

*E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN*

## RIMBAUD MEETS VERLAINE

When the wonder-poet entered, gawky, the Rue Nicolet,  
All the Domesticities, flouted cherubs, flew away.

He approached the pregnant child-wife, dwelling in her parents'  
house,

With a puma's circumspection, visibly a girl-shy mouse.

Paul and Cros were at the station; somehow he had missed his  
host.

Pale Matilde and social mother stared as if they saw a ghost:

No de Musset, no de Vigny, no marmoreal Lamartine,

But a raw-boned, red-thumbbed peasant, slate-blue-trousered,  
seventeen.

Luggage none but what hung from him, cotton socks, and stringy  
tie,

And a penetrative arrow from each poignant azure eye.

Charles de Sivry entertained him with Parisian smallest talk:

Was the city what he fancied? Did he mind the dusty walk?

And his mother? Bored by farm-work? Eggs how many laid each  
hen?

Were the fashion-papers studied in the depth of the Ardennes?

Worshipper of Victor Hugo? And his literary plans?

They had read his MS. verses and supposed they were a man's.

Monosyllables he answered, yawned, and stretched his long legs  
out,

Then, retiring into silence, scorned them with a sullen pout.

Conversation flagged; the front-door! Vast relief! Charles Cros  
and Paul!

Lurches in the bard Saturnian, and the faces start to fall.

Fate has willed it, and a Fury waves, unseen, a flaming brand,

As the adolescent, rising, takes the hospitable hand.

Can this absinthe-loving satyr grow a true child of the sun?

Can he bear the solemn torment under which the prize is won?

Try him, Visionary, try him! He has asked you to his home.

Be instinctive, be audacious! Free him from that puling gnome,  
From that cockatoo who bare her, from her half-brother, the loon,  
And their friend, the poetaster! Drive them forth, and that right  
soon!

Drive them forth with scourge of Vision, as Christ made the  
Temple clean;

Leave not in that ransomed nature one regret for what has been!  
But Verlaine saw Beauty only, Beauty offered to his touch,  
Ganymede as well as Helen; the good God had given him much,  
Such a wife, and such a comrade, and within a month a son,  
And the booze, and the reunions—what variety, what fun!  
But, while yet his gaze absorbed the boy whom he had thought a  
man,

A queer inkling made him wonder if this really was life's plan,  
And his faun eyes twinkled wildly with conception of a sin  
That would make his spirit golden and fulfil the dream within,  
And, forgetting his frail child-wife and the baby in her womb,  
Every sense he yearned to bury in that face, as in a tomb.  
Then the girl clung to her parent, for she felt the web was spun,  
Something startled into being that could never be undone;  
And she looked away from Maman to the little pampered hound  
That from guest to guest was running, till a tit-bit should be  
found,

While the young provincial muttered, in a patois grave and ripe,  
'Les chiens, ce sont des libéraux', and filled a reeking pipe.

DIANA WITHERBY

## THE MOMENT ON THE HONEYMOON

The moment on the honeymoon when all the strands  
Were separate. Atlantic rain was blowing down  
In drifts against the window; on the tablecloth  
Of baize the shell which I had lifted to my ear  
As child, and by the shell his meaty hand. A child,  
A wife, and in this unchanged room no years between.  
'A jolly sort of place for children, here,' he said,  
'But on these rainy days did you go out,  
Or play around indoors?' 'We went for walks, the sand  
Was wet, too wet for digging. Water poured on rocks  
Already drenched from sea, the spray was shot through rain  
And floated on our misted lashes. Foam——'  
'You must have been completely soused!' and he had moved  
With jointy clumsiness of those who cannot rest.  
I hated him and yet already I was caught,  
If he alone had caught me I could still have gone,  
But in my heart the self-made snare had sprung,  
The terrible maternal pity. Even then  
I felt it, when, like silly lion, he paced the room,  
As if the rain would fade because he walked instead  
Of sitting. To have and to hold him I do not  
Want is my life. When death has parted us the dry  
Sea-pinks and salty grass will still be growing where  
Near dunes they grew the moment on the honeymoon.