

# THE MASQUE OF POETS\*

EDITED BY EDWARD J. O'BRIEN

## PRELUDES

IF YOU stand where I stand—  
in my boudoir—  
(don't mind my shaving—  
I can't afford a barber)—  
you can see into her boudoir—  
you can see milady—  
her back, her green smock, the bench she loves—  
her hair always down in the morning—  
(the sun conspiring with the curtains?)—  
reddish brown,  
with ringlets at the tips—  
the hairdresser called this A. M.—  
him I have to, I want to afford.  
Unhappily, you can't see her face—  
only the back of her small round head—  
and a glint of her ears, two glints—  
but her hands, alas, not her hands, though  
happily, you can hear them.  
It isn't a clavichord—  
only a satinwood square—  
bought cheap at an auction—  
but it might be, you'd think it,  
a clavichord, bequeathed by the past—  
it sounds quite like feathers.  
Bach? Yes, who else could that be—  
whom else would you have in the morning—  
with the sun and milady?

*\*Last month it was announced that in this issue of THE BOOKMAN the names of the contributors to "The Masque of Poets" would be given, together with the titles of the poems which claim their authorship. Some belated contributions that, it is felt, are too good to be left out of the series, necessitates extending the department "The Masque of Poets," through this and the following issue. In January the contributors' names will be given. The following is a list of those who have written poems appearing in the series: Thomas Walsh, Witter Bynner, Margaret Widdemer, Amelia Josephine Burr, Anna Hempstead Branch, William Rose Benét, Sarah N. Cleghorn, William Alexander Percy, Christopher Morley, Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, Vincent O'Sullivan, John Gould Fletcher, Grace Hazard Conkling, Sara Teasdale, George Sterling, Harriet Monroe, Edgar Lee Masters, Arthur Davison Ficke, Bliss Carman, Alfred Kreymborg, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Lincoln Colcord, William Stanley Braithwaite, Conrad Aiken, Josephine Preston Peabody, Lizette Woodworth Reese, Amy Lowell, Charles Wharton Stork, Edward J. O'Brien. The series has continued throughout the year, and in the January number, the poems, given hitherto anonymously, will be listed with their authors' names.*

Grave? Yes, but so is the sun—  
 not always? No, but please don't ponder—  
 listen, hear the theme—  
 hear it dig into the earth of harmonies.  
 A dissonance? No, 'twas only a stone—  
 which powders into particles with the rest.  
 Now follow the theme—  
 down, down, into the soil—  
 calling, evoking the spirit of birth—  
 you hear those new tones—  
 that sprinkle, that burst—  
 roulade and arpeggio?  
 Gently now, firmly—  
 with solemn persuasion—  
 hiding a whimsic raillery—  
 (does a dead king raise his forefinger?)—  
 though they would, though they might—  
 no phrase can escape—  
 the theme, the theme rules.  
 Unhappy? Nay, nay—  
 they ought to be happy—  
 each is because of, in spite of, the other—  
 that is democracy.  
 He can't spare a particle—  
 that priest of the morning sun—  
 A mistake? Yes indeed, but—  
 all the more human—  
 would you have her drum like a schoolmaster—  
 abominable right note at the right time—  
 in the morning, so early—  
 or ever at all?  
 She'll play it again—  
 oh don't, please don't clap—  
 you'll disturb them!  
 Here, try my tobacco—  
 good, a deep pipeful, eh?—  
 an aromatic blend—  
 my other extravagance—  
 yes, I'll join you, but wait—  
 I must first dry my face!

#### PRAYER BEFORE SUMMER

Once more across the frozen hills  
 Comes the premonitory breath  
 Of violets and of daffodils  
 Returning from their masque of death;

And barren branches faintly shake  
 To the vibrations of the sun;  
 In the blue sky swift wings awake:  
 The dance of April is begun.