rest,
Who gave my bloodless lips your own blood's red.
Being a god, you will not understand,
Perhaps, that I have lately been afraid
Of so much shining light, — a lonely maid

Who must remember still my own dead land.
Daughter of darkness I, who go in shame
Back to the land of silence whence I came.

Caroline Ainslie

The Wind-Break

Poplars stood before the wind
In a woven row,
To make this quiet sheltered place
Where apple trees might grow.

But when the first crop colored red
In a frosty dawn,
They cut the poplars one by one,
Until all were gone.

If lanes are straight and fruit is sound
Will there be one remember
Poplars hung a sheet of gold
Last November?

Otis Wade

Love Song

Quick! Quick!
For time is flying;
Love is like
A wild rose dying.

Catch the dawn
With ropes of thunder,
Bind the sea
And dive far under;
Join the dance
Of mermaid's laughter,
Kiss their lips —
Regret it after.

Quick! Quick!
For time is flying;
Love is like
A wild rose dying.

S. Bert Cooksley

Judas Iscariot

Out into the hills went Judas,
Agile, leering, so like an animal
The soft grasses knew not what they bore.
Behind him, the servants of the temple
And the guards . . . walking quietly, all.

Who shall say the heart of Judas
Thought only of thirty pieces of silver?
Who shall say the soul of Judas
Thirsted thirty pieces of silver? . . .

“He whom I kiss upon the cheek is
The Man. . . . harm Him not, fools. . . .”

And John, the beloved disciple, shivered
With Peter and the rest in the cold dawn. . . .
Stupid, wondering . . . bewildered.

Judas, kissing Christ’s cheek
As tenderly as the winds caress a garden,
Still felt it was not too late. . . .
Oh, God! not too late. . . .

Prudence

Agatha is very wise;
She hides her dreams within her eyes,
And makes a cloak of plain gray things
To hide her soul's gay colorings;
Caught in her songs she tones them down
To tints of orchid, mauve, and brown,
When really they are sapphire blue
With glints of orange showing through.

Agatha said that once like me
She wore her dreams where all might see,
And used to try the whole day long
To twist them in a flame of song,
But that they caught her soul instead
In cries that tore her mouth's young red.
Now she uses quiet things
To make her songs — like hills and wings —
And sends them forth sedately clad
As any grave young Quaker lad.

Someday she'll lie quite straight and still
Across the town on Mayburn Hill,
And I'm quite sure in long years she
Will be a slim young maple tree.
Her dreams can then drift o'er the town
In red leaves, gold leaves, green and brown.

Jennette Edwards

Night-Riding

All thrifty folks lie still in bed,
The night was made for sleeping;
All thrifty folks lie still in bed,
But I the road am keeping.

Here is no sound of humankind
My journeying to share,
But the quiet earth is garrulous
With the hoof-beats of my mare.

Like ghosts of soldier sentinels
The trees take dark delight
In marching guard close by the road,
Gossiping with the night.

Beyond these trees I see the plain
In placid levelness,
Content with always sitting down
To meet the woods' caress.

Far down the road a quick bell rings,
The fast train flashes by,
Leaving a slender cloud of smoke
Quivering in the sky.

All thrifty folks lie still in bed,

Ensnared by sleep's grim graces;
But I would ride alone with night,
Remote from human faces.

Ronald Gordon

High-Horse Moon

With the silver lariat of my desire
I would ring the moon,
I would throw the mighty red moon.
I would straddle the ramping, stamping moon
And ride him up, up into the clear sky.
And high, from the viewpoint of the moon'sback,
I would circle the earth.

Then I would take the earth
And write it out in a little book —
A strange tale toned to dusk and silver:
Glittering sheen of whys and wherefores
Playing across ways threading to a patterned purpose.

How beautiful should be the antics
Of the busy little earth-creatures
Moving through the night!

Nellie Burget Miller

Moods

The Dawn is a pale cold nun
 With a silver rosary,
And a saint am I in the morning,
 Who would not be?

But a man of the world am I,
 Careless and debonaire
When the gypsy Dusk comes out of the west
 With a rose in her hair.

Jaen Flower

Because

Because he loved her so,
The world became to him a better place
And all men brothers. He discovered grace
In those he would have passed in scorn before,
The evil in his own heart vexed him sore;
He thrust it out, to make all sweet and fair,
As seemed to him the one he cherished there.
And set up high ideals. He thought it meet
In one who held her in his heart's retreat:
And walked straight paths, where truth and honor go
Because he loved her so.

Paul Eldridge

Comments on Life

TURNING THE CHEEK

Life, Lady of whims,
Hurled stones at me —
I gathered them,
Patiently,
I soaked them long within my blood;
I rounded the sharp uneven points;
I polished and planed them
With palms that ached and trembled
Until they dazzled and soothed
Like setting suns.
I placed them in a perfect circle
Upon a platter of heavy gold,
And bowing,
Humbly,
In the dust,
Returned them, praying:
“Madam, accept these giant rubies
For your diadem!”

FU LUNG, POLITICIAN, EXPLAINS HIMSELF

The one-skinned mouse
Hangs from the teeth of the cat
Tail outward, —
The many-colored chameleon
Escapes the crooked claws
Of the bewildered eagle.
Fu Lung is wise and obedient;
He always follows
The perfect precepts
Of the Eternal Master.

Ruth E. McKee

Wise Woman

She, born a woman,
Achieved a brain,
Mistrusted gladness,
Avoided pain,
Learned Greek and Latin,
Grasped the abstruse,
Left for an epitaph,
“What was the use?”

Weare Holbrook

Breakfast

If there were seas between us,
I would send you bright words winging,
And the world might hear my singing
If there were seas between us.

But porridge bowls between us
Are more vast than any ocean,
And I lose each lyric notion
In the porridge bowls between us.

Japanese Hokku

Americans have had increasing opportunities of late years to become acquainted with the poetry of the Orient. Certainly we have had translations of Chinese poetry in abundance. Japanese poetry has been represented chiefly through translations of the two diminutive, highly chiselled forms, the *Tanka* and the *Hokku*. Professor Longford* gives the following exact information with regard to these forms:

The first characteristic of Japanese poetry which becomes apparent to all students is its extreme brevity. Its whole range includes nothing that approaches an epic, and even narrative poems, which are very few in number, are as short as they are few. The form in which the great majority of poems are written, which is always meant when poetry is mentioned without qualifying description, is known as the *Tanka* (short poem), and the *Tanka* is simply one verse of five lines, containing in all thirty-one syllables. Short as it is, it is divided into two portions, the first, or “upper,” comprising the first three lines, and the second, or “lower,” comprising the last two, and between the two, a slight break always occurs in the sequence, and a pause is made in reading aloud.

There are both longer and shorter poems than the *Tanka*. . . . There is the *Hokku* (or first lines), introduced in the sixteenth century, which consists only of the first three lines that, if extended, would be the upper portion of the *Tanka*. It is so terse that it not infrequently contains no verb, and amounts to what is little more than an exclamation.

Professor Longford warns us that any translation “lamentably fails to do justice to the sentiment of the originals,” the exquisite workmanship of which is compared to that of the tiny ivory carvings so familiar in our museums. He

offers this example:

Asagao ni
Tsurube torarete
Morai-mizu.

Literally translated, it runs, "By the morning-glory the well bucket has been taken — receive water." This means little to us, but to the Japanese mind it conveys something like the following:

The poetess having gone to the well one morning to draw water, found that the tendrils of a morning-glory had twined themselves round the rope. She could not bring herself to disturb the dainty blossoms, so, leaving her own well to the morning-glory, she went and begged water from a neighbor.

* *Japan of the Japanese*, by Joseph H. Longford. New York. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1914.

Yone Noguchi, the well-known contemporary Japanese poet, whose work has appeared in many American magazines says of the *Hokku*: "Such brevity of poetical form might well be compared with an eight-colored butterfly, or . . . with a tiny star carrying the whole sky at its back." Another writer has said that in *Hokku* one sees the world through the eye of a needle.

R. T. T.

Between Editor and Reader

Perhaps a word of explanation is due the old friends of the LYRIC WEST and of Grace Atherton Dennen upon the omission of the latter's name from our title page. Miss Dennen has had no active connection with the magazine since it resumed publication last October. Rather, her connection has been that of adviser and friend, and her name has been printed mainly as a guarantee to the old friends of the magazine that the same ideals, and standards, and policies which she so happily and successfully incorporated in the magazine were to be continued. It is comforting to know that, although Miss Dennen has had no share in the responsibility of editing the magazine during the past six months, she has been in no wise ashamed of having her name appear upon the title page. And, although her name will no longer be printed in the magazine, the high standard which she, as first editor, set will continue to guide the further policy of the magazine.

The present editor cannot refrain from expressing his appreciation of Miss Dennen's work for poetry, for idealism, and for high artistic standards during her three years of editorship. The work was a very great strain, and was borne by her almost alone. But she gave the West a worth while magazine and poets a most creditable medium for self-expression. She started the LYRIC WEST at a time when verse magazines were by no means as plentiful as at present; hers was the pioneer verse magazine on the Pacific Coast. If the LYRIC WEST now enjoys a place among recognized artistic media of the West, if it has a future of promise, these are due very largely to the faithful, unselfish work of Grace Atherton Dennen in laying its foundations.

Three of our February poems were reprinted as follows: "Faggots," by Joan Dareth Prosper in the *New York Herald-Tribune*; "Paris — 1923," by Paul Tanaquil in the

Literary Digest; and "The Running Dawn," by Pauline Garner Curran in the *Los Angeles Sunday Times*. Up to the time of going to press we have received few comments on our March number. "The Secret Knowledge," by "Tonio" (about whom we know as little as the reader) was the subject of several comments, all highly commendatory.

We take due pride in welcoming Lew Sarett back to our pages. Through his two books, *Many, Many Moons* and *The Box of God* he has been widely recognized throughout the country. Although he holds a professorship at Northwestern University, he spends four months of each year in the West as a ranger. One of his animal poems appeared in the February *Atlantic Monthly*. Other old friends to whom readers will need no introduction are Paul Tanaquil, Mary Brennan Clapp, Ellinor L. Norcross, Paul Eldridge, and Weare Holbrook. Georgia Rowles has spent many years in Japan. Frances Wierman will be remembered as the author of "Bill Harper."

Of the contributors who are appearing in the magazine for the first time we can offer little more than the post-office addresses: Clifford Gessler of the *Honolulu Star Bulletin* has recently published a volume, *Slants*; Velma Byers Hutchinson writes from Portland, Oregon, Jo Hartman from San Diego, Anna George de Mille and Otis Wade from Hollywood, Jennette Edwards from Nashville, Tennessee, Ronald Gordon from Indianola, Iowa, and Jaen Flower from St. Joseph, Missouri.

A Correction

We sincerely regret that in printing Lilian White Spencer's sonnet, "Fray Serra," in our last issue, we transposed the last two lines. Not only to make amends to the author, but because the sonnet is well worth it, we re-print the whole:

Fray Serra

Heavy with years and far, he heard the call
Of dusky need and from his cloister came
Shod with fresh youth and in his heart a flame
That leaped across the infinite sea wall
To light new altars with old fire. All
The sweet ways he has hallowed wear his name
Like a white rose and on his memory, Fame
Lovingly casts her great resplendent pall.

Adobe cenotaphs to Monterey
Are stations of his pilgrimage that tell
How holy feet trudged on the king's highway.
Flowers still seek his trail and ocean's swell
Runs up the beach to cool his step with spray. . . .
But he rests in his mission of Carmel.

James, James
Morrison Morrison
Weatherby George Dupree
Took great
Care of his Mother,
Though he was only three.
James James
Said to his Mother,
“Mother,” he said, said he;
“You must never go down to the end of the town, if you
don’t
go down with me.”

From a book of children’ lyrics, written in the spirit of
Mother Goose, *for* and about children and delightfully
illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard. Here are two stanzas from
another selection entitled “Vespers”:

Oh! *Thank you God, for a lovely day.*
And what was the other I had to say?
I said ‘Bless Daddy,’ so what can it be?
Oh! *Now I remember it. God bless me.*

Little boy kneels at the foot of his bed,
Droops on the little hands little gold head.
Hush! Hush! Whisper who dares!
Christopher Robin is saying his prayers.

The book is *When We Were Very Young*, by A. A. Milne,
author of *Mr. Pim Passes*, and published by E. P. Dutton &
Company.

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