

THE POET'S FIGHTING CHANCE

IT'S A SLIM ONE TO GATHER GOLD AS WELL AS GLORY.

But while he may not rank with the "best sellers" many publishers do not agree with Mr. Yard that modern verse is a drug in the market.

Has the present day poet a good fighting chance of becoming a best seller? Robert Sterling Yard in a recent magazine article asserts emphatically that he has not. He does not hesitate, moreover, to go a step further and declare that 90 per cent. of the volumes of poetry published during the last few years "have failed to return even the cash cost of production."

"This applies, of course," he adds, "only to poets now writing, the 'classics,' Whitier, Bryant and the rest, being constant and profitable sellers."

He then cites a few exceptions to the rule from the ranks of living writers, James Whitcomb Riley, Bliss Carman, Cole Younger, George Sylvester Viereck and others, although he explains that their books do not yield enough profit to be considered worth while from a purely commercial point of view.

An informal inquiry among New York publishers has elicited from several of them an admission that Mr. Yard's conclusions are in the main true.

"I have no objection to confessing that we do not consider the publication of the class of poetry you speak of at all desirable from a commercial point of view," said Frank Scott, president of the Century Company. "In fact we have not brought out within the last year a single collection of the writings of a maker of current verse. It is undeniably true that a man whose poems we are glad to print in our magazine and whose work receives equal consideration from the editors of other magazines whose literary standards are similar to ours is almost sure to be a losing proposition in book form. This fact does not, however, deter us from publishing now and then a collection of poems which seem to us essentially worthy to be preserved in permanent form. We are not driven to such a proceeding so often that when the occasion does arise we fear to take the necessary pecuniary risk."

"The poet of the moment are the work of the young men and their work is very uneven. I should say too that compared to our earlier poets they are not very prolific. That is, it would in many instances take practically all the verse written by a given poet to make a volume of proper size, and it must not be forgotten that many readers prefer selections to the 'complete works' even of the great singers of the ages. The fact that a man has written one or two poems of real merit is too often made the excuse for the publication in book form of a heterogeneous collection of feeble efforts on his part, a collection which he himself would upon attaining greater achievement or ripper judgment be only too anxious to suppress."

But I do not wish anything that I have said to be interpreted as an indication that the American public is indifferent to poetry, even the poetry of to-day. I do not believe that is the case.

Mr. Johnson, the editor of our magazine has even a stronger faith than I in the popular appreciation of good verse. He proves his faith by printing a good deal of verse. It isn't quite fair to say that because the public doesn't invest largely in collections of verse the verse isn't read. No one will deny that this is essentially the age of the short story. It is difficult for magazine editors to supply the demand for that form of literature. Yet when it comes to publishing volumes of short stories by authors of unquestioned popularity the publisher is confronted by a problem much like that presented by the collections of verse. In a word, collections of short stories with a few special exceptions are very bad sellers and are constantly explaining the unpleasant situation to disappointed authors. This state of affairs is undoubtedly due to the large number of magazines in circulation. When one can buy for 5 cents or for lesser sums down to 5 cents a collection of six or eight short stories of the kind he likes best to read, he can mention off hand at least thirty magazines of fiction sold on our streets—he hesitates about spending \$2.00 or more for the same number of stories by one author. It is not unreasonable to assume that the magazines supply also what is by no means a negligible demand for current verse."

Arthur Scribner said that the poetry situation had been summed up pretty accurately by Mr. Yard.

"We do not find much demand for volumes of verse," he explained, "although there are some authors whose popularity is sufficiently great to warrant the production of their collected poems at the publisher's expense either. The result is likely to be a feeling on our part that at best we have expended time and effort with no purpose, and it is seldom that the outcome is satisfactory to the author. Without going into the question of individual exceptions, several of whom can be readily called to mind, I would make a general statement to the effect that there is little or no demand for collections of verse by saying that there is a general exception in favor of religious and in particular religious anthologies. This demand is not noticeably strong in New York or other large cities of the East, but is well worth reckoning in the towns and country districts."

"I might mention also that the poems in the Brooks have a good and steady sale. I have received a very large order from the town of Bethlehem, and the demand was profitable. The copy-right of the poem has now run out, and its popularity is as great as ever. It is only being reproduced in a few forms suitable for gifts."

"I should also mention that Henry Holt and Company, that whatever might be said of the demand for verse, anthologies and other paying propositions."

"I have a series of short specialized anthologies," said the man who had been interviewed, "including poems by the great poets of the country, and a series of poems about the town, poems of historic interest, poems of the children and poems under other headings which are excellent sellers."

"I am now in press a big English and American anthology which will contain about 3,000 pages and will include 3,500 poems from about 1,100 poets. I lay the emphasis upon this book from the fact that it is the subject under review. It is not because the book is not merely a collection of acknowledged masterpieces, but because it contains a very large selection of the best of today. Alfred Noyes, Ernest Dowson, Lionel Lincoln, Francis Thompson, Madison Cawein, Arthur

THOMPSON, MADISON CAWEIN, ARTHUR FINGER, LAURENCE HOPE AND MANY OTHER CURRENT WRITERS ARE LARGELY REPRESENTED, AND WE FEEL THAT A SUFFICIENT PORTION OF THE BEST ADVANCE ORDERS FOR THE BOOK MAY BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE EMPHASIS WE HAVE BEEN LAYING UPON THE SPECIAL ATTENTION PAID TO THE LITERARY PUBLIC. THE PUBLIC MAY NOT BE SUFFICIENTLY INTERESTED IN MANY OF THESE TO WANT HIS COMPLETE WORKS. IN FACT MR. YARD IS ALTOGETHER RIGHT IN HIS STATEMENTS TO THE CONTRARY.

"I am sure, however, that there is a good lively interest in a carefully culled selection of the newest verse. Americans are in too much of a hurry to do their own writing. They prefer that poems, like plays, should first be tried on a small scale. In a way, then, the anthology of contemporary verse fulfills the mission of that night audience in a small city. It seems to me that there is a fairly large demand for humorous verse, such as Carolyn Wells's and Oliver Herford's."

Jefferson Jones, who is at the head of the editorial department of the John Lane Company, was inclined to take issue with Mr. Yard.

"I do not think," he said, "that there is any objection to my admitting that we make money from the publication of poetry. Since Mr. Lane is across the ocean I shall also venture to say what he probably would not say for himself, that when he considers a manuscript the thoughtfully worthy literary point of view is the question of profit and loss becomes a secondary consideration. I do not mean that Mr. Lane's literary feeling has turned the house into a philanthropic institution for the benefit of poets. As a matter of fact Mr. Lane has a very strong faith in the ultimate good sense of the public regarding all classes of literature, and his faith has been in a great measure justified."

"Mr. Lane discovered Richard Le Gallienne, and Richard Le Gallienne's poetry came to a profit. So does the poetry of William Watson and that of Stephen Phillips. There is a steady sale for the verse of Thomas Day, a Philadelphian who writes in Italian dialect extremely well. India's Love Lyrics, by Laurence Hope, is an excellent seller. We are just issuing a reprint of 'The City of the Soul,' by Lord Alfred Douglas, in response to a steady demand on the part of the public."

"I do not deny that there is an occasional loss on volumes of verse published by Henry Holt and Company, for that matter, has to stand an occasional loss in every class of books. Even fiction is not inevitably profitable. We feel here that there is on the part of the American public a sufficiently strong demand for the best class of current verse to make it worth our while to publish it, both from the point of view of list value and from that of business and of it."

"The credit on poetry is practically never large. Mr. Lane handles it chiefly because he likes it, but he really hasn't suffered much loss because of it. In the long run he has come out well all right."

"He isn't a bit afraid to try new people. We have now in press a first book of poems by Benjamin Law. It is called 'The Sailor Who Has Sailed.' The poems came to us highly recommended by another publisher. We are glad he sent them to us. I may mention that we published the collected poems of Robert Cameron, which chance to include 'The Rosary.'"

"We are bringing out this fall a narrative poem by May Earle, a new English writer, entitled 'Juana of Castile,' a volume by Francis Coult, and Gilbert Chesterton's 'Ballad of the White Horse,' so you see we are not afraid of poetry."

Mitchell Kennerly also believes in poetry as it is written to-day. He publishes the verse of Arthur Stringer, Charles Hanson Towne, Bliss Carman, Francis Adams, John Davidson, Theodosia Garrison, Ferdinand Pinney Earle and Marjorie Rice, and he maintains that it is profitable, although it wouldn't make any one very rich. Mr. Kennerly says he doesn't believe in selling his imprint. If poetry is poetry he is willing to assume the financial risks of publication, provided the author is amenable to reason regarding deletion, the makeup of the book, illustration, etc. Now if Shaemas O Sheel, for instance, had been willing to do so, Mr. O Sheel is perfectly quotable on this point in his own person, for he has recently hung out a sign reading in part, 'Shaemas O Sheel, Publisher of Books in Good Taste.'"

Mr. O Sheel went into the publishing business for the purpose of introducing to the reading public a collection of poems of which he is the author. 'The Blossomy Bough' is now on his catalogue. Mr. O Sheel says he believes firmly in the publication of volumes of verse.

"It is possible," he concluded, "to create an appetite for the best in literature."

PATRON SAINT OF JOURNALISTS.

From the Manchester Guardian.

It will be news to many journalists to learn that they have an officially selected patron saint. This IX, at the request of a number of Continental journalists, issued a decree on the point. He recommended journalists to seek the help of St. Francis de Sales, whose body has just lately been transferred, with great pomp and amid popular rejoicing, to a new church at Amboise, in Savoy, his native place. The choice, our contemporary thinks, was an apt one, for St. Francis was a man of letters. His famous work, 'The Devout Life,' is still popular, and he is the patron saint of the touch with which it is written and the unerring journalistic instinct of one may put it in so writing of the work of a saint with which he compels attention to serious questions by the skillful use of anecdote and illustration.

RUSKIN AS A GROCER.

From the London Chronicle.

Ruskin was once a grocer. In 1874 he opened a shop in Paddington street, Notting Hill, in order, as he announced, "to supply the poor with pure tea in packets as small as they choose to buy, without making a profit, with great pains, large orders being, of course, equally acceptable from anybody who cares to promote honest dealing." The shop did not attract.

Ruskin complained in 'Fors Clavigera' that the public, like the grocer, had no sense of the brilliant lighted and eloquently tickled, and as I resolutely refuse to compete with my neighboring tradesmen either in gas or rhetoric, the patient subdivision of my parcels passes little recognized as an advantage of my 'economical public.'"

MISS BRADDON'S FIRST NOVEL.

From the Pall Mall Gazette.

Mrs. John Maxwell, so much better known to readers of fiction as Miss Braddon, has recently celebrated her birthday. With more than half a hundred novels to her credit Miss Braddon cannot be blamed if she prefers to take life easily, and, in Thackeray's phrase, to 'lay the weary pen aside.' It was while performing at a theatre in Hull that she discovered that neither the time nor the place were for a novelist. Her first novel, 'Three Times Dead,' before it was published the publisher, involved in difficulty, had passed on the sheets to another man. There was talk of destroying the ' rubbish,' as it was called, and this was done. One can imagine the chagrin of the second publisher when Miss Braddon sprang into popularity and he found that he had foolishly destroyed the first effort, that might have been a gold mine to him.

AN AUSTRALIAN NOVELIST.

From the London Chronicle.

Bold Haddock, the author of the novelist, recently celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday in Melbourne. He cannot walk without a crutch, but is bright and vivacious. He laughingly told an interviewer that he was kicked into literature. In 1865 he was a squatter in the west of Victoria, and one day he received a kick from a horse. It laid him up for some time, and to while away the tedious hours he took up a pen, wrote a sketch called 'A Kangaroo Bush,' and sent it to the 'Colonial Magazine.' It was accepted and published and so he was launched on a literary career.

AUTHOR WHO LOVES HER WORK

MISS MARIE VAN VORST ACTIVE IN THE LITERARY WORLD.

In Ten Years She Has Written Fourteen Novels. Has Investigated the Hardships of Women and Children in Factories and Has Travelled Much.

"I would rather be an old fashioned woman," said Marie Van Vorst at the Plaza Hotel one day last week, "and write of love and the things that appeal to womanly women and manly men than make \$1,000,000 a year by trading in the whims of a day."

Daintily, pleasingly gowned, Miss Van Vorst furnished an interesting study while she talked of her work and of the things she believes are particularly worth while. The author of 'The Girl From His Town,' 'The Sentimental Adventures of Jimmy Bulstrode' and a dozen other books, that have, whether Miss Van Vorst liked it or not, taken place with best sellers, is somewhere between youth and middle age. Her black hair shades into gray at the temples. Her complexion is as pink as a schoolgirl's. Her dark eyes sparkle.

It is not often that Miss Van Vorst is to be found in New York, or for that matter anywhere on this side of the world. Her home is in Paris, 4 Place du Palais Bourbon, and because she loves the city and does her best work there she seldom visits the United States. But about once in two years it becomes necessary for her to have a heart to heart talk with her publishers, which means a trip to this side. At such times she receives her friends and is the recipient of more social invitations than she has time to accept.

"I have no doubt," she said, "that I work as hard as any author anywhere. Within ten years I have written fourteen novels and very many magazine articles and short stories. But I like work. I like to be able to earn a living and a little more by doing what one likes best to do. They say there is much money in peddling to certain theories of the day; by writing queer novels and advocating violent theories. There may be, but I prefer to write of love and sociological problems. I am a woman of the old school."

Although she returns to this city seldom more than once in two years, Miss Van Vorst is no stranger to New Yorkers. She was born here. Her father was Supreme Court Justice Hooper C. Van Vorst. It was in this city that Miss Van Vorst began to write. She spoke of her first essay at literature.

"It was, I think, about eighteen years ago," she said, "that I wrote a little story which I called 'Rawlins,' and sent it to THE SUN. It was accepted, and the editor received from THE SUN encouraged me so much that I made up my mind to continue and to do bigger things. Really, I have never forgotten that little story of appreciation and I have loved THE SUN since that day."

"My sister-in-law, Bessie Van Vorst, with whom I am sometimes confused, became interested years ago in the plight of women that toil in mills and in the dreadful injustices of child labor. We decided to see for ourselves, so we worked in cotton mills and shoe factories, bending over looms and tables in Columbia, S. C., and Lynn, Mass., and acquiring first hand and indisputable evidence of the evils we had suspected."

"The result of our study was 'The Woman Who Toils,' which was published in 1903. President Roosevelt wrote the introduction for it. The book treated of a subject which is still of burning importance. It attempted to show how thousands of women were deprived of the opportunity of becoming mothers because of the grinding labor to which oppressive conditions subjected them."

"Another result too of the investigation we made was the passing of laws against child labor in some of the Southern States, but I fear that these laws are not, are not, enforced. They were not popular with the people, it seemed. I know that when pages of my book were read before the South Carolina Legislature, the members of the legislature, letters which warned me not to return to South Carolina."

"I said that sometimes people confused my sister-in-law with me. This month in the 'Cosmopolitan Magazine' there is a story by Bessie Van Vorst which bears my name as author. That is too bad, very unfair to my sister-in-law, who is an excellent and a hard worker. I mention this because I would like very much to have people know that the excellent story is the work of Bessie Van Vorst."

"Novels have not been all of Miss Van Vorst's work that has attracted attention widely. At the request of the Harpers she wrote a series of articles entitled 'The Rivers of the Old World,' which she traced to their sources, the Tiber, the Danube and the Seine and travelled a long way toward the origin of the Nile. All these journeys she was unaccompanied, save for guides, and she had adventures that gave her plenty of thrills."

In tracing the source of the Tiber she climbed to a point in the Apennines where no woman had ever gone in winter. In retracing the course of the Danube she wandered in a disturbed country inhabited by half civilized people. In the last adventure she met and became a warm friend of the Queen of Rumania, Carmen Silvia, the poet.

The Queen entertained her for several days. They talked of literature and of sociological matters. She was particularly interested in American women. She was astonished at their extravagance, their love of dress and show. "Why, have you two hats," she said to Miss Van Vorst, "and two hats are enough for any woman."

In 1908, when she went to Egypt to study the Nile, she was the guest of the Egyptian Government. Sir Reginald Wingate, the British Consul-General, and Sir John Sirdar, entertained her. She visited Khartoum and listened to stories of Gordon and of his defeat and death at the hands of the tribesmen.

The next year she followed the Seine leisurely, making notes for her article on that historic waterway. And all the while she was at work on her novels. She made notes of rough drafts whenever she happened to be in hotel rooms on steamers in the desert.

"Work is so much fun," said Miss Van Vorst. Although she has received in recent years many invitations to lecture in this country, she was unwilling to accept them; but next winter she will come to the United States to give a course of lectures. Her first will be in Indianapolis.

"I hope," she said, "that I shall be successful. I do not like to fail at anything."

MEMORIAL TO TOM MOORE.

From the Pall Mall Gazette.

A literary shrine sacred to Tom Moore is the Vale of Avoca, situated in Wicklow, that county which is popularly described the garden of Ireland. It is now proposed to erect a memorial there to the poet, and as the outcome of a public meeting, the promoters of it consider that a fitting inscription on the vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet would be very appropriate.

It was while at Avoca that Moore wrote some of his best known melodies. Nature herself had supplied him quite recently a memorial of the bard in the form of a tree. "Tom Moore's tree," under whose shade he did most of his writing. A remnant of it only now survives owing to the desire of tourists to carry away portions of it as souvenirs of the poet of all circles and the idol of his own.

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AT ALL BOOKSELLERS

FOR AMHERST GRADUATES.

First Number of the New College Quarterly Magazine Issued.

The first number of the Amherst Graduate Quarterly has just been issued. It contains a brief and authentic record of college sports, articles of importance and general interest by Amherst men prominent in many fields, memoirs of distinguished alumni and critical reviews of the most important literary work of Amherst men.

Prof. John Franklin Genung, the head of the English department, is editor in chief, and the other editors are John M. Tyler, professor of biology; Walter F. Willcox, professor of political economy and statistics at Cornell University and a former United States Census Bureau statistician; William S. Rosseter, treasurer of the Rumford Press at Concord, N. H.; H. A. Cushing, formerly dean of the Columbia law school, and Foster W. Stearns, the executive committee is composed of Henry P. Kendall, Robert W. Maynard and Ernest M. Whitecomb.

"Our ninety-year-old college has never been given to self-exploitation," says one of the editorial writers, "but the very reverberation of educational theories and criticisms all around us is bringing the whole matter of college education into court and bidding it give an account of itself. Amherst cannot well evade her part in this duty, if only for her own sake."

And so, the writer goes on to say, the Quarterly is to put in writing the educational ideals "drawn from the inner consciousness" of Amherst men. It is to represent "the essential meaning, the real inwardness of Amherst, and this not so much by laboriously defining it, as if we were not sure of ourselves, as by taking it for granted and living up to it."

This number contains an article by Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, the head of the philosophy department at Columbia, on "The Enterprise of Learning," in which he contends that education is not "a quality or an ornament but an enterprise to make men wise and to promote their intelligence. There is a mental education, by President Harriett, the college on Dr. Edward Hitchcock, "the grand old man of Amherst" and a pioneer in physical education at American colleges. There is also a poem, "Walden," in his memory by John Erskine, formerly professor of literature at Amherst and who is now a member of the English department at Columbia. Mr. Erskine says of "Old Doc":

He died a youthful man at last in what, as youthful evermore, So high of faith, so firm of will, So hothead's heart learns hope of him, Whose heart was younger still.

An "In Memoriam" of Edward Payson Crowell, former professor of Latin at Amherst, by Anson D. Morse, emeritus professor of history, introduces a paper which Prof. Crowell wrote for the Quarterly shortly before he died.

Other articles are contributed by John M. Tyler and the department of government, the athletic retrospect and outlook are discussed by Paul C. Phillips and Richard F. Nelligan, both of the physical education department. Under the heading of "History" are introduced by Preserved Smith, professor of religious history at the Meadville (Pa.) Theological School; Edward Dickenson, Eugene Lynch, professor of theology at the Bangor (Me.) Theological Seminary; William Chancelor, superintendent of Schools at Norwalk, Conn., and a lecturer on school administration in Chicago University; Emory Pottle, editor of 'Good Housekeeping'; Stephen Norton, John T. Stone, D. D., and Walter A. Dyer, editor of 'Country Life in America,' are reviewed.

Immigration as a Stimulus.

In the second volume of "The American People: A Study in National Psychology," one of the books on Houghton Mifflin Company's list this autumn, A. Maurice Low argues that the fear of injury done by the immigrant is fallacious. Instead of the immigrant's dragging down the native, says Mr. Low, he is the lever by which the native is raised in the social scale. Instead of the immigrant's competing with the native by underbidding him in the labor market the immigrant does work that the native accords, which forces the native to seek work requiring greater ability and commanding higher remuneration.

The effect of immigration, therefore, has been to degrade the American but to stimulate him to better things, and Mr. Low, who rests his case on historical facts, shows that this has been the effect of immigration in this country since the first great influx of the Irish early in the last century.

MARY MIDTHORNE

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