

There are millions upon millions of miles of earth, air and water
that cannot hear them or see them.

Quatrillions upon quadrillions of stars that cannot accomplish the
miracle.

That couldn't if they wanted to, haven't it in them to want to.
So it is well that people read books, go to plays, hie to operas and
museums.

Well indeed that they hear and see themselves.

Most fortunate that they like what they are.

And so express themselves.

It is all they can do.

THE CHARM OF LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY

BY JESSIE B. RITTENHOUSE

YOU will find me on Vista Avenue, off Woodland Road, in Auburn-dale," she had written, and here I was, on a crisp winter morning, setting out from Boston to visit the first poet I had ever seen in the flesh. I had reached Boston only a night or two before, without an acquaintance in the old city which was still the awesome court of American letters; had reached there at a most dramatic moment, when the people were thronging the Common, and processions with torches were filing up Beacon Hill to the State House where a trumpeter in mediæval costume was announcing—not the New Year but the New Century! I look back upon it as a romantic ruling of events that, having made the impractical hazard of poetic criticism as a life work, I was impelled to cast myself upon Boston with the tide of the new century.

What New York and other cities are to poetry publication now, Boston and Boston alone was, at that time. Aside from the poetic output of the old and stable houses, the young firm of Copeland and Day had started in the middle 'nineties, equipped chiefly with enthusiasm and discernment; but before paying the final price of its daring, it had given to the world the "Songs From Vagabondia" and many other volumes which make its imprint of value to collectors. Small, Maynard and Company had taken over most of the Copeland and Day books and were bringing out the "Last Songs" in the Vagabondia series, Hovey having died shortly before. They were publishing, too, most of Bliss Carman's personal work, though another young firm, Lamson, Wolfe and Company, had some of his volumes. All of these publishers had been sending me their

books of verse for review in a series of syndicate articles upon poets. It was necessary in those days to placate the Philistine, to keep up the illusion that the poet is a romantic figure, to intrigue the public—as the modern would say—with the poet's personality and then make adroit interpolations of his verse; and because I had passed them all in review in my series of articles—Carman, Hovey, Clinton Scollard, Alice Brown, Louise Imogen Guiney, and many others who were being printed in Boston—I had come on to seek them out and was making my first pilgrimage to "Vista Avenue, off Woodland Road, in Auburndale".

Bliss Carman had written me shortly before, when I had mentioned Miss Guiney: "The most undoubtedly genuine spark of genius—in Auburndale, shall I say, or America? In younger English today. Yes, and I had the very good taste to be born in her epoch, which is one of the things I bless the gods for." This enthusiasm did not seem at all extravagant, for Miss Guiney's work, with its pungent personal flavor combined with the paradox of classic fineness, had set her sharply apart and given to her verse a distinction wholly its own. But her personality was still a conjecture; and when I arrived at the little station indicated, I was struggling with the fact that this sylvan deity who lived on Vista Avenue off Woodland Road was at one and the same time the village postmistress of Auburndale!

Now when one conjures up a picture of a New England postmistress, he expects her to be true to type—tall, masculine, middle-aged, spectacled, and abrupt of speech; and I was inwardly fortifying myself for the worst as I made my way, after numerous inquiries, to the small house under a shelter-

ing bank, and was shown into a book-lined room, fairly impregnated with literary atmosphere. Miss Guiney was at the post office but was expected at any moment—she had left word for me to wait. I was seated in a comfortable chair and left alone to glance at the books and pictures and to fall into a day dream, so that I did not notice the door open and a friend of Miss Guiney—for it could not be she—stand before me. Doubtless, I thought, this exquisite creature is some house-guest who has come to help me beguile the time, for she was young and gay as spring and came lightly into the room with her hand on the head of a great Saint Bernard dog, making, as she stood there, a subject for Landseer. Whoever she was, she was an apparition to "haunt, to startle and waylay", and it was with difficulty that I pulled myself together and exorcised the ghost of the village postmistress as I responded to the greeting of Miss Guiney! It is a happy fortune for a poet to be beautiful, and Miss Guiney had a beauty as distinctive as her work, with the dark-blue eyes, chestnut hair, and fresh color of the Celt, and the delicate and sensitive features of one who lives with the finer emotions and has an eager joy in life. She was vivacious and companionable to a degree, and informed me as we climbed the stairs to her "Sanctuary", that she spent one hour a day at the post office! Uncle Sam's henchmen did the rest, for she had been appointed, as I learned later, by an admiring president who was doing his bit for American letters. In the remaining hours she wrote, for this was her fruitful period, and read Sir Thomas Browne and Jeremy Taylor and Burke and Lamb and Hazlitt, and for recreation ran far afield about Auburndale with her dogs.

Miss Guiney's study which inspired the poem, "Sanctuary",—

High above Hate I dwell,
O storms, farewell!—

first arrested one's attention, by a peculiar paradox, with the implements of war. Here were sword and spurs and other accoutrements of the cavalry service, belonging, as she hastened to inform me, to her father who had been a brigadier general in the Civil War. She was born to the tradition of drum-beat and sword-flash, and recalling "The Wild Ride", "The Knight-Er-rant", "The Kings", "The Vigil-at-Arms", I saw why she used the symbolism of battle and why she could pack so much valor into a line. Nevertheless I recalled more happily those fine lines in "Sanctuary" where storms are

Winnowed into silence on that wind
Which takes wars like a dust and leaves but
love behind.

All about us was the evidence of that recondite scholarship which distinguished Miss Guiney: mediæval books, archaic books, Latin poetry, early Italian and French poetry, early English poetry, and finally many rare volumes and souvenirs of those nearer to our time, particularly of Keats. First editions of some of the volumes, manuscript letters, a copy of Severn's drawing of the head, inscribed to her, if I remember correctly, by Laurence Hutton, a copy of the death mask, and many other things were embraced in the collection whose most personal feature was a lock of Keats's hair given her by a grandniece of the poet, then living in Spain. Miss Guiney linked this red-gold lock somewhat amusingly with the moderns by telling me that it was so identically the color of Bliss Carman's hair that when she tested the exactitude she would certainly have lost it had she not held

firmly to the original! She told me that she had willed her Keats collection, as well as that of Stevenson and others, to the Bodleian Library, for she was already making those pilgrimages to England which resulted in a final residence there; and later, in one of my visits to her in Oxford, I found that these treasures had already been delivered to the library as she was moving about too much for their safety.

Not to anticipate this period, however, I left Miss Guiney on that winter morning with much the same feeling that animated Hazlitt when he walked along the country road with Coleridge and felt that life had been transfigured for him by his "first acquaintance with poets". It was not the books, the associations, stimulating as they were, but the charm and inspiration of this vivid personality in whom they became alive. For Miss Guiney, with a mind furnished so choicely and rarely, with scholarship which had led her to sources where most people have not the taste nor the ambition to go, was of all people the most unpedantic and of all temperaments the most spontaneous and charming. Her Celtic wit was ever at play, but quite unaware of itself, and her letters will one day take their place as literature, having at once that tang and pungency, shot through with humor, for which one would have to look to Charles Lamb for a parallel.

Not long after my visit to her, Miss Guiney and her mother moved back into Boston, her official period being over, and ensconced themselves in a "dear little dingy house" on Pinckney Street. Here she spent a year or so in the catalogue department of the Public Library, translating from early Italian and French texts and becoming, in so far as she would permit her-

self, the centre of a small but characteristically Bostonian group. She was the especial favorite of Mrs. James T. Fields and of Sara Orne Jewett, then living with her, and of Louise Chandler Moulton whom, by reason of her name, she always called "godmother". Boston had yet somewhat of the waning splendor of the old days: Julia Ward Howe, though so advanced in years, was still at home on Thursdays; Colonel Higginson still presided over the Round Table; Mrs. Edwin P. Whipple, contemporary with Mrs. Howe, still drew about her the choice spirits who had frequented her home during the life of her brilliant husband; Margaret Deland who might, in comparison with these folk of yesterday, be called one of the younger members of the Beacon Hill colony, lived in a high-windowed house on Mount Vernon Street, lighted by golden jonquils whose flame must often have gladdened the eyes of Thomas Bailey Aldrich who lived directly across the street; while Louise Chandler Moulton, clinging to her sombre old house on Rutland Square, made it the magnetic centre where, on Friday afternoons from fall until spring, new and old Boston met together.

Miss Guiney through taste and tradition belonged chiefly to the latter group, having somewhat the same place in it that Hartley Coleridge held among the friends of his father. It was Mrs. Moulton who characterized her most aptly at the time as "a slight, blue-eyed girl, delicate as a wild rose and elusive as a thistledown"; for with all her arts of enchantment, she knew well how to escape from exactions and had in her something of the fay, so that even the closest friend could never feel quite sure that she would not vanish like a sprite when

she should be most palpable. It was this spiritual defense, which most of us are too compliant to exercise, that kept her from being absorbed in the currents which would have swept her away from her essential self, and it was primarily at the call of this self that she left Boston soon after for several years' stay in England. This was not yet her final residence there, but an intermediate period, spent largely in London where she and her mother had for a time the house of Harold Frederic. Here she had among her closest friends Dora Sigerson,—Mrs. Clement Shorter,—the Gosses, and many others who made up the London life of the day. Miss Guiney had previously made several short trips to England during one of which she and Alice Brown, who was her warmest American comrade of her own age, had taken a walking trip of several weeks which resulted in Miss Brown's volume "By Oak and Thorn"; but she continued to come back until her mother's death severed the binding tie which held her to this country. In the winter of 1909-10 she returned to Oxford, her favorite home in England, and wrote me soon after that she had "become a mere mole of the enchanted Bodleian". Here she was not called upon to be contemporary, as in America, and could indulge her taste for exploring the bypaths of human thought—for what more fascinating pursuit than to be a mole of the Bodleian? Yet this designation might wrong her to those who did not know that she was still a creature made of fire and dew, for she seemed to me much more like an air plaint held to earth by so slender a stem that one scarcely realizes that its roots are in the soil.

It so chanced that I was in Oxford several seasons in succession before

the war, in each of which I saw Miss Guiney. On the last of these visits (in 1913, when she was living at Long-wall Cottage), having spent a Sunday afternoon roaming about the towered city, pausing to look up at Pater's windows in Baliol, we held our way to the old cemetery and stood long by the spot where he lies, with just a path between him and the grave of Romanes.

During the war she wrote me that she was leaving Oxford for the Cotswold country, and it was there, at the little town of Chipping-Camden, that she died.

During her last period in America, in 1909, Miss Guiney collected and brought out her volume "Happy Ending", containing what she regarded as the most important poems from her earlier books. With her finely exacting taste, she eliminated all of the earlier work whose mood she had outgrown or which seemed not to represent her, and preserved only the more mature and characteristic work by which she was known. Many poems, therefore, treasured by her early admirers, are not in "Happy Ending", but one would hesitate to add them to the volume which received the stamp of finality from her own hand. As the title implies, Miss Guiney thought her lyric period was over and seemed definitely, with the publication of this volume, to take farewell of her art. As she was still under fifty and her work at its very height, it seemed unlikely that she would abandon it, but with the exception of an occasional poem in the American magazines, "Happy Ending" was true to its title; and one can only hope she has left something in manuscript which may come as a final message from her.

Miss Guiney's work is too fine and demands too much of the reader ever

to make a popular appeal, and herein lies its best assurance for the future. It will always gather about it the discriminating few who will be the arbiters of tomorrow. It draws richly for its sources upon the beauty of yesterday, reaching back at times to an archaic simplicity which, because it is strange to our modern ears, seems like sophistication. No style so personal, so distinctive, has appeared in poetry in recent years, and it is safe to say that no individuality has so shaped the expression of its art. Her touch both in prose and poetry is unmistakable, nor could one mistake the temperament behind it. With all her passion for letters, her passion for life was greater, and her verse is instinct with a zest that invigorates like a breath of mountain air. Knowing always the struggle inseparable from work which could never appeal to the crowd, she still held her way gladly and made her wants commensurate with the return which life had made her. She symbolizes herself and her mood toward life in her poem of the poplar:

Yet, branches never parted
From their straight, secret bole,
Yet, sap too single-hearted,
Prosper as my soul.

In loneliness, in quaint
Perpetual constraint,
In gallant poverty,
A girt and hooded tree,
See if against the gale
Our leafage can avail:
Lithe, equal, naked, true,
Rise up as spirits do,
And be a spirit crying
Before the folk that dream!
My slender, early-dying
Poplar, by the stream.

Miss Guiney knew well how to fence with life, how to disarm fate with gaiety, how to meet limitation from the inexhaustible resources of Beauty, and this is all in her work—is, indeed, the heart of her work, for any seeker to find. Scarcely a poem but bears wit-

ness to her spiritual encounters, but all by indirection; for no one was less didactic. Three notes predominate in her work: the valorous note, the Celtic note, and the mystical note, expressed at its best in "Beati Mortui", that beautiful salutation to the dead:

Not passed but perfected,
Who win from pain their strange and flawless
grant
Of peace anticipant.

The casual reader might not know that she was brought up in the tradition of the Church, as he would be sure to know this fact, for example, from the poetry of Francis Thompson, for Thompson uses constantly the symbolism of the Church and casts over his work its richness, like an encrusted vestment. Miss Guiney, on the contrary, while no less an adherent of the ancient faith, expresses always in her poetry its inner rather than its outer aspect, thus holding more closely to the universal. Such acquiescence in the shaping Force of life, coming from one who without such acquiescence might have been broken by it, is rarely met elsewhere, and she who knew so well how, in the disparity of things, one may be

Sick with the impact of eternity,
could say with serenity that one is a part of the great pageant "made in joy to pass" and should not

... the privilege disown
To flourish fair and fall fair, and be strown
Deep in that Will of God, where blend
The origin of beauty and the end.

There is one of Miss Guiney's lyrics which has for me a peculiar appeal, not only for its beauty but because it hints so deeply of an inner mood seldom permitted to appear in her work. It is one of the Oxford poems, "The Yew-Tree":

As I came homeward
At merry Christmas,
By the old church tower
Through the churchyard grass,

And saw there circled
With graves all about,
The yew-tree paternal,
The yew-tree devout,—

Then this hot life-blood
Was hard to endure,
O Death! so I loved thee,
The sole love sure.

For stars slip in heaven,
They wander, they break;
But under the yew-tree
Not one heartache.

And ours, what failure
Renewed and avowed!
But ah, the long-buried
Is leal, and is proud.
.....

At eve, overlooking
The smooth chilly tide,
With age-hidden meaning
The yew-tree sighed,

By the square grey tower,
In the short grey grass,
As I came homeward
At merry Christmas.

Such fine spirits as Miss Guiney, touched to such fine issues, appear rarely, but when they come they make a sanctuary for us from all that is petty, and when they go they carry us a step nearer to the source of Loveliness.

APROPOS OF THE REVIVAL OF "THE BEGGAR'S OPERA"

BY ANNIE NATHAN MEYER

IT was Horace Walpole's opinion that while tragedy could never suffer by delay, a comedy may, because the allusions or the manners represented in it may be temporary. But the production of "The Beggar's Opera" this season at the Greenwich Village Theatre, New York, shows that it is possible for wit and satire to possess sufficient vitality to remain alive for two hundred years, even if shorn of the biting sarcasm of contemporaneity. The Gilbertian or Chestertonian twist whereby a situation is treated from a contrary angle, seems to be perennially amusing, and it would seem that the tastes, habits, and peccadillos of men have not changed so vastly considering the number of years that have swept over their sinful heads!

New York's latest revival of Gay's immortal opera (there will be no harm done if the printer here decides to omit a *t*!) is thoroughly delightful. And the sheer loveliness of the old ballads yields but another lesson in the permanence of all Beauty. Even to an ear steeped in the gorgeous color of Tschaikowsky, and attuned to the cacophonies and strange elusive gropings of Cyril Scott, the delicate arias of another day have extraordinary charm, especially when they are sung so delightfully as by the present cast. While the elaboration of the instru-

mentation by Frederic Austin has been done with great distinction and reverence, nevertheless I, for one, would like to have heard the voices with only the original accompaniments in their naive, unarabesqued form. The early accompaniments were thin, I grant you, but the charm of eighteenth century music lay largely in its tenuousness. The power and depth of mass in music, note superimposed upon note and instrument upon instrument, is for us of today. There is the glory of the old music. And there is the glory of the new. How I enjoyed the lovely ladies!—real Hogarthian ladies—at last I have seen them with mine own eyes! There was Mistress Peachum, it would seem, straight from "The Rake's Progress" with her outward airs and graces and inner rottenness. And the young and lovely ladies with that queer, slanting courtesy, their hoops all to one side, giving them that frail, delicate appearance as flowers wilting at a breath. One could find it in one's heart not to be too severe with the uxorious hero, for while he sang the delightful refrain "How happy could I be with either, were t'other dear charmer away" to Polly and Lucy alone, there was provocation enough to have ended the song to all eight of the charmers.

Mr. Huneker, in writing last summer of the London revival, rendered