

an Absolute, as unconnected with natural life as a medieval Heaven, or, what is even worse, of reducing the work of the painter and the sculptor to an irrelevance, as Mr. Leo Stein does in effect when he observes that a piece of canvas with some blots of color on it can never be worth more to him than a hundred dollars.

We happen to live in a period when the popular valuation of art is entirely negligible, except in relation to a limited class of useful instruments, such as motor cars: even here taste is so unsure that the cheap car is now being vulgarized in the interests of "art" without popular protest, while as for the fine arts, it is significant to note that the picture which gained the highest popular vote at the International Exhibition in Pittsburgh was one that, when reproduced in the graphic section of the *Times*, looked exactly like any other photograph. The absence of art from the general curriculum of our universities is a symbol of our attitude; and the attempts now being made, as at Dartmouth and Cornell, to present the esthetic aspect of experience as an integral part of the student's education is one of the hopeful signs of our times—far more significant than the numerical triumphs in "Art-appreciation" fostered by our museums. The present "Outline of Aesthetics" is in line with this development in the universities; and the existence of these little books is perhaps as significant as anything that is said in their pages.

A Richer Poetry Crop

THE BEST POEMS OF 1928. Selected by THOMAS MOULT. With decorations by JOHN AUSTEN. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1928. \$2.50.

Reviewed by SHAMAS O'SHEEL

THE field of yearly selection of the "best poems" published in Britain, Ireland, and America has now been left entirely to Thomas Moulton. Fortunately, either the crop grows better or the anthologist's taste grows surer. In Moulton's 1927 anthology, for instance, we thought the best things were the apt and delicate decorations by John Austen. In the present book Mr. Austen's little sketches are better than ever, but the verses they illustrate with such deft allusiveness hold their primacy. Not so often beyond the first two selections do we find evidence of Mr. Moulton's particular preference for that peculiarly English tradition which, rooted in naive songs of nature, and often raised to great power by men as diverse as Wordsworth and Keats, has now become inevitably self-conscious, trying to achieve naiveté by deliberation, and simplicity by effort. We suspect that some at least of those who versify in this tradition, though doubtless they enjoy the comforts this inventive age gives us, are afraid to face, afraid to try to voice, the insistent and tremendous fact of the machine. They stick to good old Nature; sometimes succeeding in drawing from that inexhaustible soil new and valid fruitage of poetry, sometimes, as in Viola Gerard Garvin's "For Oberon," achieving mere embroidery upon emptiness, sometimes throwing a sop to modernity by way of obscure phraseology. It is many years since the Laureate, to cite one instance, in his splendid celebration of a steamship on the Clyde, showed what could be done in poetic recognition of the machine; but one could hardly guess from anything here that the world to-day wears a different face from that which the Lake poets looked upon. And the one selection here from the innovators of anarchic technique—R. Ellsworth Larsson's acrostic—seems to us a perverse and sad example.

The best poems in this book are by dead men: a kind of sketch for his epitaph by Thomas Hardy—in which the ruggedness of his manner is curiously modulated by rhythms that suggest the present-day Yeats—and a poem by Rupert Brooke which recently turned up in a lost letter, a poignant thing worthy of a place beside the heart-cries of Shelley or Keats. Of these alone perhaps, among the contents of this book, can it be predicated that they will surely live. But the blood of living poetry courses through Conrad Aiken's Sonnets—though the last three lines of the second are weak—and through John Hall Wheelock's "Affirmation," if you can accept its empirical enunciation of sheer faith. In another favorite field of the English, the combination of macabre fancy with nature-description, Struthers Burt goes them one better; his "Burial" is rich and vivid, though the variation of stanza-form

seems to us less a deliberate device than a yielding to difficulties. Things that could have been done only by Americans are Mark Van Doren's "Deserted Hollow," a sonorous elegy for those desolate places where man has rendered earth back to nature, which are so plentiful in this supposedly new land, and Stephen Vincent Benét's "American Names," which is spirited but might have been still better, and Edna Lou Walton's tale of a woman's heart dying in the desert, "Written In Sand." Only Englishmen perhaps could have played with classical and medieval romantic themes as Edwin Muir, John Drinkwater, Walter de la Mare and W. Force Stead do. Drinkwater's "Persephone" is just almost a fine poem; de la Mare's and Stead's are personal love poems in disguise, and the latter's is more impressive. Finer still is "Elms Of Protesilaus," by F. L. Lucas, a highly distinguished poem. From the English periodicals, too, are culled such things as the Song by Phyllis Megroz, a fine attack upon the problem of life; Robert Hillyer's perfect threnody for the things that "all but time held holy"; and the noble dirges of Richard Church and Humbert Wolfe, the latter far the best work of this poet we have seen recently. But after Hardy's and Brooke's poems, the one for which we would predict a most probable immortality is C. Henry Warren's "The Hounds Are Gone," an infinitely poignant reminder of the terror which man's hunting sports bring to the little creatures of the woods, who must even

..... question the watching sky
What terror to-day comes galloping by. . . .

On our own side of the Pond, the anthologist has culled a bully song by Mary Austin, a fine but unfinished bit of indignation by Vachel Lindsay, an excellent philosophical poem by Louis Untermeyer, one of Dorothy Parker's more sedate sonnets, very admirable, and an excellent sonnet by Virginia Lyne Tunstall. Rather an international affair is Edith Sitwell's "Panope," published in the *New Republic*; marmoreal, beautiful but cold. Like W. H. Davies in England, but to much better poetic effect, Theodore Maynard and Babette Deutsch here renounce thoughts of other worlds and other-worldly glories, to sing of little intimate things; poems written from very different standpoints, but equally impressive. Harold Lewis Cooke's stark love poem is good, and Alfred Kreymborg's tantalizing fragments are more to our taste than anything he has ever done in his restless experimenting.

Padraic Colum must be considered here among the Irishmen, as his contribution is called "Dublin Roads" and appeared in the *Irish Statesman*; it has his charm and craftsmanship but is inconclusive. Just failing of real distinction are the selections from the veteran Katherine Tynan and the new bard, F. R. Higgins. Most interesting of the Irish contributions, and more interesting than anything else in the book to the student of technique, is Austin Clarke's "Pilgrimage." Mr. Clarke goes Frank Kendon's "analyzed rhyme" one better by returning to the ancient Irish rhyme system, which wasn't rhyme at all as we have come to understand it, but simply assonance. Many an Irish poet, of course, since Douglas Hyde began his translations and scholarly commentaries, has imitated the Irish device of internal rhymes, rhymes echoing not only at the ends, but in the middle of lines; but they have been complete vowel-and-consonant rhymes. Now Mr. Clarke introduces to modern poetry in English the possibilities of rhyme which is vowel-rhyme only—not always too exact, either—and let the consonants fall where they will. All students of verse-technique should hasten to get "Best Poems of 1928" to study the effect; perhaps it will never be suitable to English verse, but here is a sample, with the vowel-rhymes indicated:

Beyond a rocky townland
And that last tower where ocean
Is dim as haze, a sound
Of wild confession rose:
Black congregation moved
Around the booths of prayer
To hear a saint reprove them,
And from his boat he raised a blessing
On souls that had come down
The holy mountain of the west
Or waited still in the cloud.

The late Lady Strafford, who died at the age of ninety-eight, was one of the last surviving women left who knew the Duke of Wellington—at any rate, of the Duke's circle. She was the eldest daughter of the first Earl of Ellesmere and edited his personal reminiscences of Wellington.



Hymn to Earth*

By ELINOR WYLIE

FAREWELL, incomparable element,
Whence man arose, where he shall not re-
turn;

And hail, imperfect urn
Of his last ashes, and his firstborn fruit;
Farewell, the long pursuit,
And all the adventures of his discontent;
The voyages which sent
His heart averse from home:
Metal of clay, permit him that he come
To thy slow-burning fire as to a hearth;
Accept him as a particle of earth.

Fire, being divided from the other three,
It lives removed, or secret at the core;
Most subtle of the four,
When air flies not, nor water flows,
It disembodied goes,
Being light, elixir of the first decree,
More volatile than he;
With strength and power to pass
Through space, where never his least atom was:
He has no part in it, save as his eyes
Have drawn its emanation from the skies.

A wingless creature heavier than air,
He is rejected of its quintessence;
Coming and going hence,
In the twin minutes of his birth and death,
He may inhale as breath,
As breath relinquish heaven's atmosphere,
Yet in it have no share,
Nor can survive therein
Where its outer edge is filtered pure and thin:
It doth but lend its crystal to his lungs
For his early crying, and his final songs.

The element of water has denied
Its child; it is no more his element;
It never will relent;
Its silver harvests are more sparsely given
Than the rewards of heaven,
And he shall drink cold comfort at its side:
The water is too wide:
The seamew and the gull
Feather a nest made soft and pitiful
Upon its foam; he has not any part
In the long swell of sorrow at its heart.

Hail and farewell, beloved element,
Whence he departed, and his parent once;
See where thy spirit runs
Which for so long hath had the moon to wife;
Shall this support his life
Until the arches of the waves be bent
And grow shallow and spent?
Wisely it cast him forth
With his dead weight of burdens nothing worth,
Leaving him, for the universal years,
A little seawater to make his tears.

Hail, element of earth, receive thy own,
And cherish, at thy charitable breast,
This man, this mongrel beast:
He plows the sand, and, at his hardest need,
He sows himself for seed;
He plows the furrow, and in this lies down
Before the corn is grown;
Between the apple bloom
And the ripe apple is sufficient room
In time, and matter, to consume his love
And make him parcel of a cypress grove.

Receive him as thy lover for an hour
Who will not weary, by a longer stay,
The kind embrace of clay;
Even within thine arms he is dispersed
To nothing, as at first;
The air flings downward from its four-quartered
tower

Him whom the flames devour;
At the full tide, at the flood,
The sea is mingled with his salty blood:
The traveler dust, although the dust be vile,
Sleeps as thy lover for a little while.

* This poem is to be included in Elinor Wylie's "Angels and Earthly Creatures," shortly to be published by Knopf.

England and America I,

Political aspects: Liberty, Democracy, Peace.

IT may sound hyperbole to say that the future of the world hinges on Anglo-American relations. It is true none the less. Every thinker in Europe and Asia knows it and is talking about it. He sees that if Britain and America agree they have it in their power to end the political system which has been in control of the world since the breakup of the Holy Roman Empire and the Holy Roman Catholic Church. He sees also that if they quarrel civilization will go down in chaos before this century is half done. Like most good conservatives he is torn between hope and fear—fear lest the world of national states and conflicting cultures and constant heroic wars to which he is accustomed will come to an end: hope that perhaps after all the Anglo-Saxons, as he calls them, can bring a new and happier world into being, in which all peoples will have freedom, equality, and opportunity under the reign of law, and war will cease to be the *ultima ratio regum*.

But Anglo-American relations are difficult—very difficult. They are difficult for two main reasons. The first is that the two countries have developed on entirely independent lines for one hundred and fifty years, and in many ways are very “foreign” to one another. Great Britain has been preoccupied with world affairs, but has kept its racial composition intact. The United States has been preoccupied with American affairs and has so transformed its racial composition by immigration that perhaps fifty per cent of its population is now of non Anglo-Saxon origin. The second is that despite these differences the two countries are “relations” as compared with any other nation. Their language, their ruling moral, political, economic, and religious ideas, and their dominant racial elements, are substantially the same. This becomes evident whenever the two peoples sit down in conference with other nations, and to much of the rest of the world the English-speaking nations are a single system of civilization.

Anglo-American relations are a problem all of their own. Nor is it possible to comprehend that problem except in the light of the perspective of history and of the peculiar place which the British Commonwealth and the United States occupy in the contemporary world.

The founder of Anglo-America, if one may use the expression, was Moses, for the main dynamic of English-speaking civilization has always been the moral law—the Ten Commandments and the character they produced. Greece, with its love of thinking and beauty, has touched it a little. Rome influenced it more, though independence of character rejected the rigidity of the Roman Law in favor of the ever-changing adaptability of the common law. Religion, in the sense of that true Christian spirituality, which only follows obedience to the moral law, has blazed forth from time to time with tremendous effects, in the Puritan and Quaker movement of the seventeenth century, in Wesley and others. But the well spring of its history has been that moral independence which enabled Moses to lead the Israelites to escape from the tyranny of Egypt and found the first commonwealth ever based upon moral ideas; which strengthened the British in their determination to resist the pretensions of despotism, political and religious, for the sake of freedom; and which, after taking the early Puritans across the Atlantic, nerved Colonial America to claim and vindicate its independence from Great Britain, and found the first true democracy in the world.

It is the fashion in intellectual and artistic circles to-day to be anti-moral or anti-puritan, as it is called. This shallow view, which sees repression and not liberation in the moral law, ignores the obvious fact that all true human progress has come from the increasing realization of moral, intellectual, and spiritual truth. Most of the great contributions to human progress have come from peoples who, for a time, at any rate, have lived in isolation from the fret and frenzy of the main current of the world's life and so had time to lift their eyes to the eternal hills. This was true of the Israelites in the deserts of Sinai, and of the Greeks, and to a less extent of the Romans, in their isolated peninsulas. It was even more

true of the Anglo-Saxons. The British could scarcely have established individual freedom in Magna Charta and the jury, or invented the representative system and Parliamentary government, or protected the Puritan movement from the counter-reformation, unless they had lived on almost the largest island in his world.

Many people recognize this common moral background to British and American history. But on both sides of the Atlantic there has been abysmal ignorance of what the other half of the English-speaking world has done since the split of 1776. To the average pre-War American, Britain, after the pure leaven of the Puritan and other emigrants had left it, degenerated into an almost wholly Imperialist power, dominated by kings and lords, suppressing the liberties of its own and other peoples, grabbing territory all over the world, interfering with American development everywhere, and claiming a lawless title to command in its own interests all the oceans of the world. To the average Briton, the emigrants of Great Britain vanished into an almost unknown continent, developed moral democratic institutions of a baffling complexity and conducted with a singular intemperance of language, fought a civil war over slavery, were flooded with “alien” elements which corrupted their political and judicial life, became so utterly self-centred as a nation that in order to bring Canada within the orbit of manifest destiny they fought on the side of the Napoleonic autocracy, and so ceased to make any contribution to world affairs until they were forced into the world war in 1917 by the German submarine. This ignorance is some reflection on the acumen of both peoples, and political coöperation will be difficult between them until they understand the contribution to progress which each has made in the last one hundred and fifty years.

Every Englishman thinks that the prime function of England has been to defend and promote freedom throughout the world, and that the prime instrument in that laudable purpose has been the British Navy. At this every good American laughs, as every good South American now laughs at the mention of the Monroe Doctrine as the shield of pan-American freedom. Yet the British contention about freedom and the navy, like the American contention about the Monroe Doctrine, is substantially true. England's national history centres about five desperate struggles for political freedom as against despotism. The first was the struggle against Philip II of Spain and the attempt of the Counter-Reformation to destroy Protestantism, whose crisis was the Spanish Armada of 1688. The second was the struggle to protect the budding plant of Parliamentary government from being killed through the support which Louis XIV gave to the Stuart autocracy. The third was the long struggle all over the world, and especially in America and India, which decided whether the resources of the new world and the Orient were to be mobilized in support of the autocracy which was the heart of the *ancien régime* in France, or whether they were to become the support of the system of free government, already half evolved in Britain, and rapidly developing in the American colonies, and later in Canada, Australia, and South Africa as well. The fourth was the struggle against the effort of Napoleon to unite the whole civilized world under his own despotic sway by force. The fifth was the world war of 1914 when, on the whole, democracy and nationality were on one side and military autocracy and the suppression of nationality on the other.

Nothing will convince the Englishman that his country's greatest claim to fame is not the tremendous sacrifices it has made in freedom's cause. Nothing will convince him that the British navy, exercising high belligerent rights, has not been the main instrument through which this freedom has been made secure. He forgets, of course, a few things which may be set on the other side—his treatment of Ireland, for instance. None the less he is fundamentally right, as can be seen, even by foreign sceptics, if they consider what would have happened to the world if Philip II and the Papacy, Louis XIV and the Stuarts, Louis XV and the *ancien régime*,

Napoleon, and William II of Germany had won these wars and England had been laid low. England has been the pivot of world history for nearly three hundred years because without her freedom would never have spread over the earth as it has to-day.

What then about Imperialism? What about this stupendous Empire which now covers a quarter of the land surface of the globe and includes a quarter of the human race within its bounds? Here also, the Englishman is convinced that on the whole he has been doing the work of Providence. Though he now understands better than he did how capitalism led inevitably to Empire building and is less sure that all his transactions were prompted by conscious idealism, he is confident that on the whole he has been faithful everywhere to his creed of individual and political freedom, and that what Bacon said of the Roman Empire applies also to his own: “The Romans did not spread upon the world; the world spread upon the Romans.” In the main the Empire has grown as the inevitable outcome of the world struggles between freedom and autocracy just mentioned; North America and India were the outcome of the eighteenth century wars; South Africa and many minor possessions, of the struggle with Napoleon; the present mandates, of the late war. History shows that on the whole British Governments have been reluctant to extend Imperial responsibilities, and that the driving causes of expansion were the actual situations which confronted them at the end of these world struggles, the fact that the alternative was occupation by some other and usually less liberal power, or the need for protecting a primitive people from chaos caused by war, or from the impact of the evil elements of modern civilization, liquor, firearms, or predatory capitalist exploitation.

The Englishman is convinced that, so far from being an old fashioned Imperialist, he has given to the world an entirely new concept of Colonial Government—that of “trusteeship,” whereby innumerable races and peoples, who had never known individual liberty, impartial justice, honest administration, or lasting peace, have been introduced to these things and educated in ideals of liberal government. No doubt our Englishman conveniently forgets certain other things—his social caste system, his long tendency to regard the demand for self-government as seditious, his relative failure to raise the economic standard of living of the peoples he controlled. None the less history vindicates him. On the whole in an era when democracy was largely unknown outside the United States, when nationalism was non-existent outside Western Europe, when the crudest oppression and exploitation was unchecked by world opinion, British Colonial government has, by almost universal testimony, been singularly just, liberal, benevolent, and uncorrupt, and has laid foundations upon which the structure of self-government can now be peaceably reared.

When we turn to the United States we find an entirely different picture. World politics hardly enter into it at all. The development of a new type of society during a century of unexampled seclusion and international quiet behind the Atlantic, is everything.

The original contribution of the United States to world civilization has been democracy. The city government of Greece was not democracy because it rested upon slavery. Parliamentary government in England was not democracy because power lay mainly in the hands of an hereditary aristocracy. The French Revolution was not democracy; it was a movement for social equality, tempered by party despotism, so that France did not become democratic until 1870. Nor was American democracy the direct result of the revolution, for the vindication of independence and the construction of the federal Constitution was the reproduction on American soil of the overthrow of the Stuart régime and the creation of Parliamentary régime in Great Britain nearly a century before; and the Fathers were very suspicious of the people. It was the mingling of the moral independence of the Puritan and the Quaker with the vigorous initiative and social equality of the pioneer that gave birth in Jacksonian days to a movement which has not yet ceased to emancipate