

# the Phoenix Nest

## BALLADE OF FONTAINEBLEAU

**F**LOWERBEDS, fountains, and  
grand canal  
Loved of the Sun King and  
Henriette  
When their gondola glided the carnival,  
Blue evening breathing of Nicolette.  
And harken, the forest echoes yet  
The hunting horns that it used to know  
When his merry ladies with Francis  
met!

*Yet the leaves are falling at Fontainebleau.*

Here at a fête in the Salle de Bal  
The Dauphin soothed Diane's pouting  
pet

While De Bassompierre the Maréchal  
In cloth of gold watched their quaint  
duet;

And above, on a time, Marie-An-  
toinette

Played for high stakes till the lights  
were low,

While sleepless her women must fume  
and fret.

*But the leaves are falling at Fontainebleau.*

*Semer de fleurs, though fleurs du mal,*  
'Tis the way of courts! Can a court  
forget

Such occasion as fluttered the Salle  
Ovale,

Henry's joy of his heir—or the mi-  
gnonette

Fragrance such lovely names beget  
As Eugénie, Blanche, and Isabeau:

Queens of the Valois? Vain regret—  
*The leaves are falling at Fontainebleau!*

La Trace, *piqueur*, bugles "a cheval!"  
But Josephine's haunted eyes are wet.  
What whispers Fouché? ('Tis a *tasse*  
*de galle!*)

"Le bruit court que . . . !" Now her  
proud aigrette

Quivers. She sobs. But Napoleon's  
debt

To Venice for Campo Formio  
Shall be paid in an Empire overset.

*The leaves are falling at Fontainebleau!*

The little grey redingote leaves the  
*salle.*

"Adieu, mes enfants!" The Old Guard  
let

Tears fall unheeded. But Elba shall  
Not prison their lion; no parapet

Wave-washed can hold him; he cometh  
yet

Till Blücher blench at the fearless foe,

Till the Duke, from Iberia, spreads  
his net,

*For the leaves are falling at Fontainebleau.*

*L'envoi*

And here—alas!—Little Corporal,  
Your nephew, brooding on Mexico,  
Met Bismarck one autumn, last of all,  
When the leaves were falling at Fontainebleau!

\* \* \*

The French forms are fun to try  
sometimes. The above is, of course,  
inexact, as the true ballade has only  
three verses and a half. Who will  
write me a good *chant-royal*? H. C.  
Bunner once did one about a land-  
lady! But who remembers Bunner's  
"Short Sixes" today? Who even re-  
members what "short sixes" were?  
Bunner's were stories. He was a good  
story teller as well as rhymester. I  
might say that no one could hold a  
candle to—No, I won't!

Here I am up at Angling Point  
again, and this blue and gold morning  
I have seen two anglers. They re-  
mind me, somehow, of F. C. Bur-  
nand's "Happy Thoughts"—"dibbling"  
for chub, and "snigging" for eels,  
and, "Caught anything? Nothing."  
Another nice book nobody recalls.

Those writers were neither "impor-  
tant" nor "significant," and how rest-  
ful they are!

This afternoon I am going to the  
local baseball game. Recently in  
either the *Tribune* or the *Times*, on  
the front page, there was an amusing  
piece on a tirade launched in Soviet  
Russia against the behavior of certain  
elements at public sport. These ele-  
ments were, it seems, "non-objective,"



and hooted the umpire, or something.  
Apparently over there you are not  
allowed to take exception to an um-  
pire's decision. Probably you are  
marched right straight to the station-  
house. Holy smoke, they ought to  
listen to an American baseball game!

Still, our local umpire is, usually,  
the chief of police. The visiting team  
always makes a lot of capital out of  
that, pretending he is going to arrest  
them if they complain. And how bit-  
terly they do complain! And how we,  
in our turn, complain! And every-  
body has a grand time.

No, American baseball is decidedly  
not "objective." It is passionately par-  
tisan. It has developed umpires that  
must be made of iron. But the worst  
they do is to fine a player or send him  
to "the showers." *Pravda* may think  
that *that* is a kind of water torture  
imposed on recalcitrant American ath-  
letes. I am sure it will say so if it  
occurs to it.

I never have known an election  
year when I had more apathy toward  
all the candidates. I respect Eisen-  
hower for not running—he would be  
my choice—and unless they can make  
Douglas run, the Democrats haven't  
a prayer. One of the Repubs will get  
in, I am convinced, and sometimes I  
can't think whom I like best, or least  
worst. The issue of Communism has  
been pumped so full of hot air that it  
has really ceased to impress anybody  
except the hot-air merchants. The  
Communists are solid for the Wallace  
crusade, and he has got them all with  
him whether he wants them or not.  
He may poll a larger vote than any-  
body suspects. I can't help wondering  
whether he actually believes all he  
is saying. I know he is a sincere man;  
he is religious and undoubtedly he  
has a good heart and a lot of com-  
passion; but wisdom is something  
else; and somehow as I get older and  
older I set more store by wisdom.  
Maybe, at that, I'll vote for Norman  
Thomas. I do not like the large cor-  
porations, because I fear their power.  
I know they give us wonderful things,  
like the Kelvinator I have just bought  
for the house up here. But still—!  
Anyway, I admire Norman. No man  
has ever run for President so long  
or so consistently that I can remem-  
ber—even Bryan!

\* \* \*

### W. H. A.'S COMMENT ON ONE OF OUR NATIONAL SYSTEMS OF TRANSPORTATION

Oh, how I hate the Pennsylvania Rail-  
way;

They are full of *hubris*—they have no  
*agapé.*

HOWARD GRIFFIN.

\* \* \*

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

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(Continued from page 33)

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