OKLAHOMA HAS A LITERATURE OF ITS OWN.
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SISTER MARY GABRIEL GRAVES

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W. F. Smith, Jr.  MAJOR ADVISOR

H. E. Fore  DEAN

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"Not all who are, are there;
Not all who are there, are!"

This is a favorite tag applied by Spanish reviewers to Spanish anthologies. It best expresses the lack of inclusiveness of the following compilation. I am well aware that not all who are, are here; and well aware too that this collection is neither complete nor definitive, but only a suggestive compilation, a cage to gather together and pass in review those who are bringing to our State an intellectual advancement apace with its industrial development. It does little more than suggest openmindedly something of what readers may expect to find if they will but thumb even a very few of the outstanding names contained herein. It is only a chronicle—in nowise intended as a criticism.

It had been my intention to consider separately the novelists, the magazine contributors, the historians, and the short-story writers, as well as the outstanding poets; but upon taking inventory of the array to be treated the task proved too gigantic for so unpretentious a work as this so I reconsidered and chose from among the many who have won national recognition, only those who are either Oklahomans
by birth or have received their education from their earliest years within its borders. I rely solely upon their reputation to determine the validity of the statement that "OKLAHOMA HAS A LITERATURE OF ITS OWN."

Its meagreness is due, not to the scarcity of productivity but rather to the fact that it is only within the past few years that any attempt has been made toward advertising the literary products of Oklahoma. So busy has the young State been in the development of the soil and the provision of buildings for educational purposes that only now dare it pause to note the fruits of its toil and expenditures.

Through the Oklahoma Anthology of Poetry, the Critical Reviews of Mary Hays Marable in "Under the Reading Lamp", and the Literary Page in the Sunday Oklahoman, "Oklahoma Writers", conducted by May Frank, I found that a good start has been made toward the recognition of our first-rate authors. So far there is no permanent record. Hence the material herein is gathered mostly from wide and scattered magazines and newspapers—added to this recounts of memories given to me by their friends and acquaintances.

In spite of its shortcomings, I offer this much, in order that, like all samples, it may be an incentive to the recognition that Oklahoma has a Literature of its own. That in the reading at least some of the keen delight and enthusiasm
of the seeker may be imparted to the peruser. It will be a revelation to many, as it was to me, to learn that not a few of the names already famous in the world of letters are sons of our own State.

Most of all do I hope that these modest endeavors may help to establish a willing admission that not only have we oil-wells, Indians, and Outlaws, but also a culture, in its sincerity and solidity, peculiar and native to Oklahoma— to Literary Oklahoma. If I have erred in quoting too literally from the opinions of others it is because I value their opinions as important ones.

To Mrs. Peacock, Head Librarian of the Carnegie Library, Oklahoma City, is due thanks and appreciation for her interest and assistance in finding the material; and to the University of Oklahoma for permission to use poems from its anthologies; to Mrs. Anna McClure for poems from "Airs and Ballads" (out of print), and for several unpublished poems by her son John McClure, together with several of her own.
CHAPTER I

The accumulation of a State literature, like that of a national one, is a slow and somewhat intermittent procedure. For the development and perfection of any art leisure is needed, at least it is presupposed that time alone can evolve that unique, intangible mass of writing which is recognized as a literature of a certain people. Surely Oklahoma can lay no claim to leisure.

Despite, however, its necessary pre-occupation in trying to grow up, the pressing problems of settlement and pioneering, with the handling of the vast invaders of the oil fields and many other industrial enterprises, all of which lend no encouragement to literary production, Oklahoma, not because of, but in spite of all these barriers, has made remarkable strides within the bare forty years since the Run in '89.

Out of the ferment of transition from pioneer life to culture, working on the picturesque physical resources of the State, unspoiled and untrammeled, and on the wide variety of racial strains, temperaments, and points of view attracted to it, an artistic tradition is slowly shaping itself in Oklahoma, and one wakes to the fact that it is fixing itself on the literary map. It has been helped up the ladder and given a seat among
the literary by no less a personage than the famous Henry L. Mencken, who without any solicitation appraised it thus:

"Oklahoma, though it came in before Arizona and New Mexico, is actually the youngest State in the Union. Until 1889 it was a sort of no man's land. Yet I can testify as an editor that it produces ten times as many likely manuscripts a year as Maine, which was admitted in 1820, or Delaware which was one of the thirteen colonies, and it has already thrown off such men as John McClure, the poet, and Burton Rascoe, the critic. The reason I don't know, but the fact is brilliantly plain that many young Oklahomans are taking to the pen, and that not a few of them have talent. There is almost, indeed, an Oklahoma literature, or at all events, an Oklahoma manner. Has anyone ever heard of an Ohio manner?"

A few weeks later he testified in the Baltimore Sun, (May 12, 1925), that Oklahoma is producing more of the type he considers worthy of conservation than half a dozen other states combined.

Mencken was also the discoverer of John McClure, the first Sooner to gain the ear of poetical America. "Since plucking this unexpected rose in the prairie, Mencken has kept unusually close watch on Oklahoma, and it is undoubtedly a fact that the great editor personally opens all manuscripts from this State and reads them carefully in the hope of uncovering another prairie genius."

Through his generous praise and that of the eminent Dr. John Powys, the names of our authors are appearing more and more frequently on the pages of the important national magazines and anthologies. And the books that are being published by State

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Writers bear the imprint of some of the oldest and best known book companies. Among the most notable may be found: The Century, Macmillan, Houghton-Mifflin, Appleton, Harpers, Longmans-Green, Alfred Knopf, and Samuel French. Recently "Happy Hunting Grounds" and "Kit Carson" by Stanley Vestal, have run into second editions with the English publishing house of Houghton. "Books Abroad" by Roy Temple House has also been eagerly bought over by an English Company.

All of which points to the fact that Oklahoma can command its own market in the publishing world—that its writers are just as successful as its oil magnates. That just as its reputation in the industrial, political, and criminal world—news has been made, so too has it begun to attract the national attention to its literature. As Johnson has it:

"Next in importance to the Indians themselves are those poets who have very definitely been influenced by the Indians and by the Southwest landscape and life as the Indians are....and where is this Southwest? Is Lynn Riggs, the Oklahoma lyricist, a southerner by virtue of a New Mexican sojourn, or, are he and Stanley Vestal from the South (West)?"

Not the latitude nor the longitude has made these men. Lynn Riggs and Stanley Vestal are both products of Oklahoma Life and Oklahoma educational institutions. Their's is the "Oklahoma manner" of which the eminent Dr. John Powys speaks in his article,

"Elusive America". 1

That Oklahoma has an individuality of its own marks it—not the Southwest nor the South(West)—but Literary Oklahoma. To this individuality none have contributed more specifically than has Lynn Riggs who is immortalizing certain phases of Oklahoma life through his dramas, and Stanley Vestal who, in his "Fandango" emerges as the first writer to make poetry of the plains ballad. In his hands the plains ballad rises to Literature.

CHAPTER 2.

Among the first of our writers to win national recognition was John McClure, who with Ebert Boylan, Muna Lee, and other University of Oklahoma students, had various poems published in the Smart Set, edited at that time by Henry L. Mencken, and George Jean Nathan.

Then came a period during which Olive McClintic Johnson contributed short-stories to Collier's Weekly; Fleta Campbell Springer was writing, as she still is, for Harper's Magazine; the short-stories of Vingie E. Roe, Thyra Sampter Winslow, Jennie Harris Oliver, Zoe A. Tilghman, and Mrs. Harlan Read, were appearing in such magazines as Good Housekeeping, Munsey's, Holland's, and the Woman's Home Companion.

Meantime Burton Rascoe was writing for such sophisticated magazines as the Smart Set, Reviewer, Vanity Fair, Shadowland, Freeman, Nation, and the New Republic.

A little later still, we have Lena Whittaker Blakeney's poems being published in Contemporary Verse, Munsey's, Southwest Review, and the Literary Digest. Rex Harlow's special articles in Current History, Collier's, The Nation, Liberty, Outlook, and Our World; Lillian Fryer Rainey's delightful essays in the Century; Dr. Roy Temple House's reviews in the Forum, Century, Harper's
Weekly, and the American Journal of Sociology.

In Braithwaite's Anthology of Magazine Verse we find an excellent showing of Oklahoma poets—these are included in the annual issues from 1923 to 1928. Each Yearbook as it leaves the compiler's hands is a magnificent witness to the fact that Oklahoma poets and authors have gained a sure place for themselves.

Of the anthologies of poetry published this Summer, 1928, six poems by John McClure are included in the Lyric South, (Macmillan); four by Lynn Riggs, and two by Stanley Vestal find a place in Alice Corbin Henderson's "The Turquoise Trail", and anthology of poetry of New Mexico and the Southwest; and one poem by Muna Lee has been selected by Sara Teasdale to appear in "The Answering Voice", (Macmillan), a collection of the most beautiful love lyrics written by women since the middle of the last century.

The Stratford Company has just released (1928) "Contemporary American Poets" which includes among its most representative poems "The Spell" by Rudolph N. Hill. Walsh's "Catholic Anthology" for 1927 contains Muna Lee's translation of a beautiful poem from the Spanish. "The Bowling Green", Christopher Morley's anthology of verse has "Field Wireless" by B. A. Botkin.

In his "Best Plays for 1925", Samuel French has "Syrian Knives" written by Lynn Riggs; 1928 edition includes "Reckless"; in 1927 Broadway rang with "Big Lake". This summer the Company published "Sump'n Like Wings" and "A Lantern to See By" in a one-volume edition. All of these plays are about, or at least have
an Oklahoma setting. The last two are scheduled to be produced in New York during the season 1928–29.

The 1928 catalog published by the Haldeman-Julius Company lists five Oklahomans as authors and editors of Little Blue Books: Stanley Vestal, John Woodworth, Clarice Cunningham, George Milburn, and William Cunningham.

"Poetry" has become for the State almost a representative magazine. Its editions for the past four years have usually carried one poem and in some months we find an entire edition given over to the Oklahoma poets.

Contributors to the American Mercury are numerous enough to form a group by themselves. They include among the many, John McClure, Stanley Vestal, Mrs. John McClure, Ben A. Botkin, May Frank, Leo Turner, William Cunningham, and Muna Lee.

Even America and the Commonweal have realized that it is the thing to include Oklahoma writers. Hence we find Muna Lee's delightful sonnets and villanelles appearing in the 1927–28 editions of these time-honored sanctums.

Vingie E. Roe's novels and short-stories are being used regularly as scenarios in Hollywood. "Val of Paradise" was one of the most popular pictures of the year.

There are few Americans who are not familiar with "Will Rogers". Although his reputation has been gained through stage comedy yet his "Letters of a Self-Made Diplomat to His President" and his syndicated newspaper wise quips have made him a by-word in
the homes of America. What Will Rogers says seems to be of more importance to the general public than the opinion of the most learned in the nation.

The New York Times and Herald regularly carry poems and reviews of the rising Oklahomans. Only this week has the Mrs. Perry Johnson of Norman been placed on the staff of the Saturday Review of Literature. The Bookman of which Burton Rascoe, in 1927, was chosen editor, watches with interest the development of the new generation of writers from the State which produced its famous editor and has supplied on the board of the Literary Guild a worthy follower to Glenn Frank and Zona Gale.

In the newspaper world Oklahoma claims a commanding position. In the four sections of the country we find an Oklahoman on the Staff of the widest publications. George B. Parker, editor-in-chief of the twenty-five Scripps-Howard newspapers was graduated from the University of Oklahoma. Within the twenty years since then he has risen to one of the greatest journalistic jobs in the world. Earl Sparling, not yet thirty years old, is on the New York Telegram Staff. Dorrance D. Roderick is President of the Herald-Times Corporation of El Paso; publisher of the Lubbock Morning Avalanche, and the Lubbock Daily Journal, besides having control of over sixteen Texas newspapers. John McClure is editor of perhaps
the most conservative newspaper to be found—the New Orleans Picayune. The Washington News is now being edited by an Oklahoman, Walter Stone. Our own Diocesan "Southwest Courier" has a national circulation principally because of its clever "Fore and Aft", by the editor and "In the Airlanes" contributed by the brilliant Bishop Kelley, who achieved his literary fame before coming to Oklahoma; yet within the four years he has been our Bishop, a marked change in his style has slowly crept in—the simple, straight forward, engaging language has, without throwing off its simplicity taken on a strength and ruggedness that mellowed may in time make him a second Newman. Stanley Vestal has been made one of the advisory board of the Southwest Review, published at Dallas. This quarterly review is taking its place among the best magazines of the country and is making Southwestern arts and literature nationally known.

When asked for his opinion concerning Oklahoma's literary future, Mr. Rascoe replied:

"Oklahoma probably has more writers per capita than any other State in the Union. One of the best novels of the past season, "Andy Brandt's Ark", was written by a new Oklahoma novelist, Miss Edna Bryner. I think there is every reason to believe that a great deal of excellent literature is to come out of the State."

This from the man who "made" Theodore Dreiser in spite of all his contestants. A man who has risen from a small Oklahoma town to the very pinnacle of the literary critical world should have a sharp prophetic vision of the
New Oklahoma. We feel justified in making the claim that just so truly as it has passed from the pioneer to the settlement; from the settlement to the commercial; from the commercial to the cultural period; so too has Oklahoma passed through its phases of writing until today it stands ready to hold sway in the literary world just as it already dominates the varied fields of industry and commerce.
CHAPTER 3.

The list of Oklahoma Poets is a long but not an uninteresting one. With the exception of two or three who have attained the heights, practically all those of note have been at one time or another enrolled in the State University.

John McClure and Muna Lee are the University's, and incidentally, the State's greatest claim to literary fame. They were at one-time classmates and as fellow-poets rose to fame through the pages of the old Smart Set.

Muna Lee has gone far and further since that time and today she maintains her place as one of America's first women lyricists. She is adding to her achievements as an accomplished translator of Latin-American verse.

John McClure is the maker of some of the most enchanting lyrics in present day poetry. Its shining, singing purity has not been marred even though his late work takes on a new deepening and enriching tone of the miasmic West.

To his influence may be traced the device used by many of the University's newer poets. The most recent instance of it may be found in Isabel Jones Campbell's "Love Songs"
published in Poetry for May 1928. The trick seems to be in giving a wistful, lingering, cadence, and logical and melodic emphasis to the lines by the repetition of a key phrase at the beginning of a stanza. This is displayed to perfection in his "Celts":

"We are the grey dreamers
With nets of moonlight
That always go a-hunting
About the fall o' night,

"That softly go a-hunting
In quest of strange birds
With a thin net of moonlight,
A grey net of words,

"That steal through dim forests
By dark Lethe-streams
With pale snares of moonshine
And grey bait of dreams

"Until we catch the prize catch
The queer bird we get,
The dreamy, fluttering soul o' the world,
Caught in a silver net."

Other University poets too, such as Lynn Riggs, Maurice Kelley, Louis Barnes, Richard Caldwell, Hollis Russell, Stella Reinhardt, Winifred Johnston, and Elizabeth Bell, have caught an echo of John McClure's fragile music without succeeding in conveying his peculiar Celtic charm.

Of the lyric group Louis Barnes, remote, somber, cryptic, is the most intellectual and individual. He writes with a physical and metaphysical fierceness. Among them Lynn Riggs and Winifred Johnston display the greatest virtuosity.
Both have in common a certain reticence and aloofness. In form Miss Johnston gives the impression of one who is playing with verse as a technical exercise—giving correctness to the point of self-consciousness. Yet her ideas possess a great deal of urgency and incisiveness. Mr. Riggs who is more fluid is primarily interested in the writing of plays. But he "confesses"a poetic mood attacks me in between writing plays" and "poetry seems to me a harder, more precise, more important art than any other. And more rewarding". Though he began writing verse, as he says, "just as self-expression at first, when there was no other", this "would seem to me now to be a tawdry use of a fine cool art". At present his "only aim in poetry is to come nearer and nearer fixing and presenting an emotional experience in its own terms", which is certainly a high and disinterested ideal. This detachment communicates a certain austerity to his work, the result of careful emotional and imaginative discipline, which combined with craftsmanship, makes him the most genuine artist among the recent Oklahoma poets. Those who knew him for his cynical cleverness in "The Smart Set" will realize what a long way he has gone from his youthful sophistication in the cool broken rhythms and the subtly overtoned if occasionally obscure, phrasing of his mature work. Placing "These thin impudent letters" and "Bird Call" in juxtaposition one can get an immediate gulf between the two periods.
Among Oklahoma women poets Elizabeth Ball and Isabel Jones Campbell are the most feminine. The latter states the case for the woman poet as follows: "The English classics are full of war, conquest, sea-faring and love from a man's point of view, but only in our own time have we found women writing with sincerity and truth about the things they themselves feel". Her interest in poetry, according to her own statement, seems to be "almost wholly in the lyrical", that is, the musical, her ambition being "to write some day, a few little lyrics that would be musical enough to live". The appeal of rhythmic tune and musical tone in her little poems may be due to the fact that she began to write in the grades "by putting new words to old tunes" and by singing to herself. Her poems are delicate and whimsy even if at times trivial. They are refreshing.

Several other women writers, possessing undeniable talent for verse and flexibility of expression suffer from a lack of emotional precision and imaginative distinction for which they make up in many other ways: Maurine Halliburton McGee, with piquant satire; May Frank and Anne McClure, with human interest; and Lena Whittaker Blakeney, with pictorial quality. The most typical of this quality is her volume called "Ports of Call". It is made up of pleasing travel pictures. We might mention too the McDougall Sisters whose characterization
poems are entrancing. The fine lyrics to be found in "Wandering Fires" prove that they are capable of rising to the heights. Jennie Harris Oliver and Zoe Tilghman likewise have pictorial quality but more emotional quality. Yet all of them stand apart from their Oklahoma environment. Of course all of them have tried at one time or another at putting their hand to setting Oklahoma into verse. The last two named seem to be the most successful. It may be because they have had training in the short-story that they are more successful in catching the monotony and the color of the Oklahoma atmosphere, the feel of its sun and wind and biting sand.

Kenneth Kaufman is another poet who writes lyrically of the plains country, idealizing it sympathetically and even rhapsodically. His lines have a swing, even a veritable looseness, that comes from years of riding on the plains and gazing at far horizons.

Yet all of this is neither in the "Oklahoma manner" nor is it typical of Oklahoma character. It is practically a throwback of a previous locale or maybe the influence of teachers who have not been in sympathy with the newer and freer movement that has gotten hold of this "no man's land". There are two types of Oklahoma character waiting for their poet—the Indian and the farmer. Stanley Vestal seems to be taking care of the first. His real field is the plains Indian, of whom he knows
more than any other Oklahoma writer. His colleague Paul Eldridge, knows intimately the psychology of the modern Osage, whose struggle between savagery and civilization he has put into "Gray Roadster" and also into a sonnet sequence on an Indian heiress. As to the farmer, William Cunningham is about the only one who has so far succeeded in putting the rugged earthly character of the farmer into his work. Most typical of his sympathy with the type may be found in such poems as "Sandy Andy", "My Town", "Old Time Fiddler", etc., which deal chiefly with the passing of the pioneer spirit. His latest "Steam Songs" take on a new tone of the laborer in the new industrial movement which is sweeping over the State with the advent of the oil wells.

Another poet of the farmer is a farmer himself and the greatest promise of the year in Oklahoma poetry. At a single stroke, Leo C. Turner has won for himself first place in the nature poetry put out by Oklahoma Poets. His method may be seen by reading Poetry for May, 1928. He displays a manner of Robert Frost. His is a sturdy, original talent, which, in the isolated environment of western Oklahoma farm-country, ought to produce as pure and distinguished a reaction to native material as can be found in Oklahoma poetry.

Ben. A. Botkin, Professor of English at the State University, although in Oklahoma a short term of seven years,
has contributed many poems and critical articles to the magazines in the interest of Oklahoma poets. Of national renown himself, he has been quick to recognize the fertility in the ballads, poems, and various products of the native sons and has gathered into one volume "Fold Say" the most illustrative material of traditional Oklahoma. This book will be published in the Summer and it is said by those who know that it will be an incalculable addition to history as well as to literature.

With such a variety of talent, Oklahoma should be able to give a distinctive contribution to American poetry. Here on the last frontier in America where life is still in a state of flux and formation in its various phases of western migration, poets should be able to find a better place for creative activity in poetry more than in any other land beyond the Middle-West.
Because he was the first Oklahoma writer to reach national recognition, John McClure deserves to head the list of our worthies. Furthermore he is our very own.

Born in Ardmore, of a Southern family of Scotch-Irish descent, he passed his boyhood in Chickasha where his father was a practising lawyer and his mother gave voice lessons at the Oklahoma College for Women. Even at the age of nine years "Jack" attracted the attention of his fifth grade teacher because of his unusual ability in composition. He finished grade school in three years, spent the time in High School in about six semesters, and when a senior at the University of Oklahoma dropped out to spend a year in the guise of a wandering minstrel with "Hank McCullough" as a boon companion, to tramp over central Europe just before the outbreak of the World War.

While in France he became acquainted with none other than Francois Villon, the famous and lovable vagabond to whom he owes his poetic allegiance. He acknowledges this influence of the great master over him in one of his first
poems appearing in the University of Oklahoma Magazine in 1921:

"I am a poetaster
And my knee I bend
To Marlow, my master,
To Villon, my friend.

I am a swashbuckler
And I break my sword
Before Blake, my tutor,
Shakespeare, my Lord.

I should burn my song-books
This very day
If singing didn't matter
So little anyway."

Possibly this is the explanation of why McClure's work, though much of it was composed here, breathes none of the atmosphere of Oklahoma, but rather is it after the old classical manner. Maybe the call of his Southern ancestors stirred his blood in his early youth; despite the fact of his environment. He is again in the South. Has been there for almost seven years. Peculiar to say it is after this absence that one observes in his late work a subtle change and here and there it takes on a very evident tone of the West.

He began his literary work when a student in the University by writing humorous stories of boarding house life and poems. His signature appeared frequently in the University publications, including the University of Oklahoma Magazine.

Probably one of his greatest literary triumphs was the publication in "The Bellman", printed in Minneapolis, of one
of his short-stories in 1915, when he was only 19 years old. Critics judged it the best short-story of the year.

After securing his A B Degree from Oklahoma University he remained in Norman and became an Instructor in English and assistant Librarian at the University. Here he met Miss Grace Smith. Their friendship terminated in the marriage which took place while he was stationed at Camp Travis during the World War. She too has entered the literary world. Within the past year a number of her poems have been accepted. Even more interesting is it to note that his Mother and Sister both have tried their hand at poetry since "Jack"s" rise and have in turn added many a laurel to the family litterateur.

While still a young man and would-be poet, McClure became a close friend of Henry L. Mencken. Mr. Mencken took a great interest in him. Advised and counselled with him on his future works.

His "Airs and Ballads" (1918) took the East by storm. Within a few weeks a second edition had been run. After reading the collection Mencken is said to have summed up his opinion with a gesture—"Jack McClure is one of America's true poets".

At the same time he was editor on the New Orleans Times-Picayune; furthermore he was only twenty-two years of age.
The second edition of "The Stag's Hornbook" was published in 1924. With its sale the reputation of its author became established. Publishers and compilers from all over the country were clamoring for his poems but "Jack" kept his head and held on to his steady job on the Picayune.

In addition to writing for "Smart Set", "The Literary Digest", "American Mercury", and "The Bookman", he was at one time editor of "The Double Dealer", one of the foremost magazines of the Southland.

Some of his best known works are: "The Book of Fools", a series of short paragraphs on the follies of mankind; "To His Lady", a philosophical poem; "Ballade of Broken Tombs", and "Airs and Ballads", a collection of ballads.

Walter Yust, famous critic, now living in New Orleans, wrote this enthusiastic article about "Jack", which appeared in the October issue of the Bookman, (1921):

"If you want to see John McClure, author of "Airs and Ballads" and poet authentic of the South, to best advantage, perhaps you'd better see him as bookkeeper in his little dusty old bookshop on picturesque Royal Street, New Orleans. You'll see him there to best advantage because his gentle wife is there with him. And what Jack McClure lacks in good looks his wife makes up, good measure pressed down, shaken together and running over. Or you might see him as a man bending over the copy desk nights in the office of the daily Times-Picayune; or talking as editor, animatedly with editors Thompson and Friend over the merits of a new contribution by Jeannette Marks or Arthur Symons in the office of the Double Dealer... But whenever you see him with his soft, quite ordinary felt hat and his smelly pipe, I'm afraid you won't recognize in him the poet. He looks—maybe they are the ear marks after all—like a regular, garden variety.
everyday sort of man, who has a mind and a sort of body which enjoys life, which lives gratefully."

He took a two thousand mile hike one, just to see more things, and, as he says, he's a swashbuckler at heart even if he doesn't look like one. Perhaps some day the world will know him as one of the few poets who was the better poet because he could never take his work too seriously. "I enjoyed writing it" is the most he will say for any of his charming pieces. His name is one that is juggled with precision in New Orleans. Literate Orleanians, most of whom are congested in that little section of the city known to sailors as French town, read John McClure's Sunday book page "Literature and Less" more devoutly than most folk read Sunday school quarterlies. And when the conversation slips and flounders, the eventual question is, "Well, what does Jack McClure say about it?" or "Did you read what John McClure wrote about it last Sunday?"

The word "Oklahoma" carries with it connotations which do not attach themselves to the name of any other State in the nation. So, naturally, when "Oklahoma" is included in an introduction, one grows to anticipate the query tinctured with polite surprise, "Oh, so you're from Oklahoma?" In New Orleans this question is treaded by "Do you know John McClure?" He has the face of a sensitive Celt and to meet him is to be reminded of his own poem, "The Celts", quoted in chapter 3.
Since 1921 he has been doing the regular shift as copy reader on the Times-Picayune desk, where he is employed at present. For the last four years he has edited the book page for that newspaper, the largest in the South. In that time he has established an enviable reputation for his critical judgment. McClure's verse appears from time to time in the more intelligently edited magazines of this country, and readers of the American Mercury are familiar with his dialogues on aesthetics, printed occasionally in that magazine. For these dialogues, McClure has created two characters, Scamander and Polycrates. Of these Scamander is the "feeder" or "yes man" and Polycrates the one who takes the thesis produced by his friend, examines it, dissects it, and finally states his opinion. Through such an arrangement McClure gains an unusually clear perspective, and he deftly avoids didactics and the dogmatism associated with it.

When Mr. Mencken finds a poet or a writer of any sort in whom he believes, his belief is without stint as is his enthusiasm. For example, he writes in his magazine: "What I find in these modest airs (the poems of John McClure) is what the late Elijah found in his small voice; an assurance and a criticism—the first of the making of songs is yet a living art among us, yet young, yet adroit, above all yet natural and innocent. In brief, McClure is the born poet, the poet first
and last, the poet full-fledged from the start, as opposed to all your stock company of sweating poetizers. His simple and perfect songs are to the tortured contraptions as the self-consecrated messiahs of prosody, with their ding-dong repetitions, their chopped-off lines, their cheap socks, their banal theorizings, their idiotic fustian—these songs of his are to such tedious gabblings as the sonorous lines of Swinburne were to the cacophonous splutters of Browning, the poet of pedagogues and old maids, male and female. "(Mencken evidently does not know Browning as he is)." What we have here is the Schubert complex—the whole pack of professors and polyphonists routed by a shepherd playing a pipe."

Whether one shares Mr. Mencken's enthusiasm or not, John McClure's qualities may be judged in his "Elf's Song":

"She came in the garden walking
When shadows begin to steal;
She trod upon a wing o' mine
And broke it with her heel.

She was a very queen I think
A Queen from the West,
I should have only smiled
Had she stepped on my breast.

But I have told nobody,
I have told nobody yet!
I have told nobody—
Only the violet.

Or the opening lines to "The Celts":

"We are the grey dreamers
With nets of moonlight
That always go a-hunting
About the fall o'night."
Cook says "There are some immature spots in his work and a fondness for comparisons to jewels that is similar to George Sterling, over-use of such trite and inexpressive words as "red-gold", "White-silver", "Lady", "Hoary head" and "wee". 1

But these are only on the surface of such lines as:

But she shall dress more strangely still:
   In all men's eyes she shall be seen
To wear my little silver dreams
   Like tinkling trinkets of a queen.

Ay, queenlike, she shall move them all
   To adoration and desire;
For she shall wear my golden dreams
   As though they were a robe of fire.

or in his lines called "Man to Man":

Better it were my brother,
   You twain had never met,
Then were no hearts broken
   And no dreams to forget.

Now you must not remember,
   After you are gone,
The mystic magic of her eyes
   At twilight nor at dawn.

Now you must not remember
   The songs her red lips sing
Of love and lovers' ecstasy
   At dawn or evening.

An interesting comment on McClure's work was recently made by one of his contemporaries as follows:

"John McClure's 'Airs and Ballads' impress me as the work of a man who has not (and perhaps cannot) outgrow the impulse to enthusiasm which is characteristic of young writers of the romantic school. There is in his poems a certain naivete, a certain artless simplicity which his very real lyrical ability

Stanley Vestal is almost but not quite a native Oklahoman. He came here with his Step-father when he was ten years old and spent his first summer with the Indian boys dabbling in a winding Oklahoma river. Today there are few buttes and western prairies that he does not know. And there is very little pioneer history that he has not learned on horseback, around the campfire, or in the library. He is known to his friends by the name of his step-father's family and to his students he is the much loved Professor Campbell.

Mr. Campbell was the first Rhodes Scholar from the new State of Oklahoma (1907). During the war he served in France as a field artillery Captain. After teaching in Louisville, Kentucky, he accepted the position that he now holds as Professor of English in the University of Oklahoma.

With the possible exception of John McClure, he has contributed more to literature than any one other Oklahoman. He has put the border heroes into song in a way that has never been done before. No other poetic form expresses so directly
or so forcefully the tragedies and comedies of plains life
or lends itself so reasonably to the primitive situation of
the prairie pioneers as the ballad. For this reason perhaps
in his "Ballads of the Old West", Stanley Vestal achieved
his initial success and received his first literary recogni-
tion in the "Southwest Review".

From "Saddle Song", the opening poem, to "Kit Carson's
Last Smoke", the closing one, these ballads with their lilt and
their narrative art, swing us back to that early West of the
Frontiersmen, Indian raids, and prairie tragedy.

Mr. Campbell could not have chosen a more suitable
medium for depicting characters and events of the pioneer West.
The racy atmosphere of violent love, sudden death, and rough
justice which these verses give forth, makes the Old West,
glamorous and romantic, live before us like an actuality.
Even at that however, it is merely the West of history.

A few months later the editor of "Poetry" in an
article, "In Texas and Oklahoma", says: 1

"My first stop was at the small town of Norman
where the "Sooners" are being educated at the University
of Oklahoma....Here I found Professor Walter S. Campbell
whose two Kit Carson ballads appearing in the April South-
west Review over the signature of Stanley Vestal, I had
greatly admired for their persuasive use of the racy folk-
lore ballad style. With much difficulty I contended with
Mr. Campbell's overweening modesty until he promised to
send us the ballads and riding songs contained in this
number."

1. Monroe, Harriet "In Texas and Oklahoma". Poetry.
Vol. XXVI. No. IV, (1925)
In 1928, Houghton-Mifflin published the collected ballads which had appeared in Poetry, the Southwest Review, Literary Digest, American Mercury, etc., in one volume entitled "Fandango: Ballads of the Old West". Fandango, the title poem is a typically pioneer-like version of the gay theme of Young Lochinvar very cleverly done. Its swing and dash leave one rather breathless:

"Dick stooped from his saddle to say goodbye
Whispered her ear and looked in her eye.
She flashed him a smile like the break of morn
 Reached her hand to his saddle-horn
 Placed her foot on his moccasin—
 He caught her, and struck his spurs well in!"

The stark justice of the Indians in killing one of their own warriors for slaying a white man although they would not turn him over to the local authorities for punishment, is well illustrated in the last four stanzas of "Boggy Depot":

"They led him out before the crowd;
They stripped him to the waist;
In white pipe-clay a round mark
Above his heart was placed.

"The Captain of the warriors
Stepped forth with shaft and bow;
There was no sound in all the camp
But leaves that rustled low.

"The prisoner stood unbound, erect,
He neither spoke nor stirred;
The Captain drew his arrow back—
The bow-string whirred.

"Back from Boggy Depot
At noon that summer's day
The Marshall went- a-riding
To the city far away."
Of the several ballads based on incidents in the life of Kit Carson, the one entitled "Oliver Wiggins", will perhaps have the widest appeal. The entire collection of poems shows not only originality of treatment but considerable dramatic power.

In his scholarly article "Oklahoma Poets", Professor Botkin, himself a noted author, thus appraises the collection:

"As a medium for creating an epic of the Southwest the form seems to me more successful than, say, the long turgid blank-verse narratives of John G. Neidhardt in his epic of the Missouri Valley, while the material is a triumphant fulfillment of the latter's dictum that "The Heroic spirit is the outcome of a society cut loose from its roots, of time of migrations, of the shifting of populations."

Simple, swift, virile, these song-stories take on the quality of the frontier figures whom they transform into heroes of legend—quaint, native, hard, quizzical—changing them wherever necessary much as the hero-making instinct of the people takes liberties with the characters of history.

In a letter to a friend (Parker LaMoore), Mr. Campbell puts up his own defense for his Indian of "Happy Hunting Grounds" in speaking of the hard time he had "getting over" with the publishers where Indian material is concerned:

"It is harder to get real Indian stories into print than it is to hurdle Pet building or Philtower from a standing

start. Why? Because the editors of America, and through them the reading public, have refused from time immemorial to subscribe to the belief that Indians are people, and are nothing more. They would have them idols or butchers, scouts or murderers, loyal scouts or treacherous bushwhackers— always one extreme or the other. Never the middle ground. Never the little-bit-of-the-best-of-us viewpoint." Never until Stanley Vestal came along and converted some few of them.

To begin with "Happy Hunting Grounds" is dramatized history of the West that was—the West of the Sioux and the Cheyennes and the Apaches and all the rest of the Plains Indians. It is a story of life and death and flowers and gore and religion, and treachery and what—not. It is a refreshing thing to discover someone, best of all an Oklahoman, with the courage to write of the American Indian as a human being. And he knows whereof he speaks for he has ridden boot to boot over dangerous trails with the American men of yesterday in whose hearts lurked the dying traditions of an emerging race. He has watched braided whips strike color from pinioned backs and he has one of the whips entwined about the picture of a real Indian above his fireplace. He has known the Indian and loved him as only one can know and love who has learned about Indians from ex-
perience, and not from books. His most prized possessions—
in fact the only keepsakes to which he has clung through the
passing many years are the turkey feather fans, the bois d'arc
bows, the sassafras—root pipes, all made for him alone by real
Plains Indians.

Having grown up among the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians,
the tribes with which Kit Carson was most intimately associat-
ed, Stanley Vestal knows the country over which he ranged and
has thus secured much material hitherto unavailable concerning
Kit's life. The result is one of the most exciting of recent
biographies of Americans as well as one of the most illuminat-
ing of all books about the old frontier.

The Yale Review in its Autumn Number (1928), has a
discussion by R. H. Gabriel on the books written about the
frontiersmen of many kinds. Speaking of Stanley Vestal's Kit
Carson:

"Of these varied types, each in its own way rich
in human values, none is more interesting than the hunter
pioneer. And of these men no individual is more worth know-
ing than Christopher Carson....cheap biographers, exploiting
the literary lodes of the "Wild and woolly West" made a penny
out of Kit's adventures. Their transparent purpose and lack
of skill injured the memory of their hero....the true Carson
was in danger of being discredited and forgotten. Stanley
Vestal has gathered together with industry and skill the scat-
tered fragments of evidence which bear on the life of Kit.
From them he has reconstructed the personality of "The Happy
Warrior of the Old West"....In rescuing the memory of this
frontiersman....and in painting a full-length portrait of one
of the last and greatest of the hunter—pioneers, Vestal has
done the American people a real service."
Sydney Greenbie of no small authority as a critic speaks more favorably of Stanley Vestal's Kit Carson than of any other like biographies of the period. He says:

"Direct, unpolished, Kit Carson emerges from the wilderness an exponent of the basic virtues. Mr. Vestal has given him a vivacious, life-size portrait in a very readable book....But he stresses too much the physical prowess, the clear wit, the fine courage of his hero, destroying by neglect the side of Carson that might be called his "Soul". But the man, the personality of Carson, is left real enough, and as one finishes it one feels that this is the way the story of King Arthur's Knights would sound if all the glamor and reinterpretation were removed—and while King Arthur had his Guinevere Kit Carson had his Josefa." 1

The Literary Supplement of the London Times devotes a column of its issue for October 11, 1928, to a favorable review of the work. The quotations which follow are of interest as showing how English critics react to the work of this Oklahoman:

"English readers who ask themselves who Kit Carson was will learn from his biographer in his first two pages that Kit Carson 'Rates a siege at the round table' and that matched with him Odysseus was a 'stay at home' and Achilles a 'wash-out'; and when they have reached the last page they will probably admit—allowance being made in each case for the contribution of the vates sacer—that Kit Carson supplies in his doings and misdoings raw material to stand comparison. Moreover, in spite of his initial flourishes, Vestal is a thoroughly competent vates. He so describes Kit Carson as to confirm the claim made for him that it was he who won for the United States the Indian stronghold of the Southwest. The adventures in which Kit Carson bears the chief part would make a gorgeous film, yet, he is more interesting than they are; he is not infallible—not a great deal more formidable than his enemies and competitors, but just a little, like the man who is expected to win and does win a lawn tennis championship. Morally, too, he is a little better, while—like Achilles—falling at times deplorably below the standard

of the film hero—his defects being those of time and place. In fact, Vestal has so told the story that Carson appears as a natural growth of the southwest in the second third of the last century; and what he has to say of the conditions and of the changes brought about by forces of one of which Carson was a type make quite as good reading as the feat and escape of a remarkable man."

Just how much effect this article had on the English readers is not estimated but it is a well-known fact that immediately after its appearance Hodder and Stoughton of London published it in an English edition. At the time Houghton—of Boston, had not released it more than a year.

The American Scrapbook compiled by the Wm. Wise Company in 1928, includes two pages from "Kit Carson". In the insert they explain why this choice has been made: "It is a rippling record of facts—facts swept with such singing prose that one encounters passages of terrific heart-shaking effect". 1.

To date Stanley Vestal's international reputation is based on Ballads published in the American Mercury, The Southwest Review, Poetry, The Literary Digest, articles on Indians in the American Mercury and in the American Anthropologist, and verses and prose in the Kansas City Star, the Daily Oklahoman, Christian Science Monitor, The Journal of

American Folk-Lore, and The American Oxonian. He is also the author of the following volumes: "Fandango: Ballads of the Old West", (Houghton-Mifflin, 1927); "Happy Hunting Grounds", (Lyons-Carnahan, 1927); and "Adventures of Kit Carson", (Haldeman-Julius, 1927); "Kit Carson: The Happy Warrior of the Old West", (Houghton-Mifflin, 1928).
Twenty-one years ago, Burton Rascoe took his first step on the journalistic ladder when the Shawnee Herald printed his editorial, "Consumption and Genius". Today he has grasped the top rung and is one of the outstanding nationally known critics of America. At thirty he was literary editor of the New York Tribune; at thirty-three editor of the Bookman; and in 1928, at the age of thirty-five he has been chosen to serve on the Literary Guild—supplanting such eminent writers as Glenn Frank and Zona Gale.

The late James Gibbons Huneker said in one of his articles just before his death that there was no critic in America whose opinion he valued more than Rascoe's and in an article in the Yale Review, Hugh Walpole listed him as one of the three American critics who seemed to him to be the most important—the other two being Francis Hackett and Henry L. Mencken.

Because of his courageous defense of the new in writing, he has been called "the flaming apostle of twentieth century literature". Long before his contemporaries
discovered their merits, he championed such writers as James Branch Cabell, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, Edgar Lee Masters, Ring Lardner, T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway and others. In recognition of Mr. Rascoe's efforts to call public attention to the genius of the then unknown master ironist, Cabell, the author dedicated "Jurgen" to him even though the two had never met. While Theodore Dreiser worked in the face of many discouragements, Mr. Rascoe was battling for him, battling for his work and controverting his critics. Nine years ago Burton Rascoe wrote his first extensive critique of the work of Henry L. Mencken. In it he called attention to the qualities in Mencken as a critic and a satirist which marked him a vitalizing influence in American literature. At that time the more academic critics ignored Mencken or were contemptuous of him.

Yet one must not take from all this that his interest is narrowed to the work of any particular group or the expression of any special point of view. He has a broad background of serious scholarship and many years of editorial experience.

He came to Shawnee, Oklahoma, in 1903 when he was ten years old. A Kentuckian by birth. Here the newspaper office had a great attraction for the small Irish lad and before and after delivering his papers he usually sat around the Herald office watching every phase of the work intently.
Shannon Mountjoy, an eccentric and brilliant bachelor on the Herald Staff was fond of the boy. This strange friendship was the cause of much comment. More than once he had remarked, "This boy is a genius". It was he also who called the attention of U. S. Russell, then city editor of the Shawnee Herald, to Rascoe's first newspaper contribution. Russell could scarcely believe a boy fourteen years old had written the article but published it to surprise him and asked him to do more. Burton then began to write a series of articles on literary and kindred subjects under a standing heading, "Seances with the Mental Medium". He speaks of these articles later: "I was much too modest in those days to venture my opinion as my own, and so I created an erudite and philosophical man whom I was supposed to interview from time to time. A lot of people thought the old man really existed and wanted to know who he was and where he lived".

After one year on the Herald, he and the late Miss Aloysius Larch-Miller, started a literary magazine "The Tatler". Burton did the ads and wrote about Tolstoi, Chesterton, and others, while Miss Miller did the town gossip.

While attending the Chicago University he became campus reporter for the Chicago Tribune. On this paper he later ran the gamut of ten editorial positions from reporter to literary critic and editor.
He was for a while Chicago manager of the Newspaper Enterprise Association. Served for a year as associate editor of McCall's Magazine and went to the New York Tribune in May 1924. During the next two years we find, while another Oklahoman, John McClure was literary critic on the New York Times, Burton Rascoe filled the same capacity on the New York Herald. Many of the New Yorkers might have raised their eyebrows had they known that these two young men barely verging on maturity were laying down opinions to be caught up and quoted by the most erudite of the East.

Even Oklahoma was scarcely aware of his existence as a critic, until he wrote a diatribe on the State for "The Nation". He declared it to be a wretched wilderness in things intellectual—a show place for bawdry parvenues. With a peasantry starved by the greed of landowners because of their ignorance of any except the most primitive agricultural methods. Practically ALL of the PRESS of the State then discovered Rascoe and there was some talk of passing a law prohibiting his stuff from being sold in Oklahoma. Feeling ran high—so high that an expeditionary force was organized to go to New York and get him.

This reaction gave him wide publicity. He needed little advertisement after this. But in time the jab was

overlooked. Still it rankled in the bosom of the State until in 1927 when Mr. Rascoe was given the editorship of the Bookman. Oklahoma now got its chance. She sent him congratulations and watched with breathless pride for the first issue sent forth by her blasphemous son. True to his form he changed the whole make-up of that time honored magazine. Some praised the new style, others scathingly denounced it. However the subscriptions jumped to five times the number of previous years. Unfortunately he quarreled with the publishers—handed it over to another company and wound up by resigning his position before the year was up.

He has contributed to such magazines as "The Nation", "New Republic", "Freeman", "Bookman", "Double Dealer", "The Reviewer", "Smart Set", "Vanity Fair", "Shadowland", and edited and wrote introductions for the Borzoi editions of "Mlle Maupin", "Madame Bovary", "Manon Lescaut", "Nana". He also wrote the introduction for a revised edition of James Branch Cabell's "Chivalry" and D'Annunzio's "Triumph of Death". In the Spring of '23 he published "Fanfare" which received delighted praise from the reviewers.

In 1928 "Morrow's Almanack" was given a nation's welcome before it had been off the press a bare three weeks. Laudatory epithets of this kind appeared in all the magazines
of worth during January 1928: "By all odds the most original book of the year" (Vanity Fair); "The Most consistently amusing book which landed on this desk since we took possession". (Edward Hope, New York Herald Tribune,) Etc., and the like, filled the review columns and advertising sections.

Being satisfied with its enthusiastic reception, Burton Rascoe then compiled a 1929 edition which was put in publication October 1928. That it will follow the lead of the initial volume one is assured after reading in the New York Times Review within the week:

"Morrow's Almanack is a book of genuine wit, of brilliant burlesque, of intelligence and real vividness. It is as joyous a collection of jibes, in short, as was ever scattered through with grains of sober criticism. It is a delightful contribution to the civilized life of the day." 1

That he holds a secure place in the field of letters may be accorded when one picks up "Literary Spotlights", edited by John Farrar. In this anonymous collection of essays, Rascoe holds high rank among such celebrities as Mencken, Nathan, Henry Seidel Canby, Sinclair Lewis, Fannie Hurst, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Floyd Dell, and a dozen or more intelligentsia of the period.

Even though the book is a satirical laugh with, laugh at me, affair yet there is pure truth in the appraisal given

Rascoe's intellectual status: 1.

"As a critic, he is a wonderful newspaper man. If he goes down to history at all, it will be as the encourager of new talents. He smells them out not by their artistic fragrance, but by virtue of as keen a nose for news as ever anyone was gifted with. His flair for the author who is going to write something startling is downright uncanny. No one else in the world could have anticipated "Jurgen" by reading "The Cream of the Jest". One is already a classic; the other is just jeu d’esprit."

Little has been heard from him for several months. His friends take this as a favorable omen of a forthcoming startler for the nation, always on the alert for the new. In fact it is being whispered that Oklahoma or at least an Oklahoman will be the hero of his song.

CHAPTER 7

LYNN RIGGS

"Big Lake" one of the most recent and most successful of Broadway's openings, was written by Lynn Riggs. He is one of the youngest of the leading younger Playwrights of America. Of him Barrett Clark, New York Dramatic Critic says:

"Lynn Riggs, the Oklahoma poet and dramatist, is one of the few native dramatists who can take the material of our everyday life and mould it into forms of stirring beauty."

Like Will Rogers, Lynn Riggs was born in Claremore, Oklahoma, and may now share with Rogers, "cowboy-humorist-satirist", the honors of making Claremore famous. Like Rogers, Riggs is also part Cherokee Indian.

From his birth in 1899 until his graduation from the Oklahoma Military Academy in 1917, Riggs lived in Claremore. His graduation released him from the domination of a step-mother with whom he had spent a very unhappy boyhood. The Rock Island freight transferred the young adventurer to Chicago. Here he obtained work and steady employment in the Adams Express Company.

1. Riggs, Lynn "Big Lake" French, 1927. Foreword by Barrett Clark.
Chicago was not quite big enough for him. He set out again. This time for New York City where he accepted any kind of employment which offered enough for a bed and sandwiches. Among a few of his colorful occupations was that of reporter for the Wall Street Journal. Later he earned ten dollars a week clerking in the book department of Macy's. Every off moment he spent at the theatres, concerts, recitals, etc., But the turbulent life palled on him. 1919 saw him back in Oklahoma—this time not in Claremore—but in Tulsa.

While in Tulsa he was inspired by the poetry and romantic death of Alan Seegar and he became a zealous student of modern poetry. He has ever since carried this enthusiasm to the extent of decrying the classic poets—unless we might single forth Villon. However Tulsa could not hold him for long either, and when in the Fall of 1920 Los Angeles became the center of the Motion Picture World, Riggs again fared forth to try his fortune by working as an extra in the plays of many of the older favorites—Wallace Reid, Pauline Frederick, and others. His acting failed to net him sufficient funds so he gave it up to read proof on the Los Angeles Times.

In speaking of this period of his wanderings, Riggs always claims that the city editor, by naming his first published poem "Spasm", caused him a deal of unhappiness. Strange to say he felt it so keenly that he left Los Angeles and the Fall
of 1921 found him enrolled a Freshman in the University of Oklahoma. When a Sophomore he taught Freshman English in the College and wrote a farce "Cuckoo". It had a college fraternity setting and was twice produced with great success by the University Players.

Two friendships which were to affect his life in the future were formed during this period. Professor Walter S. Campbell became his warm admirer and the two had contributory influences on each other—in fact each acted as a goad to the other to write.

During the Spring, Walter Bynner, the poet-critic, came to the University to lecture. He took a fancy to Riggs and even kept up a correspondence with him after leaving. It was Bynner who advised him to retire to the serenity of Santa Fe, New Mexico, to regain his health after a complete breakdown. He led a very colorful life here but it is of more importance to note that during these three years he wrote and saw produced by the local theatre group, "Knives from Syria", a play with an Oklahoma setting. It has been included by Paul Green in his One-Act Plays for Stage and Study, third series. He also continued to write poetry and had it published in such magazines as the Nation, New Republic, Poetry, Palms, the Reviewer, Contemporary Verse and the American Mercury. His "Knives from Syria" received a reading through the intervention of Altha
Leah Bass, another Oklahoman, but it was not produced in New York.

Hope rose in him when he drew up his first contract with the original Actor's Theatre group, backed by Otto Kahn. However the group failed to produce "Sumpin' Like Wings". Yet a still greater triumph was in store for him. On the night of April 7, 1929, the American Laboratory Theatre opened with his "Big Lake". In the New York Daily News next morning appeared the following, by Burns Mantle:

"This Big Lake is the first play written by a young western poet named Lynn Riggs, to be produced. It is one of those simple, direct, bitingly true extracts from life, cut out, set down, and touched by the beauty of an imaginative writer's recital....In fact, if you foster any belief that you are a real student of the theatre this 'Big Lake' is one of the exhibits worth your study."

K. N. S. in the New York Telegram says:

"Riggs, hitherto known as a poet, has made a genuine contribution in the field of folk drama and lyrical writing."

In a letter to the Chicago Tribune, Burns Mantle particularly extols Riggs and "Big Lake". He says, "Big Lake" gives young Riggs definite place among the native poets with a feeling for drama. Almost anything may come of this development of talent. And something fine will come from it I feel sure."

Two weeks after its tremendous success, Samuel French published the play with a foreword by Barrett H. Clark:

"Big Lake has that rarest of things, a poetic drama that is at once poetry and drama....There is a winged lightness in the words that the poet puts into the mouths of his young people, an ecstasy born of the sheer joy of his being alive....In calling Mr. Riggs a poet I am not forgetting that poetry in the theatre is a different thing from the poetry you read in a book. Mr. Riggs's plays are stage pieces; the poetry in them is never a matter of mere words, but an integral part of the speeches uttered and the gestures made by the characters directing each scene and permeating the whole. It lies first in the writer's conception of a harmonic entity and floods it from beginning to end....My purpose is to point out to you a new American dramatist whose work is permeated by an odd and strangely haunting beauty." 1

His newest play "A Lantern to See By" is to be produced this winter by the American Laboratory Theatre, while "Sumpin' Like Wings" has been selected for the Lenox Hall Players' Repertoire for the coming season (1928-1929). "Sumpin' Like Wings" has been produced also in Rome, Italy, by a theatre guild there. "Rancor" and "The Lonesome West" are to be tried out in the near future. "The Domino Parlor" has already had a preliminary try out on the road.

To anyone who has been watching the present season in the theatre either in person or through the magazines and reviewers, there is no dodging the fact that the new theatre has gotten ahead of itself, and that our playwrights are holding up the parade perhaps bewildered by the very wealth of the new stage technique at their disposal. Such is the eagerness in its revolution that almost any play that makes sense will be promptly squeezed and tortured into the semblance of a masterpiece to be imposed for a few weeks on a rapidly growing critical public.
Again, if he is able to survive, then Oklahoma can claim a Eugene O'Neill of its own.

The two plays with their Oklahoma farm settings bring no new note to the theatre. He has discovered, for example, that farm folk, living that natural life which Wordsworth vaunted so highly, are not lifted thereby to the heights. He finds man in his pristine state the victim of too much Bible-pounding, too little knowledge of human nature. He finds him sodden and stupefied by his severance from those living contacts with the outside world, past and present, which are the heritage of city bred civilization. This in itself is a time-worn theme. The boy crazy, girl-child of sixteen in "Sumpin Like Wings", punished for her natural instincts yet insisting throughout on her right to live as she sees life, is hardly a novelty in our drama. Nor can one stare in astonishment at the brutish John Harmon of "A Lantern to See By" who callously inflicts upon his patient drudge of a wife "Six boys a growin' up like stair steps t' keep me alive when I'm dead" only to beat the life out of them.

However, there is that in Lynn Riggs' plays which suggests that once the fires of autobiographical bitterness have spent themselves—for he too escaped—his real dramatic sense may focus impressively upon other forms of American life. For he brings specific gifts to the theatre—sincerity, brevity, force. He has humor, rather conventional and vulgar, but still humor.
And rarer still he has a notion of what plays should be—hence Oklahoma waits patiently for him to come into his own.

Professor B. A. Botkin (Oklahoma University), who has known him for the past six years and very intimately during the first two, says: 1

"That he should now be described as 'Taking the material of our everyday life' is in accord with all that I have known of Riggs. This in spite of an increasing reputation as a poet and the success of his first play on Broadway....he is at once the sanest artist I have known, and the nearest to being a genius."

The two poems most representative of his maturing genius are "Letters" written in his first years for the old "Smart Set" and "Bird Call" which appeared in the Literary Digest during the early months of 1929:

LETTERS

These thin, impudent letters—
What can they say?
Life is so damned disastrous
And yet so gay!

And all of the matchless colors
Of sunrise and of song
Can never live in these letters
Nor last as long.

As the passing of great wings in darkness,
Or the sudden and fleet
Footsteps of Beauty passing
In wild retreat.

And what can one say in sorrow?
And what is there to say
Of a bird flown through the window
And a soul blown away?

1. Riggs, Lynn "My Oklahoma" June 1927. p. 34.
And these thin, impudent letters—
Why must they prate
Of life, so damnably petty
And yet so great!

(Smart Set 1920)

B I R D C A L L

There is tall crying in the willow reeds
From the kinless bird on that water
Which is a mirror depthless and deceitful,
Silvered by wind and set with tiny seeds.

What great eye, benevolent and curious,
Its look clean as a released blade,
May wound the water sailed by a crying bird,
Lay bare the source of that hurt cry mysterious?

Many an ear has heard—the snake's, the otter's—
Curl at the bank. In motion sinuous
And still they are waiting, waiting the voice in the reeds
From the bird stirring those waters.

(Appeared first in the New York Herald-Tribune)
CHAPTER 8

WILL ROGERS

Of Will Rogers's latest book "There's Not a Bathing Suit in All Russia", published this Summer by Albert and Charles Boni, the New York Times Book Review says:

"Despite its alluring title, this volume is really an appendix to "Letters of a Self-made Diplomat to his President", a continuation of those racy and pithy observations on European politics which made the latter a notable if informal contribution to international understanding....it should be noted that "There's Not a Bathing Suit in all Russia" is written in a rather more sparkling, if diluted vein than the preceding volume....It is a fine achievement to succeed simultaneously in two such difficult and mutually exclusive fields as humor and politics. It takes more than queer spelling and tricky twists of wording to accomplish that: It takes brains and common sense and an open mind."

Writing of Will Rogers's first diplomatic volume, John Carter of the New York Times Book reviewing staff said:

"Will Rogers is Will Rogers. America has never produced anybody quite like him; and there has rarely been an American humorist whose words produced less empty laughter and more sober thought....He is to this country what Punch is to England. There is a sting to this book, kindly but none the less actual. Will Rogers is much more than a funny man....There are times when one of his laboriously spelt sentences embalmes, as a fly in amber, the essence of America's involved relationship to Europe and of Europe's attitude toward us and all our nations."

All this of the famous cowboy humorist who takes pride
in the fact that he is an Oklahoman. Both of his parents, descended from early settlers, have a mixture of Cherokee blood in their veins. His father one-eighth Cherokee was once a Senator of the tribe in Oklahoma.

Brought up as he was on a ranch, with many cattle, young Rogers soon became a cow-puncher, a good horseman skilled with the lariat. On this ranch twelve miles from Claremore, he lived the most impressionable years of his life and something of his fine vigorous breadth of outlook must have been instilled into him from the naturalness of his great State—for the ranch was a wide, wide world to a youth in whose veins flowed the blood of the valiant hunters.

When he reached the age of young manhood he became possessed of a desire to see the world. He started on horseback, earning enough money to support himself at the different ranches en route. Chance or fate led him into a wandering rodeo troupe. He joined them and it was the manager of that troupe who suggested to him to go to New York's annual horse show and entertain society with his riding and roping. This was eighteen years ago. He made such a hit in New York that it was easy to take the next step into vaudeville.

Fortune continued to smile upon young Rogers's efforts. This early vaudeville act was made up of mostly fancy roping, with a little bit of talk thrown in. Gradually he made more
of his monologue, turning it into a witty fire of comment upon current politics and other topics of the moment.

During the campaign of 1924 Rogers was asked to make a political speech in New York in favor of Ogden Mills, a blue-stocking candidate for Congress. His talk in behalf of the "only candidate who owned his own silk hat" was reported to the New York papers and it delighted the City. He was immediately invited to make after-dinner speeches and public addresses everywhere and all of his talks were reported at length in the papers.

Will Rogers "who came out of the West" is now known internationally through his writings which appear in every worth-while paper throughout the nation.

During the election of 1928 his opinions were watched for more eagerly than those of any one other individual except, perhaps, the decisions of Al Smith.

He is said to be the most brilliant humorist since Mark Twain. In 1925, after the newspapers announced that Mr. Rogers would tour the country, telegrams came from every city and town from New York to San Francisco, asking for him. When the Prince of Wales came to America he was asked just what were his wishes—"I say, I say, I should like to meet Mr. Rogers". He is our unofficial ambassador and though he has developed into an international celebrity, yet he is still the Will Rogers of years ago.

When he was invited to become Governor of Arkansas he sent the following message to the Rogers' Kiwanis Club, "Thanks for
your offer to govern Arkansas, that's one State I could not govern. I got the best part of Arkansas here now but I have never been able to govern her, but I do thank Arkansas, especially Rogers, for furnishing me a Governor for eighteen years. Rogers is the Claremore of Arkansas and that is the last word in towns. Regards to the town jester, Tom Morgan". "Good Luck!" "Will Rogers." Mrs. Rogers is a native of this city.

Being one of the best known personalities in the United States he has as a consequence an enormous speaking acquaintance. He is a simple, sincere, and sympathetic soul, always glad to remember old friends whether he knows them or not. He makes no distinction between hoboes and high hatters. He likes to get close to the common people. And like all successful men he has his method of work. Every day he studies the newspapers from all over the country, reading first the front pages and then the editorials written on both sides of the political fence because he has no faith in the interpretative powers of any single publication. Only by reading them all does he feel that he has learned something. What he finds he calls the truth. And it is his way of summing up these truths, telling them in simple words with his own point of view that makes him the most quoted man in the country.

At present he is making a new name and fame in "Three Cheers" with Dorothy Stone. So successful has been its run
during a season when there seemed to be a surfeit of vaudeville that this one play alone has held the favorable review and comment of the dramatic critics when only two or three others could scarcely survive even in spite of the lines and scenery. The latest news of his acting is a two year contract from the Vitaphone in Hollywood. New York will feel stripped during the winter season after having been roused and entertained for so many years by a man who has never dimmed his popularity with the public.

St. John Ervine, guest dramatic critic of the "World" granted an interview to Harry Saltpeter just before leaving America after a seven months' sojourn. He expressed himself with slight, if any reservation, on many things American, including American life, American men and women, the theatre, intellectuals, American culture, (and lack of it), etc., In his commentary on the theatre he said emphatically,

"You have some astonishingly good comedians. Will Rogers is a great comedian, as native as Niagara, a witty man and a wise man. You have many others but there is no other comparable to Will Rogers."

CHAPTER 9

MUNA LEE and ELIZABETH BALL

The first woman ever invited to address an international Congress is the distinction given to Muna Lee, who in the Summer of 1928 spoke to the sixth Pan-American Conference at Havana, Cuba. This honor came to her because she is the director of the Bureau of International Relations of the University of Porto Rico. She is the wife of the well known Porto Rican author and publicist, Luis Munoz Morin.

Although she was born and received all of her preparatory education in Mississippi, it was only after she entered the University of Oklahoma that her talent as a lyricist came into notice. Here she studied Spanish and because of her excellent progress she was able to command the position of interpreter for the Spanish Ambassador in New York. It was through this commission she met the distinguished Spanish writer who later became her husband.
During her University days she belonged to "the Grub Street Club"—in fact she was one of the first members. Out of it have come at least three well known American writers——
John McClure, Muna Lee, Stanley Vestal.

"Sea Change", a volume of verse written by her, was published by MacMillan in 1923. In 1924 she translated the Spanish-American anthology number of "Poetry" and "Four Years Beneath the Crescent" by Rafael Nogales in 1926. She is a frequent contributor to such magazines as American Mercury, North American Review, Ladies Home Journal, Bookman, Commonweal, America, Poetry, etc., and in Spanish, El Diario de la Marina, El Sol, and La Nacion.

Her lyrics have the pure singing simplicity of the Victorian period and yet they belong to this era. Her love poems have a refined delicacy which have lifted her to one of the most famous lyricists of the present day.

In 1915 she was awarded the Lyric Prize by "Poetry".

This poem was chosen by Sara Teasdale to be included in the "Lyric South", a collection of the most beautiful love poems by women in the past twenty years:

When We Shall Be Dust.

When we shall be dust in the church-yard——
In twenty years—in fifty years——
Who will remember you kissed me once,
Who will be grieved for our tears?
The locust tree will have grown taller,  
The old walks will be covered with grass,  
And past our quiet graves go straying  
A youth with his arm around his lass.

And the bee that shall suck your grass flowers,  
Anemone, stock, columbine,  
May pause in its swift homing journey  
To taste of the honey from mine.

This little poem from "Sea Change" is typical of her lyrical charm:

The Little White Flower

I can forget so much at will:  
That first walk in the snow,  
The violet bed on the wet spring hill,  
The song we both loved so:

Even the rapture of love's magic hour,  
Even the anguish of love's disdain,  
— But never, but never, the little white flower  
We found one day in the rain.

Her ability as a translator may be seen readily after reading the following sonnet. It was composed as an aftermath of her readings in Saint Teresa, Luis de Leon and Ramon Lull from the Spanish:

There is a joy I have not known, a splendor  
That never flashed across my darkened heart.  
There is a bliss in which I have no part  
Of passionate welcome and of rapt surrender.  
It is the Vision, terrible and tender,  
Whose ecstasies Teresa's songs impart;  
The spring from which Luis's praises start;  
The Fire and Dew that Ramon's altars render.
Yet even I, the cold and blind, have been
   Led by an echo toward the Holy Wood,
   Hearing the Voice that thrilled its sentient air,
And, as an alien at its edge I stood,
Afar within its depths I too have seen
   The star that glitters on the lilies there. 1.

Or in this sequence:

**Sonnet**

It will be easy to love you when I am dead—
Shadowed from light and shut away from sound,
Held deeper than the wild roots underground,
Where nothing can be changed and no more be said.
All will be uttered then: beyond the dread
Of failure in you or me, I shall have found
Most perfect quietness to fold me round,
Where I can dream while Time's years are sped.

But now Life roars about me like a sea,
Sears me like flame, is thunder in my ears.
There is no time for song, no space for tears,
And every vision has forsaken me.
In a world earthquake-shaken, lightning-charred,
Love is the hardest where all things are hard.

ELIZABETH BALL

Standing out among the foremost of our lyricists we find Elizabeth Ball in whose poems can be found nothing of the severely intellectual or morbidly analytic tendencies that modern science has communicated to the lyric. She remains as from the beginning, primarily the singer, sweet and wistful, at times perhaps sad, but always a dreamer. With careful restraint and precision she etches in her favorite tones of "glint" and "grey" in "thin pencilled lines of poetry". Her poems always quiet, shy and delicate, are often exquisite.

Dealing almost entirely with the everyday trifles of love and nature, she has achieved considerable mastery of her art. Few Oklahoma poets have succeeded in doing better what they set out to do, as may be readily admitted by reading the following, picked from among a wealth of like creations:

Wishes

I would mix colors
With artist skill;
Glint of a treetop,
Grey of a hill.

I would go strumming
On a guitar,
One of the mad race
Musicians are.
But I can do none of these;
Only for me
Are the thin pencilled lines
Of poetry.

A Year

A year has passed in beauty,
In beauty and in pain;
And Autumn, like the stricken leaves
Flutters on earth again.

And we who know of fleeting things
Never think it strange
That beauty sometimes turns to pain
And time brings change.

And how is it today with me
Who loved you so before?
I, too, as everything, am changed,
For I love you more.

Stitches

Stitches for a little one
Small stitches in a row:
Who would have thought I'd make no verse
But only sew and sew?
But seams themselves are metrical,
With stitches short and long;
And was it I who used to think
That verse was always song?
SELECTIONS FROM OKLAHOMA POETS.
APRIL IN OKLAHOMA

April in Oklahoma——
And the scent of wild plum blossoms on the air,
The sun drifts slowly westward,
And in its light, yellow as golden wine,
The flower-gemmed prairies gleam like Persian carpets
Purple and rose and gold.
Along the winding waterways
The cottonwoods lift high their silver branches,
New-tipped with tender green,
Above the bronze of scrub oak trees
Not yet in bud and leaf.
The orchards are a blur of pink
Above the emerald alfalfa fields;
And on the slopes and in the little hollows
From the black, fertile bottom lands
Comes up the smell of fresh-ploughed earth;
And over the field and lake and flower-bright prairie
Pass flocks of wild geese going north again.

April in Oklahoma——
The long bright days that end in blood-red sunsets;
And the soft purple twilights over the wide plains
Are like the peace of God.

Lena Whittaker Blakeney.

UNBROKEN SPELL

Under coral vine and canary tree
The village lies a-swoon.
The sun clings like a golden bee
To the wide blue petals of noon.
No sound seeps through the shuttered walls,
In the brooding square, — no sound;
Only a soft, ripe mango falls
To rot upon the ground.

Muna Lee.
P A N

Pipes o' Pan in Arcady
Wakened shepherdess at morn;
Now he summons raucously
With a motor horn.

Once his pies Pan sounded sweet
Beside the reedy river;
Today we go, his call to meet,
On highway, in the flivver.

Pan is master, as of old;
He calls—we follow far.
Dryads may dance in wood or wold—
Pan drives his motor car.
Zoe A. Tilghman.

A L L E G I A N C E

The mountains shelter Arcady,
And slender rivers wander through;
And Pan pipes sweet in Arcady
As in the days when life was new.

But I have seen the far-spread plains
That have no bounding but the sky,
And mountain sentinels that keep
Eternal vigil, standing by.

I have seen stalwart rivers poured
Down from the snow-clad mountain land,
Meandering like silver threads
Far through a waste of sun-gold sand.

And I have heard the mystic songs
Of winds from South to Polar sea,—
Songs made of myriad strains that throb
With an unfathomed ecstasy.

And Arcady has lost its spell.
I own a wilder, stronger call;
Arcadian Pan no more I hear—
Pan o' the Prairies holds me thrall!
Zoe A. Tilghman.
EGOTISM

You say that I have a core of ice,
That the living fire divine,
Which could warm me to a moment being,
Will never be mine.

Let us change the figure.
My heart is a cello, suppose we say.
Will you think that it holds no music
If you can't play?

May Frank.

CONCESSION

Love galloped by while I quietly sat
And watched him pass.
Now I stand by the roadside holding out
A nibble of grass.

May Frank.

The Road to Faeryland

Oh how may I find Faeryland?
I have lost the way
From traveling too long a-down
The road of Everyday.

I used to know just how to go;
A wish would take me there,
But wishes are too frail to lift
A heart tight-bound with care.

When little David comes to play
He gives this gay command:
"You be the Maiden-Fair-To-See
I'm the Prince of Faeryland".

On a white plumed horse he rescues me
From the Dread-Dragon's den.
Could he but really set me free
I'd learn to dream again!

May Frank.
Light and Shadow

I saw a girl with sunset hair
Dancing in the street.
"Life is a dance", she sang, and swiftly
Moved her sandalled feet.

I saw a monk walk solemnly
Where the passion-flower bleeds.
"Life is a pilgrimage", he sighed,
And knelt to tell his beads.

Robert E. Brittain.

M O O D

Wind on the prairie, wind in my heart,
And where is the dream that was yesterday mine?
Blown like a tumbleweed in a queer line
Over the prairie, and scattered apart.

Robert E. Brittain.

Growth

Not in working shall I live—
I've tried
And love—I had a great deal once,
And cried.

Not in being, seeing, thinking,
Can I know,
But only as I feel
I grow.

Stella Reinhardt.
BLACK GOLD

Where shafts bite deep in a home hillside
And wounded earth in its flame has died,
The trees are tattered and seem to be
A-drip with black dew, endlessly.
The children's play-house has lost its way
In dismal ooze and sullied clay.
The grass is shriveled in clots of grime;
And flowers, strangled in sheets of slime.
Like soot, upon coal, is the mossy stone;
Oil dabbled, the rest where a bird has flown;
And even the stream in its shaley bed
Bears glistening ink, where it once was red.

On this spot—palsied—without a bloom—
Tanks squat like gnomes in a world of gloom;
Through veins of iron is pumped away
Old forests' blood in its rich decay.
The trucks crawl out; new roads cut deep.
Where the buried trails of old dreams sleep
A woman sees through the sting of tears
A murky flood on the pride of years;
But the man beholds, with exultant eyes,
New fortunes make and new cities rise!

For it is the law that earth shall give—
The past must die, that the present live!
So derricks stand upon ruin's wall,
And black gold flows for the good of all.

Jennie Harris Oliver.

ACHIEVEMENT

There are many who set to building
And little it is they do——
The sons of gods are many,
But the gods themselves are few.

Louis T. Barnes
SANDY ANDY

Sandy Andy's come to town,  
A-whistlin' a tune to his possum houn'  
Sandy Andy's stopped in the street,  
An' taken his fiddle from under the seat;  
An' folks crowd around where his horses stand  
To hear him singin' "Sandy Land".

Sieve your meal an' save the bran;  
Plant your taters on sandy land.

Sandy Andy's long an' lean,  
With the reddest face you ever seen.  
Oh, Andy's as ugly as he is long,  
But they like to hear him sing his song;  
An' they climb on the load of corn he brings,  
To listen to the song he sings.

Sal's got a wooden leg, so they say;  
Jis' take that wooden leg an' throw it away.

Andy lives on the river here,  
An' a box of matches lasts 'im a year.  
People say he's a little queer,  
But you can't be sure about all you hear.  
Andy, they say, was a young cow hand  
When he heard the song called "Sandy Land".

Sal's got a bacon rine laid away  
To grease that wooden leg every day.

Andy was in love when he was a lad,  
(I reckon that's why he sings so sad.)  
An' he heard a song when he was young.  
It's the only song he ever sung  
Andy, they say, was a good cow hand;  
But now he's farming on sandy land.

Sieve your meal an' save the bran;  
Plant your taters on sandy land!

William Cunningham.
Dilemma at the Crossroads.

Shall I follow the scent of the rose
That someone has carried
Along this highway?

Or the print of one who has plodded past
Too heavily laden?

Maurine Halliburton McGee.

Declaration to a Lover

Love me lightly as the gently bending grass
Before the wind,
Leaving no kiss upon my lips,
No grief within my heart,
Only laughter lurking in my eyes
And wishes unfulfilled.
Pass quickly as the music of a muted string,
Leaving no tract of sound upon the air.
And soft beside my window I will sing
That other lovers may be tangled in my hair.

Adeline Rubin.

C H A L K

Chalk on his coat, chalk on his sleeves,
Chalk on his fingers that sometimes leaves
A smudge on his face as he strokes his chin
Or presses his brow to keep his thoughts in.

Lectures, quizzes, blackboards, chalk,
Erasers whose flying dust-motes mock
This man of dust: from classroom to house
He carries chalk to be brushed by his spouse.

A few scattered thoughts that crumble in talk
As the marrow of his dry bones turns to chalk.

B. A. Botkin.
ROOFS

Greener than Arden-Forest is my city square in summer
At the hour when the late sun sends a flood of gold
Pouring over the incredible green.
Floating above there are roofs:
Red roofs, gray roofs, slate-blue, and purple roofs.
Beneath them tired fathers sink relaxing into the biggest chairs;
Welcoming mothers brood over clamorous children,
And over their men, resting from work.
Into the air reach radio-poles, more challenging than Ajax,
Giant antennae, feeling for words through infinite blue ether.
But it is not the tired men, nor brooding mothers,
Nor the exigent young that I see;
It is not even the curious radio, interrogating Natal,
South Africa;
It is the roofs, like rafts of many colors,
Swimming in seas of green and gold,
Oblongs and soft triangles, over the trees.

Anne McClure.

HANDS

Copper-bronze and ivory-tipped,
Flexible, subtle, — beautiful!
Supple, subtle

Copper-bronze and ivory-tipped,
Flexible, fluent, lightning-quick,
Supple, subtle, — beautiful!
The hands of the young mulatto who shines my shoes.

Anne McClure.

POETRY

POETRY?......
The voice that leaps up
With the spring water
And thunders
Out of the mountain.

John McClure.
S P E N D T H R I F T

I cannot carry my money
'Tis gone before I know:
I lose coins out of my pocket
Or squander them as I go.

I cannot carry my dreams
Nor barter them for bread
I squander them like pennies
Or lose them out of my head.

John McClure.

E S T R A Y

Dreaming by sand and water,
The brown beach and the bay,
I am the wandering minstrel
That wandered too far away.

He that went hunting early
To chase the stags of song
Struck the black spoor of sorrow
And followed it long.

I dream by the water and sand,
Aging, who once was young,
And the moonlight running on the water
Is the song I should have sung.

John McClure.

I C O U L D F O R G I V E

Love is so very hard to bear,
Mad Love, on his own pleasure bent,
And yet I think I could forgive
If he were different.

I could forgive Love's wantonness,
Forgive that he is blind,
I could forgive Love everything
If only Love were kind.

John McClure.
On Discovering Land

I, who have shivered in the moon before,
And seen different Aprils whiten the same tree
How shall I swear that this is ultimate shore,
And not an island in an infinite sea?

There may be other isles where moons will waken
A world-old, world-young tremor in my blood.
My sail months hence or years hence may be shaken
Along the reaches of an alien flood.

But this is land, firm land, not mist nor shadow,
Whatever else has been or comes to be:
Here are green slope, and trees, and blooming meadow,
On rock thrust up from bed-rock of the sea.

Muna Lee.

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SOUVENIR

I remember you because of a little hill
Where the violets grew thicker than the grass,
And through my memory flames and whistles still
A flock of red-winged blackbirds we saw pass.

Because of a rain-filled night I remember you
And a tree we came on suddenly in the Fall
And a vague horizon that broke and foamed in blue
——But I do not remember any words of yours at all.

Muna Lee.

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THORN

I mourn a desert here, where was a tree;
Of all its beauty there remains to me
This sharp upthrusting thorn of memory.

Anne McClure.
That apple tree? The road hands cut it down. It stood in the way of the new road-bed; the old trail was too crooked for auto travel. They flattened it that way, lopped some limbs off. It still had say enough to burst this spray of scattered buds; some yellow leaf-shoots, too.

Those peaked May-apples, there—see? Underneath, trying to push through the limbs for sunshine. I wonder what old Doc Smith would say if he could see that far down. He set it out to shade the place, he marked off, where they'd bury him. They didn't though. He's planted on the hill, where the new road bends around. Just missed him by a bit. He lived enough to hate the automobile like sin. A funny critter; said they got on his nerves, like a bawling calf, that's hurt. And he wouldn't ride in 'em.

They killed a calf for him once. Funny, too. He didn't say a word; the car had stopped; but he killed the calf (it was only hurt), with an ax, and then he walked on off and left it there, and wouldn't say much for a week. Hurt 'im, deep.

And now he's got to listen to them all day long. Can't even stir, I guess, in that place; though I'll bet if rocks can, he will; hard old rock, himself. I've always heard he beat his brother out of this place. He won't bother to move the old man's grave.

And I've heard too, that Doc Smith had a soft spot, for he gave that sick fellow and his wife the forty-lot, when they come out for his health; lungers, I think, for he didn't mix much. The mills he worked, and the city smoke kinda unraveled him.

He died, this winter, remember? Kinda hard for the girl, and the little kid, too. She should 'uv known before she married him how things were set.
The neighbors help her some,
And young Perc Robinson has plowed the lot
They're planting peas to. I've seen her stop
In the woods above, where they buried him,
When she come in. Cries some on it, maybe;
Though, look at her face, there ain't much left.
To cry with. There's the kid too — can't help much,
But keep her from dying; something to live for;
And cute too. I suppose she doesn't know
What it's all about.

Kinda like those blooms,
On the apple tree that's cut down. Well, I suppose
Things move pretty fast these days. We got to live,
And try to keep up, sorta. I don't know.
Maybe we're better off than we used to be.

Leo Turner.

Oklahoma Cross-Roads

Our weary engine panted,
When we stopped in the dust and heat,
Of a fiery August afternoon
Where currents of travel meet
At a prairie station like a box
Set down in the blinding glare
Of the red-hot plain; but phlox
And glorious yellow marigold
Grew in a little square;
And crimson Prince's feather
Flamed in the torrid weather:
Of a sudden I was ten years old——
I smelt the four-o'clocks!

Anne McClure.
THE SPELL

Like some dim echo of the pristine sea,
Far-borne through corridors of ages gone,
A touch of dreamless beauty comes to me
And love, half-clinging to the age of dawn—
A haunting, rapturous thing that casts a spell
As deeply mystical as verse of stars,
That breathes the music of a singing shell
Beyond a thousand soul-sought, soundless bars.
For, in this dimly lighted scheme of things,
As in some ancient castle hall whose light
Reveals but two dark windows, our soul wings
Its way from whence to where in endless flight?
And surely love is that fair flame which lures
Within, and past the darkness that endures.

Rudolph Hill.

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EPITAPH

Let them say this of me
If they say anything;
"Whether God or the devil ordained it
— He must sing!"

"Color of wind and morning,
Color of dusk and word,
Sound of the storming sea waves,
Sounds unheard—"

"Of these were his songs articulate
In some degree.
He has been happy — he will be happy
Forgotten utterly."

Lynn Riggs.
A WOMAN'S SONG

The Lord God painted the sunset
And hung it against the sky,
The Lord God tore up the great ribbed rocks
And flung them mountain high:

And I have ruffled the thin white lawn
To curtain the window pane,
And I have mended the broken walls
Uncertain against the rain.

The Lord God measured the great green sea,
And counted its heart in hours,
He sent His forked fire from Heaven
To bring Him a chart of the flowers.

And I have made a rainbow thing
For a quilt on the worn old bed,
And I have drawn a magic ring
Where gentle words are said.

God made the world while lightning played
Below the purple dome;
And, under a low roof, I have made
The miracle of Home.

Mary McDougal.

The Knife-Thrower

The crowd is here, night after night,
Beyond the hard white glare of light,
Expectant faces, row on row,
To watch me while I poise and throw
The gleaming knives that cut the air
And, hissing, strike the rough boards, where
She stands with outstretched arms. The crowd
Sits rustling, murmuring aloud;
They watch the wicked knives that hiss
Like hooded cobras— If I miss! ---
The long knives leap out, serpentwise,
Thin evil darts. Her laughing eyes
Are unafraid. I hem her in
With whizzing blades. A sudden din
Of swift applause goes sweeping by!
And every night I wonder why
My hand held steady. Will it be
The next night, with them watching me---
A Farm Wife Watches the Train go by.

I heard it whistle at Hainey's pond.
It'll be in sight now, pretty soon.
It's due to pass here just before noon.
The children are watching. They're awful fond
Of running out to the right-of-way,
Though I never let them go inside.
The engineer waves at them every day,
And lots of times I go to the door.

I remember, a month before Bennie died,
They had a washout, north a ways,
And we didn't have a train for days.

We don't get to town much, any more,
The roads are so rough, with all this rain;
It'd be mighty lonesome without any train.

I remember the first time I rode on a train,
It started so smooth, without any jolts.
That was on our wedding day—

There it comes now—look at the colts!
Seems like they always act that way—
Gallop away with their tails in the air,
But the cattle never seem to care.

The engineer waves like that every day—
And sometimes the man in the baggage car—
You know, I suppose they travel so far
Without seeing anyone, up in the hills,
That they're glad to see anybody, even a kid—
There's a crossing the other side of the trees,
He's whistling for.

It always did
Seem cooler after the train goes by,
Maybe because it stirs a breeze,
But the sound of the whistle makes me shiver,
It sounds so lonesome—you hear that cry!
That's a coyote down the river.

William Cunningham.
The next night, that my sure hand slips
And laughter leaves her painted lips?
The knife that, like a thrown thin flame,
Licks out and sears, will end the game?
The lean knives pin her to the boards,
And satisfy the eager hoards
That watch their vicious whizzing flight?
I wonder — will it be — to-night?

Violet McDougal.

____________________

LOVE SONG

My love tonight is quiet,
Like an old dream
That came to me in childhood,
When it would seem

I sank into my pillow
Way down deep,
And soft walls of feathers
Surrounded my sleep:

Soft walls of feathers
Caressing and white,
That shut out the world
And shut in the night.

Isabel Jones Campbell.

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Poet and Peasant

Aloft on a swaying spray sits he
And chants the wood's full minstrelsy,
While I dig deep in my garden plot
To make spuds grow where they did not.
Poet and peasant we. Full well he knows
That poems are needed as well as prose.

Francis Paxton.
LULLABY

Why, oh why is the wind blowing,
Boy with storm-gray eyes?
It doesn't know, but it keeps on going
Over the hills and the river flowing,
And into the blue skies.

Why, oh why are the chickens cheeping
Boy with nodding head?
I don't know, but the stars are peeping,
And I think it's time you had better be creeping
Into your little bed.

Why, oh why is the mocking bird singing,
Boy with restless feet?
I don't know but the trees are ringing
With the song he sings and the dreams he's bringing
And I hope your dreams are sweet.

Kenneth Kaufman.

Lyrics of a Farm Boy Shuckin' Corn

There's something I like about shuckin' corn;
It sort o' does me good
To see the big ears sailin' along
And to hear the sound of wood
When they strike on the bump board and slither down
Into a golden heap,
And to watch the old mule lazin' along,
Head down and half asleep,
With a half-chewed cornstalk helt in his mouth,
And his ears laid back on his head.
And maybe cockin' his big brown eye
Around at the wagon bed.
And I like to hear the brittle stalks
Pop when the wagon passes,
And the meadow larks singin' their cheery song
In the frosted, sun-dried grasses.
The field's so big and lonesome like
And the air's so clear and still
You can hear a dog a barkin' for miles,
And on some far off hill
There's maybe a rooster a crowin' at noon,
And maybe a wild hawk screams,
But mostly there's only the thud of corn
And breakin' stalks, and your dreams.

Kenneth Kaufman.
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