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The Connecticut College Quarterly

May, 1927



CONNECTICUT COLLEGE
NEW LONDON, CONN.

CONTENTS

Over Cups of Tea.....page 7
Joyce Freston '29

In the Manner of Others.....page 8
Henrietta L. Owens '28

Parents and Daughters.....page 10
Elizabeth Utley '29

Mrs. Lilypage 12
Mary deC. Vernon '29

Three Poems.....page 14
Louise Towne '28

Everlasting Light.....page 15
Dorothy Pasnik '28

Poemspage 17
Louise Wall '27

Where There Is Fog.....page 21
Audrey Jackson '29

Three Poems From a Notebook.....page 19
Mary deC. Vernon '29

Trainspage 21
Dorothy Davenport '28

Four Masterpieces.....page 23
Margaret Carns '29

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THE CONNECTICUT COLLEGE QUARTERLY

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Number 2

OVER CUPS OF TEA

*"I saw the immortal moment lie
And lived from laugh to laugh, I too
When you were there—and you—and you."*

R. B.

OVER cups of tea flow the superficialities of conversation. The taking of a teacup seems the putting off of simple things, and those whose simplicity is too deep sit silent. Yet, beneath the glitter of trivialities, each person knows reality lurks, not to be ignored for long.

Reality—even over cups of tea! The fragrant lemony tea in fragile cream cups, the silver tea set, dishes of fluted and frosted glass piled with flaky white sandwiches and miniature colored cakes, all stood upon the dark tea-wagon with its glass top and its air of well camouflaged utility. A tall austere pitcher of water with pieces of ice tinkling against the sides was upon the slim Sheraton table. A great fat bowl of roses lay in its shadow and mingled with the scent of the steaming tea. Upon the massive furniture against the wall, shadows stirred uneasily, cast by a restless curtain in the summer breeze. Shadows skulked about the corners, hid beside the book-cases and beneath the lifted cover of the grand piano, but the sun streamed through three broad windows and made a great pool of sunlight upon the shining oak floor and the wine-dipped Oriental rugs. The sunlight seemed as fragrant as the golden brown cup of tea, as fluid and as fair, as it touched the books upon the center table—the silver piled upon the tray, and the crisp golden waves of your hair.

You were there—the familiar golden brown waves of hair, the wide brow,

and that deep impenetrable silence broken only by a platitude. And You were there, with ruddy golden hair, sleek as a newly washed kitten and gleaming with the splendor and life and magnificence of your own radiant personality. Your teacup was a battle ground. Over it you sparred, the duelist in the conversation of the hour, the duelist with the newest quip, the right remark. And You were there, taciturn and morose, cynical and discontented. Your dark hair lay in rebellious locks upon a high mounded forehead. Your very slump against the white mantlepice spoke your dejection. Your lift of eyebrow expressed your contempt of Man. Your terse remarks betrayed your search—your never-ending search for an "Ultima Thule" of happiness beyond our feeble comprehension. And You were there, blundering, mild and kindly. Your voice flowed on, little varied in tone, as your eyes looked over your glasses in gentleness and sympathy. For You the every day had assumed a great guise; for You the tiniest detail hid the mystery of Life and its inescapable enchantment. And You were there, queen at the tea-table, serene and cool. You were the center, the life of this great room filled with darkly gleaming mahogany, old bits of embroidery, books, and sunlight. You were the weaver of these discordant elements into a pleasant flow of tea time talk. Upon your white halo of hair and sharp patrician features, a long ray of sunlight lay as though precisely planned. It was but another pattern in the whimsical design of piece to piece—block to block—to make an Afternoon Tea.

The amber tea flowed soothingly from the fat "tummied" silver pot—the ice tinkled in the pitcher—and the roses and the lemon and the tea leaves filled the room with sweetness and spice. The curtains moved against the window and the sun streamed in upon the floor. Higher and higher rose the mound of trivialities while inwardly our six souls laughed—save you—against the mantlepice—yours might have wept. Higher and higher piled the pyramid of stupidities while lower and lower sank the tide of tea and the mounds of cake and sandwiches. But under the superficialities of conversation lurked reality, even over cups of tea.

IN THE MANNER OF OTHERS

REALISM IN THE MANNER OF CARL SANDBURG

The Student Contemplates Her "D" for the Semester's Work

I shall cry God to give me a cross-eyed husband.
 I shall ask for twenty-a-month and no income.
 I shall take the last and the worst.
 I shall spend my life in wear-ever ground-
 grippers with rubber heels, and in a belt-backed
 raincoat will I shiver and sob.
 And yet—of all "and yets" this is the steel sturdiest—

I shall keep one thought higher than all else; there is
the black of a storm-stunned night sky
in it; it lives longer than crossed-eyes and
ground-grippers.

The crossed-eyes will wither themselves straight
into dust in a deep hole put there with a shovel,
or a well-worn house slipper may be
consigned to the filthy ignominy of the
garbage-can—and yet—“and yet”—

There is one black heap of ashes left after all, and none
of the shrieking winds that blow the filth
piles about and none of the zooming rains
that cleave into the earth know how to reach
this blackened heap of reality.

I cry God to give me a cross-eyed husband, an empty larder or a creaking
boot.

I who have flunked the snap-easiest, I ask God for the last and worst.

REALISM IN THE MANNER OF ONE OR OUR LADY LYRICISTS,
SUCH AS SARA TEASDALE

APRIL MUSING

The hilltop winds of April
Trip up the hilltop street,
But there's no joy within my heart,
No tripping in my feet.

The hilltop songs of April
Laugh through each hilltop lane
But I am cold to laughing lips
And will not sing again.

The hilltop games of April
Engage my pen . . . But oh,
Why should I give my theme to him
Who flunked me long ago . . . ?

I GO TO SLEEP

(IN THE MANNER OF “H. D.”)

The light glares into me
I am dazed—
My pen rolls onto the wooden floor—

I am found out—consigned.
 A slight sigh shakes the book-leaves—
 my thoughts are spent
 as the essence of professional wisdom
 before me.
 My thoughts wrench me,
 I tremble in their maelstrom.
 I am disintegrated in its force.
 I am scattered like
 the long, learned words of the professor.

The caustic words from his lips
 are burning in their brains—
 their minds crack with heat,
 as summer air crackles
 with stifling lifelessness:
 yet far beyond the classroom
 with stiff chairs and cramped limbs
 I think of a room
 and a long soft bed.
 The bed is stretched out on its legs
 in an accommodating floor-space.

O bed, you are soft
 on my weary body;
 while I drowse in the class-room
 get ready
 to have me come.

PARENTS AND DAUGHTERS

ALL that President MacCracken of Vassar says about parents and daughters in the March *Harpers Monthly* is very true—so far as it goes. His trouble is that he is necessarily limited in space and source. Unable to get his material first hand, he must rely on facts as they come to him. Thus he is confined to the difficulties of certain wealthy girls who are inevitably to become social butterflies, or league officers. I admit they have their handicaps—and leave them to Dr. MacCracken. Far more important than these, to my mind, are those college daughters destined to influence the masses in a most unfortunate way. Knowledge of these girls can be gotten only from their homes. A week-end with one of them is illuminating. Usually their dangerous bitterness, cynicism, is the result of one or more of three things: a preoccupied family, an incongenial family, uncertainty or worry.

In the preoccupied family, there is no common ground on which it may

assemble. Meals are irregularly served and attended, there are no common interests, no discussions. There is no community life, no time for affection. The family members separate regularly to read, or study, or go out. The parents are too preoccupied ever to guide the children: the father scrambling for money, the mother keeping house in a racking way which excludes system and co-operation. One of the most disillusioning things I have ever heard was a conversation in one of these families. The small daughter charged into the living-room with an harrassed look on her face. "Mother, do you believe in God?" Silence, and then "Hell, no!" said the eldest daughter, and the child was told to run off and play. They were not depraved. They were an average middle class family in which discussion is taboo. I saw what was being done to the small child, guessed the way in which she would have to learn, and ceased to wonder at her embittered, disillusioned sister who had also learned by trial and error. She is going to college; she intends to teach. She has been taught neither sympathy nor understanding. Every legitimate instinct in her has been inhibited, all her gropings thwarted by unfeelingness, ridicule. And that training is insurmountable.

Because it combines the faults of the preoccupied family with others of its own, the incongenial family goes even a step lower in the scale of families. It is not only unsocial it is positively hostile. In it you find either a subtly unpleasant undercurrent, or frank animosity. It is characterized by disagreeable bickering, nagging. Each member is afraid that he is going to be "done," is chary of lending his possessions without barter or bargain. The lack of affection leads to bitter crimination, vulgar argument. Father, mother, children are constantly at variance. Mere preoccupation in a family is nothing beside the degradation of this awful situation. The children insist on going to college, demanding it as their right. There they are instantly disliked for their noisiness, their moods, their disagreements, their lack of emotional control. Their fixed habit of combativeness follows them through life: while they may get along by sheer force, they never form a valuable part of society.

And with this state of family affairs is likely to go uncertainty, worry. The children are constantly told they discredit the family, they must save, their father may not be able to pay their next tuition, he has no idea where the next money is to come from. Preyed upon by doubts, the children are unable to work. They are excluded from the pleasures of their schoolmates with a casual "Oh, she can't go. She never can afford anything. My father says her father has no go." In the family are held solemn conferences so that the children may have an "intelligent conception of reality, may share the responsibility" until the poor child lives in constant terror as though swords dangled over her, pistols pointed from all sides, a trap threatened beneath her.

"None or too much" is the family blanket rule until finally it smothers them. The counter argument is, of course, that all of these hardships teach the child independence. At what a cost! From these three training-fields emerge embittered remnants, battered, warped, repressed beyond recogni-

tion. I cannot think these people scarred with inhibition, neglect, worry, are more fortunate than those poor girls of whom Dr. MacCracken speaks as having suffered shelter and care. Anyone prefers a bowl to its pieces. The pampered pet merely needs polishing, but the other is a mass of fragments. President MacCracken is right; the family as an institution needs renovating. The hopeless thing is that it has to do its own reforming, and yet the future generation is being reared to carry on "as you were."

MRS. LILY

WHERE the street ended its rambles and dived headlong into the sea, there lived "Mrs. Lily". Even when her four sons were full grown, she was still an erect, powerfully built woman. The swift Norwegian blood in her veins did not slow its course to suit old age; her great knot of yellow hair did not surrender its lustre. Her large heroically modeled arms were roughed by the washing of clothes, and were tanned by the breeze from the sea. Her eyes, too, had something of the sea in them.

On the first spring day of the year, Mrs. Lily always sought the sandy mold of her garden-beds. Sinking on her knees with her blue calico dress billowing around her, she used to plunge her trowel deep into the thawing earth. Her body would ripple with the strength of a Viking, and her great heavy locks of yellow hair would blow about her and would tangle in the leafless rose bushes. By mid-summer, hollyhocks and geraniums would be thickly growing about the weather-beaten clapboards of her cottage. Delphiniums, mignonette and roses would be in a riot of bloom and color. There was no garden for miles about that could equal Mrs. Lily's in sheer beauty. The neatness of her flower-bordered lawn was almost a passion with her.

Never-ceasing labor will cause as much gossip as laziness; Mrs. Lily's neighbors fretted over her zealous care of her garden. In time their comments grew to be sharp, spiteful. One day the climax was reached when a neighbor of Mrs. Lily's accosted her.

"Good-morning," said Mrs. Lily in her calm, resonant voice, and continued turning up the earth with strong twists of her firm, brown wrist.

"Mrs. Lily," began her neighbor without returning the salutation, "it ain't no secret why you work so hard. But you'll kill yourself for a dream that ain't comin' true. Take my word for it, he ain't comin' back to you—after all these years!"

With a slight trembling of her body, Mrs. Lily settled back on her heels. The trowel hung listlessly in her hand, and her blue eyes had a look of the sea in them.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Lily, "you are right." And again she bent to her work at loosening the earth about a rosebush. With the same care as before, she plied her trowel, with the same tautness of her body she bent above the

young green things which were beginning to pierce through the garden-bed. The salt sea breeze curled her yellow hair about the rose bushes, and picked up the hem of her blue calico dress. With a puzzled look, almost one of anger, her neighbor turned away, and left Mrs. Lily to her gardening.

Within her house, Mrs. Lily proceeded with the same care she exerted on her flowers. She kept her rooms immaculate, and served carefully cooked meals three times a day to her strapping sons. When she was with her children and moving about her house, she seemed almost happy in her tragic way. Her great sons barely spoke to her, and they seemed to accept her silent massiveness with an unworded understanding. When she did speak, it was almost always in one particular vein.

"John," she would say, "I worked in the garden this morning. It'll please your father to see it so neat when he comes back."

"Yes, Ma." The conversation was ended. Through the rest of the meal, Mrs. Lily would move about the table waiting thoughtfully on her sons. Every day it was the same, every day she cooked huge dishes of food and set them before these brawny men, these men who were the children of her romance.

The youngest of the sons, Bim, was the only one ever to disturb the monotony. It was he who dared to confront his mother. He had been silent for days until Mrs. Lily was finally moved to question him.

"Bim, lad, what would you say?"

"Ma, I ain't comin' home to-night—nor no more."

His mother looked at him, and her great rounded chin was calm. But the look of the sea was in her eyes, and the thick yellow strands of her hair trailed in the breeze which came through the vine-covered door. At sight of his mother, Bim flushed and turned on his heel. His voice shook when he spoke.

"I got to get away, Ma—from all this." And he made a sweeping gesture with his arm.

"Bim," said Mrs. Lily, and her voice was firm, "I had hoped to have your father see what a fine proud son he had."

"Father!" sobbed Bim, "Father! I ain't had no father for seven years. He never come back, did he? It's 'father' this and 'father' that. Everyone but you knows he's drowned—or that he just ain't comin' back."

Mrs. Lily put out no comforting or pleading hand. Her full red lips trembled open, and worded her sentence thoughtfully.

"Perhaps," she said, "you are right."

And she let Bim go from her with never a word, and her three sons looked at her and marveled at her quietness of soul.

"Oh, God!" cried John, "I know what's in her mind. Ain't I the oldest? She's thinking, 'What can I tell his father when he comes back and there ain't no Bim here?' She's driving us all crazy with her 'father' this and 'father' that. You'd think he *was* comin' back to her."

Mrs. Lily never knew what her sons and neighbors said about her. Or, if

she did know, it was with indifference that she sensed the gossip about her. She apparently lived her life serenely, content with gardening, with washing great piles of tarry clothes, and with serving three meals a day to her four blond sons. She seldom greeted anyone, but when she did speak her words were courteous and cheery enough. Her neighbors regarded her with a kind of awe, and used to grow silent before the look of the sea that was in her eyes. The children were almost afraid of her, and they whispered that she visited the rocky cliffs at night.

Children often come very near the truth; in the midnight hours, Mrs. Lily did seek the ledges above the heavy lashings of the sea. On some jagged promontory, she would sit down, and with her legs widespread, would dig her elbow into her knee, her strong browned hand cupping her rounded chin. In the moonlight, her knotted hair would gleam with a pale radiance. To a man sitting close, her eyes would have looked like deep purple depths, broad and quiet. Her bold strong figure was like the carved figurehead on some ancient Norse galley. Beneath her the waters lashed at the prow of the down-diving rocks, and the spume would fall over her motionless body.

"He is coming back," the waves would whisper to her. "He is coming back—coming back—coming back."

And the ebb and flow nightly sobbed out its great life as Mrs. Lily sat listening to a listening sea.

THREE POEMS

A PROPHECY

We talked that night about so many things,
 And yet so many things were left unsaid;
 There were so many thoughts we left for dead
 That now come back to haunt us. Fate flings
 At us what we had thought to leave behind.
 You said you loved me, and the rest was naught.
 Was naught? Now we can see how we were caught:
 We failed to see what mattered was the mind.

You said you loved me, and we soon forgot
 The rest. (The rest that was to be the whole
 In years to come.) In all those years my mind
 Has called unto your mind. The two have not
 Been one. Nor ever can. And when my soul
 Calls unto you, you grope, but you are blind.

CLOUDS

If I could wrap my wishes

In clouds of silvery white,
 And send them softly drifting
 Into the dusky night,
 And one should daintily hover
 Betwixt the moon and you,
 Would you see, and understanding,
 Cause that wish to come true?

NEXT !

You offer me your heart;
 I'd fain give mine to you,
 But since another has it now,
 Why, what am I to do?

If you would wait a month,
 Or maybe even two,
 By then I'd have it back again,
 And pass it on to you.

EVERLASTING NIGHT

IT was the sunset hour. The red-gold of the sky, in which one lone silvery point gleamed like a jewel, boded a night filled with myriad stars. The glow cast a spell of warm content, a shining radiance, into the eyes of those marching toward their destination, the house of prayer.

They had but recently finished their evening meal, these Israelites, the last meal of which they could partake until twenty-four hours had past. For it was the evening of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement: on that day all is fasting and prayer.

The street up which they passed was a narrow one. Houses, shabby, paintless, weather-beaten, lined its treeless length. Curious eyes stared at these foreigners filing by, eyes of unsympathetic faces in which intolerance and ridicule were plainly discernible. An old man blinked feebly at those who passed his door.

Slowly they walked toward the Synagogue, as if loath to leave the glory of the dying day. Already many of the men and boys had hurried ahead to begin the services. The women and girls followed more leisurely. Then they, too, disappeared into the sanctuary.

I drew nearer the small, brown, wooden building. Its windows were unprepossessing, some of them far from clean. The fence that surrounded it was broken in places where children had torn away half-loose pickets to play on the grass enclosed on either side. The small wooden star at the top of the building rose proudly toward the heavens. As I drew closer, the

sound of the congregation praying half-aloud floated toward me from the open windows. A crowd of children of motley ages swarmed before the doorway. I almost fell over a little tot stumbling along as it clung to the hand of an older sister.

I entered the place of worship. The small hall was dark after the glow of the sunset. I climbed the stairs, narrow squeaky ones, for I needs must join the crowd of women, whose place is in the gallery. According to ancient custom, men only can sit downstairs.

At the top of the steep flight of stairs I paused to regain my breath. The last rays of the sun struck the colored glass at the back of the Synagogue, sending shafts of red, orange, and blue down toward the Ark. In the mystic glow the faces of the people took on a hallowed radiance. The white dresses of the women added a note of purity to the scene and symbolized complete abnegation of self and worldly cares. The shawls upon their heads seemed like a touch of the East.

I walked to the balcony rail and gazed down. At the far end of the room was the ever burning light, guarding forever the dwelling place of the Most High. And above it were the Tablets, with the hands of the Cohens outstretched above them. The Safe Torah was open. On red velvet rested the books of the law—long scrolls that were covered with white satin and hung with gold and silver ornaments and minute bells.

The congregation had risen as the doors of the Ark were opened, and the Rabbi had stepped up to hand the sacred scrolls to the elders of the Synagogue. One by one he entrusted the books of the law to grave, grey-bearded patriarchs, who solemnly proceeded in single file down one aisle and round the other until they came to the place in the center of the building which served as a pulpit. As they proceeded in their stately march, eager youths kissed their Talises, then reached out to touch the holy books before raising the silken cords to their lips once more.

The Cantor and choir of boys' voices break out into Kol Nidra, the most beautiful, the most sad, the most sacred song of praise to Him in whose Hand lies the power of Life and Death, destruction and redemption. A woman's sob breaks the stillness. Another follows. The old and the young are praying for Life, are praying that they and their dear ones be written in the Book of Life. Familiar faces, here a year ago, are now under the sod: who of these will next be called by the Most High? Among the older women sob follows sob. The men call, "Sh—sh": prayer goes on.

The candles now flicker brighter. Dark shadows crouch in musty corners. Black, grotesque figures move on the bare walls. The evening service is over. Slowly, solemnly, the worshipers file from the Synagogue. An undertone of subdued talk is heard. The crowd of figures, once outside the building, disband and go their separate ways. They go to rest, for early on the morrow they must again be in the Synagogue for all-day prayer.

I linger in the entry way. High above the altar burns the everlasting flame: the light of Israel that never fails.

"WHAT ARE THE SHIPS?"

What are the ships?
They lie like smooth flags
Gently curved at bow and stern.
Are they smiles
Touching a worn grey face?
There is no water, there is no sky
Only the vague mystery of ships.

"TREES, TO ME"

And I watched the smoke drift slowly through the pine branches
Like tears through beautiful eyelashes
It made me think
That pines were, somehow, nearer God than other trees
They are Christian soldiers.
Apple trees are friendly, they chuckle to themselves.
Willow trees are graceful and piteous
Palm trees are wild and wanton, primitive and shameless
But pine trees give you peace. They are prayers.

"THREE IMPRESSIONS"

Light of evening
Brushes a still pool to amber
Under a thin fall of autumn leaves
Warm wind, skirting the sapens
Pierrette, her hair tangled with laughter.

Puck sitting under a toadstool
Winking at the stars
Soon he will carry it away
To tap on the windows
Of little boys asleep.

The quick flash of a raven's wing
Across the magnificence of a black and red sunset
A flute played while the smoke of the fire seeks the cold stars
An Indian bow, tall and graceful.
So
Are you.

WHERE THERE IS FOG

THE evening mist was seeping up over the meadows like steam from a vast kettle. There was nothing sinister or threatening in its vague shadows. Rather, it was a kindly fog, enveloping in its fleecy gray folds the gaunt unpainted little farmhouses and robbing them of their daytime starkness and squalor until their mellowed outline blended in with the soft gray atmosphere. Everywhere that silent haze—except where tiny squares of yellow light, flashing out in the fog, told the story of a happy family at its evening meal, or perhaps, at prayers.

The day's labor done, evening stillness descended upon the farm country. On the red clay roads which stretched away from the country hamlet, like spokes in an enormous wheel, there was almost no sign of activity. Upon a single muddy one, alone could be heard the heavy creaking of a solitary farmwagon and the steady plodding of its drayhorses. And through the mist, above the noise of the creaking wheels, sifted the droning voice of the old man perched high up on the wagon seat.

He was sitting slouched a little forward, a perfect silhouette against the gray sky. An old brown hat slid away to the back of his head revealing a contented, yet pathetically childlike expression on a face old and seamed. His mackintosh, bought many years before for its warmth and wearing-qualities, had fulfilled its promise of earlier years. He had sunk his face somewhat into the stiff folds of it about his neck, as if to ward off those night vapors about him. Sturdy hip boots and trousers of an unknown color completed his costume. Only his hands which held the reins so tightly were without covering. They too were old and crooked with rheumatism, yet withal, they had a certain strength born of years of plowing and haying and pitching.

At first, in the gray evening light, the old man seemed alone, yet in a far-distant part of the wagon, the slumping figure of a small boy was barely discernible. Hardly an attractive boy. His face was too sullen for that. An indifference and nonchalance unsuited to one of his age, made him scarcely conscious of the old man's monologue. In fact, it almost seemed that the boy wished to convey to the old man that he was conferring on him a certain favor by being there at all in the bouncing wagon.

At sundown the old man had set out from the farmhouse—alone. "And don't come back 'til you can bring Joey with you," his wife had cried out after him from the doorway. The old man was used to such things now; Joey had begun running away from home when he was only a tiny lad—four and a half years old the first time. They had not found him for three days, then, when he lay in the musty hay and munched dry crusts of bread. Joey was twelve now, and bright, so the school teacher had said. Only he was not like the other children who were content enough to plow and hay and pitch with their father. Joey could almost always be found, as he had been tonight, somewhere on the road to Melrose, that hub for the red clay

spokes. Sometimes he would be sitting in the tall grass along the roadside, idly chewing a blade of grass. More often he would be in the hamlet itself, hanging about the theatre door, watching for a glimpse, and sometimes a word, from the actors as they came out from the dusky narrow alleyway. "Stark crazy about play acting," the old man and his wife had concluded, "and we've got to do our duty by our religion and by our boy and beat it out of him."

That was why the voice of the old man was droning above the noise of the creaking wheels. He was doing his duty, preparing the boy for the ordeal which both knew would have to come. Soon the old voice trailed off into the fog as two small yellow squares blazed out into the darkness. Tightened reins guided the old horses into the rocky driveway; the wagon lurched over the stones into the darkness of the barn. "Your mother 'll be waiting for you, Joey. I'm sorry it has to be this way." But the boy still seemed unconscious of his father's voice. With a toss of his young head, he scrambled to his feet, swung lightly from the wagon to the ground below, and walked out of the barn towards the squares of yellow light in the mist.

THREE POEMS FROM A NOTEBOOK

"ANCHORAGE SONG"

Heigho, Swift Boat, that loves to float
 Upon the sunny seamless sea,
 Your swaying mast is knotted fast
 The while your boom swings aimlessly.

Heigho, Swift Boat, for seas remote
 Will garland soon your bow with spray;
 Your sails will sing beneath the sting
 Of winds within a day—a day!

"QUEST"

In vain I tread the board
 And with a straightening spring
 Unfurl my crescent form,
 Down-diving in the ring
 Made by a sea-impinioned moon.

I leave the deeps too soon
 For, treasureless, I rise

Above the wreathes of foam;
 Sly moon, your beauty lies
 About me still unchastened, free.

But night-blown roses see
 Your silver smiles, and snare
 You with their fragrant sighs
 Breathed out into the air
 Of a quiet Old World garden-bed.

If I should swathe my head
 In folds of silver lace,
 Could then I bring you near?
 Or must your mirrored face
 Content my glided finger-tips?

"FLIGHT"

(Long Island Sound)

Like a black indignant cloud
 Sweeping from the Blue,
 Over hill and marshes
 And the homes of men,
 Southward, sun-ward, wild geese flew.

Darkness swirled a sable robe
 Close about my form;
 Standing on the river's edge,
 I, concealed, might see
 Wild geese racing with the storm.

Near my shrouded head they brushed,
 Honking in their flight;
 From the distant glens
 'Wakened dogs began to bay
 As the geese sped through the night.

Shadows, trembling in the frost,
 Spread upon the ground;
 And they cupped my face
 Deep within their hold
 As I bowed my head to hear
 Cries of geese upon the Sound.

TRAINS

I LIKE trains. Ever since I was a very little girl I have greatly enjoyed them. When I was very small I liked the sensation of speed and excitement. The idea of going to sleep and waking up in another place appealed to me immensely. Since I have grown older and travelled much, I do not feel the same way about it. As a rule, when I go to bed on the train I have the misfortune to crack my cranium against the ceiling, or get soot in my eye, or freeze or roast as the weather permits. In my youth of course, these things did not seem to annoy me and, if they were present at all, then was I quite impervious to their discomforting influence. Now, too, when I wake up in another place, it is usually at college. Travelling is not so pleasant a prospect as it used to be, when I was not consulted as to where we were going next, and was never exactly sure where I would end. The spirit of adventure, then, is nearly gone. Only in the Summer can I catch that elusive spirit, UNUSUAL EXCITEMENT OF ANY KIND. However, I find that a train is a stimulating sort of steel beast in a mechanical sort of way. The last time that I travelled on one, I found myself thinking of all kinds of things, all to the tune of wheels, and to the rhythm of the rising and falling telephone wires outside. The fact that I was thinking at all was unusual in itself, and it gave me a rather irrepressible sensation of SUPERIORITY. I looked about me benevolently and saw sleeping giants there, jaws swinging loosely in the jars of motion. I heard the weary wail of sticky infants; I smelled the salient fumes of oranges. And then I began to think. My thoughts were disjointed, and varied with the jolts of the lurching train.

A train is a jointed caterpillar. That is trite. If I add that it has a million eyes, forty to a joint, will that make it less trite? Maybe . . . ! The train is a caterpillar with a million eyes that scan the swift horizon. A protean landscape rushes by, and we, in the train are stationary. If the day is bright, people are out of doors in the comparatively early morning. Between eight and nine we see children and workmen. The youngsters going to school in merry and bright costume; the workmen walking along in dull and somber overall. Sometimes it is one, sometimes it is the other, and sometimes it is both. No matter what it really is, by the time you have decided that you are not sure which it is, it is too late to verify either opinion. The verification of the brown shoes on one child may be the black ones on the next one. Thus, the train is no place for argument. At least, not for arguments of the externals. Trains are uncertain, too, not only in that they are very often late, but, in that they very often get right to the climax, as in a serial movie, and then the picture ends and we are left wondering what is to happen.

How often I have watched with interest an approaching baseball game, seen two strikes, three balls called, and then just as the decisive ball has left the pitcher's hand, a building has loomed up before me and I never find out what has happened . . . Some times it is in the calm of a forest, and on the quiet of the lake is a canoe. The occupants, if they are not too busy, wave;

there is a terrible tipping of the tiny craft, . . . and then the entire picture is forest. Did the boat tip over or not? . . . Once I saw a great burly man about to strike a tiny child; as the arm was lifted a house came between us, and when I next saw them, the child lay quite still on the ground. The man was gone. As on the stage, we were spared the sight of the actual killing (taking this as a killing).

Very often we get minute glimpses into the homes of the dwellers by the track. Sometimes it is a kitchen scene. We always suspect that it is onions or corn beef and cabbage, that steams on the stove. At other times it is a drawing-room that presents itself, and we see little Rosie of Joseph dressed in Sunday garments and beaming shinily. On Mondays, and sometimes on other days, we have intimate glances at the family wardrobe, that swings on the line. These glimpses serve but to whet our curiosity. Should we be witnessing a murder, we would be as useless as the wall paper. The tragic, or should I say fortunate, part is, that we never know what actually does happen.

Occasionally, there is a sudden flash, a roar, a quick look through a solid body at the scene beyond, and two trains have passed, leaving not even as much as an echo behind. This meeting and passing of trains; I wonder if the meeting and passing of people is not almost as superficial?

Train smoke is like the ideas of some people that I know. It comes out of the stack with a snort; blows hither and thither on the winds and evaporates quickly, leaving no sediment but a flick of cinder which gets into the eye and annoys. Trains are very human anyway; and yet they are superhuman. They do not have the little failings that the race of man is afflicted with. For instance, they never look back. They are always forging ahead into the uncertain certainty that lies before them on the double track. They are brave. What man has the courage to look forward always? When making a curve, the engine descends its dark gleaming length, it shrieks in consternation, and rushes ahead with seemingly greater speed than ever. With a wail of regret, yet triumph, the lithe caterpillar bursts into an interminable tunnel, screams joyfully all the way through it and emerges from it as confidently as it went in. It has such a devil-may-care attitude, that it is truly delightful. It is fortunate that such a machine is guided by a steady and sure hand.

And so it is that the train starts me thinking. I wonder about the people that I see, I think about all of the little ideas that come into my head (the kind that you do not talk about, the lovely ones that are all your own). I philosophize on the meaning of life and wonder about immortality. I dream about the beauties of the present, and smile as I dwell on the promise of the future. I ruminate my memories. Through it all I am very happy. When the kaleidoscopic landscape glides by, and the rivers turn into valleys; when the rocks rise in flanks, and bridges reflect great gaping "O'S" in pond and river, and freshets burble down the sides of the close banks, then the train rips into my mind and soothes me and gives life to a smaller and yet quite powerful train of thoughts.

FOUR MASTERPIECES

Yes, there they are, the four great works of art
 And who shall say, who dares, which is the best?
 For each excels, yet is itself excelled—
 And none is quite complete without the rest.

And so we see them all—in four great scenes,
 An etching crisp and stark in black and white.
 A pastel dream of blended pearly hues,
 A water-color rich in sparkling light,
 And last—an oil—magnificent, supreme.

The first is done with boldness and with skill.
 The artist chose his medium with care—
 For what more fitting than an etcher's tool
 Can picture Winter's landscape bleak and bare?

For every twig a sharp clear cut is made.
 The thatching on the hut is covered o'er
 And only rough'ned boards stand out like ink
 And one or two black strokes can mark the door.

The Artist's eye has caught the little pile
 Of drifted flakes which edge the window sill,
 And so we see no corners clearly marked.
 Perhaps a strong firm line,—and then a frill.

Of fluffy fairy snow will hide the rest.
 A few bold strokes the picket fence describe,
 And here and there a line or two suggest
 The Wintry landscape clear against the sky.

* * * * *

And now we see a softly crayoned sketch—
 A mist of powdered chalk still seems to cling
 As if to cast illusion like a veil
 On this faint fleeting moment of the Spring.

A pale blush rosiness and filmy green
 Give to an apple tree a beauty rare—
 But more. We seem to sniff the very breeze
 As if expecting scent of blossoms there.

So truly is the new-blown Spring portrayed.
 That each wee bud would seem about to free

The bonds which clasp so closely, and prepare
To glorify and garb afresh the tree.

The crocuses which brightly dot the grass
With bits of pastel color, hold aloft
Frail chalices to catch the morning dew
So that the birds may quaff their daily drought.

The house and fence are painted fresh and bright,
The shutters green are flung; the windows wide,
And from them flutter curtains trimmed with lace
So gay and starched, they cannot seem to hide

The great disorder which pervades the room,
Marking the season one of joys and tears,
Showing us yearly cleaning underway,
Conclusively we know that Spring is here.

* * * * *

The water-color is a splash of hues
And only He could make it hold as one—
The piercing blue of that clear Summer sky,
The dazzling radiance of the brilliant sun,

The frothy cream which foams within the pails,
The nests well-peopled with the feathered folk,
Some perched amid the leaves, some on the wing,
The oxen calmly carrying the yoke.

The clear cool leafy bounty of the tree
Casts deep its shadow on the velvet lawn,
And in the brown rich loam behind the farm
Are rows and rows of early summer corn.

A wealth of flowers in profusion wild
Surround the place; while clinging ivy creeps
And, in quaint harmony with summer green,
A lattice forms, thru which the cottage peeps.

* * * * *

And last of all we see a glorious oil,
Flaming with scarlet, crimson, yellow, gold;
Brilliant with tawny orange, dusky brown,
Lush with abundance, rich and manifold.

A heap of ruddy apples and a press
Half-hid from view by happy greedy boys

Can all but make you taste the amber wine
And hear the crush and swish and trickling noise

That cider presses make when amply fed
With juicy fruit from busy helping hands.
Across the field the high-piled stacks of hay
Make but a pigmy of the man who stands

Beneath their towering summits cloth be-capped,
His hand against his mouth seeming to call
To all the world that Harvest time is here—
Who can mistake this canvas?—'tis the Fall.

* * * * *

Yes, there they are, the four great works of art,
And who shall say, who dares, which is the best?
For each excels, yet is itself excelled—
And none is quite complete without the rest.

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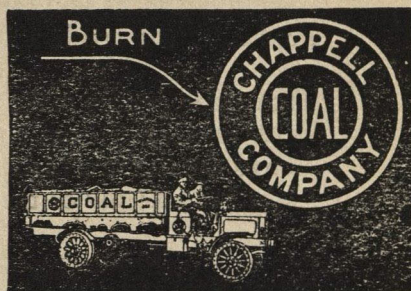
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