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NO. 5

The
LYRIC WEST

A Magazine of American Verse



IN THIS ISSUE

Noel Stearn | Elinor Chipp

Doris L. Bradley | Dorothy Stott Shaw

L. B. M. and others

REVIEWS

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The Lyric West

Vol. VI, No. 5

A Magazine Of American Verse

February, 1927

Edited by Allison Gaw and Ethelean Tyson Gaw

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The Lyric West

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Among Our Contributors

Clinton Scollard, whose reputation as a poet of versatility and polish has long been established, is the author of over forty volumes of verse in addition to a number of other publications.

Charles Howard Marsh, head of the Department of Music in Redlands University, California, is spending a sabbatical year in France.

Elinor Chipp is the author of *Doubting Castle* and *Many Waters*, novels, and *The City*, a volume of verse, and has contributed short stories and poems to a number of magazines.

C. T. Lanham, a graduate of West Point, is an officer in the United States army, stationed at Fort Howard, Maryland.

Edith B. Spaulding is a contributor to the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *McClure's Magazine*.

Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni is Educational Chairman of the Arkansas State Federation of Women's Clubs and the wife of the Professor of Romance Languages at the University of Arkansas.

A. M. Stephen, Noel Stearn, Ethel Romig Fuller, Alberta Bancroft, Alice Ferrin Hensey and Winifred Davidson are all well known to readers of THE LYRIC WEST and have previously been noted in this column.

Of the thirty-one contributors in this issue, one comes to us from France, one from the Belgian Congo, Africa, one from Mexico, one from Canada, three from New York, two from Washington, D. C., one from Maryland, one from Wisconsin, one from Michigan, one from Arkansas, one from Colorado, one from Texas, twelve from California, one from Nevada, and three from Oregon.

Noel Stearn

Choice

Oh, the sunset flare is a gipsy lass
Who beckons to every one!
But cold are the eyes that beckon to me,
Gray eyes filled with timidity,
Like the gray of a misty dawn.

For gray is the color of silence,
And gray is the color of strife,
Steel, and mist, and challenge are gray —
Steady, steady are eyes of gray,
And as hard and as sweet as life.

When to the sun I wandering go,
Oh, do not let them say
I was lured by his gipsy daughter,
By the sun's wild gipsy daughter; —
I'll be wooing his first-born daughter,
Dawn, with the eyes of gray.

Alberta Bancroft

Necessity

So Rachel stole her father's gods —
Such desperate need had never been before.
Here in these valleys safety lay;
These hills gave promise of security;
These stars maintained their spacing in the sky —
(Thus Rachel in her tent,
Obedient to follow Jacob in his flight,
A wispy thing with great, affrighted eyes,
Whom Jacob loved on sight) —
But on beyond these hills
Who knew what horror might be lurking?
Who could tell but what the land beyond
Had broken quite away
And plunged with crashings into far abyss?
Or if the hills and valleys still stretched on,
As Jacob said,
Clear to his father's pasturage in other lands,
Who knew what awful gods
Were lurking in the land between,
All angered at their coming,
To mark them for destruction as they passed?
Laban and his herds at pasture here
In all the sure security
Of this established earth she knew was sure —
What need had he of images
Against this need of hers?

So Rachel stole the images
And never told.
And Jacob all unknowing, slipped away
With all his household and his hard-earned flocks.
And Laban never found his gods again,
Although he followed
And made angry search. —

A tiny story, thrust between
The thunderings of great Jehovah,
Mighty Hebrew God,
And so preserved for us by miracle.
The writer, all aware
That every man has images
To guard him and his tents,
Forgot to tell us what they were,
Those gods that Rachel hid
Amid the camel's trappings —
Strong in power to set a heart at rest.

Katharine Marie Barton

Manna

While others gathered manna, every man
His omer, Israel's poet, Miriam, ran
Fleet-souled into the dawn and plucked seven
Singing colors from the hand of heaven.

Men looked askance. "Thine omer hath no bread!"
"My measure brimmeth over," Miriam said.
Still gleaning loveliness, she sped along —
And spun at dusk a golden-azured song.

Edith Mirick

Caravans

Thoughts are caravans that go
Through dry desert-days — slow — slow.
Their padded feet, from sun to sun,
Fall softly, silently upon
The shifting sand-floor of the mind.
Weary, with night-fall they find
Sleep-oases, where are born
Dream caravans that drift till morn.

Sarah Foss Wolverton

Dead Trees

There are many to sing of the living trees
Sucking sweet sap from earth into sunlit leaves,
But who shall sing of the dead?
Gaunt skeletons where beauty once hath been,
And clingeth round the rough wood still?
On barren peaks where forest fires have swept,
Licking with crackling flames their nesting birds
And sheaves of green to smoke,
They lift black mutilated branches to a stone-blue sky,
The while magenta fire-weed conceals the charred bark
at their feet.

Or on the ocean's rocky shore they lie,
Swept down on surging river-flood from distant lumber
camp,
Prone giants thick of girth, half-hid in drifted sand,
Battered and soaked by a hundred years of tides,
Grey havens for scurrying tiny creatures of the shore —
Sand spiders, crabs, a myriad hopping mites.

And there are trees which living met the water's might
and died.

I know a long brown lake
Between sheer walls of glacier-polished rock,
Where once a green vale full of trees spread fair;
Up to their middles in cold death they stand,

Hemlock and oak and pine,
Defiant keeping the curves of every brittle twig,
The while dry moss, grey as the slime in bogs,
Swings like a specter's hair in long festoons of woe.
And toadstools orange, and red, and brown,
Creep, thick-set poison, along the deep cracks in their
 whitened trunks.

The ravens, feathers ruffled by the sweeping winds,
Pause as they wheel across the water's waste
To perch upon a ghastly branch and croak,
Voicing the grisly desolation of the place.

Dim questions prod the haunting ache my spirit feels.
Whither has fled the urge of energy that drove the soil
To grow from out its dull brown heart these trees
That once were vital forms and still have grace?
Have those swift rays of spirit-force sped on
To drive to crimson glow yon foxglove in the wood,
Or sharpen the coyote's call on mountain slope?
Why do these wood-forms call to me with comradeship
 evading human words?
Does some ray of my lonely spirit call to its far distant
 home
Across a drift of time too vast for human thought?

Robert A. Smith

To the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra

The Swan of Tuonela

—*Sibelius.*

Between dark cliffs dark water flows —
Smooth, deceptive, deeper-current, goes
Past circling whirlpool, eddying, — flows
Onward — Whence? Who knows?

The swan (on solo English horn) glides down and sings.
Unhurried on the hastening stream, with folded wings,
The passing of some sighing soul he sings.

To what land does the soul, stream-wafted, go?
To what land does this dark, deep water flow?
Ends in some broad meadow, bright with happy flowers
 aglow?
Or plunges down with mocking laughter, down to
 plumbless depths below?

The swan is still.
A whisper passes from the cello to the violin.
Another soul is gone.

Edna Worthley Underwood

Songs From the Andes

A Travel Sequence

*I. Puna**

Silence and cold and the long black night!
The shaggy-necked llamas have swung from sight.
Soft shadows now on this windless height
 The pallid *puna* stain.

Peace — on God's giant Andean stair,
Peace — on the steel-thin summits bare,
Sleep for hill-herdsmen everywhere.

For you and me, Love, the unloading of care —
 Sleep, too, on the frozen plain.

II. Evening Rain

The flying battle-splendor of the rain
On buff, blond Arequipa's streets
Is resonant as proud Pizarro's spears.

My old court shows square Moorish flagstones, worn,
And gaunt bare walls that Goya loved.
They catch up light from grand Chanchani's glaciers
 glistening
To fling in it sun-yellow throats of rows of dripping
 flowers.
That grey convent, by the giant Andes dwarfed,
Calls to my heart.
The patient, plaintive bells are dulled with sleep;
They sound far, far away —

The slanting convent roof is all ashine.

**Puna:* The mountain prairie of Peru.

III. Moon and Night Over El Misti

The terror of white snow peaks — lofty, lone!
The terror of a moon so huge, so wan,
It could not hang above a humble earth.

Across birds fly, unkempt, disheveled, black —
Black birds with open beaks, and tongues outthrust,
With gestures of despair, with agony.

Why passes Pity by the pendent moon!

IV. In an Old Garden of Peru

These are not eyes of night, nor wild new moons,
Nor flecks of whining foam from some lashed sea,
But morning-glories, dead against the dusk;

White morning-glories — sweet, candescent globes
That glow across the deepening, drifting dusk.

V. A Mountain Madonna

Cross-legged she sits. She trots her donkey down
Steep mountain ways where red abysses frown.
Her blue-swathed brow bends o'er a babe clutched to
her breast,
Her eyes alight with peace — supremely blest.

Sly foxes slip ahead. Night's white with the great
drouth,
Bleached eyes of flowers, the fire-pale constellations of
the south.

Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni

Magdalene

The calendar lies open here before me,
Each day a Saint or a Santification
To glorify our Holy Mother Church.
Andrew the Apostle, Elizabeth the Queen,
Leonard the Friar, Sylvester the Pope,
Rosa the Virgin, Catherine the Martyr,
Bishops, philosophers, and David the King —
Each has a feast day.
They stay shoulder to shoulder
Feeling most worthy of each other's company.
But there, among the glorious Kings and Martyrs,
Is one who did not earn her place and glory
By learning, torture, virginity, or fame.
She is of Saints the most unworthy;
Still of them all greatest is she
Because "she hath loved much."

Elinor Chipp

Awakening

The long waves beat with an angry tune,
A crimson moon rode over the sea,
The dunes were white with a level light
That night when you had your will of me.

A blind tide creeps to a silent beach,
(Rivers must yield when they meet the sea)
But salt the tang of the ebbing tide
And bitter the taste of love to me!

Frances Wierman

Woman

Woman was meant to be a tree of life,
A cooling shelter for the heart of Man,
Upon his journey on a dusty road;
A screen through which the blinding rays
Of sun would break in patterns of leaf tracery,
Hieroglyphs of the Creator's thoughts for Man to read;
Her myriad arms to cradle tenderly
All forms; and her maternal murmuring
To lull the beast and waken sleeping soul!

Man made of her a Thing, a log denuded, bare,
A universal crucifix whereon, with sodden jest,
His body hangs until his soul has flown.

Oh, Woman, who was meant to be a tree of life!

Charles Howard Marsh

Of a Prostitute Redeemed

(After reading Wassermann's World's Illusion)

I thought there could be no release for me,
Whose body lies a phallic sacrifice,
A prey to every cunning low device
That gives the beast in man false liberty.
No more, I thought, the fires of love could be
A hope of life, to cunningly entice
The confidence of hearts at peace. No price
Would be too dear for that glad surety.

Yet I who see the bestial side of men
Was lifted from the mire of sordid things
And filled with hope. I do not understand
How it could be that you, Heaven's citizen,
With all the gracious chivalry of kings,
Would kneel by me in hell and kiss my hand!

Ramsay L. Harris

Ecclesiastes, 12: 1-7

Metrical Rendering

Cleave to thy God in the days of youth
Ere the dark days come or the years draw nigh
When life shall be as a faded truth
And clouded o'er with an anguished cry;

While the sun and the light of the noonday proud
And the moon and stars be undimmed and fair;
Nor the frail, white curtain of drifting cloud
Cast its gloom on the rain-sweet air.

Cleave to thy God when the hands wax frail,
And palsy taketh the stalwart limb,
When the grinders, reft of their comrades, fail
And the lights in the aged eyes grow dim,

And the doors on the silent streets shall close,
Close when the sounds of toil shall cease,
And the dawn-watch wasteth the night's repose
Where songs give way to a saddened peace.

And terrors shall tend on that last, sad hour,
And fears shall brood by the lonely trail,
And the hair grow white as the almond-flower
And the limbs droop low as the passions pale —

For man goeth out to his last, long home,
 Yea, man lieth down for his last, long sleep;
And scarce hath his body become as loam
 Ere they wait without who are paid to weep —

Or ever the silver cord divide
 And the golden bowl of the light be sped,
Or the pitcher fail at the fountain-side
 For a broken wheel at the cistern head.

Dust unto dust at the last decline
 Shall mix with the clay from whence it came,
And the soul, set free of its mouldered shrine,
 Unfettered burn in the great God-Flame.

A. M. Stephen

Challenge

“Fling me the gauntlet, Life,” he said
Whose heart eternal youth
Had dowered with light of far-flung skies,
The open road, and the sweet surmise
That love is one with truth.

“Here is a quest for a Galahad,
And a Graal whose jewelled rim
Is a flaming sign in a midnight sky,
A trumpet-call, or a star on high
In a twilight grey and dim.

“For suns may fail on the edge of morn
More pale than the salt sea-foam,
And ships go down in the dark of night
Or stark winds rave with a fiend’s delight
Where our wandering feet shall roam —

“Yet give me, Love, on the long, long road,
Your heart as a home for me!
Your touch will wake, as a seraph’s wing,
A wind of dawn whose breath will bring
Our dream ships from the sea.”

W. W. Robinson

Accents of Night

I. Frailty

A tree-group wind-bent,
Far straining from the Western Sea.

Lithe, delicate limbs,
Dark foliage —
A frail and beautiful pattern pressing against
The grey violet of the sky.

Lean branches — naked arms uplifted —
Ending unadorned,
Like skeleton fingers.

Eucalypti of new and arresting beauty.
Aristocrats in the fine flow of line, in the natural
 harmonies —
Aristocrats protesting the harsh moods of the sea.

Behind — a young, wan moon, elusive,
Gliding through cloudy fields,
Lifting now and then the veil of shadowed light,
Touching the scene with weird and occasional
 luminosity.

A silhouette — finely designed —
Like a print by Hiroshige

II. Creeping Fear

Over the black waters a creeping fear —
A touch of terror at once weird and audible —
Bred of night, tide, wind and Unknown Power.

From out the dark depths of distance comes the surf;
It advances in broken ranks, white plumes nodding;
Closer, it bounds like river-rapids,
To plunge into chaos upon the shoulders of vague rocks,
Into a battling and seething of currents,
Into a crashing of seas, where a hundred crests
Toss aloft their banners of spray.
A jutting shelf is being blotted beneath the enveloping
 white,
While over the sand the water sweeps in great dark
 fans.

Loud are the accents,
Mingled into one hoarse, undying uproar —
The tumbling and cannonading of surf,
The swish of racing currents,
The bellowing of caves,
And the hiss of blowing winds.

Over the black waters a creeping fear. . . .

C. T. Lanham

Armageddon

Death sows darkly. Who may know the sowing?
Rank green growth in a black-green pool,
Wind-vine writhing in an agony of growing,
And cypress roots in the heart of a fool.

Death sows darkly! There shall be a reaping
Ultimate and bitter of the things that be.
Ah, poor fool, look well to your weeping
When laced foam whitens your last black sea!

Clinton Scollard

The Drama's End

Nevada

Quite casually remarked my new-found friend,
Straight, sinewy, and all of six feet two,
Beardless and bronzed, with brooding eyes of blue,
Speaking about the drama and its end: —

“They closed up Collamore’s after that night
Six years ago. I had just trailed down,
Down from the mountains at the edge of dusk.
I’d seen my burros fed, and happened in
After a day’s prospecting where Mount Rose
With its eternal snows ascends the sky.
’Twas quite a spacious place, was Collamore’s;
There must have been a hundred girls and men
Drinking and gaming, staking their red gold
Where Big Bill dealt at faro. I knew Bill.
‘Hullo!’ I said to him. ‘Hullo!’ said he,
Raising his eyes a second from the cards
To drop them with a murmur — ‘The queen wins.’
That was the card between his finger tips.
‘Hell!’ some one hissed, and all was still. Bill smiled,
Smiled just a little, a slow sort of smile;
And then the man who’d hissed, he hissed again,
And flung a woman’s name across at Bill
With some foul implication I won’t tell of.
Bill hunched so quick you could not see his hand;

A couple of guns began to bark and blaze,
And — well, the floor was soft enough for me,
Being right close to Bill. 'Twas soft enough
For pretty much the whole one hundred there.
The foolish guy who hissed and pulled on Bill
Got his — and got it right straight through the heart.
They hauled him out and planted him next day.
And Bill? He used his left hand after that,
Having no right you could take notice of.
A trial? No, there wasn't any trial;
They called the incident 'unwritten law.'
Believe me, that was not a movie show!
After that night they closed up Collamore's!"

Doris L. Bradley

Hill Lament

Thro' seven vistas I have searched for you. . .
I dream away the hours
Upon this monotone of tumbled heights.
Southern hills press cool lips
Against a passionless sky,
The Sun kneels under the West,
And East and North the same
Dull immobility.

Perhaps I am a figure in a painted scene,
Tucked in a corner near the dusty frame,
And all these grazing sheep the central story!
Well, if a Figure, I can only dream;
And if Myself,
My search shall bring you close.

Love that never came,
Drift to me out of the far valley,
From the torturing, immaculate heavens!

These mountains are crude chains
That bind my feet,
Imprisoning me with utter egotism.

Were you a prisoner too, I should be free,
Content that you, as I, were artist's skill. . .

From dawn to dawn
In every harsh horizon,
Thro' seven vistas I have searched for you.

Edith Clarke Curtiss

Sacrilege

Long strings of box cars, some empty, some loaded,
Rolling, day after day,
Monotonously across the broad expanse of the
continent,
Awkward and unbeautiful
As befits those doomed always to labor
At the ceaseless drudgery of Commerce.

“Out of the dizzy maze of the yards we crawl,
Past straggling factories that mark the dingy frontier
of the city;
Then, triumphantly, *clackety-clack, clackety-clack*,
Cleaving the acres of prosperous farm lands and
orchards,
Over long miles of glistening rails that lie, helpless,
Beneath the hot sun of the prairies;
Enduring with patience the heat and dust of the
sidings —
But on — always on —
To the tiring ascent of those purple monarchs, the
Rockies.
Our screeching complaint at the curves
Causes whole forests to shiver and cringe at the
discord,
While the challenging snorts of the conquering
monsters that draw us

Echo and pulse through the depths of the canyons. . . .
A moment's pause at the very crest of the summit,
Then, carefully down,
Bearing our burden for you, you little hurrying people,
Whom we serve greatly.

“A stinking, slovenly tug,
Who has never known heights
Nor devoured the far-flung distances of the deserts,
Who would never dare venture
Beyond the prescribed confines of her little harbor,
Who puffs back and forth
Profaning the cool, green quietness of the water,
Now shrieks with importance as she tows us,
One after the other,
In abject line across the bay!”

Lady Wanderlust

She comes with all the south wind in her hair —
A busy whispering of fruit and flowers;
Her eyes hold wakened dreams that bravely fare
With Ecstasy astride fast racing hours.

Her every motion wafts a lilting scent
That clings despite that emptied reel of miles
Spun from the rod of separation — bent
In playing captured charms of southern isles.

Her poise is virile as of fresh green things
That, frailly fashioned, yet defy the rain,
And breasting storms' impetuous black wings,
Find strength their virgin softness to sustain.

Romance and glamour hold her groping hand;
Her hungering feet are shod of mystery;
Daughter she is of ever an alien land —
True love to him whose breath is errantry.

Herbert Rose

Mediocrity

I'd rather be, by far,
A falling, flaming star,
And paint a streak across the Dark,
For all the world to mark,
Than, hung in space, obscure,
Ten billion years endure!

I'd rather be a flying star,
In gloried flash afar
To fall into the arms of Night
And flame and die aflight.

Alberta Bancroft

The Street of the Wind

Sometimes

From the top of the tower

You can see in the waning day

Stretched on the air beside you —

Broad, ashimmer, asway —

The Street of the Wind,

Empty and bleak and bare;

And the freezing breath of its presence

Sucks at you in the air —

Empty, apart and endless,

Apulse in the sickening skies —

Empty? —

There! Did you see That pass

With fear-held, stricken eyes,

Fast in the clutch of the Street of the Wind,

Helpless to turn or stay,

Streaming past on the Street of the Wind,

Caught and whirled away?

There! Another, with tangled hair

And bulging eyes alight,

Its round mouth set in an endless scream,

Whirling down the night

Hard in the clutch of the Street of the Wind,

Stiff with frost and rime,

Streaming down the Street of the Wind,
On to the end of Time —

Quick!

Clatter down the tower stair. . .

We only thought that street was there.

Ruby Weyburn Tobias

Storm

A slow, bright caravan is trekking north
 Across the western sand,
Bearing its cargo of rich dye-stuff forth
 To some far Samarkand;

But well to southward looms a threatening horde,
 Above that burning sea:
Careening with its swart-browed brigands toward
 Night's caravansary.

I think swift jinn will overtake them all,
 Before they meet and clash,
For hark! I hear their low, deep rallying call,
 And see their white flames flash.

Winifred Davidson

In Storm

Far winds sigh,
Near winds brawl,
Mad crests vault high
And the ship's how small!

Lines wet and taut,
Fraying, shriek;
It's a long run to port
And the old ship's weak.

Worn rails jig,
Sprung planks groan;
A sea grave's big
And a doomed ship lone.

Alice Ferrin Hensey

Carmen F., Half-Half

*Moon, my Congo moon,
Swing low and tell your story —
Tell, as your watching eye down-burns,
Tales of might and glory.*

I see a bronzy slip of a girl
On a sandy beach lone standing,
Listening the *kom, kom, kom*, of the summoning
dance-drum,
“Croc-skin” covered and black,
Beaten by fingers nervous, quick,
Of her people.
Her people? — reeling, bending,
Twisting, advancing, receding,
Suggesting, inviting, denying,
In vexing weird contortions
Of dancing elemental?
No, not *her* people — for Carmen F. is Half-Half.

She hears the wild throbbing call
Of that leering, jeering, mad drum,
And her slim young feet twitch,
They move, they slide, they shuffle;
Her grey eyes glance and burn.
In her perfumed, flat-combed wool
Gleam golden combs;
Rare filigree silver rings

Hang from small ear lobes shell-dainty,
Outshining gleam of leopard-claw brooch
And polished horn-*jikunda*
That rise and fall on her breast —
Not *her* people's charms, for Carmen F. is Half-Half.

She turns her face quick danceward,
Then sudden slinks back, remembering.
From strollers under palms
Come silvery tones Parisian:
"Non, non, monsieur — pardon!"
"Mais, madame, c'est bien certain."
To her neat hut
In anger shamed she hastens,
And lights a swinging copper lamp;
Calling a serving-lad from the dusk
Of the half-dark clay-walled kitchen,
Gives order quick for dinner;
Then bends over linen fine, at dainty lacework.
"Madame is served" — (correct, Jean!) —
And Carmen dines in dignity
On linen clean and white,
With granite plates and tin forks,
Spoons of time-thinned silver,
Haviland cups all paper-clear —
Roses dew-wet.
Her mother zealously guards
The girl's prestige, as befitting
A daughter of the late proud father,
Whose time-worn silver service
And monogramed linen old

As heirlooms of her people he left to Carmen.
Her people? No — for Carmen F. is Half-Half.

Carmen dines in dignity —
A crystal dish of rare hors-d'oeuvres,
Hot cream-soup rich and suave,
Gray-blue gluey toko-bread,
Four-day-dead venison,
With salad crisp and mayonnaise
Served from old Sévres,
A glass of wine with wafers,
Plump almonds blanched, and raisins secs,
Sugar-cane cubes and a demi-tasse . . .
“Dinner” once more over,
A special toilette claims her,
So, dressing, she warbles a Frenchy little tune.
Over face, fingers, and throat
She dusts patrician-fine powder,
A touch of rouge on cheeks,
Cheap perfume on fine kerchief.
Then into the new frock
Of sweltering, proud red velvet —
Black Paris pumps
French-heeled with buckles gleaming!
So forth to meet her fiancé,
Swarthy and thin with black beard scanty,
Gold chains and seals arattle,
Twirling a cane of bamboo —
Gay lover, “dark-white” breed —
west-of-southwest-Europe.

Carmen flings her small head high;
She's glad and flattered and frightened;
She's all aglow with pride
And a touch of half-vague dread
(His roving eyes *are* strange).
Next week will come Père Benedict
To the church, and after mass is finished
(How proud her father, could he know!)
The priest will read the marriage rites
'Mid stare and nod and mutter
Of black, gray, white, and yellow.
Her people? Somewhat — for Carmen F. is Half-Half.

Already she sees the gifts —
Chairs, dishes, a green lamp,
A loud new phonograph,
Clay cooking-pots, reed baskets,
In motley, strange array,
Like the jostling crowd of givers.
No chance “arrangement” this,
But a real, priest-tied *church-marriage!*
Carmen will be half-proud, half-shamed,
Half-glad, half-sad, and half-mated,
Carmen will be half-loved, half-shunned,
Half-feared, half-scorned, half-hated —
Her people and his! — for Carmen F. is Half-Half.

Ethel Romig Fuller

On Making a Fiddle

Old wood, dead wood, seasoned wood lain
For years away from sun and rain —

Oregon maple, Canadian spruce,
Heart of a forest for the use

Of the old fiddle-maker who carves it thin,
Gauging its strength with the touch of a djinn;

Scraping it, shaping it satiny fine,
To incredible grace of curve and line,

And dyeing it with a dark rich stain —
Key to the hidden beauty of grain;

Burnishing, polishing it until
It takes the sun like a brown bird's quill.

Then he breathes a soul in the taut, tense strings,
And the quivering wood comes alive and sings —

Sings of awakened April floods,
Of delicate cones, of pink young buds —

Sings of leaves bewitched in June,
Of winds gone mad and a broken moon —

Sings of black bare boughs that write
Runes on the sky of a winter night.

Oh, the old fiddle-maker in God-like elation
Fiddles away on his own creation.

Till in resurrection the dead wood sobs
To the miracle of its new heart-throbs.

Ben Field

Swords

They flash and lunge and grimly thrust,
 Their slithering sharpness pierces me, —
But my resistance is like dust
 Against the onslaught of the sea.

The sword of Damocles hangs low
 And I look up with wondering air —
A Samurai could plunge it so
 With damask touch across the hair.

The sword of Solomon defends
 And bares my every thought to err —
Crusaders fight with Saracens
 And draw for Holy Sepulchre.

Saint Peter's blade is bared for me
 And only Christ discerns his thought:
Herodias would gladly see
 My head upon a charger brought.

All these! and I have struck in turn
 And cared no whit for Christ, my Lord! —
Whose sword for blood doth redly yearn
 Shall perish by the selfsame sword.

Dorothy Stott Shaw

Rome

Lovely things pass soon away:

Raphael, like his angels, fair;
Keats's laughter, brief and gay;
Simonetta's golden hair;

Shelley's hands, and Angelo;

Palestrina's gentle gaze —
Gone so very long ago.

Cæsar stays.

Words Unspoken

Ye're lyin', *gillie mo chridhe*, under the snow and
heather,
Under the springtime blossoms, under the autumn
rain,
Sleepin' safe i' the brown earth, mindin' na wind nor
weather;
Whiles will ye yet remember dawn on the hills again?

Ye went, *a gillie mo chridhe*, out in the gloamin' lonely,
Leavin' the words unspoken yet when your lips were
cold.
— If He'd left you wi' me just one little summer only,
Here when the whin's in blossom ye'd missed nae
streets o' gold.

Tell me, *gillie mo chridhe*, now while my head lies
weary
Here i' the sweet bell-heather ower your heart, my own,
—No, ye shall rest, dear laddie, under the moorland
dreary,
While I am walking sadly a' o' the way alone.

Rest, then, *gillie mo chridhe*. Warm on the earth above
you
Fall my tears, but it isna sorrow, that gars me weep;

For, though you never told me, “Máire, *a rúin*, I love
you,”

We knew; and the words unspoken never need break
your sleep.

Gillie mo chridhe (cre-ye): lad of my heart.

Jessie Weber Kitt

Penitence

I could not answer when you called,
For I was bound —

Stiff thongs of duty, and my pride
Had wrapped me round.

Now — if your slightest thought could pierce
The silence through —
I'd go the length of heaven and hell
To come to you!

Lori Petri

Blue

So many radiant things are blue —
Heavens of fragile turquoise tint;
Thin, curling smoke; a seaward view;
The eyes of laughing girls, that hint
Of sudden stars or sun-touched dew:
So many dear, delightful things —
Forget-me-nots, and gentians too;
A bluebird's crisp and curving wings —
I think the soul's own hidden hue
Must be some lovely shade of blue!

Red Rhododendrons

I have seen red rhododendrons flaming in forest
 glooms;
I have seen them gleaming in brass bowls in shaded
 rooms;
And I have seen them in the black braids of a Hindu
 maiden,
As she came swinging down the hills, with wilted
 nettles laden.
I love red rhododendrons that vehemently gleam,
Against nocturnal backgrounds — a gorgeous, daring
 dream.

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Porter Myron Chaffee

Life

Life is a street car
Where all are comfortably seated
But the poets.
Strange creatures —
They wobble in a more or less uncertain manner,
Strap-hanging to the moon and stars.

Our Younger Singers

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Elise Stearns

Sky Egret

Over the rice-sown slope,
Stands the cloud-plumed egret.
His floating tail spreads feather fingers
Over the sky to the sunset.
He blushes lightly as he looks over his shoulder,
Preening his wing —
For he sees his mirrored glory in the heap of gold in the
west.
A tall, faintly rose egret,
He stands in the corner of the east,
Leaning silently against the background of blue sky,
And holding a black, Japan tree in his claw . . .

(Girls' Collegiate School, Glendora, California.)

Peggy Patching

Woven in Lavender

My lady,
You are a bit of heliotrope,
And your eyes are like deep violets.
When you dance you are like an orchid chiffon scarf
Fluttering from the arms that so lightly hold you.
You stand stately and wistful like the slender lilac;
Your frail beauty gleams in the moonlight
As a mauve dusk sifted over with powdered silver.
You breathe the scent of lavender sachets,
While your lips are cool and fragrant
As dew-drenched wisteria petals,
My lady.

(High School of Commerce, Portland, Oregon.)

Prize Awards

Board of Judges

Dr. Richard Burton, author, scholar and critic.

George Sterling, poet. (Mr. Sterling's decision reached the office of THE LYRIC WEST five days before his death.)

Dr. Allison Gaw, Chairman of the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Southern California, and editor of THE LYRIC WEST.

The SARAH BIXBY SMITH PRIZE of Fifty Dollars for the best lyric poem published in THE LYRIC WEST in the fifth volume of the magazine, i. e., from October, 1925, to September, 1925, inclusive, is awarded to *Children*, by Leslie Wallace, in the May-June number.

The BEN FIELD PRIZE of Fifty Dollars for the best poem irrespective of type in volume five, is awarded to *To Omar Khayyam*, by Clark Ashton Smith, also in the May-June number.

The choice was difficult. Each judge was requested to select, in order of excellence, ten poems for each of the two awards; and the lists were characterized by marked diversity. Among poems that also stood high in two or more of the various groupings should be mentioned Vachel Lindsay's *The Parable of Deepness* (November), Jamie S. Holme's *The Song Unsung* (February), Augusta Bancroft's *En Tour* (April), Mirza French Mackay's *L'Alouette* (May-June), Isabel F. Conant's *Songs of Time, Space, and Values* (May-June), Snow Longley's *A Song for Rosetime* (May-June), and B. Y. Williams' *Forgotten* (November).

We quote with appreciation the words of the veteran critic, Dr. Richard Burton, who, after studying the volume, writes: "I can say in all sincerity that I think the average of quality runs very high and that your magazine is publishing as good verse

as any periodical in the country.”

Brief Reviews

Edgar Lee Masters' *Lee: A Dramatic Poem* — (Macmillan) — has depth rather than grace. Although rather ponderous, as is the way with the author's dramatic verse, there are some excellent lines and some fine interpretive philosophical bits as to that period in American development. Unfortunately these real values are too often encumbered with sentiments uttered in *furioso*. The drama could never be staged. It can be read only with difficulty. But it is an extremely interesting thing, its gospel of tolerance significant indeed, since war hatreds are still smoking in our world.

George Sterling's *Robinson Jeffers* (Boni and Livewright) is interesting for its information concerning this comparatively little known poet, and for the characteristic utterance it seems of the author. Sterling understood the genius of Jeffers' work, though he was not long acquainted with the man. Few have understood Jeffers, perhaps because his system of punctuation has been a too efficient barrier — "one of those mysteries still unrevealed by the Divine Intelligence." Acrimonious toward California critics in their reactions to his Jeffers, Sterling quotes widely from critics from afar who have appreciated the vivid flash of *Tamar*, *Roan Stallion*, *The Tower Beyond Tragedy*, *The Coast Range Christ* and the others of unusual strength. If you own any of Jeffers' volumes, have the Sterling study to stand beside them and to preface their reading.

John Russell McCarthy's *For the Morning* (Doubleday, Page) shows a pleasing facility of style and attitude towards nature. If it has no superlative qualities as poetry, surely it can claim most of the moderate ones, as the poems are of even quality, happily rhythmic as the clear morning light they would proclaim. This, called *Spring*, has a delightful humor:

“A thousand little slimy things
Are praising God with me.
They go chipping and chirping about their pond,
Like smooth jigglers and wigglers that only a child
could touch;
And every ecstatic wiggle is a ‘Hail Mary’!
And the chips and chirps are a squeaky ‘amen chorus’.
These happy little devils know what they are wiggling
about,
And chipping and chirping about,
Just as well as I know why I stand on the mountain-top
and shout.
Very likely, one of these days,
They and I will do a little cursing together;
But now, in the spring, we are praising, praising;
A thousand little slimy things
Are praising God with me.

Ralph Cheyney’s *Touch and Go*, together with the accompanying illustrations, are for the jaded poetry reader, while Lucia Trent’s *Dawn Stars* is for any who need soothing to a conservative and peaceful state of mind. The former, both in text and picture, has the charm of the perverse abstract, reminding one for the most part of explosive, bizarre fragments of broken sky-rockets, very intriguing if only the reader knows what to do with them. The latter volume will be found an effective contrast. Both are published by Henry Harrison in New York.

Humor is always more satisfactorily broadcast by quotation than by review. Hence the following, which comes out of Sherman Ripley’s *Moon Shadows* (Vinal):

Fleas

(With humble apologies to Joyce Kilmer)

I think that I shall never see
A bug as pesky as a flea.

A flea who does his level best
To be a perfect little pest.

Who grows in numbers day by day
More prevalent in every way.

Who, when you put your finger where
He ought to be—he isn't there!

Who, when expelled with might and main,
Comes intimately back again.

Poems are made by fools like me;
God only knows who makes a flea!

L. B. M.

Some Places Where the Lyric West May Be Purchased

BOSTON:

Smith and McCance, 5 Ashburton Street.

Marjorie Knapp Book Shop, 110 Mt. Vernon Street.

NEW YORK CITY:

Brentano's, Fifth Avenue and 27th Street.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:

Brentano's, F and 12th Avenue, N. W.

CHICAGO:

Brentano's. 218-224 South Wabash Street.

Marshall Field Company, 219 West Adams Street.

University of Chicago Book Store, 5802 Ellis Avenue.

PHOENIX, ARIZONA:

E. J. Doyle, Broadway and North Central Avenue.

SAN FRANCISCO:

Paul Elder, 239 Post Street.

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA:

The Sather Gate Book Shop, 2271 Telegraph Avenue.

SANTA BARBARA:

Tecolote Book Shop, 25 Paseo de la Guerra.

LOS ANGELES:

Fowler Brothers, 747 South Broadway.

Parker Book Store, 520 West 6th Street.

Jones' Book Store, 426 West 6th Street.

Bullock's Department Store, 7th and Broadway.

California News Agency, Metropolitan Bldg., 5th &
Bwdy.

Associated Students' Book Store, University of
Southern California, 36th and University Ave.

HOLLYWOOD:

Hollywood Book Store, 6812 Hollywood Boulevard.