

POETRY IN AMERICA

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that is not quite so simple as reading prose. But that is no reason why you should give it up as a great mystery. The best poetry says something clearly. The rhythm, the rhyme, and the metre—though in a great deal of modern poetry you will not find them—are designed to enhance the expression. In fact rhythm is the foundation of all human expression, as it exists in the beating of your heart. And more and more, I believe, that modern poets are returning to contact with the public, are turning back from the blind alley and dead end into which overintellectualization led them, and desiring to be understood by the people. I think that is the latest trend, and high time too.

Also, in the last twenty years in this country, there has been evident a desire on the part of the poets to

explore human history, and particularly American history, in verse; to tell stories about this world, and this country, either of the past or of the present. This is welcome. Every full-fledged poet desires to try his powers in narrative. Novels in verse are now a recognized form; though, of course, they go directly back to Chaucer. Yet it still remains for a poet of our time to give us any such *comédie humaine*. In fact, no matter how modern any trend may seem, it is usually involved with the rediscovery of something lost. Hart Crane and Stephen Spender, both moderns, rediscovered the work of a recluse Jesuit poet of a former century, Gerard Manley Hopkins. Seventeenth century John Donne, the Dean of Saint Paul's, has had a considerable influence upon American poetry in the twentieth century. But there is also this. Five years ago one of our most notable American poets, Horace Gregory, spoke of "that indigenous vitality that has always fed the veins of American poetry." It has triumphed

finally, I think, over foreign influence, and gives today a noticeable flavor to the best American verse, which has assimilated what it needed from other literatures. After all, we are a polyglot nation. In that lies our greatest weakness and greatest strength in this challenging hour. But what we need above all, to face the hour, are order and precision, and these are exactly the qualities which poets have always endeavored to cultivate.

And, in very truth, our poets are continuing to write, and endeavoring to interpret a time of the most bewildering and cataclysmic change. It is they who will keep us in touch with fundamental wisdom and virtue and the values that do not alter. Listen to them now, and draw strength and sustenance from them, for their work is a rampart against barbarism and they hold no truck with the tyrants of the bloody hand! Even in this darkest of all days, beleaguered England must take heart from the words of one of her great poets of the stoic spirit:

The kings with half the earth at
heel have marched from lands
of morning,

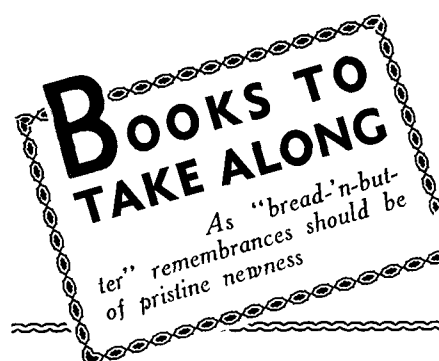
There stallions drink the rivers
up their spears benight the air,
And he who falls will die for naught
and home there's no returning—
*The Spartans on the sea-wet rock
sat down and combed their hair.*

War of Nerves

By Leonard Bacon

OUR role is middling
As one discerns.
America's fiddling
While Europe burns.
Times are contrarious,
There's no gainsaying.
It's no Stradivarius
That we are playing.
And the air we are mangling
Could be sweeter.
We are not untangling
A Bach partita.
Ah no! We are pounding
Politically
At themes ill-sounding
From Tin Pan Alley
What was achieved in
Times gone by
Is not believed in
By low or high
Who cherish a theory
That they can live
In an empty, dreary,
Negative,
And thoroughly boring
Continuum
By simply ignoring
What is to come.
We shall, we chuckle.
Get by perhaps,
If we only knuckle
To the Japs.
And no doubt we shall
Escape with a scare,

If we speak total—
Italians fair
Who view us indeed
As simply a finer
"Hog of the breed
Of Poland-China."
The knaves will desert you
In the hour of the terror,
Who brag of your virtue,
Gloss over your error,
Flatter inanity,
Say you're too moral,
And have too much humanity
To take up a quarrel.
Where shall we find it,
The spirit sound,
With the truth behind it
No words confound,
That doesn't sit tight,
That is not smug,
Whose hearing and sight
Are not dulled by a drag?
We must have leading
Less suspected
Than place-hounds pleading
To be elected,
Know instincts urgent
As those that call
The salmon resurgent
Up the white fall,
And get a guiding
That will take us forth
Like the wild geese sliding
In the Spring sky North.



ANYA

by Joy Davidman

Glowing, sensuous, alive, this story of a Jewish maid, wife and mother in a Czarist Russia "pale" of seventy years ago will recall to your mind D. H. Lawrence at his best. There is poetic artistry in this story, and all the five senses alert to warmth, color and feeling in the heroine and her setting.

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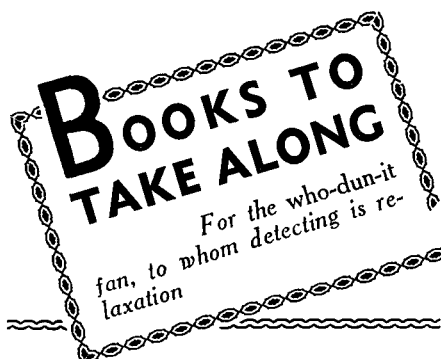
ADULATION AND THE ARTIST

(Continued from page 7)

was simply frantic, and defiant to the death."

Then came recognition, when, as he puts it, "all the poets that were my friends and myself were suddenly *recognized* all at once, seemingly the same morning." From the first he was aware of the danger of success, of the necessity for that quietness to think which he was not granted.

Especially since 1919, from South Texas to Saskatchewan—and Oxford, England to San Francisco, it has been a path of fire for me, gorgeous fire, a really beautiful blazing panorama of life, and the fire of the human faces was still burning in beauty before me when I came to Gulf Park and was *near dead* from a burnt imagination, more than a burnt out body, but still blazing. I *know* this is what people love in me, even those that think themselves intimate. But it is public, public, public. You are to me the incarnation of all things equally good and infinitely opposite. You are virgin modesty and quietness, and meditation and individual conversation and the village mood I have always worshipped and have always declared was the quiet pool in the heart of America. I *must in some sense* take you with me every step of the way henceforth. . . .



Murder at the Munition Works by G. D. H. & M. Cole

The expert Coles give us crime with a new technique in this exciting story of murder in a munition factory busy with emergency war orders. Superintendent Wilson has to revise his usual procedure completely before he finally isolates and nabs the killer. \$2.00

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MACMILLAN

And you are certainly my only hope to be loyal to my best self. All the next steps are impossible without you.

Now, I realize, looking at "The Handy Guide for Beggars" this morning—that I am further from that book than I have ever been in my whole life, that my whole life must be worked from the other end. I am no longer the town fool whistling to keep up his courage and defy Babbitt and Main Street. Quite the contrary, I am almost wrecked by public good will. By September or October, when the reviews of the "Collected Poems" come roaring in, I will be more demoralized than ever. Above all I need a Handy Guide to Privacy, to serenity, to meditation, to delicacy of fancy, to village quietness, to secret prayer, to untouched girl beauty, and the innocence of your glorious young mind. My manager Armstrong is determined to national-tour me again, Bryanize me if possible. My two publishers back the idea, and I am sure of flattery and fried chicken in every town, while slowly disintegrating for lack of your care. . . . My particular United States has been delivered to me, and I have not the strength to receive it alone, the sense to understand it, the heart to love it, alone. . . .

The privilege of the average life, the right of leading a normal, off-duty life at least part of the time was denied him, as it is denied to all artists. The public would not think of demanding that a preacher preach save at limited times, that a doctor or a clerk or a cotton picker spend twenty-four hours a day at work, but a writer is never permitted to relax. He always, no matter in what company or circumstances, remains not a human being, but a writer.

The idea of the ideal, as well as that of quietness, permeates the letters. The young girl herself became his ideal; she must go with him, without her he could do nothing, and he apostrophizes her both as poetic vision, eternal truth and the solitude he so desired. There must be, he insists, not only quiet, but some vision of what must be attained there.

"This is the way I felt before I met you. This is a song I wrote in my notebook when I was in England with my mother:—

My heart is full of love-songs, though
my loves have gone away,
Have turned to other lovers, one
and all.
They are wooing in the palaces, or
kissing in the hay;
I pass their homes and hear the
cupids call.
My heart is full of love-songs, but
who will hear them now?
My lovers are the South wind
Or the snow.
I am thinking of the dears I knew
Who sleep beneath the hills,
Of the tears and cries and flowers
Of long ago.

All that desolation was in my heart—and had been in my heart for a long time—when I met you—and then my mother's death and the final breaking-up of the home also. When I met you my only home was the entire United States, and I was loving everybody in the whole United States, the whole one hundred and ten million, just to escape loneliness. I suppose that is one thing that made me seem so strange to you and to the girls that teased you so unmercifully about me. I was strange—for I had stretched

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
MURDER DRAWS A LINE Willetta Ann Barber and R. F. Schabelitz (Crime Club: \$2.)	Fatal Manhattan studio-stabbing and two other deaths make much work for sketching-sleuth Storm and Shand of Homicide Squad.	Plot excellent, characters vivid, numerous illustrations enlightening—but superabundance of had-I-but-knowing annoys cranky judge.	Very good grade
VERDICT OF TWELVE Raymond Postgate (Crime Club: \$2.)	Aunt accused of slaying youthful heir to British fortune. Story analyzes backgrounds and motives of suspect and jurors.	Refreshing twist to crime fiction, handled effectively and with grim realism, and with gasp-producing terminal snapper.	One of the best
THE CASE OF THE FRIGHTENED FISH William Dubois (Little, Brown: \$2.)	Much-married millionaire news-reel photographer and remorseful scientist perish in Bahamas ere reporter-sleuth quells massacre.	Grisly bits in tropical aquaria on coral islet give special punch to yarn with variety of thrilling slants—including Nazi plot.	Swift and shuddery
MURDER ON THE PACIFIC David Knox Patton (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Perceptive purser on trans-Pacific liner bluffs killer of consular trouble-hunter and dope carrier into confession.	Interesting assortment of characters, including an amazing missionary, rule-of-thumb sleuthing, and not unexpected wind-up.	Agreeable