

the Phoenix Nest

BALLADE FOR A SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY

THAN all joy's slow erosion
By critics cold and queer,
Rather the loud explosion,
The hale and hearty jeer,
The rude abrupt Bronx cheer,
The razzberry ripely twirled,
That battle-cry *sans* peer,
"I'll tell the Cockeyed World!"

Then here's to rich emotion,
To whisky and to beer,
To love's enchanted potion
That brings the glittering tear!
The starry dark I fear,
Yet life is lovely-girled.
The world is mad? That's clear,
I'll tell the Cockeyed World!

From John o'Groat's to Goshen
(I.e. The Far and Near)
In beauty like an ocean
(No wailing on the mere!)
I still cavort like Lear
(Edward, not King!) I'm erled
And spinning on my ear?
I'll tell the Cockeyed World!

L'Envoi

Prince, how's about this here,
In re defiance hurled?
Before we're truly sere,
Let's Tell the Cockeyed World!

* * *

In a grand poem not yet published
in this country (whose title I am
not at liberty to divulge) there's a
burning chapter on the Industrial
Revolution in England. A lot of it
applies in America today, though
working conditions are somewhat
better. These lines, for instance: em-
ployers speaking:

"The unwanted overplus
Should lay the blame on Adam—
not on us!"

Until we feel that unemployment
is a national disgrace, we'll never
know what it is to be civilized.

I lay the blame on Adam, all right
—on Adam Smith!

* * *

Christopher Morley speaks to me
of "that delicious book of reminis-
cence by Edward Marsh, published
about 1938, the last of the old Geor-
gian suavities and *simnel* cake," and
reminds me of Eddie Marsh's prize-
winning piece for a competition way
back in '31, in the *Week-End Review*,
the idea of which was to repair the
obvious omission in *Paradise Lost*,
Book IV, that Adam and Eve went to
bed without brushing their teeth—as
follows:

From Sir Edward Marsh, *A Number
of People*, (1939) p. 27:
[and eased the putting off

These troublesom disguises which wee
wear.]
Yet pretermitted not the strait Com-
mand,
Eternal, indispensable, to off-cleanse
From their white elephantin Teeth
the stains
Left by those tastie Pulps that late
they chewd
At supper. First from a salubrious
Fount
Our general Mother, stooping, the
pure Lymph
Insorb'd, which, mingled with tart
juices prest
From pungent Herbs, on sprigs of
Myrtle smeard,
(Then were not brushes) scrub'd
gumms more impearl'd
Than when young *Telephus* with
Lydia strove
In mutual bite of Shoulder and ruddy
Lip.
This done (by *Adam* too no less) the
pair
[Straight side by side were laid.]

* * *

For the Fiftieth Anniversary of "A
Shropshire Lad" comes the following
from a well-known Canadian-Ameri-
can writer:

THE SHROPSHIRE POET

His straitened days were brighter
made by song,
By staves that left the dark road
often splendid
Yet touched with sadness at the
thought how long
Must be his sleep with all the
music ended.

Bravely he sang, but on his happiest
strains
There hung the cloud of that un-
known Tomorrow.
They now have met, and only song
remains,
Made richer by the final gift of
sorrow.

ARTHUR STRINGER.

* * *

"A Fleet Streeter," of Cincinnati,
Ohio, postcards me:

Re Sir Edwin Arnold: His poem,
"He and She" (right title, I think)
is one of the most beautiful and af-
fecting poems of Death in the
language. Look it up. Many, too
many, years ago I used to see Sir
Edwin often at night as he was
leaving the *Daily Telegraph* office.
Odd little figure. Quite different



from his huge confrere George
Augustas Sala, of the red nose and
red tie.

* * *

And opines Earle Walbridge:

If you saw the new FBI film thrill-
er, "The House on 92d Street," did
you recognize the 59th Street book-
shop, re-labeled "Lange's Book Shop,"
where the FBI agent went seeking
Spencer's "First Principles?" It's the
Carol Cox bookshop, one of the best
hunting-grounds on the street. My
own copy of "Trilby" came by mail
from Mr. Cox thirty years ago: he
was then on 125th Street.

* * *

From Placentia, California appears
the following,—and do you remem-
ber how Shelley once wrote a poem
on a "little downy owl" called "Azi-
ola"? Mary had to tell him it was an
owl! I am printing this just as it
came in.

THE LITTLE OWL WITH THE HICCUPS

When shadows whisper my garden to
hush
And only the crickets have failed to
hark
He may pause in thought on my tall
rose bush
And concentrate a-while there before
dark.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 145

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 145 will be found in the next issue.

KBCALNLTGPPM BDH

EBDHCGPF BN WBBX OLPP

GCBLCA GCX THBOC

KHLRGZ ZCAZHKHLFZ GCX

PGLFFZV NGLHZ.

O. H. SZCZA—FGADHXGM

HZRLZO BN PLAZHGADHZ

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 144

Ulster for a soldier, Connaught
for a thief,
Munster for learning, and Leinster
for beef.

—G. BORROW—
Wild Wales.

He utters no sound from his shadowed perch,
This hackneyed little feathered paradigm,
But frequently his tiny shoulders pitch
And heave with the hiccups that harry him.

I would be happier if I could know
That his affliction springs from some comestible
For all my feeble effort seems to show
That thought's the thing that is so indigestible.

FLORENCE EMERSON HONEY.

* * *

Lewis Worthington Smith of Des Moines, Iowa, a poet whose work I have long known, and a teacher of note, bursts forth as follows:

JOHN DOE REMARKS

Oh, glorious is our manager
At a thousand bucks a week,
As glamorous as a tanager
With pouncing claw and beak.
We rivet, forge, we little men,
At half of one against his ten.

The world is so constructed,
Our ways are so allied,
That we are well instructed
To find in him our pride;
For he is ours, we made him so.
We turn the lights on for the show.

There may be twists and changes.
Who knows but we may yet
Find succulent pasture—ranges
For daylong toil and sweat;
So now, if we must live in hell
And call it heaven, 'tis very well.

* * *

And then there's Charles Christopher Mierow, who is professor of biography on the Ambrose White Vernon Foundation, at Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota. He "hopelessly submits" the following:

To those who are interested in the fascinating work of research in the field of the sources of folk songs, this precursor of a well-known ballad of these modern times (namely, the touching verses which tell of Mary and her William Goat, their happy life and pitiable death) cannot fail to be a treasure.

Though the manuscript bears no name upon it, the poem would seem by all indications to be the work of no less famous and worthy an author than one whom our own Spenser has called "the well of English undefiled"—Geoffrey Chaucer:

MARIE AND HER WILLIAM GOOT

Bifl that, in the olden tyme I wot
(Forthe that now such things happen not),
A mayde there ben that was yclept Marie.
She was ful fair and beautiful to see,
And therewithal her tenderness was grete:
The litel briddes played about her feete,
And eek the lambes and the puppy dogges;
She loved ev'n the dirty litel hogges!

This Marie had a goot, a darling thinge,

William yclept, and oh! how he could singe!
This goot was not like others goots,
I thinke,
For that his inward parts were lined with Zinke!
Therewith he hadde an appetite withal
It was a verray marvel unto al:
An oyster-can that lay there in the dirtes
He ate, and eke a clothesline ful of shirtes!

A clothes line ful of shirts could harme no manne,
But oh! alas! alack! the oyster canne!
This can was filled with dynamite also
(Poor Bill dyde think it cheese, as you shall know).
He ate the shirts, they pleased him aright,
He ate the can, and eke the dynamite;
Then layde him down to rest at Marie's side,
(Poor Marie wist not what would soon betide).

Ther came, alas! an awful sound, a crashe,
The William Goot exploded al to smashe,
And Marie—wel, it al was for the beste—
She entered with her playmate into reste.

* * *

With this final tribute to atomic energy, I leave you.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

The Phoenix Nest for March 16 erroneously identified C. L. Sulzberger as "son of the publisher of The New York Times." This should have read "nephew."

For Tense Folks

MASTERING YOUR NERVES. By Larry Freeman and Edith M. Stern. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1946. 247 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by BERTRAM D. LEWIN, M.D.

IT would be interesting to know how much and what is accomplished by books that instruct us in mastering or outwitting our mind or our nerves. The present one is designed for "normal" people, who are "neurotic too." It recommends action and relaxation in efficient forms as cures for nervous tension. It makes suggestions as to what functions can serve as outlets; it tells how to get the most out of play and work, advises letting off verbal steam, has some special remarks to help make the love life relaxing, and gives a scheme of a well-balanced life. The basic idea behind this advice is sound enough, viz., that stimuli produce tension if there is insufficient outlet. But the therapy inferred from this principle is far too diagrammatic to be more than on the aspirin or daily dozen level.

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