

a mule in a team I had seen that struggled halfway through a main-line mud hole and then had lain down to die. I thought of the patience and skill of the driver in passing along to that mule enough of his own spirit to make it get up and stagger on to the other side; and I thought how nonchalantly the man had done it. One was a mule, the other was a man. My friend had been wrong: women in the oil field were the least of its vexations. After all, history gives them a fair due, bless them! After all, it was natural for them to want to bathe.

Men are like children. They are responsive to trifling whims. On small provocation they will outdo even the famous Arkansas razorback in running hog wild. They plan a lot of things illogically. They do a lot of little things very badly—but whatever the world needs and wants man somehow will get. The furniture makers need a certain kind of rare wood that grows in the lowest swamps of the Amazon basin, and only there. It is infested, this place, with more reptiles, more winged mon-

sters, more death germs, than any other known area on earth, so they say. The round trip from the jumping-off place requires forty days, and they bring out the wood on their backs: a pitifully small yield for the effort consumed. But they bring it out. A mule will lie down and dumbly await death, but a man—never. Something attempted, something done, after all is the summit of man's ambition; not of certain men, but of all men.

Thus it is that in going to the oil field to study life, one stumbles on contrasts and contradictions, and in due time comes to a realization that they are but raw life itself, standing apart like those many-colored jewels strung on the chain without apparent rhyme or reason. The contrasts which add spice to the zest of life; the contradictions which epitomize the variableness of it, after all are but cross sections of life "as is"—and the reason they are more obtrusive and sharply cut is that, in the oil field, men live somewhat more carelessly, and therefore more impetuously, more unevenly, more vividly.

"Thus to Revisit—"

BY ALINE KILMER

THAT arrogant fool, the moon, is loose on the world again;

But what do I care for her touch or her vacuous face?

I saw her last night, the wanton! her head on the hill's dark shoulder,

But I only smiled and shrugged and came back alone to my place.

Because she knows that the world is a maddening welter of blossom,

That the air is warm and wet and heavy with locust bloom,

Being a fool, she will think that I have repented my hardness;

Soon she will come to look for me here in my little room.

I have turned my back on the east that I may not see her,

Lifting herself assuredly, knowing I shall be there:

By the time she has walked across the sky to stare through my western window

Sleep will have sealed my eyes against her, my tears will be dried in my hair.

Narrative of a Journey

BY JAMES NORMAN HALL

This is the first of James Norman Hall's series of articles on Iceland, which are to be a feature of the Magazine during the coming months. While written in Iceland, the following is really a retrospective introduction to Mr. Hall's narrative, in which the author of that idyl of the South Pacific, Faery Lands of the South Seas, contemplates his far leap to Arctic latitudes and some of the humorous vicissitudes in setting out therefor.

I HAVE a friend who is compelled to live a lonely, shut-in existence in a gray old city on the Atlantic seaboard. His lodgings are high above the street, and the windows of his living room and library command a pleasant view of the harbor where ships are coming in and going out again to the four corners of the world. There he sits, day after day, week in and week out, watching the busy life of the waterfront and reading books of travel. He has a wide knowledge of this literature, and recently he made an interesting suggestion with respect to the writers of it.

"I think it would be an excellent thing," he said, "if the self-appointed wanderer for others produced some sort of credentials at the beginning of his narrative. This he rarely does, and the result is that a fireside traveler like myself is often far on some particular bookish journey when he discovers that he is in uncongenial company. The journey must then be abandoned after great waste of time and imaginative effort, and if ever he returns that way under more acceptable guidance, his pleasure is more than half spoiled by the memory of the earlier experience."

He then went on, half seriously, to say in what manner this so-called statement of credentials should be made. There should be a frank avowal of the reasons why the self-appointed wanderer had undertaken a task of such delicacy and responsibility, including a history-in-little of the experience which had led him to choose a particular country for his trav-

els. From this the reader would be able to decide at once whether or no he wished to accompany him farther.

I have often thought, since, of my friend's suggestion. If it were to be widely carried out in what apologetic vein all travelers would begin their narratives! For is it not absurd that any man should claim for himself the powers of just, balanced, sympathetic, imaginative observation necessary for this high calling of Interpreter? And many a traveler does claim it in a sense, I suppose, or he would hold his peace. Alas! what a dimly burning lantern he carries at best, as he wanders through strange lands! And it must be remembered that to those who have not visited them they may be dark places. They are seeing them, perhaps for the first time, only by the light of this little lantern which throws such grotesque shadows, not the least grotesque that of the bearer himself. He lifts it high, flashes it from side to side, and you who follow see the shoulder of a mountain blotting out the stars, or the flash of a pair of oars on a guessed river, or a detail of curious carving over a doorway, or the contour of a cheek where someone looks down from a high balcony. These fragmentary glimpses but whet the curiosity and arouse the interest. You lose patience with your guide. "Is this all you can show me?" you say. "No, no!" he replies. "Look! do you see that, and that?" holding his little light higher still. You gaze intently, straining the eyes in the effort to pierce the darkness