

## This Dust of Dreams

By LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS

WHEN the eventual Silence shall impugn  
 These stubborn lips and close them on a cry;  
 When stone shall crumble and the sea defy  
 Its wonted ways, contemptuous of the moon;  
 I shall not wonder then, or be aghast,  
 Though all the stars be harvested, and feet  
 Of fire tread out the darnel and the wheat,  
 And sky be wedded unto sky at last.

O moon of my desire that rises chill  
 From the infructuous caverns of despair—  
 O moon of marble!—let the sea forsake  
 Its channels, and in darkness do its will!  
 This dust of dreams shall find fulfilment where  
 No dawn can trouble and no morning awake!

## Literature

### Nosegays from Parnassus

- Modern American Poetry.* Edited by Louis Untermeyer. Harcourt, Brace and Howe.
- The Second Book of Modern Verse.* Edited by Jessie B. Rittenhouse. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Yanks; A. E. F. Verse.* Originally published in *The Stars and Stripes*, the official newspaper of the American Expeditionary Force. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- A Treasury of War Poetry.* Second Series. Edited by George Herbert Clarke. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- The Paths of Glory.* Edited by Bertram Lloyd. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.
- The Yale Book of Student Verse, 1910-1919.* Edited by John Andrews, Stephen Vincent Benét, John C. Farrar, Pierson Underwood. Yale University Press.
- A Book of Princeton Verse II, 1919.* Edited by Henry van Dyke, Morris William Croll, Maxwell Struthers Burt, James Creese, Jr. The Princeton University Press.
- Humble Voyagers.* Verses issued by the Reeling and Writhing Club of Bryn Mawr College.
- A Second Pagan Anthology.* Containing poems that have appeared in the *Pagan Magazine*. Pagan Publishing Company.
- Stuff.* An Anthology of Verse. The Four Seas Company.
- More Translations from the Chinese.* By Arthur Waley. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1919.* Edited by William Stanley Braithwaite. Small, Maynard and Company.
- The Book of Modern British Verse.* Edited by William Stanley Braithwaite. Small, Maynard and Company.

THOSE who gather and arrange blossoms from the meadows of Parnassus issue as the fashion of the year neat little boutonnières and carefully selected centre-pieces for the library or drawing-room table. Gone are the heavy calf-bound "Elegant Extracts" and "Chaucer to Johnson" of the former age. The meanest flower that blows may have its place beside the most precious—daisies and buttercups, anemones and arbutus, fox-gloves and hollyhock, violets and sunflowers, Joe Pye weed, skunk-cabbage, orchids, passion-flowers, night-blooming cereus, poppies from China, and poppies from the fields of war—take what you will from what hand you like, that of Perdita, Ophelia, or Autolycus.

In "Modern American Poetry" Mr. Untermeyer traces a current which first shows its trend about 1890, though its impulse is

farther back, in the work of Walt Whitman. It marks a departure from the older poetry which the editor describes as remote from experience, mythological, moralizing; legendary, classical, or traditional themes treated in intricate versification, ornate literary phrasing, stilted language, rare rhetorical words, "peradventures," "forsooths," "alackadays," and "O thou's." The modern poetry, he tells us, differs from the old in that it finds beauty in familiar things, in the "divine average"; it is "fresh vigorous poetry in a world of honest and sometimes harsh reality." It may deal with familiar subjects, indeed any subject. It uses the daily vocabulary and the every-day phrase; its lines reflect the tones of ordinary speech. Its moods are sincerity and intensity. It lays emphasis on emotion, always on matter rather than manner. About all this the most striking fact is the closeness with which Mr. Untermeyer's thought and phrase parallel the thought and phrase of the prefaces to the "Lyrical Ballads"—the "gaudy and inane phraseology" of the older school; the purpose of Wordsworth and Coleridge "to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men"; genuine emotion to be aroused "without the aid of gross or violent stimulants"; and freedom to the poet to "follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings." Very likely the parallel is more striking than significant—or striking where it holds and significant where it breaks. It may indicate that the literary wave interval is about a hundred years.

In the preface to "The Second Book of Modern Verse" Miss Rittenhouse emphasizes the idea of the series, "small intimate volumes that shall be typical of the period." Can anything small and intimate typify the last five years? The lines that express most accurately the impression of the volume are Conrad Aiken's in *The Morning Song of Senlin*:

Stars in the purple dusk above the rooftops  
 Pale in a saffron mist and seem to die,  
 And I myself on a swiftly tilting planet  
 Stand before a glass and tie my tie.

If a book is to be representative of the period we must have something more than saffron mist and pale stars, and decorous poets "Doing [again in the words of Senlin] the things their fathers learned to do." The planet tilted, and not all men, least of all the poets, stood to dally with mirrors and ties. Miss Rittenhouse's book is intimate; you can live with it as you can with your wall-paper, of which you demand no emotional stimulus; if it intrudes no mood of its own, neither does it respond to yours. There is beauty here, but most of it is frail; you fear to drop the book lest something should break. But some of the poets stand out. Against the saffron mist Robert Frost shows like a New England hill with a background of cloudless sunset. Amy Lowell splashes the saffron with Chinese colors, and weaves patterns of her own among the pale stars. Edwin Arlington Robinson etches it with clean thrilling lines like those of naked trees.

When the first guns of the war cracked their mirrors from side to side, most of the poets dropped their ties. At whatever cost, war feeds with emotion the roots of poetry, causing it to grow with new vigor on familiar ground and to spring freshly in fields before barren. To many a doughboy poetry was one of the new experiences of the war—"Me that ain't a poet growin' poetic!" he chirps nervously. "The A. E. F. was about the most sentimental outfit that ever lived," declare the editors of "Yanks"; "Most of it—so it seemed to anyone who served on the staff of the *Stars and Stripes*—wrote poetry. All of it read poetry." If this assertion comes as a surprise to anyone, it will not be to him who was with the doughboy in his hours of ease. He absorbed poetry wherever he could lay his hands on it, and exuded it at every pore. This from the *Stars and Stripes* is in many aspects the most interesting poetry of the war, because it is so nearly communal. And in so far as it is communal it is specially interesting because it is so little narra-

tive and so largely lyric. Nearly every poem here expresses the writer's emotion, yet the writer is of no great importance; the emotion as well as the phrase that sets it forth is just what the writer has in common with two million men. Whatever one felt about "mud and cooties and gas and mess-kits and Boche 77's and home and mother," exactly that all the others felt also. Emotion of all kinds found ready expression, in "beefing," in yelling at boxing matches and baseball games, and in poetry. Of that poetry "Yanks" is the cream, skimmed first for the "Army Poets" column of the *Stars and Stripes* and a second time for the book. He who would know how the A. E. F. felt will find here what he seeks.

"A Treasury of War Poetry" is Professor George Herbert Clarke's second gleaning, and a volume of pocket size from which, the editor tells us, he has had to exclude material he would willingly have retained, yet it is surprisingly comprehensive, and well selected, too, if sustained high quality is the test of selection. Whether the poet speaks for romance or realism in war, extols its glory or protests its horrors, his work is here so long as it speaks the language of poetry. Not so "The Paths of Glory," which has no voice but that of protest. There is poetry in it that cries from the heart; many of the poems are in the other collection also; but there is verse, too, that is mere pacifist propaganda and often propaganda without a singing voice or any ear for music.

Books of college verse from Yale, Princeton, and Bryn Mawr raise the question, Is college verse really much better than it used to be? Perhaps it only seems so here where we have the cream served, and the skimming is done behind the scenes. Or is it that the war has struck crystals into the emotional welter of youth? These anthologies cover only the period of the war, but there are in them a few names of those who have already graduated into the broader realms of general periodicals and anthologies. Of the others one might augur much from the quality of their poetry, were it not for experience which tells how quickly the light of common day pales the spark—out of fifty college poets time brings only one to bear.

In the "Pagan Anthology" there are only a few lines of poetry; most college teachers would call these fragments daily themes. Every instructor has read thousands of them, and it adds no whit to their pregnancy that they are chopped into lengths. Rhythmic pattern, cadence of any sort, are rare in the book, and image and diction are sophomoric. There is scarcely a line that sings, or a verse that exhibits anything but the Freudian psychology of young persons with hair Hollandaise and blouses à la Russe. "Stuff" appears to have been cleansed from stuffed bosoms, perilous to them, and as interesting to others as might be expected of such cleansings—frogs, spiders, pollywogs, and monkeys in their least presentable aspects; there must be some way of getting them off your mind without putting them on the minds of others.

From such as these it is a relief to turn to a volume of the quality of Arthur Waley's "More Translations from the Chinese." To many of us it has not before been given to find in Chinese poetry anything like the feeling we find in the better examples of other forms of Chinese art. The feeling is here, enough like our own to satisfy us as human, different enough to keep us always in the foreign atmosphere. The rhythms, too, are ingeniously woven; the beat is regular enough to give rhythm, but the pattern of sentence modulation runs free, as in The Great Summons:

Green Spring receiveth  
The vacant earth;  
The white sun shineth;  
Spring wind provoketh  
To burst and burgeon  
Each sprout and flower.  
In those dark caves where Winter lurketh  
Hide not, my Soul!  
O Soul come back again! O, do not stray!

O Soul come back again and go not east or west, or north or south!

For to the East a mighty water drowneth Earth's other shore;  
Tossed on its waves and heaving with its tides

The hornless Dragon of the Ocean rideth:

Clouds gather low and fogs enfold the sea

And gleaming ice drifts past.

O Soul go not to the East,

To the silent Valley of Sunrise!

Of the "Anthology of Magazine Verse" one must believe that it would have been quite as representative if it had contained more poetry and less journalism. There is poetry here of a grade we like to boast of being able to find every day in the magazines, that of Conrad Aiken, Sara Teasdale, Clement Wood, Edwin Arlington Robinson, and sundry others. There is singing here that is something more than verse, and there is verse that is something less than poetry. Such things as *South State Street* and *With the Tide* belong in the Sunday newspaper, and like macaroni they cannot be made into poetry by being broken into irregular lengths. The editor is much more successful in making a book worth having in his "Book of Modern British Verse," in which his purpose is to exhibit the period which "has now definitely assumed the name of 'Georgian.' It began with John Masefield and has grown into the newer blossoming of Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Robert Nichols." It exhibits the period fairly enough without characterizing it, and with this book as with other anthologies, even the best, the critical reader will miss old friends and make new ones.

ROBERT P. UTTER

## On Our Liberalism

*Liberalism in America.* By Harold Stearns. Boni and Live-right.

MR. STEARNS'S aim in writing this book was presumably to expose the failure of American liberalism in the war and to point out the path of true progress. To the first of these two considerations the greater part of his energy is devoted. He describes all the unhealthy manifestations of the last five years—the intolerance and repression, the bigotry and distortion, which have afflicted the public and its leaders. With his statement of the facts there can be no quarrel. Have they not been an unceasing irritation to every liberal thinker and writer for three years? Have not our liberal journals been declaiming against these evils with a violence which at times threatened to react unfavorably on their own spiritual balance? Mr. Stearns is a poor marksman; most of the shots which from some point in space he directs at liberals fly wide and hit the opposite camp. On only one question does he join issues fairly with liberals: he finds fault with their support of conscription during the war. But if he is himself opposed to conscription, he fails to meet squarely the difficulties imposed by his attitude. He refuses to take the uncompromising pacifist view; he is not a believer in the martyrdom of nations. He simply affirms it as his belief that the Allies could have won the war earlier without resorting to conscription! Nor is he exempt from mental confusion in his discussion of this subject. He fails to discriminate between the imposition by a military oligarchy of conscription as a fixed principle and its adoption in a moment of need with the acquiescence, however ill-considered, of practically the entire nation. He argues that conscription puts enormous power into the hands of the politician and relieves him thereafter of the restraints of public opinion, and in the very next breath he declares that popular sentiment prevented Lloyd George from conscripting men for a war on Russia. Obviously, these propositions cannot both be true.

Mr. Stearns scatters criticism, if not with open eye, at least with open hand. Having studied Mr. Bassett's one-volume history of the United States, he has learned that the Puritans were