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archives

The FRONTIER

A Literary Magazine



CONTENTS

1. *Paul Bunyan Yarns*
2. *Story: The Intolerable Hope*
3. *Sonnet: Graves of the Road Agents*
4. *Sketch: Nocturne in a Butte Setting*
5. *Verse* *Stories* *Book Reviews*

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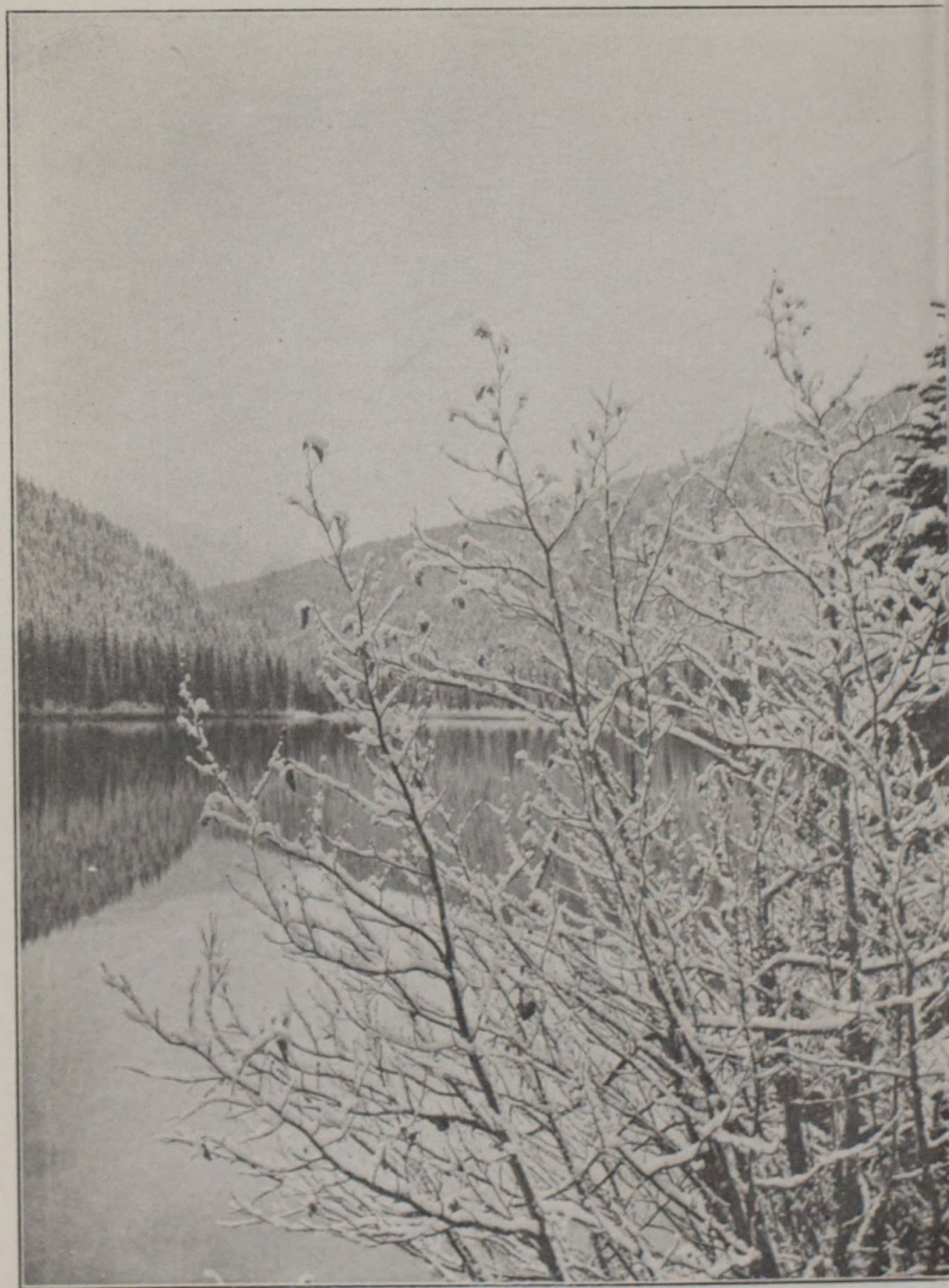
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THE FRONTIER

A Literary Magazine

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VOL. V. NO. 1

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Cycle

The night slips to its ending,
A new day shall come—
There shall be new roads wending,
A new beating of the drum—

Men's eyes shall have fresh seeing,
Grey lives reprise their span—
But under the new sun's being,
Completing what night began,

There'll be the same backs bending,
The same sad feet shall drum—
When this night finds its ending
And day shall have come.

D'ARCY DAHLBERG.

Just the Way It Goes

I.

MRS. Maitland leaned back in her chair and rocked effortlessly as she waited. She was a motherly sort of a person—plump, blue-eyed and check-aproned. Her straight hair was uncertainly gray and held loosely back from her face. The boards in the porch floor squeaked companionably as she rocked and her hands lay quietly resting in her lap.

It had been a busy day for her—not in that respect unusual but because she had had to hurry and even then leave undone some of the household tasks in her daily program. Now supper was ready and on the back of the stove. Pa Maitland and the hired men were in from the fields and as soon as they got the horses watered they would come in and wash, and then they would eat. They would let the chores go tonight and start for town right after supper because, she thought, they wanted to get there early and get good seats. . . .

For Mildred was graduating. Mrs. Maitland smiled tenderly as she thought of her. Again she mentally approved of what she had said to one of her friends over the phone that day, that "Mildred was as good a daughter as any around here." Not only was she the youngest in the class, seventeen, but she was the valedictorian—chosen out of a class of twenty! It had been a proud moment for herself and Pa when Mildred's name had appeared in the headline in the school news column of the *Clyde Park Pioneer*. Pa had thrust the paper aside and said, "Foolishness!" but she had known that he had been as pleased as she. And the presents Mildred was getting! She was a little troubled when she thought about them. It seemed as though she and Pa should be giving her something special. Of course Mildred understood that all her new clothes were from the folks, but it seemed strange to think of other people giving her so many things—as though she and Pa were being left out or that they weren't doing all they should, or something.

Here Mrs. Maitland's rocking ceased and she reached over to the table to pat and smooth the tissue paper wrapping on a little box which was tied with a Christmas ribbon which she had found and pressed for the purpose. The content of the box was the result of her work during the moments which she had snatched from her busy day. Mrs. Maitland was not making Mildred's graduation outfit. She had intended to, but Mildred had asked to let her have a dressmaker make her clothes, "because dressmakers put a different touch to them," Mildred explained. Turning the work of making Mildred's things over to a stranger had made her feel empty and lonely, and so it happened that while she had been looking through *Good Housekeeping* she had been delighted to find directions for making wax-paper flowers, and she had happily made her a corsage bouquet.

So after all, she thought, Mildred would be wearing something on her graduation night that her own mother had made. Yes, they would have to go early so that she would have time to find Mildred and give her the flowers before the class went on the platform. . . .

After supper, Pa Maitland dressed while Mrs. Maitland cleared up the dishes—it was always nicer to come home knowing that the dishes were washed—and took another peep at the living room. Mrs. Maitland had worked hard to put the whole house in spic and span order for Mildred's homecoming. She had not been home since Christmas. They lived only fifteen miles from town but Mildred's week-ends had been filled with her school affairs. Mrs. Maitland had re-varnished the congoium (of course, it all came in on the

spring cleaning, anyway, she had told Pa when he had objected to her "fussing") and washed the curtains—they had been washed for Easter, but she had wanted them to look fresh.

As she looked through the doorway she saw a cheerful, homey room. Everything in it said something about the Maitlands. In the center of the room stood a small table on which stood a blue glass nutbowl filled with Christmas greeting cards and postcards. By the window stood Pa Maitland's easy-chair. A feather cushion worked in "crazy-pattern" design was plumped carefully in the seat and across the back hung a white crocheted scarf. Opposite the piano stood the china closet which held a set of colored dishes, several flower vases and an opened chest of silver. A picture album stood upright on the buffet. There were many pictures on the walls—pictures of men in low-necked collars, women in high-necked collars, and babies in long-sleeved dresses. The stiff lace curtains at the window slyly beckoned to the lilac blossoms just outside to vie with the bowl of wild roses on the table.

"It will seem good to have Mildred home for a while again. No one has played the piano for ever so long," said Mrs. Maitland as she started for the car in which Pa was waiting at the gate.

II.

Mildred was standing with a group of girls in the hall as Mr. and Mrs. Maitland entered the high school building. She came toward them and Mrs. Maitland exclaimed:

"Oh, Mildred girl, your dress is so pretty! And here are some flowers I made for you to wear tonight. They are mixed colors and"

"Oh, but the school board is giving us flowers to wear, Mother. You keep it for me and I'll look at it when we get home."

III.

"Well, Mother, I took Home Management this semester, you know, and I won't mind spring house-cleaning at all this year. Managing a home is an art, Mother, and should be done systematically. We'll begin with the living-room. First, we will take down the curtains."

Why, didn't she see that she *had* done the spring cleaning? Take down the curtains?

"And, Mother, that stuffed eagle on the piano—let's put it down cellar. It's awful! It unbalances the room terribly. Those pictures of Grandma's house and your and Dad's wedding picture are old-fashioned, too! Let's put them in the old trunk in the back bedroom. Simplicity is the thing, you know."

Ye-es, but the eagle?—She was back to the first year she and Pa were married, fighting desperately to save their first home from that terrible forest fire which had swept the country. She felt again the despair she had known when they were forced to leave their homestead. And the eagle! When they had returned three days later their log cabin home had completely disappeared and a blackened stalk was all that had remained of the tall, swishing, conversational pine tree which had stood just outside the cabin door. The eagle had been perched on this, unmoving and unafraid, mocking them or welcoming? But it *was* old. And why should she ache to see those old dull family pictures put aside, and the doilies she had made for the chairs? Mildred knew how other people had things and was only helping. Wasn't that what she went to school for—to learn things she couldn't teach her? She wasn't going to get sentimental—why on earth did she want to cry?

IV.

"I hardly think Pa will want the flowers on the dining-room table, Mildred."

"Why not?"

"Well, he calls them weeds, you know."

"But they are not weeds; they are bluebells and they go so nicely with the dishes and the yellow tablecloth."

"He'll say this is no place for fancy centerpieces."

"Fancy centerpieces! I'm not trying to be 'fancy!' What do you people call fancy, anyway? It seems that what you think is pretty and what I think is pretty are two different things."

V.

Mrs. Maitland sat on the floor before an old trunk sorting and rearranging the contents. This back bedroom had been left till the last in the house-cleaning (or clearing?) process. The discarded furnishings were on a heap on the floor. Mrs. Maitland had volunteered to put the things away and in going over the trunk she had found a pile of old letters and photos that she had not looked over for several years. She had read half through the pack when Mildred entered, asking:

"Mother, you haven't seen a plain sealed envelope around anywhere, have you?"

"No-o, I don't think so, unless it could have been the one I swept up and burned. I didn't look to see what it was; it didn't seem to be much."

"It was the rose I wore at graduation! Burned it? Oh, Mother, I wanted it for my Memory Book—I've saved it for that. Why didn't you stop to think" she cried impatiently as she ran out of the room.

Memory Book! Mildred was making a Memory Book! A curious smile hung on her lips as she mused over the expression.

"That's it," she finally said aloud. "This house is my Memory Book, I guess. Strange; we all go on loving and misunderstanding each other" Then she added, "No, not strange, either, it's just the way it goes."

JORAN J. BIRKELAND.

Graves of the Road Agents

Old Burial Ground, Virginia City, Montana

I stood one noon on Cemetery Hill

Where Alder Gulch, like Carthage's fabled bride,

Robbed of her millions and her heart beside,

Laments her Trojan band. A snow-fed rill

Creeps by below, whose golden shadows fill

The Vigilante's page. Here's one who died

And bears no stone; his neighbor's weathered pride

Unmonumented lies with numbers still.

Yet on this barren shelf's unlettered crest,

Where virtue's pale is weeded o'er by time,

Does hovering Fame Death's registry restore:

Five cherished mounds, whose legends are impressed

With name and year, immortalize the crime

Of Club-Foot George and his companions four!

WASHINGTON JAY McCORMICK.

Frannie Flat

Spring

DEEP in yellow dust and wrinkled by many wheel tracks, the dry prairie road lay asleep in the August sun, stretched out between its two guardians of barb-wire fence. The straight lines of brown, rotting fence posts ran side by side for miles over the burnt prairie and joined hands as they disappeared on top of a slight rise far to the west. To the right a quarter-mile away, a low hill bulged out of the level plain. On top of the hill sat a deserted dry-land shanty. In a pocket at the foot of the hill a small alkali swamp cuddled. The whole lay in a shimmering haze of mirage-like density. Frannie flat was in the grip of drouth.

The sun had paralyzed the very air. There was not enough motion to stir a grain of sand, yet the choking smell of dust, of dry, finely pulverized dust, rose over the road. A brown gartersnake, whose dull surface might once have been a bright green, glided lazily under the barb-wire fence, raised its head to listen, and then plunged into the deep, warm sand, which partly closed over its back as it made a crooked wrinkle from fence line to fence line. But the road didn't notice. Neither did the two fences that stood silently by with their wire hanging in loose, untidy loops.

The prairie between the road and the swamp at the foot of the hill was brown. It was baked into irregular squares and trapezoids, separated from each other by fine, spider-web cracks. Here and there was a spot of parched grass, more like the color of the dusty road. The prairie had the appearance of having first been wetted and then scorched for a long time.

The few, straggling cat-tails on the border of the swamp were brown, too. The sun had robbed the pool of most of its water. Its bottom was a nasty, black mud, filled with shallow pock-marks. In the bottoms of these pockets huddled precious drops of water. The dried rims of the mud pockets were white with alkali.

"Kill—deer, kill—deer." The snipe's wail rose and fell harshly in the hot quiet. "Kill—deer, kill—deer," and the snipe moved farther into the shade of the hill to bathe its feet in another water pocket.

"Kill—deer, kill—deer," came the echo from the vacant windows of the deserted shanty.

Autumn

It is late October in the Frannie country. The road is hard-packed, smooth, and dark-tan, gleaming with life and newness. The road runs swiftly on between the two lines of fence posts, which have been freshened by a recent rain. The posts have lost their look of decay. They have taken on the appearance of battle-scarred sentinels, who watch the activity of the road with amusement. Their wires hang in graceful loops, like tassels on a sword.

Someone has killed a hawk and nailed it by its wings to one of the fence posts. A magpie sits on the opposite post regarding it seriously, head cocked to one side, and long, slender tail balanced in air. It chatters and scolds loudly at the inanimate mass of brown feathers across the road, and cocks its head again to await a reply. Disgusted by the cowardly silence, the big black and white bird swoops upon the fence post, and after a few pecks at the head of the dead hawk, flies toward the deserted house, scolding and chattering.

Below it everywhere the ground is red, red, fiery red. September rains after the drouth have filled the prairie with bushes of Russian thistle and

October frosts have set them aflame. As the weak autumn sun reflects their color, everywhere it seems to be sunset. The magpie circles the swamp, which is filled to higher borders with water. Scarcely a streak of white alkali can be seen. The slim cat-tail shoots are emerald-green with thimble caps of soft brown. Tardy frogs that have not yet found winter quarters in the swamp mud, croak to each other from the bottoms. Water-skippers race in black droves at the water's edges.

The magpie swoops down and then soars to the top of the hill and to the deserted shanty. A fall wind has filled the vacant window with yellow umbrella weeds, giving it an air of enchantment, and mystery.

The sound of galloping hoofs comes from the brown road. A boy on a pony rides into view. He is leaning over in his saddle, whispering to his horse as they gallop past. Suddenly he throws his head back and laughs.

"Ha, Ha," echoes the deserted house.

FRED GILSDORF.

Winter Dusk

In the sky tonight an afterglow
Like grosbeaks gleaming in the snow.
Then down through the drifted blue-black burn
The night wind blowing.

GRACE D. BALDWIN.

But You Are Like Waves

I am pine shadows, brooding, still,
Haunting the deep recesses:

But you—

You are like waves on a lake sunlit in the midst of the forest—
You are like waves of living blue
That glint and are gone.

I am patient and grim and reserved,
Determined by ancient trees:

But you—

You are light and swift and ever new,
Reflecting, eluding.

I wait in the woods, but you—
You ripple among the pebbles passing through
And softly returning, smoothing bare
Their hidden colors, waking there
A myriad gleamings.

I am dusky and somber and stoic;

But you—

You are blue and gold like the waves of a sunlit lake in the forest—
You are like waves, that caressing softly,
Break in white-flecked laughter.
And vanish.

GRACE D. BALDWIN.

Gray and Gold to White

I. Early Fall

WE trudged slowly up the long mountain slope, pausing now and then to rest and to survey the country around us. The city lay below, serene in the early October sunshine—a beautiful thing of homes, of churches from whose spires came the clear ringing of bells—an ugly thing of smoke and dust and regularity, symbolizing our bondage to man-made laws and customs, to civilization.

Just ahead of us was a thicket of small bushes whose scarlet leaves, lighted from above by the morning sunlight, glowed with red incandescence. We climbed still higher and turned again to look back. Far down below us white smoke rose from the house at the mouth of the canyon. A herd of cattle grazed on the hillside. Down on the level valley floor where the wheat was stacked like golden hillocks in the farmyards the threshing machines were hard at work. The city seemed smaller—much less significant.

But still we felt the oppression of its presence, so we hastened to leave it behind us like children who feel that a disagreeable thing is blotted out if it is lost from sight for a time.

Finally we left the open hillside, entering the timber, and followed a tiny path which led us by easy stages toward the backbone of the mountain. Crossing the ridge we came out on another open hillside. We sat there basking in the sunshine—it was too cool in the shade of the scrubby pines—and let the autumn color enter into us.

The grass was burnt dry and the hill was a sweep of soft gray, broken by bright spots of crimson, gold, orange, and purple where clumps of small bushes flaunted their autumn raiment. Far off, beyond densely wooded ridges old Sawtooth reared his snow-covered head, and Lolo stood like a white cloud crest against the deep blue of the sky.

There was very little animal life; we saw a squirrel and heard a few chickadees. For the most part it was a day of silent October gold—quiet, drowsy, and a wee bit wistful.

The whole outdoors seemed waiting—waiting for the snow-laden winds to come whistling down from the north and cut short the colored glory of the fall.

II. Late Autumn on the Divide Trail

Since for two months autumn had been enthroned in a glory of color with not a drop of cold rain nor a snow flake—for which she seemed waiting with a tinge of regret—to mar her brilliance, she threw off her despondency and became carelessly, flagrantly gay. “Winter might have come long ago, perhaps he does not mean to come at all,” she seemed to say.

As we swung up the trail in early morning darkness the hush was broken by the bark of a coyote and the cry of an owl. Slowly the clouds parted in the east and day came with a tiny breeze that rustled the tamarack trees crisply and shook down golden mists of needles.

A whirr of wings startled us as a grouse flew up from almost beneath our feet. The light grew brighter and little pink clouds floated across the sky.

Suddenly Clare stopped. “Grosbeaks, aren’t they?” she asked, pointing to a clump of larches. There, on the carpet of gold needles beneath the trees and among the branches, were several large crimson birds.

"No. Crossbills! Walk quietly over toward them and see how close you can get without frightening them."

Clare walked slowly toward the birds while Ward and I stood and watched her—a slender little thing of dusky brown and red coloring, a bit of the autumn woodland come to chum with us.

Nearer and nearer she drew to the red birds, who eyed her with shy friendliness, letting her come quite close before they flew up into the tamaracks showering yellow needles over their bright plumage. Clare came back to us her eyes dancing; and we took the trail again.

Later we reached the spring, and far above it we made camp in a thicket of larches. After breakfast we hiked far into the woods on a little trail which led us up and up until we reached a saddle between two summits. We stopped and looked down on the other side into a ravine so deep that it seemed bottomless. The nearest slope was covered with an open forest of yellow pine; across the ravine the firs grew thickly, covering the hillside in sombre green with the brightness of larches splashed here and there.

The trail led us far down into the ravine, across the brook, through thickets of alder and birches, through tangles of spruces, and up again on the hill where the larches cast soft yellow shadows among the smoky emerald shadows of evergreens. Finally we came out on a high ridge, burned over years before, from which we could see the country for miles. The Bitter Root mountains stretched their chain of serrated peaks before us; Slide Rock mountain loomed misty purple on one side; far off Mount Stewart cut the blue sky with a silver edge.

Sitting on the hillside we watched the lavender haze of Indian summer advance and recede from the mountains, listened to the rustle of the fickle breeze in the bushes and to the cry of a great hawk wheeling alone in the sky, basked in the soft warmth of the sunshine.

Clare spoke suddenly:

"Why can't it remain like this? Why must the snow come to hide the colors?"

Snow!—a chill touched my heart.

Winter on Mitten Mountain

The sun came up from behind Mitten mountain, illuminating the fairyland through which we walked. A low-hanging fog had been frozen on the trees the night before and the frost, falling from the branches, carpeted the ground in white. Most of the autumn color had disappeared; the world was blue and green and white. A sky of deep sapphire, cloudless and fair, arched over us; dusky green showed dimly through the frost on tiny clumps of evergreens and a brighter hue was visible between the ice crystals covering the kinnikinnick and Oregon grape. But as we came out on the upper slope where the frost had been heavier we found ourselves walking down a path through a forest of white coral.

Strive as it might, the sun could not come up over the mountain to shine on our camp in the midst of evergreens and willows, so none of the frost fell, and our camping place, overhung by fir and leafless branches from which even our fire could not melt all the snow, seemed in a dream country.

At noon we took a little trail going over the hillside into the creek bottom. All along the way we saw rabbit tracks and suddenly a rabbit jumped over a log and hopped down into a thicket of frosty fir trees.

"Do you suppose he enjoys living in Christmas-country?" Ward asked me.
 "How could he help but doing so?" I replied.

Christmas-country—a land of Christmas trees, bedecked in snow and ice crystals, bright with sparkling sunshine!

We wandered far down the trail, and then, when the frosty crimson and range of sunset east rose and lavender shadows over the far blue mountains, we went back to camp.

The glow of our fire rose-tinged the whiteness about us. Darkness came and through soft, low-hanging clouds the crescent moon peeped down at the quiet woodland.

As we stood looking down the trail, a narrow opening between trees and bushes of silvery whiteness, I said to Ward: "Look! It is winter—'Christmas-country'—I was so afraid of its coming."

He laughed softly and led the way down through the enchanted forest.

EUGENIE E. FROHLICHER.

I Cannot Think on Love

Tonight I cannot sweep the kitchen hall
 But you are watching me

I cannot wade into the moonlit creek
 But I'll be glancing back to see if you can hear me

I cannot stop to watch the river's fall
 But I must hear your laugh

I cannot feel the wind upon my cheek
 But I must close my eyes to fancy you are near me

Tonight I cannot think on love at all
 But think on you!

VIOLET E. CRAIN

Disillusionment

Gay Lad, who romped a little while ago,
 What holds you, spell-bound, in the new-fall'n snow?

"Follow that pine's shadow—to the brook below,
 Down where gold willows and red dog-wood grow.
 There, on that ground-pine, is the "spell" I've seen,
 A snow-shoe rabbit, on a bed of green."

Still Lad, who laughed a little while ago,
 Why grave and silent? Can you let me know?

"I sought adventure in the busy mart,
 They saw a snow-shoe rabbit—on a furrier's cart!"

WINIFRED MUCKLER.

The Intolerable Hope

THE tiny southern village drowsed in the heat of the early afternoon. It was the day that comes toward the end of August, when, even in the fullness of its rank, dust-covered vegetation, of its sun beating against sidewalks and whitewashed fences, of its still air quivering in little waves of heat, summer seems to hang poised, reluctant, heavy with age, transfixed by a first intangible hint of the coming autumn. Mary Lorne, on her way to the postoffice, felt the faint exhilaration of impending change, as she had felt it with every summer's end since her early teens. The moment was precious to her, for the mood it brought, and the brief illusion of a weight lifting through the haze, or an opening gate, or a cool wind on the brow of a hill one has never climbed before. It was a mood she had tried to hold, sometimes, in sobbing defiance.

In the postoffice a group of young girls obstructed the way to the Lorne box. They were her pupils in the high school; in a few years, no doubt, she would be teaching their daughters. Sometimes they whispered about her behind her back. They were young enough to feel sorry for her, at times; she achieved a vicarious glamor of romance, no doubt, in their young imaginations—Miss Lorne had had a hopeless love affair, don't you know—oh, *you* know—

Mary bit her lips. Why must she think of all that today, today when the turn of the year promised, vaguely, change, escape? The postmistress beckoned.

"Here's a letter for you from some place in Colorado, Miss Mary. Didn't know you all had friends out west?"

Mary studied the long business envelope with a puzzled frown.* The postmistress leaned expectantly in the window.

"Likely it's some special some one out there in Colorado, Miss Mary? Is it now?"

Mary had a sudden wish that she might answer in the affirmative, truthfully. But Mrs. Myers knew better; every one in the whole town knew better than that. She put the envelope into her pocket. There was an unwonted flush on her forehead, and her voice trembled a little.

"Oh, please, Mrs. Myers—"

Outside, Mary stopped to open the letter. The postmark had recalled to her an application for a position written one spring night in a bitter mood of revolt. Now, after three months, they had sent her a contract to sign. How like a school board! And how like herself, Mary Lorne, to be startled, almost frightened, by this thing that came so like a response to the feeling of vague expectancy born of her mood!

She turned homeward. She could feel her heart beating, and the blood in her temples, uneasily, restlessly. The letter in her pocket was like a tugging hand. Mary trembled in protest. She had tried. Must she be once more humiliated, before herself, by the knowledge that she could not, could not, go away?

She had been teaching at home for five years. Other offers she had refused; and her reasons were not to be found in the textbooks on education. They were unadmitted reasons, tough little tentacles of memory and inarticulate longing which, perhaps, one might have to tear away a part of oneself—

The wide, shady street enumerated them, mutely, while her slow steps counted the boards in the sidewalk. Some of the boards had been loose, five years ago; one tripped over them in the dark and swayed against a supporting arm, and laughed. Sometimes Mary hated herself for stepping carefully on those boards. Tentacles—chains.

Old Caesar had used to run along the fence of Johnson's side yard, and bark. In the daytime he was faded, like an old tawny rug, and stiff, but amazingly fierce and noisy and betraying, nevertheless, when the moonlight made warm black pools of shadow around the plantain trees.

She turned into the last block of her way. Her head was bowed. A magnolia bloomed, there, in the spring. If one went away, would it be joy or pain to forget the fragrance, and the fragility, of those white, luminous flowers?

Before the big house on the corner a small red-headed, tear-stained person was swinging on the gate. Mary hesitated. Her voice had a throaty sweetness that would have astonished her mother.

"Why have you been crying, Sonny Lee?"

The little boy looked at her in solemn silence, while two big new tears rolled down his chubby cheeks. She glanced quickly up and down the street, and toward the windows of the big house. The street was empty; the windows blinked sleepily, and unattentive. Dare she? Mary knelt on the sidewalk and held out her arms to the child.

"Come here, Sonny Boy," she said softly. "Tell Mary all about it, won't you?"

Sonny Lee came doubtfully into her encircling arms. With a sort of defiance, Mary tightened her embrace until the tousled red head rested against her shoulder.

"Tell Mary, dear," she prompted.

The youngster found his voice with a sob.

"Daddy was cross, said 'Go away out of the house.'"

"Why, is your father at home now, in the afternoon?"

The child nodded.

"Upstairs."

Mary got hastily to her feet.

"Don't cry, honey, Daddy didn't mean to be cross." Her hand lingered on the red curls. "Do you love me a little bit, Sonny Boy?"

The child stared, round-eyed and non-committal.

"I guess so, Mary."

Mary laughed, and pressed a kiss to his moist forehead. On her own doorstep, across the street, she turned for one more look. Sonny Lee had gone back to swinging on the gate, as if he had already forgotten the interruption. Mary's lips quivered. They "guessed so," or—said nothing at all—and then forgot. A half-remembered quotation floated through her mind—"I love you, what is that to you?" She stood for a moment gazing out over the sun-flecked lawns, then, with a little sigh, took the letter from her pocket and turned to go in. Mother—

Voices came to her from indoors. At the sound Mary slipped the envelope back into her dress, and went through the house to the kitchen. As she opened the door a neighbor who was talking to Mrs. Lorne broke off in the middle of her sentence.

It was always like that. People said things. Or else, the things they might say, perhaps, clung about you like cobwebs in a dim room. You couldn't break through them all. Mrs. Lorne ended the awkward silence.

"I'm sure you'll be sorry to hear what Mrs. Jones has just been telling me, honey. Young Mrs. Lee has been taken suddenly ill, and is not expected to live."

"Oh!" Mary sank into the nearest chair. "Oh, how terrible!" It would seem more terrible, in a minute, when she had thought about it. She knew that

the others' eyes were upon her, the neighbor's curious, full of secret significance, her mother's vaguely anxious, and added, in a sort of panic:

"So that was why?"

Oh, she shouldn't have mentioned that, not now! Mrs. Jones had compressed her lips, tightly, like an inquisitor. Mary stammered on:

"Sonny Boy was—swinging on the gate, when I came by. He said his father had sent him out of the house."

"Hmph," said Mrs. Jones, as if she were contradicting something. "And I don't wonder. Lawrence Lee just worships his wife, I reckon he's worried sick. He'll never find another mother for that poor child. As I started to say—"

She means that for me, Mary thought; she means that I haven't even a right to remember, even just to dream. Dream? The meaning of her mother's soft interruption shocked her, terrified her.

"Let us hope that Ethel will get well, Mrs. Jones," her mother said.

"Well. Mercy yes, of course."

Why must Mrs. Jones contrive to appear just a little surprised, incredulous? Mary got up and walked blindly across to the window. She felt, somehow, constrained to echo the neighbor's words, in a muffled voice:

"Yes, of course."

She was still standing there, with her back to the room, when her mother came back from taking the guest to the door. There fell a long silence in the bright little kitchen, broken only by the pop-pop of the peas Mrs. Lorne was shelling. At last Mary turned.

"Mother—"

"Yes, dear?"

"Mother, I—I'm so sorry about Ethel Lee."

"Of course, Mary."

Mary flushed. Again. But why? Why? What did it matter whether it was "of course" or not? Mrs. Lorne bent to rescue a fat, round pea from under the rocker of her chair.

"Was there any mail, daughter? Isn't that a letter in your pocket?"

Involuntarily, Mary covered the envelope with her hand. The flush deepened in her cheeks.

"It's only a—a business letter, for me. Do you mind if I go for a long tramp, mother? School is beginning so soon—"

Mrs. Lorne looked up.

"Go for a walk if you like, dear. But not too long. People wonder. They can't always understand, you know, even if—mothers do."

Mary went upstairs to her room for a broad-brimmed hat. She put the letter from the Colorado school board under a pile of books on her desk. And hated herself; Mother never pried; Mother just understood. Her fingers had grown unbearably slow and clumsy in her haste to be quite alone.

A few minutes' walk took her out into the open country. Undirected, her steps turned into the river road. Ethel Lee was dying. But the river road drew away from the shadow of death, softened it, colored it, as if the past had changed places with the present. Mary had come this way so often, in so many moods, that her eyes no longer saw the familiar scene as it was, but instead, a blending of summer sunsets and autumn haze and the bare tossed branches of trees against a winter sky, vague, unrealizable, like the setting of a dream life. She put her hand to her throat. She must not; an alarm clock was ringing.

She walked rapidly on and on, hardly conscious of effort. A country boy, splendid in his careless blue overalls, tipped his hat respectfully as she passed.

From across the fields, she could hear the clear-toned "Gee, there!" of a ploughman. The utter peace of the afternoon frightened her, made her feel like a trespasser. She longed for a storm, for a sudden violent uprising of nature to clear her mind of clinging, insistent memories.

It is hard to speak with yourself, face to face. Mary wanted to ask, "Am I hoping that Ethel will die? Am I?" But, life was like that. Things did average up if you waited long enough. The river road blurred; her eyes smarted.

She passed a place where the river waited, gentle and deep, behind banked willows. There some small boys had sought relief from the heat, and, at sight of her, ducked under the water until they looked like a floating colony of impudent grins. A pain that resembled relief stirred at Mary's heart. Youth! Perhaps—perhaps she was still the little girl who had used to slip quietly by to catch a glimpse of a flaming red head through the willows.

Perhaps the rest hadn't happened; and she could go back to not caring whether he loved her or not. That was what hurt, not knowing, not being sure, even of memories, wondering—one couldn't ask. The things people said stood between them. . . . Mary Lorne is a perfect fool to run around so much with a man engaged to be married. . . . At least she has sense enough not to let his wife know how she feels. . . . Mary had Sonny Lee on her front porch all afternoon. Hmph. . . . Five years. Had he loved her?

The road ended at the ferry. The boat was moored on the other bank, and the ferry keeper nowhere in sight. Roads do end. Mary picked her way across the pebbly beach, and sat down at the water's edge. With a sort of joy in abandoning herself to the childish impulse, any impulse, she began to flick little stones over the surface. One, heavier than the rest, splashed into the deep water along the opposite shore. Mary watched the rippling circles widen until they merged in the shallower current; and suddenly, she knew that the river road had become Gethsemane, and buried her face in her hands.

Why had the letter come? Why must she decide? Death would not keep a tally of anyone's hopes, or fears, or uncertainties. . . . The letter was cruel, because choice is cruel. A prisoner may accept the thing he cannot reach out and take.

The sun was sinking. Oblique rays touched Mary Lorne's figure, and gave it an odd sort of distinction, as if some maker of cathedral windows had taken it for a symbol of the inarticulate and the commonplace, and edged it with light. She sat so, until the river at her feet reflected a crimson sky, and darkened, became strange, cold, sinister.

It was quite dark when she reached home. Mrs. Lorne met her at the door. "It's so late, dear. I'd begun to worry. I've kept your supper. Will you eat in the kitchen?"

Mary avoided her mother's questioning eyes.

"I'm really not hungry, Mother."

"You must eat your supper, Mary. I—you must eat something."

"Yes, Mother."

Mrs. Lorne brought her mending into the kitchen. Mary stirred her tea, round and round, over and over. Her mother's unspoken sympathy hurt; she didn't deserve it. Mrs. Lorne bent her head lower and lower over a brown silk stocking, and spoke softly. Mary started. Mother's voice sounded so strangely, the same as always.

"Had you ever thought of going some where else to teach, Mary? Everyone needs a change now and then."

Mary stirred uneasily.

"It's rather late to think of a change now, Mother. I—Oh, Mother!"

Mrs. Lorne held a stocking up to the light.

"I'm sure the school board wouldn't stand in your way, dear—of course it's just a suggestion, but I've been thinking—you know, there's nothing to keep me here. I could go with you; we could have a little home—"

Mary put down the teaspoon, and clasped her hands tightly together in her lap, under the tablecloth.

"You mean," she said slowly, "to—to sell the house, and go away for good, never come back. Oh, Mother!"

"Why not, dear?"

Mary got up uncertainly, and went around the table to stand behind Mrs. Lorne's chair. How gray mother's hair was getting! How easy, and how simple things were for mother! Her voice caught in her throat.

"I can't think about it tonight. I can—I—I'm too tired, I guess."

"Yes, dear," Mrs. Lorne sighed gently. "You'd better go right up to bed. I'll be along soon."

Mary hesitated.

"I—good night, Mother."

Mary closed the door of her room behind her, and stood still, without turning on the light. She tried to be calm, to tell herself that nothing had happened, that nothing was going to happen. She tried to imagine herself taking off her clothes, getting into bed, going to sleep, waking up to a day just like any other day. She needn't do anything else.

She slipped quietly across the room to the window, as if some one were watching her. The night was warm, and breathlessly still. From upstairs in the big house on the corner, a light shone through the trees. Mary watched. At intervals, a shadow moved in front of the light; some one, the nurse or the doctor, was bending over the patient, administering stimulants, perhaps, fighting—perhaps Sonny Lee had been put to bed by his father, awkwardly, strangely.

With a start, Mary realized that the clock in the hall downstairs was striking. The house was quiet; she could vaguely recall hearing her mother come up to bed, hours before. She must have been standing there for hours, waiting. Waiting? Why, that—that was intolerable. She could not bear it any more, not ever again. Mary pulled down the window shade, and groped her way to her desk. The light went on like a cold, invigorating wind.

With steady hands, Mary drew the contract from the western school from its envelope and signed her name. It was simple, after all; one could just go away and never come back. For a long moment her head drooped over the books and papers. Then she raised it high, and hastily scanned the typewritten pages. She would have to telegraph. She wanted to telegraph. She caught up her purse, and stole cautiously down the stairs and out of the house.

The station master and telegraph clerk, who had known her from childhood, stared curiously. It didn't matter what he thought, he would send the message. Nothing mattered. Or at least—

The picket fence along Johnson's side yard looked pale and ghostly. Old Caesar wouldn't run out and bark. Of course. Old Caesar was dead—how many winters ago? Mary spoke half aloud:

"It was the best I could do."

A voice came from the quiet shadows of the plantain trees.

"What on earth are you doing here at this time of night, Mary?"

Mary trembled.

"I—I've been sending a telegram, Lawrence. I'm going away." The words came of themselves. And abruptly, she thought, "What a strange thing to say, how selfish!" and hurried on:

"I'm so sorry, Lawrence. How—how is Ethel?"

His voice sounded strained and unnatural.

"There's a chance. She's just holding her own. I don't know. I couldn't stand it in the house. They told me to try to sleep. I couldn't . . . Thank you, Mary."

Mary wanted to stretch out her hand and comfort him, just as she had comforted the small, read-headed person crying by the gate. But it wasn't quite like that. The man sighed heavily.

"I'll walk home with you; you shouldn't be out by yourself."

They walked on together. Some one had nailed up the loose boards, long ago, and their footsteps echoed solidly. She heard herself saying:

"Sonny Boy was crying, out by the gate. You shouldn't be cross with him, Lawrence. He's so little."

She wondered if he had heard her. What had she said? One more block. It seemed to her that the moment was being prolonged out of all relations to time and space. Calm came to her, and courage, because of the knowledge that she would never see him again. At the corner she spoke:

"This is goodbye, you know. For just one little minute can't we break through the pretending, and being afraid, and—everything? It's only the not knowing, never being able to stop wondering. Lawrence, did you love me, that summer?"

He was so long in answering that she thought, again, that he might not have heard her. His voice seemed to come from a distance.

"Yes, Mary, I did love you. But I couldn't say anything, you know. And now—I—it was so long ago—you understand, don't you?"

They had stopped, unconsciously, under the magnolia tree on the corner. Mary looked up into its gnarled, spreading branches. She wouldn't mind now, when it bloomed in the spring. She would love to remember it, to think back to it from that far place, in Colorado, of wide plains, and distant horizons, and mountains, and new faces—

"I understand," she said softly. "Goodnight. And goodbye. And I hope that—that Ethel—"

Their hands clasped an instant, fell away. Mary smiled wistfully in the darkness. Of course.

DOROTHY MUELLER.

Cobwebs

The fairies seined for fish last night.

They sunk their meshes into lakes of dew—
And pulled the silvery spoil to light.

When they were through.
The nets were hung from close-together trees
To dry out in the early morning breeze.

JOHN C. FROHLICHER.

Paul Bunyan Yarns

Finding Out About Paul

“WON’T you tell me about the time Paul was logging around Lake Five?”
 “Well, you see, I don’t know much about it.” He puffs at his pipe.

“You don’t?” eagerly.

“No, you see, me ‘n’ Paul bein’ on the outs just about then, he was makin’ shift to do without me.” He puffs again.

“He was?” imploring.

“Well, he was getting on somehow, I guess, but as I said before, I don’t know much about it.” He becomes patient.

“You don’t?” getting anxious.

He sits with his hands locked over his knees, his pipe in his mouth, but he finally removes it. “No, can’t tell you nothin’ about it,” then, seeing his listener rising to the occasion, “but you might ask Sam.”

“Sam?” bewildered.

“Yes, Sam can tell you all about it,” with a decisive nod.

“He can?” hopefully.

“Oh, yes, Sam was workin’ with Paul that winter. It was to Sam Paul let the contrac’,” mysteriously.

“Contract?” still prying.

“Yes, Paul had to get those logs out of there in a hurry and Sam was his man. Why, Sam up an’ cleaned out that timber with a binder, cut an’ bundled it same’s they do wheat up there now. That machine cut a swath a mile wide, too. Seventy teams of mules couldn’t pull it, but Sam hitched Paul’s blue ox, Babe, to the machine, an’ Babe pulled it across a section of timber in three jerks. Oh, yes, an’ the bundles was just right for fodder for the ox, only they had to be used for makin’ lath, accordin’ to the contract. You see, each tree made one lath bolt, just the way it come out of the bundle, or maybe they might have fed them to Babe after all. (As it was, they used sawdust to feed the teams that worked around the mill, and even for the old blue ox himself, and dumped the logs into the lake. You can doubt me if you want to, but they’re still takin’ lath bolts out of that there Lake Five, there was so many of ‘em.” He goes on smoking.

“Where did they get the sawdust to feed the animals? Well, that’s another story, but I told you I didn’t know nothin’ about it. Sam can tell you. It was to him Paul let the original contrac’, me’n’ Paul bein’ on the outs at the time. No, I don’t know nothin’ about the sawdust, but you might ask Paul.”

GRACE D. BALDWIN.

Paul Bunyan and the Forest Service

“The drive was down, an’ me’n’ Paul Bunyan was a-settin’ out in front of the Lake House, back in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, a-whittlin’ an’ spittin’ tobacco juice at the flies that was crawlin’ up the posts to the hitch-rail. It was springtime, an’ the sun was mighty warm an’ we was most asleep when old Joe (I fergit his last name, but he was a Belgian, an’ run the hotel) came along an’ says: “Paul, here’s a letter for you.”

Paul takes the envelope an’ looks at it mighty curious-like, an’ fin’ly cuts it open. He takes out the letter, an’ looks at it, an’ says to me, says he: “Charley,

you read this to me. I lef' my spees in the room." Paul was allus leavin' his spees somewheres.

So I read it, an' it said that the President of these United States had appointed Paul to be Forest Ranger on the Silverbow district of the Lewis and Clark Forest, an' he was to report to his supervisor at St. Paul right away, an' then take charge of the district—it an' all the rights, emoluments an' privilege acceruin' thereto. Paul said that he'd never worked for the service, but that he'd try it a whirl if I'd come along to look after the books, sort of.

Well, we paid our reckonin' at the hotel, an' took the Hart boat to Green Bay. There we got on the train an' come west. Paul kept lookin' out of the window at the old cuttin's all the way to St. Paul, an' I saw he was mighty blue. I asked him what was the matter, an' he said that the slashin's an' deserted loggin' camps an' burned stumps an' dried spring-holes was a-lookin' at him an' sayin': "Paul, you done this—you an' your men. You cut the big pine. You took the clear logs. You left the tops to rot in the hardwood second growth. You dried up the springs, an' brung in the thistles. You are responsible for the wasted land here." But I told Paul not to fret, that whiskey that's spilled ain't fit to drink, an' that we was goin' into the Forest Service to save the timber an' not to mine it as we had done before.

We pulled into St. Paul an' went right up to the postoffice, where we found old man Raines, who was supervisor of the Lewis an' Clark in them days. The forest run from the Mississippi to the Pacific, an' from the Canady line to the blue grass swamps of Arkansas. Raines was plumb tickled to see Paul, an' he told us that our headquarters was in the village of Butte, which hadn't been discovered by the A. C. M. yet. All there was in Butte was in a ravine called Dublin Gulch, an' our station was there, too. It was a right nice cabin, we found when we arrove. But we travelled ten days through the finest ten-log tree stand I ever saw—all the way from St. Paul to Butte. An' when we got there they wasn't no mountains at all—nothin' but a low ridge extendin' from north to south—like the height of land between Superior an' Hudson's Bay, only not so rough.

In Butte we hired three, four men, an' set them out to build trail an' watch fer fire an' draw pay. Me an' Paul done Public Relations work in Butte, but the Relations got strained; Paul got thrun out of the Hibernian Hall on the twelfth of July. He'd proposed that the folks there give three cheers for William of Orange an' the Battle of the Boyne. So we left Butte an' made an inspection trip—just like Ranger Blue does nowadays. Paul carried a Pulaski tool, which is a combination mattock an' axe, an' I carried a water bag an' a garden rake that the big bugs in Washington had sent to me to fight fires with.

We put out two or three small fires—not over a couple sections, any of them—an' kept a smart lookout for more. The woods was gettin' dryer an' dryer; smoke from a big fire to the east of us piled in front of the sun, an' we was gettin' worried. We talked the situation over, an' didn't decide much until Old Man Raines hisself rode into our camp one night. He had been out fightin' that big fire all alone, because Congress wouldn't appropriate money to pay fire-fighters with.

Him an' Paul, they set up all night, tryin' to figger out how to stop that fire, which by this time stretched all the way from Canady to the Gulf, an' which was movin' west at a terrible speed.

Paul smoked an' thought on the question, an' in the mornin' he picked up his Pulaski an' says to me: "Charley, you an' Mr. Raines go back to Butte an' stay there. I'm goin' north."

So I took Raines an' we went back to Butte. The smoke kept rollin' up thicker an' thicker, an' we took lots o' lip from those Butte Micks about inefficiency, graft an' incompetency. But I never said nothin'—I was watchin' the north, where Paul had gone. One mornin', about five days after Mr. Raines an' me had got to Butte, I saw a hill to the north—a regular rough old mountain, an' they hadn't been one there the night before. As I looked at it, it seemed to come nearer, and then I saw that it *was* comin', because its shape was changin', an' it was spreadin' considerable, too. I watched close, an' at last I saw Paul, his back bowed, his Pulaski swinging' like a flail, an' his breath comin' in short gasps. He was scrapin' the surface of the country clean—trees, brush, grass, duff—*everything down to mineral earth*, an' leavin' behind him a bare strip about twenty miles across, an' on the western edge of this strip the scrapin's was piled high.

He never said nothin', but he passed Butte like a fast mail passes a tramp. The fire burned everything clean, up to the edge of the cleared strip, an' then went out. The west edge of the strip came to be known as the Rocky Mountain region, an' there was trees all over that, an' nothin' but grass come up on the burned area, until the Swedes homesteaded North Dakota.

Charley paused. "What became of Paul?" I asked.

"Well, he had gone clean to Alaska before starting work, so's the fire couldn't sneak around the north end of his trench. So the big gun in the Washington office accused Paul of exceedin' his authority an' abandonin' his district in the face of danger, and asked him to resign. I ain't never seen him since."

JACK FROHLICHER.

Paul Bunyan Logs off Eastern Montana

The winter that Paul Bunyan had the contract to log off Eastern Montana was an exceptionally bad one. It began in the early fall with a steady rain which increased so that it wrecked Paul's bunkhouse on Indian creek by raining down through the chimney faster than it could run out the open doors and windows. Then it turned cold. It was so cold that the ten men who took care of Babe, Paul's big blue ox, had to make her drink anti-freeze solution of alcohol and glycerine. That was the time that Babe got delirious and pulled part of the Beartooth plateau a hundred miles to the north and so made the Crazy mountains. It was during this cold spell that the flames in Paul's big cook stove froze stiff and Paul had to detail four men to thaw them out with hot water.

The Missouri river kept rising around Paul's camps and so he sent five men and a boy down the river to find what was holding the water. They found that the Yellowstone had frozen fast to the Missouri and that it could not be moved. But Paul knew at once what to do. He called in all his men from the upper camps and set them to making snow shoes for Babe. It took one tamarack, two spruce and the skins of twenty-two mules to make one shoe. They ran out of mules and Paul had to lead Babe out with three shoes and one brush pile to hold her up.

Paul threw three half hitches around the Yellowstone just below the lake and hitched Babe on. In thirty minutes Babe had pulled the Yellowstone out of the Missouri, but in so doing had dragged the upper part of the river so that it cut a gash half a mile deep in the river-bed. Paul folded the slack of the river into the upper and lower falls and started for home.

In crossing Alum creek Babe broke through the six-foot crust and got her snowshoes wet. They shrank to less than one-tenth of their natural size, and

Paul was forced to spend the rest of the winter there. It was at this time that he built the hot springs in order to keep warm and Babe got so used to the heat that she couldn't stand any cold. Every time she saw a cloud she started to shiver so hard that the trees all rocked and pinched the saws and axes so tight that the men had to lay off until Babe got over the chill. So Paul decided to send Babe to his son in Texas.

By spring Paul had finished logging off Eastern Montana and he started to move his outfit over onto the Blackfoot before the snow would leave. He detailed twenty men to take Babe and skid a plow across. While they were coming through the Dearborn country a chinook hit them, and Babe started out on the run. But the chinook traveled so fast that while Babe was able to keep on the snow, the plow dragged in the dirt. Babe's speed was so great that she cast a shoe and killed seven men, and Paul had to grab the plow and stick it into the ground. But Babe didn't stop until she reached the Blackfoot, and the plow scooped out a furrow that they call it Limestone Canyon.

GENEVIEVE MURRAY.

Flathead Lake

Fierce, roaring flames smothered and consumed chunks of tamarack in the big stove that stood near the door of the long bunkhouse. Their heat made an orange pillar of the tin stove-pipe, their light set aglow the features of the lumberjacks lying on the floor or leaning against the bunks about the stove. The men's faces stood out against the dark remote interior of the building like deeply cut yellow cameos in a setting of cloudy onyx. A smoky kerosene lamp, suspended from a wire that crawled down out of the gloom from the ridgepole, dispelled but little of the black haze.

To any person who, when entering, pushed the clapboard door against an elbow or a bare foot, a curse would be the greeting, or in passing the group at the stove brushed too heavily against a rheumatic shoulder. Further dexterity would be required in stooping under the masses of steaming clothing draped over wires and cords close about the stove.

The stench of drying socks and jackets and of stale tobacco smoke was stifling, sickening. In the tiered bunks beyond the heat of the fire smelly blankets cast forth the peculiar odor absorbed from long contact with hot unbathed bodies. The tumbled bedding made a jumble of billows in a sea of streaky black.

Ole's candle, perched on the wooden frame of the farthest lower bunk, made a little pool of light in the gloom. His eyes were fixed upon a fiction magazine which he held obliquely to the candle. A tentative clearing of the throat was his only sign of remonstrance when Two-Fingered Bill, the most stentorian individual in the employ of the lumber company, improvised yarns for the entertainment of his small audience.

And on this night Bill was in fine fettle. A slight thaw had been followed by a quick freeze, making the logging roads dangerous with ice. This was to Bill's liking, and all day he had swayed upon loads of logs and bellowed, and lashed his horses as the sled shot down grades and careened wildly around stumps and rocks and fallen trees. The best skinner in camp, he was, despite the loss of two fingers on his whip hand. And Bill knew it.

"Jumpin' Gee Hosaphat, she shure went fine today!" he whooped, "the snow's as slick's the snow that thawed w'en Paul's big ox laid down to sleep, across the Mission mountains."

"That was the time o' the blue snow, wan't it, Bill?" queried the Duke as he snipped the stub of a brown cigarette through the open draft door of the stove.

"Yah, that were the year o' the blue snow. Ol' Paul ploughed up the big plateau that was here then, an' the tops o' the furrows is wot these here mountains is now. It took 'im all day, an' the blue ox, that'd been pullin' on the plow that Ol' Nick had give to Paul, was plumb tired out. So 'e layed down atween the furrows, an' went to sleep right off.

"Well, it thawed during the night, an' w'en Paul pulled the ox's tail to wake 'im up the next morning there was blue slush everywair. W'en the ox got up an' licked 'is flanks the water began to ooze into the hole in the mud where he slept the night before. The snow kept on thawin', an' finally the water started runnin' down atween the furrows.

"Well, sir, that damn puddle never did drean off, an' that's how we got Flathead lake to this very day! The snow was blue, and so was the slush, an' so was the water, an' it's been blue as ink ever since.

"Now then, God, He didn't like to see that big puddle there with nothin' in it. So 'E took a broom an' rammed the handle through the ground right under the Cascades an' the Rockies. The end o' the handle came out where Big Arm bay is—That's wot made the bay an' Wild Horse island.

"'Now,' 'E sez, 'now the sea-devils can come in fr'm the ocean!'

"'An' they shure did come in, an' they never got out, either, cuz the tunnel that God made with the broomstick caved in some'rs in Idaho. An' w'en the sea-devils frolic around, then's w'en we have the big storms on Flathead lake.'

"Yee Cly! Can't yous falluhs know anyting to come to bet ven it iss almost time to go to vork?"

This from Ole, who had extinguished his candle and buried his head under a quilt.

"Yur right, Ole, we're all gonna roll in pronto," chirped Blind Eyed Mary, whose eyes were watery from the glare of the fire.

"Say, Beel," wheezed Fat Le Blanc, "for w'y did Mistair Bonyan plough the plateau?"

"W'y, he planted a crop o' tam'rack trees. But there was chaff in the seed—that's w'y we got these here damn lodgepole."

AL SCHAK.

"At Home the Tamarack Forests"

At home the tamarack forests burn golden on the ridges,
Beneath the trees the crimson grape flares through amber glow,
The mountains smoulder in purple haze, until the stern Coldmaker
Descending from the north will quench the autumn fires with snow.

EUGENIE E. FROHLICHER.

Neighbors

LEST I be misunderstood I had better announce and elucidate my thesis. I should most certainly hate to confess myself a mossback, or to put myself in that class of people who are always praising "the good old times" and harking back to "the good old days." *This* is my age, and in it I find joy. There is romance in machines. Let pastoral poets have their swish-swish of the sickle, but give me the clatter of the header or the roar of the mower. It was a good sight to see old Wissman light the Christmas tree candles, one by one, years ago; but it is equally thrilling to see young Wissmann light them all at once with a turn of the electric light switch.

Of course I draw the line once in a while. I want my boy to make his own kites, getting water-blisters in the web of his hand from whittling, and white streaks on his pants from wiping the paste off his hands. But I do not want people with me on camping-trips who bring pancake flour, napkins, fig newtons, and other reminders of civilization with them. The spectacle of two atrophied souls listening to a portable phonograph out in the woods in the midst of a hundred bird-flutters makes me want to throw rocks!

I am not against any certain thing because it is new, or devoted to it because it is old. The pride that buys a triple-six car is quite the same as that which caused the family of a few generations ago to sport a double-seated, fringe-bordered phaeton; and no one can prove that wrinkle clay is any more of a sign of degeneracy than the hoop-skirt.

It is true that the automobile, the free delivery, the telephone, and radio are all useful and wonderful. But may we not consider whether they have not been instrumental in killing that old-fashioned virtue, neighborliness?

Our neighbor used to come sauntering up to our farm-house. Maybe it was a rainy day and Dad was fixing the well-curb.

"Hello, Dan!" (my father.)

"Hello, Pete! Nice rain we had," answered Dad, dropping his tools and coming to meet Dan.

"You bet it was—a reg'lar mortgage-lifter."

"Folks all well?"

"Yes; how's yours?"

"Oh, all right; the little kid's had some trouble teething, but nothin' out of the ordinary, I guess."

So it went on, quite *ad infinitum*; nothing very important: gas and gossip, crops and weather. Finally Dad looked up at the sun.

"Dinner-time. Come in and eat with us, Dan." The voice was sincere.

"Well, I didn't aim to, but I guess I can."

Inside, hearty hand-shakes and more useless profitable talk: opinions on the new preacher, exchange of notes on babies, estimates of canning, inquiries after Mrs. Dan. Finally a lull.

"Well, I guess I'd better be movin' along. Have you got a scythe, Pete? I clean forgot what I came after."

We went out to hunt up the scythe, Mother and Sis following, Mother urging Dan to have Mrs. Dan come over Wednesday. Dad hunted another half-hour for the whet-stone, over Dan's protests, assuring him that "by the time that blade has hit a few of them big rosin-weeds, she won't cut hot butter." And so the afternoon, too, passed—Dan leaving content to put off the use of the scythe until next day.

It is 1923 and Dad is again working at the well-curb. Dan's Ford comes rattling up. Dad looks up and manages to grunt, quite patronizingly:

"Hello, Dan."

"Hello, Pete; have you got a scythe?"

"Yeh," says Dad, quite business-like, pointing with a vigorous back-jerk of his thumb. "Over there under the eaves of the old tool-house."

The Ford rattles and bangs, bangs and rattles, while Dan hustles over to get the scythe. Having dumped it into the back seat, he shouts above the din of the Ford, "Much obliged!" and is off.

And as I think of the contrasting pictures, an old vaudeville joke comes back:

"Husband, the lady across the hall is dead."

"Have you been over?"

"No; I saw it in the papers."

Which is why, I think, that we all liked Ole Svea down on the dry-land. He surprised us the first time we asked him to stay for dinner—by staying. When we were sick he came over, not to offer help, but to help. And after that we, too, were more neighborly.

E. E. ERICSON.

Today

What did we talk about today?

Oh little things—little things—

The thin smiles that come to men

And why a child sings.

And what all did we do today?

Oh little things—little things—

Walked easily, arms brushing,

Watched a bird's wings.

And know? What did we know today?

A little thing—a simple thing—

Because of winter's long sitting by

The roadside we have spring.

D'ARCY DAHLBERG.

Punctuation

"Life—it is but a path to God."

"Life—it is but a path to God?"

Death's an eternal proofreader,

Marking out, cutting down,

Conjecturing pages,

Of man, the piteous seeker.

RICHARD F. CRANDELL

"Nocturne" in a Butte Setting

I KNOW Jenny and Emmy. I met them in Butte in 1919. Upon arriving there to write an eccentric old millionaire's checks and personal letters, I met his telegraph secretary. The E. O. M. had seen her during my absence, and since Jenny was Jenny, the old man decided that he needed a telegraph secretary.

"Oh-h-h, so *you're* the captain. But yur just a *kid!*"

"Yuh?" I said.

"Wuryuh reely wounded?"

"Once or twice."

"Got any medals?"

"Yuh."

"Yuddid! Lesseeum!"

Jenny was a wee thing—the old colonel called her a "cute little tyke"—pretty, with a round white face and grey eyes that at times dreamed wistfully and at other times gleamed like hot sunbeams on polished steel, or imparted a chill as does moonlight on shimmering ice. Her little round wad of a chin tilted itself into an attitude of stubbornness, of haughtiness, or of combativeness, as her small pink lips pressed themselves together in an expression of scorn or of anger. She appeared to be ultra-mondaine, and her tongue was a dart jabbing at the homely pleasures that satisfied the others of her family circle.

The colonel delegated me to see that the cab carried her safely home. So I met Emmy and Pa and Ma at their home on Georgia avenue near the N. P. station.

The snow about the house was grey with cinders. Smoke-dust and cinders and soot spread unceasingly over the house and over everything about and within it.

I squinted as one does in the dark when I entered the cold hallway, for the yellow-white glimmer of the suspended bulb struggled barely to its narrow extremities.

"Ma, c'mere, willyuh?" was Jenny's greeting.

Emmy was patching the family album in the parlor; I saw her through the door.

Emmy sighed. She was tired—always so, it seemed. She drooped. Her shoulders, her head, drooped. Her mouth drooped, but not petulantly, not sullenly. She was thin and flat and faded and washed-out. The color seemed to have been washed out of her eyes, and her hair to have been washed in lye or singed to its roots. The vitality of her skin had given way to moldiness, except where her nose shone through a peeling coat of powder. Her voice wasn't really raspy; it was dry and weak. And often, if you didn't see Emmy when she spoke, you'd wonder if she were crying, for her voice carried the threat of a sob. Her little smile seemed bashful or ashamed of itself.

"Emmy's setcha help to me," her mother said when the sisters were in the kitchen. "She gets breakfast 'fore she goes to work, and in the evenin' she helps clean up the house an' get supper an' do the dishes an' take care o' grampa. He's in bed awleys—he's setcha care—an' sometimes 'e sits up a bit. An' she hardly ever leaves the house at night, 'cept when Chuck, that's 'er brother, 'cept when Chuck takes a bunch out in the Ford. She doesn't care much for boys, yunno." This last in a confidential manner.

"But Jenny, there—she's a little dickens. She won't let *ennybuddy* boss *her!* She does wat she pleases. An' fellas! W'y, they jes' come a-runnin'."

after 'er! An' she jes' fools 'em, an' twists 'em around 'er little finger an' snaps 'em off with 'er thumb!"

Thump, thump, thump, on the wall.

"That's grampa," said Ma.

"Jenny, you see woddys wants," said Em.

"Yeh"—ma, confidentially—"he likes Jen best; sez she's got the most spunk uv enny uv us."

"Yes," came Emmy's voice from the kitchen, after an interval of apparent silence—maybe she was crying—"yes, some o' these days, young lady, you'll be sorry f'r actin' with these fellas the way yur doin'. Makin' 'em think yur crazy about'm, 'n then givin'm the hee-haw when the next one comes along!"

"So I chase after all the guys in town, ha?" Jenny's lips were brass. "No I don't!" The words were blackjacks. "You're just jealous b'cause they don't pester you! I can't help it if they do think I'm goofy about 'em. Lettum think it! The poor boobies! Shure, I get tired uvvum, an' take up with the next guy that comes along. An' say-y—"

"Well, anyway, yuh shouldn't talk behind their backs that way, 'n make fun uv'm."

Only one man ever proposed to Emmy. She dubbed him "Uncle"—"Gosh, he's so much older'n me. But gee, he's got a big car, an' a swell house over on the flat. But I couldn't marry 'im, though."

Along came Alf. He was bronzed and blocky. His fingertips were square, and so was his head, and the toes of his heavy shoes. He and Jenny danced and danced on the napless carpet to tunes of Jolson and Berlin. Alf's silly grin was ineradicable and changeless. His face might have been hewn by Rodin. And his idolatrous eyes stretched toward Jenny's face, which beamed like a bright little moon. They paid no heed to the others present, nor to the hole in the carpet where they stumbled as they jazzed by the Sonora.

Jenny didn't let Emmy take Alf. "Gosh," Emmy mused later, "she was just bugs about him!"

Jenny clung to Alf until in April the police jailed him for deserting his wife and two children.

And in May Emmy married the "Uncle," and moved her powder-puff and pin-cushion over to the swell house on the flat.

The odor of stew in Kensington park is ever so much more vivid in my mind than is the aroma of roast beef on Georgia avenue, and the love-making of Alf and Emmy was better done than that of the marionettes who dangled from Jenny's fingers. The yellow lights in both places were equally puny.

AL. SCHAK.

Peace

I can take a long breath now and look into
the past and smile. . . .

I'm glad I loved you—glad I loved you such
a very little while. . . .

VIOLET E. CRAIN.

Notes About Contributors

Mrs. Winifred Muckler is a graduate student in Education.

Mr. W. J. McCormick is a graduate student doing special work.

Fred Gilsdorf, formerly '28, is this year in Washington, D. C.

E. E. Ericson, '23, is now an instructor at the University of Maryland.

Dorothy Mueller is a graduate student doing special work.

John Frohlicher, '26; D'Arcy Dahlberg, '25, and Joran Birkeland, '27, are students in the English department.

Mrs. Genevieve Murray, '26; Richard Crandell, '25, and Al Schak, Special, are students in the School of Journalism.

Eugenie Frohlicher, '23, is teaching at Valier, Montana.

Grace Baldwin, '22, lives at Whitefish, Montana.

Violet Crain, '24, is teaching at Florence, Montana.

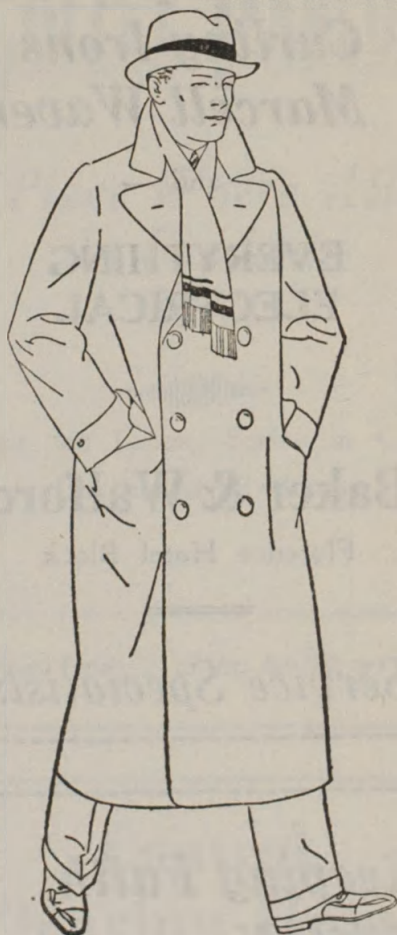
Frontispiece, photo by K. D. Swan.

The Frontier BOOK SHELF

Sard Harker: John Masefield. (Macmillan, 1924.) A glorified obstacle race, in which the hero, who is all hero, meets superhuman difficulties and with the aid of a *deus ex machine* in each incident overcomes them. Every moment of reading is a thrilling moment. The book is comparable to that other wise literary man's novel, Quiller-Couch's *Foe Farrell*, although Masefield lacks his skill in plot construction. *Sard Harker* is a series of episodes strung like beads, with the appearance of the heroine at the two ends, a woman, by the way, with no more humanness than a bead. But the story is active romance. If the setting carries authenticity, the reader gathers valuable and vivid impressions of a small South American country, with its overlapping ancient and contemporary civilizations. There is little consecutive strong writing, but there are short passages filled with poetic feeling—"What do people listen for?" "The sea wind in the heat," she said, thoughtfully; "and the crowing of the cock in the night of pain; and in life, the footsteps of the beloved who never comes; or when he does come, goes out on the instant." And sayings that read like maxims crop out now and then. "He always held that it is better to be in a difficulty than expecting to be in one." A reader who doesn't mind absurdity in situations and incidents and wooden romantic persons will enjoy the book immensely.

H. M.

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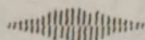
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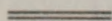
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R. D. Co.

The Lonely Warrior: Claude C. Washburn. (Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922.)

Galahad returns from the Great War apparently metamorphosed into a disillusioned Byron. In his adventures "over there" he has acquired the D. S. C., the D. S. O., and an attitude towards existence that varies between a general impersonal dislike and an occasional frenzied hatred. Nothing, he believes, has glamour. For him the "overtones" of life no longer exist; all that he can see is "a mess of bare conflicting facts, stark naked." The story revolves about his efforts to reconcile himself to the chaotic conditions of civilian life. Finally, he achieves calm through a period of isolation from men and a world interested only in economics. The shock of an evening of excitement, in which he rescues a doll from a burning building, brings a sudden realization that the world is not all evil, not all good, but merely "a groveling, incoherent assemblage of facts." It is "rather pathetic to care so hard about motor cars and bathrooms and servants." But—"Oh, well, it couldn't be helped." With this philosophy of nothingness he goes back to the real world, where "tulips bloom gaily in well tended beds" and "a fresh smell of spring is in the air."

The Lonely Warrior has the bleak barrenness of the typical modern intellectual novel. A tinge of *Main Street* can be recognized in the frequent "digs" at things in general—the parlor Bolshevik, big Little Business, etc. The characters are coldly self-analytical. The emotions portrayed are stilted and unhuman, the highest feeling achieved is a sort of dispassionate, unconvincing frenzy.

J. L.

J. Hardin and Son: Brand Whitlock. (Appleton, 1923.)

Reminiscent of *Clayhanger*. As a rough guess, I should say that the book is a thoughtful and elaborate study of the average man, under the thesis that the average man is eminently worth studying, that he is not so limited in his emotional scope as he appears on the surface. The setting, an Ohio town, is detailed, carefully typical and carefully individualized. Wholly admirable is the consistency of perspective. J. Hardin and Son are never permitted to transcend their status as integral parts of their environment; indeed, some such statement might express the reader's final impression. The book suffers somewhat from the fact that one comes rather tardily to the knowledge that the story, as such, is of secondary interest.

D. M.

Conquistador. Katherine Fullerton Gerould. (Scribner's, 1923.)

The transformation of Wharton Cameron, American engineer, into Don Pablo Gutierrez, creole and caballero; to my knowledge, the second time Mrs. Gerould has worked the—supposable—influence of

heredity slightly overtime. We are asked to believe that an emotional second nature may be inherited as easily as, and simultaneously with, a Mexican hacienda. The story has a certain amount of glamor, and a certain amount of realism, both applied—impartially, it must be admitted—to the inevitable sex problem. Beautifully written, but not quite convincing.

D. M.

The Rover: Joseph Conrad. (Doubleday, Page & Co., 1923.)

In this perfectly controlled novel, Conrad takes the melodramatic events of an episode of the Napoleonic war and with his accustomed suavity and incisiveness shows how much more romantic even hair-raising adventure is when it is beheld in its spiritual aspects. At the same time he shows how profoundly admirable is the man who is master of his relations to life, master of almost overmastering emotions and by reason of self-mastery, triumphant even when love and life are ironically denied.

S. H. C.

Mirage: Edgar Lee Masters. (Boni and Liveright, 1921.)

Skeeters Kirby having given up his fortune for a divorce from his wife, Alicia, and to protect the name of Becky Norris, who has just refused to marry him, tries to figure out what the love of man for woman is. To him love is a mystical thing for which any suffering can be endured. Now the question has come to him as to whether the ultimate thing in life is literary achievement or heart's desire.

The story deals with the loose morals of modern men and women who are not averse to swapping husbands and wives, drinking and spending money. Bob Hayden tries to open Kirby's eyes to the fact that Becky is only one of these shallow, modern creatures to be regarded only as a "hard case" of passion and forgotten. Kirby manages to put Becky partially out of his mind through Charlotte Shanley, his mother's secretary, and Rene Aldrich, a young married woman. He finally achieves literary success but realizes an emptiness in life. He feels that if he could have married Becky life would have been different. In spite of her deceitfulness and shallow nature she remains to him a mirage.

E. M. B.

Gold: Jacob Wassermann. (Harcourt Brace and Company, 1924.)

Gold is the story of a woman's destructive influence on a family. Ulrika Woytich attaches herself to the Wylius family and gains their wealth for herself. Vivid, passionate and menacing, she dominates their lives, and the steady rise of her power and the decay of the family go on to the final destruction of them and of Ulrika herself. The book is strongly written. The atmosphere throughout is unhappy, not to say morbid. Characters are presented with a striking vividness. A sense of real-

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GERALDINE FARRAR and her
company in
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ity pervades the whole narrative. The break of the story between the two parts, during which probably twenty years elapse, somewhat destroys the interest of the reader, although the tensity of the situations never slackens. It is a book wholly without humor, yet striking, tragic and artistic.

C. M. P.

Saint Joan: George Bernard Shaw. (Brentana's, 1924.)

Mr. Shaw indulges to the full his hatred of authority and of sentimentality, the Catholic church and former biographers of Joan of Arc sharing the force of his attack. From the play, which is one of his finest, and which in some respects is a return to his manner of *The Devil's Disciple*, emerges Joan of Arc as a young woman of fine intellect, strong common sense, buoyant energy, ordinary but intensified emotions, and convincing personality. Her "voices" and her visions become no other than the projection of her common sense, shrewdness and desires. Dramatically the story grows through its six scenes with intensity, and culminates in a grandly satirical and unifying epilog.

H. M.

R. U. R.: Karel Capek. (Doubleday, Page, 1923.)

A business man's Utopia in which soulless men are manufactured for efficiency and the production of wealth. Aesthetic capacities and other technical errors in man's constitution are carefully corrected by efficiency experts who sympathetically appreciate the fact that "God knew nothing of modern engineering when He created man."

Universal Robots is a burning satire on modern commercialism that appeals quite strongly to those who enjoy striking productions. Yet this very quality makes it ineffective as a positive social force because we can give it no place in society. It is so far removed from our experience that there is little or no emotional appeal. We have no sympathy for the placid, passionless Robots and certainly we are indifferent to the human Babbits. Neither is there an intellectual appeal. Those who are interested in living problems will find that Capek has given only the obvious while the uninterested can treat the production as a simple diversion that is so completely divorced from life that it is quite inoffensive.

A. C.

New Hampshire: Robert Frost. (Henry Holt & Co., 1924.)

This book of poems disposes of the hasty supposition that Mr. Frost is deficient in lyric power. But it helps one to see that the grounds for that assumption are the extraordinary power of this poet to detect delicate rhythms in surroundings commonly deemed dull and petrified, the manly insistence upon avoiding words save when

they can be as genuine and positive as deeds, and the mature wisdom which checks all slight and gurgling emotions. If poetry is the modern vehicle of religion, the book, *New Hampshire*, is an important manifesto. It is charged with the effective spirit of a real man who has not been fooled, who cannot be fooled, but who yet endures and smiles and loves, enjoys and hopes.

S. H. C.

The Dance of Life: Havelock Ellis. (Houghton-Mifflin, 1923.)

In this series of essays on "The Art of Dancing, of Thinking, of Writing, of Religion, of Morals," a charming, honest and creative point of view is given a rather excessively definite exposition. But if any readers derive stimulus for a gayer, more constructive, more inclusive, more rhythmic life, like a dance in that control gives design to spontaneity, if any come to recognize more clearly that valid objectives cannot be given definition in advance, and that wisdom does not consist in classifications, but in a bold, selective spirit, the book will have accomplished its evident intention. And in that case we need not wish that Ellis had written instead another book like his *Comments and Impressions*.

S. H. C.

The Decalogue of Science: A. B. Wiggam. (Bobbs-Merrill and Company, 1923.)

Mr. Wiggam is an eugenist who can see very little in the world but eugenics. He harangues the reader on "five warnings" to contemporary civilization, and on ten commandments of science that issue from the New Mount Sinai, the scientist's laboratory. He addresses his remarks to all statesmen, assuming with a fiery conviction that they are all ignorant of science, all unskilled in their art, all naturally asinine, but all stupidly well intentioned. He is simply "showing them the way." He arrays authorities until one is greatly impressed with the mass of what is known to biologists that other mortals will not, or do not, make us of, and must use if civilization is to be saved. He asserts the immutability of the germ plasm, and thereby hinges his argument on the all-importance of heredity and the comparative unimportance of the influence of environment. He draws staggering pictures of what is happening to civilization. His philosophy is that of the behaviorist or the mechanist, and with some success he endeavors to reveal the positive rosiness and optimism of such a belief. He rails at the prevailing trust in intuition. The book is a perplexing mixture of sound biology, "scientific" forecasting, arrant dogmatism, unwarranted accusation, and telling quotation from "authorities." It is as good as Mr. Stoddard's books of scare-head nature, but no better, and possibly not so patient.

H. M.

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