

sex interest, and with a truly scientific detachment. These were of course children whose questions had been answered fearlessly, as soon as asked, regardless of the youth of the questioners.

Can you imagine Rita talking over these matters with her family, as table conversation?

It may be thought that great courage is needed to give sex information to the very young. But, indeed, it is the easiest time. When sex consciousness has awakened, then the deferred conversations do become difficult.

Let mothers seize the early years. Let them answer honestly the little sisters' questions about the new babies, and save their daughter's minds from the sex obsession of the pitiable Rita.

GRACE POWER BEMENT.

Deerfield, Massachusetts.

## The Bandwagon

### THEY'RE WEARING THEM LONGER NOW

"It was a great lesson in acting," she said, "to observe how the people acted when they met the president, for Mr. Harding asked us to be seated in his executive offices while he received. Of course, they were all excited, as we were. In fact, my knees were shaking, though I tried to conceal the fact under what I hoped was a calm exterior."—*Syndicated Interview with Lillian Gish.*

### HOW THE OTHER HALF GIVES

One of the largest and most brilliant social events of the season was the Sunrise Ball last night at the Hotel Ambassador for the benefit of the Help-Men-to-Help-Themselves organization. This is the association formed by many well known New Yorkers to establish stations throughout the city where unemployed men may get a bath and a shave without cost. The idea is that they will be better able to obtain work by presenting a more attractive appearance.—*The New York World.*

### SHAKING HANDS WITH BANKRUPTCY

The conference has been successful at least in exposing the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of the Russian representatives. They have but one idea, and that based on denial of the right of property. But the right of property is more for social than individual benefit, and Russia should be quarantined pending her perception of this. That would not prevent trading with Russia.—*The New York Times.*

### RESEARCH WORK

OREGON. Arthur Burr, Negro porter, was seized by armed men upon his release from jail at Jacksonville on March 14th after serving a sentence for intoxication, and taken to Siskiyou mountain, where a band of masked men threatened to hang him unless he told where he obtained liquor in Medford. He was finally released with the warning to leave the state at once under penalty of death.—*Bulletin of the American Civil Liberties Union.*

### AN EXCHANGE OF PUNTS

There would be no talk in the Democratic Party of a Presidential boom for the Mayor of New York if the Democratic Party were not suffering from a serious shortage in leadership.—*The New York Tribune.*

That is one explanation. Another is that after viewing the spectacle now presented in Washington Mayor Hylan decided that a country that would stand for that would stand for him.—*The New York World.*

## The Tragic Goose-Step

LAST autumn toward the end of November I saw a matinée of poetic plays, or rather scenes from them, given by a group of young actors at a certain theatre. The plays were Elizabethan, scenes from Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher and the somewhat later Otway. There was a separate director for each dramatist represented.

I arrived late, ten minutes or so. And as my eye lighted on the scene I saw that a dialogue had just closed; the lady stood in the middle of the stage and the gentleman was in the act of departing, moving toward a door in the wings. My attention was at once caught by his unusual movement. His hips seemed at each step to congeal themselves, to become rigid, and from this rigid pivotage the leg shot out toward the floor, a straight, inflexible line. And as the heel of each foot struck the floor, the impact registered in the hip above it and the whole body made a solemn vibration of resistance to the trodden earth beneath. The nostrils, too, grew firmer.

I watched the various scenes. The young ladies in them seemed to have little idea at all of what was to be done. You got the general impression that if one wears a snood like a lady of Marlowe's time, one must have a rosebud mouth and a virginal, versified cast of countenance. The artistic creed set forth most strongly seemed to be a demonstration of the fact that the human body looks well enough without stays after all, and that if one stands a little sway-backed in a long white robe with a slanting girdle or rope of pearls around one's waist and dropping between one's knees, one can indicate a creditable enough figure of a woman. As for the verse, that was spoken as fortune willed, smoothly, ravingly, chantingly, stertorously or in a sublime calm above all mere meaning. But the step was everywhere, the getting across the stage was always the same, and no artist failed to register its measured delays and stalking rhythm. To that extent at least the entire afternoon was uniform.

At last it was clear to me what this stride was about; this tragic goose-step, so inexplicable otherwise, meant that we were acting poetry. It was the gait of immortality, the ritual of bardolatry. And then I realized how well it might serve as a symbol for most of the trouble that blocks the way of our poetic drama.

In our theatre the minute we recognize that a thing is poetry we make something separate of it. We give the poetic a sort of worship; which means, as Bernard Shaw said once of heroes, that everybody bows down to it and nobody does its will. To do the will of poetry is to take it naturally.

But we Anglo-Saxons are a great race for setting things apart, for separating them from our plain and usual tracks. Even religion we tend to separate from us. The spirit of it may be in our daily living, but the expression, the celebration of it, and especially its more formal celebration, we set off to itself. We carry no chickens, ducks or vegetables into church with us.

Whereas in Italy or in Spain people come into the church as they might cross a street. There is no change in the natural habitude of that more serious region. They kneel, if they are simple folk, with their baskets at their sides, and watch the heart-shaped candle flames on the altar ahead of them, the incense rising in the dusk, the motions of the priest, the vestments, the music, the words repeated over and over. And they know that this is only another department of life, in no way different from the rest, a part of

our natures needing expression. They know that here these motions and the mood of this ceremony become formal and graver only because it is natural so to the thing expressed; that the remoteness of the expression is there only because of the remoteness and the simplification of our thought and spirit in this more ultimate region of the day's living.

And so in poetry. Acting poetic plays in our theatre is a kind of going to church, as we use the word, with all the awe, particularity, tedium and unfrequentedness implied. The very legs of those autumnal actors were stiffened with this poetic specialty, this apartness of verse; and the throats routed. But in Spain the audience scarcely knows when the play is prose and when it is verse, or when, as happens there so often, the same play passes back and forth from one to the other. Every year around Halloween in Madrid Zorilla's Don Juan Tenorio is given for five nights in all the principal theatres. And there is no actor in it but goes from prose to verse and back again without batting an eyelash and with the utmost naturalness. And in Italy the same audience and the same actors experience the gorgeous poetry of D'Annunzio or the beautiful, warm marble quality of Morselli and the realism of Giacosa and Marco Praga without any specializing whatever. And so with them the realm of poetry is ventilated, is healthy and natural.

In our theatre the health and the possibility of creating and of acting poetic drama lies in our understanding one fact: that there is no difference in kind between what we call poetic and what we call prose. No difference in kind. We may have arrangements obviously, genres if you like, in verse or in prose. But on the whole they are related to each other, the poetic and the prosaic, exactly as the moments of life are related to each other. In life, for instance, we have particular moments of deep feeling, say, or suspense. We do not separate these, hold them compartmentally off to themselves. What happens is a gradual heightening, an intensification of our beings. The pulse concentrates its stroke, it is quicker or it seems almost suspended; but its existence is deepened and made more compulsive. The body increases its life, it moves toward more complete unity. The mind is charged with a vaster region in which it dilates and seems to breathe a wider air. The whole of us, mind, body, spirit, is driven toward a simplification, a oneness. We draw more easily and luminously a radiance from ourselves and from the life of the world that we have shared. And though all this may happen in a graver or a slighter mood, the point remains the same. And that is what the poetic is, then, in our existence. It differs in no way generically from prose, exactly as the moments of a life do not differ in kind but only in completeness from one another. And that is what the poetic is in the art of the theatre. The rhythm, the word, the incident do not essentially change. They are only driven down into their inmost substances. By a heightening in vitality they are simplified; and through that at the same moment they are made more subtle. They become more accurate. They become truer to the experience expressed.

And for an actor or a producer when these plays are presented, what ought to happen means not necessarily any change in method. Even in Racine, to take an extreme case, the method changes only in the sense that it fits itself to an accepted and confessed conventionalization of idea and form. But in the poetic drama as we have it in English, most of it, all that need happen is what happens in our lives: where the intensity and accuracy of effect approaches a larger and simpler order or a more passionate

ornament in beauty and imagined grace, there the gesture, the delivery, the expression, follow. Even in the reading of verse the same holds true; there is no distinct method implied or necessary. Verse requires a better use of the tongue, the lips, the sense of tempo, the vocal tone, only because of its greater accuracy to the meaning. Good verse follows its content exactly. It is in form precisely true to its sense. To read it, then, requires no ramping about like he-muses marching to Parnassus, no startled reverence, but only an increased exactitude.

But for a sudden break to come into the actor's life, into his brain, his spine, his knees, his throat, his soul, when he hits this poetic phase of dramatic experience is for him to falsify the thing he undertakes. The only reverence worthwhile in art is not one that jerks the legs about, blows up the lungs and gets the soul on a high-horse. It is a reverence that, once under way, is scarcely conscious of itself save for the quiet amplitude or the beautiful ease or absorbing intensity or passion or elevation or clarity or spacious precision that has come into the moment.

STARK YOUNG.

## Epitaph

For this she starred her eyes with salt  
And scooped her temples thin,  
Until her face shone pure of fault  
From the forehead to the chin.

In coldest crucibles of pain  
Her shrinking flesh was fired  
And smoothed into a finer grain  
To make it more desired.

Pain left her lips more clear than glass;  
It colored and cooled her hand.  
She lay a field of scented grass  
Yielded as pasture land.

For this her loveliness was curved  
And carved as silver is:  
For this she was brave: but she deserved  
A better grave than this.

ELINOR WYLIE.

## Harvest Dust

The road is burnt to dust, like more dust meadow rue  
Smokes in the meadow. Berries are balanced to fall  
At a cowbell's echo. Apples will soon be over, nothing is  
left to do  
For the trees but to crook their elbows on the wall.

In the farmhouse doorway a woman husking corn  
Droops to where, softer than children's hair, a yellow  
heap  
Of the silk fondles her hand. Under her eyes her face is  
as worn  
As the stone steps where she sits and has fallen asleep.

What is it all for? Why must the earth crack  
Over and over beneath this searing breath?  
Only that apples be ambers and berries black,  
And women content and wearied unto death.

WINIFRED WELLES.