

the Phoenix Nest

PSYCHE'S TASK

TIME, whose gift of masquerade
Clothes us in a strange disguise;
Present time, with credit paid,
Past time that age, contented, buys;
Future time, rash youth's desire,
Anticipated, never had;
Time, entranced by love's empire
Over days in beauty clad;

Imagination's fragile fruit,
Half-tasted in a waking dream;
A frightened nymph, from hot pursuit,
Escaping, as a virgin stream,

I see you pass, incognito;
While the frail sieve of my mind
Strains off gold from your swift flow
For some unborn child to find.

—MARGUERITE STEVENS FOSTER.

* * *

A little while ago I received a note from Luis Felipe Collado, as follows:

I'm deeply sorry because this letter is going to be a very poor one. My english is almost in the abc. Can you find a place in THE PHOENIX NEST for this poem?

I can, certainly, and herewith do. It is translated from the Spanish by Joseph E. Groveman:

VERSES

A verse always needs words,
and there are verses
so fragile
that they drown in the ink,
and there are some so white
that on paper
they die,
and there are some so invisible
that they play
in the river,
and there are some as pure
as a wing
at rest,
and there are some as sweet
as a heaven
of bees,
and there are some as good
as a branch
in bloom,
and there are some as clear
as the dream
of a scrap of crystal on the grass.

* * *

Today we [Mr. and Mrs. Benét traveling by freighter from East Coast to West] are passing the coast of Baja California, and I am halfway through Lecomte du Nouÿ's book on human destiny. This morning we saw dolphins near the ship. The trip has sped like a dream. It seems just yes-

terday that at 5:30 I stepped out on deck with the messmate and watched stars, lights, and a searchlight from under the horizon that betokened the nearing of the harbor of Cristóbal. There were two Russian barkentines in that harbor, flying the red flag; there was also the *Hawaiian Citizen*, and there was the *Marchen Maersk*. When we started through the Canal our chairs were taken up to the flying bridge and we had a wonderful view of the Gatun locks and Gatun Lake. We saw banana and cocoanut trees ashore, but what were those masses of strange red blossom? The messmate had fun taking photographs. Through the long Gaillard Cut the shores were very near. At Pedro Miguel, just before we reached the lock, an attractive young woman waved frantically from the bank. I waved too, thinking that really it was none of my business. But she ran to a man near by, and then back, and then they called out, and the captain discovered they were calling my name. It turned out that they were friends of mine and the messmate's, friends we had never seen, as we merely know the young lady's mother who had told her to be on the lookout for us. She married a West Pointer and he is stationed in the Canal Zone. They had friends with them, too, and a car. The captain handed me his megaphone, but I could think of nothing commensurate to say, and shouted, "We can't stop at Balboa!" The feeling of futility was dreadful. The ship went sailing on! We thought we might possibly see them again at Miraflores, but did not. In the evening when the second pilot was being dropped at sea, it was a subject for an artist, looking down from the bridge. Light and shadow and the blue launch and the gleaming dark skins of the Panamanians, the soiled white drill garments and the fantastic bundles, the rail and the coils of rope and the dark water, with another highlight from the red ember of a cigarette. Then the launch was gone, in a swirl of foam, and we began our fish-hook turn in the Pacific, finally to journey up the Western coast. Next day the captain presented us with a map of our East Coast run, the line of it being drawn by Second Mate Peterson, who also did the lettering of noon positions. Our deck chairs came aft again, and for quite a bit of time Montusa Island and a line of rocky islets were in sight to starboard.

The messmate sustained a slight swelling under the eye from sunburn, which was promptly attributed by the other shipmates to my aggressiveness, an unmitigated misstatement! She was by this time, however, reading Arthur Koestler's "The Gladiators," and this may have had something to do with it! We had boat drill at one o'clock in the afternoon and all hands acquitted themselves creditably. The messmate took pictures, looking rather bulgy in a Mae West. I then retired to the stateroom and read a book sent me by Alfred Noyes, "Timeless," by Prince Nicholas Tchkotou, to be published by Murray & Gee, Inc., in Culver City, Calif., on April 15. Its background is Georgia, that beautiful country in Southeastern Europe which is actually remarkable for many other things beside Generalissimo Stalin. Byron, as Mr. Noyes reminds us in a foreword, originally suggested to us something of its romance. "Timeless" is a dreamlike story of much charm.

We have seen flying fish; and the messmate swears to a glimpse of Moby Dick among some darker whales. Mr. K. has seen a shark, and up in the bow the messmate and Mr. K. saw a giant turtle. This morning I did see dolphins disporting, but otherwise I seem to have mostly been absent when new fauna were espied. The stars at night, however, have been a majestic spectacle, Orion faithfully marching above us. How grand it is to contemplate the stars! Also the messmate and I stood in the bow and saw nothing but blue ahead of us for miles and miles. Mostly we are aft on the fantail, or to port or starboard of our cabin corridor. The purser has kindly lent us excellent binoculars, which we use constantly. Tomorrow is the last day before we reach Los Angeles, and the trip seems to have passed with undue speed. A word of tribute should be given to Frederick Williams, the chief cook, who has provided us and the crew with wonderful meals. His way of cooking frankfurters is so superior that the messmate secured a recipe from him in his own handwriting, something we shall always treasure. —WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

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Julia had made a kind of note of me in her mind, as, scanning the shelf for a particular book, one will . . . have one's attention caught by another, take it down, . . . saying, "I must read that, too, when I've time," replace it, and continue the search.

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(Continued on page 42)

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(Continued from page 41)

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