

VERSE

How I Walked Alone in the Jungles
of Heaven

Oh, once I walked in Heaven, all alone
Upon the sacred cliffs above the sky.
God and the angels, and the gleaming saints
Had journeyed out into the stars to die.

They had gone forth to win far citizens,
Bought at great price, bring happiness for all:
By such a harvest make a holier town
And put new life within old Zion's wall.

Each chose a far-off planet for his home,
Speaking of love and mercy, truth and right,
Envied and cursed, thorn-crowned and scourged in time,
Each tasted death on his appointed night.

Then resurrection day from sphere to sphere
Sped on, with all the POWERS arisen again,
While with them came in clouds recruited hosts
Of sun-born strangers and of earth-born men.

And on that day gray prophet saints went down
And poured atoning blood upon the deep,
Till every warrior of old Hell flew free
And all the torture fires were laid asleep.

And Hell's lost company I saw return
Clear-eyed, with plumes of white, the demons bold
Climbed with the angels now on Jacob's stair,
And built a better Zion than the old.

And yet I walked alone on azure cliffs
A lifetime long, and loved each untrimmed vine:
The rotted harps, the swords of rusted gold
The jungles of all Heaven then were mine.

O mesas and throne-mountains that I found!
O strange and shaking thoughts that touched me there,
Ere I beheld the bright returning wings
That came to spoil my secret, silent lair!

VACHEL LINDSAY.

The Mathematician

Stranger alike to traffic's clamor crude
And to joy's throbbing, intricate design,
He stands serene. A formula, a line,
With changeless beauty is by him endued.
Striver for truth's perfection, no light mood
May move him. Differential, axiom, sign,
Bring to him glimpses of the far divine,
Marking the boundaries of finitude.

By Euclid's theorems cramped, he seeks new spheres,
And walks in high, far ways forever free,
Toils with awed vision through the ordered years,
Till, from the all-but-handled harmony,
In some grave vision Deity appears,
And in a graph he finds Eternity.

NELSON ANTRIM CRAWFORD.

Sea Dream

Sometimes at night a song comes flying
Among the shadowy fields in sleepers
Who waken to its sweet careering
Through their bodies' colour and grace:
Magic pierces to their hearing
With sounds that are not heard by day;
Silence, breaking from its keepers,
Flies and music takes its place.
Those who waken and hear it crying
Find it beats with tidal motion;
It is the blood within their clay,
Remembering its ancient ocean.

To hear such wild and dreamy strains
Borne past the dim shores of the veins
The heart stops short—then beats again,
So to keep the singing flowing
Through the lands that lie in men.
For in the song those thousand streams
Are telling of their ancient fountain.
The sea, with all its jewels glowing
And beauty running on the waves,
Or buried in the water-mountain
Where the sea Shape, snowy and old,
In deeps that mock the diver's wish,
Blood-blind with war and a hate untold,
Still dooms and tombs in his diamond caves
The silver navies of the fish;
And the cold sea-worm, all curled
About the bones of battle gleams.
"Long past," (the song runs), "left behind,
—But we remember all in dreams,—
The battles in the water world
Till the landward gates were passed.
Long since, all dim, long left behind,
The foes, the fangs, the hates at last
Buried in the water-mountain
With the nations of the blind."

Then the song changes and is young.
A new music leaps in birth,
Flying sweet in the veins of each,
Flooding through the body's earth,
Telling with the spirit's tongue
Of new seas lifting on another beach.
In the spirit, in the heart's deep places,
Those hidden seas increase:
The shining love from the eternal spaces
That beats on earth with surges soft as fleece
Fills them in silence from a tidal fountain.
Until the golden day shall gleam
When the red wells of hate are sealed,
Buried in the shining mountain
On the day of the heart's overflowing
When the earth is washed and healed,
And the lovers with the dream,
From ocean unto ocean going,
Shall lift at last into the living peace.

So the song tells, and much besides
Of glories in the blood's dim tides;
Much that no ear of dust can mark
Of marvels in the body's dark,
Singing of marvels in the body's dark.

RIDGELY TORRENCE.

Six American Poets

Tendencies in Modern American Poetry, by Amy Lowell.
New York: The Macmillan Co. \$2.50.

MOST laymen do not read poetry. They are scared. They have heard high-flown discussion about the poets. They have been checked by critics and chilled by professors and left flat by soaring spinsters. The thing has seemed too fragile for them to grasp, too precious for them to share, too ineffable, too beauteous. The priesthood of poetry has bulldozed them. An old game in every human specialty, the art of bulldozing the public has been carried further in poetry than in music or painting or sculpture or law or politics or science or militarism or religion. Carried further, because the medium in which poetry is written is the familiar medium of speech, and it took a greater skill on the part of the priesthood to exclude the common herd, to admit only those who have the high sign.

What I like best about Miss Amy Lowell is her impatience with this timid ignorance, her determination to do away with it and to compel the unpoetic public to walk up, walk up. Miss Lowell is the leader of a sort of Votes for Poetry movement. She is, in some important respects, a partisan poetic boss. She cajoles and browbeats for poetry, and especially for one brand of poetry labeled Imagistic. But the fine aspect of this powerful insistence on the rights of poetry, especially Imagist poetry, is the clear and detailed instructiveness that Miss Lowell reveals in this book. She establishes the humanity of her poets, in a literary world where the great pretense has always been that poetry is ineluctable. And she makes no demand for readers specially endowed and trained. To meet the ordinary extraordinary ignorance about poets and poetry nothing could be more useful and valuable. Whether or not the American renaissance is a fact, Miss Lowell's preliminary survey of current poetic activity brings a great deal of its material into consciousness, makes it more manageable and definite.

The mere task of selecting E. A. Robinson, Robert Frost, Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, "H. D." and John Gould Fletcher, required a courage that most critics do not possess. Miss Lowell regrets that she had to pass over Louis Untermeyer, James Oppenheim, Ezra Pound, Vachel Lindsay, William Rose Benét and Eunice Tietjens. Passing over someone, however, was an act necessary to the completion of her work. One great handicap to the understanding of current American poetry is the welter of creeds, the disorder of practices, the multiplicity of effort. Any choice in this confusion is a good choice, and only a Miss Lowell could risk it—only a person, that is to say, who felt above everything the necessity of mapping in some fashion and with some clarity a new and dazing world.

But the success of this volume is much more in its setting forth of individual poets, it seems to me, than in any orientation of tendencies or any real discernment of a movement. It is as one who has emotions for specific performance rather than as a theorist, a philosopher of culture, a person of durable general ideas, that Miss Lowell has contributed to understanding by this volume. She has a great deal to say throughout her book of a "movement"; and this movement, we are given to understand, has three stages, the third and final of which is Imagism. But these three stages seem to me to remain three separate points in space, points with an interstitial hollowness around them through which Miss Lowell's "movement" goes plunging to a dark and melancholy doom. How does the poetic connection swing from E. A. Robinson and Robert Frost to the two Chicagoans,

and how from Chicago to the London Imagists, "H. D." and John Gould Fletcher? Miss Lowell speaks vaguely of a "new paganism." "The 'new paganism' which raises science to the emotional level of a religion, is achieved with difficulty by one only lately freed from the shackles of a hampering superstition." But is there any demonstrated progression, tendency, movement, toward a poetic reconciliation with the crudeness of existing America on the basis of a "new paganism" or a new idealism or a new anything else? It may be said in passing that John Gould Fletcher and "H. D." are much more in the asylum of culture, much more nostalgic and withdrawn and renunciatory, than the incorrigible Masters or Sandburg. But the ambitious essay that is offered as a preface to this volume is sufficiently incoherent and immature to make one highly suspicious of Miss Lowell the philosopher. Her aim in this essay is to link up our poetry with the war, and she argues in this way: "The so-called 'new movement' in American poetry is evidence of the rise of a native school." We are "ourselves, different from all other peoples whatsoever." "It is this realization of ourselves that has drawn us into an understanding sympathy with our allies hardly to be conceived of before. And let us make no mistake; such a result cannot be reached through a devotion to the teachings of materialism." "Long before the travail of battle flung itself over the world, the travail of this idealism began." "Literature is rooted in life," and so in this idealistic evolution. "At the moment of writing, it is America who has taken the last, most advanced step." "We who watch realize something of the grandeur of conception toward which this evolution is working." "The modern poets are less concerned with dogma and more with truth. They see in the universe a huge symbol . . . all falling into place in a vast plan, the key to which is natural science."

As one of the founders of Imagism Miss Lowell subscribed to the dogma, "We believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art." It is a pity that this excellent poetic principle could not have applied to Miss Lowell's half-baked preface and to most of her talk about a new "movement." But when Miss Lowell is not busy with amateurish ethnology and "atavism" and evolution and pseudo-science, she is one of the best expositors that modern poetry could have. And it is for her sympathetic exposition of the things she likes rather than her ineffectual announcement of a system and a touchstone that her book deserves to be read.

In writing biographically of her six poets, Miss Lowell adopts a kind of interpretation that the more timid public is sure to understand. The attractive aspect of it is her own high biographic skill. In dealing with Mr. Robinson and Mr. Frost it is not unnatural that a New Englander should feel the romance of these "disinherited Puritans." But Miss Lowell is equally moving and sensitive about the Illinois background of Edgar Lee Masters and of Carl Sandburg, the Oklahoma setting of John Gould Fletcher and the London atmosphere in which "H. D." (Miss Hilda Doolittle, now Mrs. Aldington) "bourgeoned." A great deal of the charm with which Miss Lowell invests these six poets is her account of the surroundings of their childhood. It is not merely a documentation quite in keeping with modern psychology. It suggests the romance of their endowment in a beautiful and telling way. Hamilton Wright Mabie might have done it, one fears, as he might easily have made many of the platitudinous observations