

## LETTERS FROM AMERICA: WRITTEN BY JOHN BUTLER YEATS TO W. B. YEATS

NEW YORK, November 16, 1916.

WOULD you like — *pour changer* — to know my idea of America? There everything is in the melting pot, husbands, wives, children, and the family, and religion, and politics. No fixity anywhere. It is not a hot melting pot, it does not come to the boil, just simmers gently on the hob, so that everybody is good-natured and tolerant and almost indifferent — not much concerned for the truth but just to amuse the passing moments. In the election, as at a game of baseball or on an English race-course, the only interest that matters is the betting. I wonder is it so always in a democracy? For instance, in the old days at Athens. Ah, no! There is a vast difference. In Athens the supreme interest — for some not mysterious reason — was art and poetry.

Apart from the betting, they also in America have another more serious interest: it is that their ninety millions should be materially comfortable, for the Americans are a humane people, they wish everybody to be comfortable — that is, in a bodily sense comfortable — whereas, the Athenians thought all the time of mental comfort. No, no! more than mental comfort, for to a people living as they did, with wars constantly threatening, such constant sorrows about death and disease, the lot then of every nation on the globe, mental comfort was not to be thought of; they thought all the time about spiritual ecstasy, and strove for it through the methods and channels of artistic creation.

Latterly mental comfort comes easily; disease is manageable, and

death is regarded as the tranquil ending of life coming at the right moment when the failing powers long for rest. Mental comfort being thus within easy reach, there remains only bodily comfort, and that America is resolved to bestow on its people. Who nowadays cares for mental ecstasy?

I see every democracy, even that of Athens, as a crowd gathered to hear their orators, very eager to be excited, for excitement is the breath of their nostrils, and a great orator who is himself a great man means a great democracy. But great men are not things of chance and appear only when there has been necessary training. There are no great men in America because their training is lacking.

There is one dark menace running through all classes, like a black thread in a cloth of gold — the labor cause. Its supporters are numerous as the sands of the sea, but brainless. Their hearts beat for but one feeling which is hatred, the ignorant love activity and to see things doing, and hatred prompts to action, therefore, the ignorant love to hate. Isaac Butt was a constructive statesman, his heart and mind luminous with love for his enemies, but the Irish are an ignorant people and so Parnell seduced them with his gospel of hatred, which Butt, in his gentle and courteous fashion, called the policy of exasperation.

February 20, 1916.

The ethical doctrine most popular in America is expressed by the word service. Every man, woman, and child is brought up with the idea of *service*, and it is fatal to sincerity. In America

there is no such thing as sincerity — the effect of democracy is that each citizen regards himself as holding, by virtue of his citizenship and his vote, a kind of public position. Socrates, in his *Apologia*, says that he soon discovered that in democratic Athens, he could not serve truth if he occupied a public position; for which reason he forsook all opportunities of public service and devoted himself to a private life in which he sought for truth pure and simple. The head of a great railway or other big commercial concern must, if he is to do his duty by his clients, throw overboard nice ideas of honor and honesty, and employ the accustomed methods of graft and bribery. The editor of a paper, enlisted in some propaganda of socialism or philosophical anarchism, finds that he must look askance at truth as these men do at honesty — overstating and understating matters in a way that must ultimately blunt all those susceptibilities which are of the very essence of fine character, and which also are at the root of that enthusiasm which is the soul of poetry. If a poet preserves his susceptibility to truth, poetic enthusiasm remains to comfort and inspire him, even though he had parted with every other honorable quality.

November 21, 1916.

The doctrines of 'uplift' and social service are shouting over all the hills and valleys and into the secret glens. The natural man loves his wife, his children, himself, and the little patch of the earth's surface where he lives and was born, and though he says his solitude is for him an arching sky glittering with stars, it is vain. Civilization says he must be reasonable and he must not be selfish. The shy muses who come to us in secret are scared away by the noise and the company.

In their place come the pompous rhetoricians pretending that they are commissioned by the muses and what they preach is that a man does not belong to himself but to his neighbors. Every age has its particular heresy.

The doctrine of social service is the heresy of modern civilization. And so, poor man the solitary, becomes man the social, the gregarious; his natural feelings all watered down to the right temperature so that he can cease to be himself and become the servant of the social machine. Meantime my only comfort is to know that the muses by fiat of the gods are immortal. And where are they domiciled? In Russia perhaps, or in Roumania, or in India — savage lands not yet reached by the heresy. In Russia, certainly, there are some poets and there is still a 'palate.' These benighted Americans have no palate either for Jameson's whiskey or in poetry for the true vintage. So it is a sad and noisy world. I think that in Europe, when this terrible war is over and gone (if there does not start another war of labor and social struggle), the individual man will rediscover himself and become so vital and, as it were, importunate in his demands for a true existence (which I need not say is not the material things the proletariat — inevitably so — are in pursuit of) that he will return to solitude and once more be visited by the kind-hearted and now more relenting muses.

True patriotism is not social service in its essence whatever it be in its effect. The ecstasy of the Athenian was patriotism; but why? Because it was spontaneous, genuine, and springing as naturally in the bosoms and hearts of Athenians as the multitudinous duties on the hillside. Another ecstasy was their sense of life as it distributed fate and fortune and death in its awful way, and with its

capricious impartiality — an ecstasy made of fear and wonder and austere beauty. Patriotism is only possible to a small country and a small city. However intense our feelings are, the heart of man cannot embrace a large surface. When he 'thinks imperially,' as — and my unionist friends would invite me to do, he does so with his vanity and vulgarity or because of some self-interest. His heart is cold as ice. Athens was a mother to her children — the best of mothers, and as visibly so in their eyes as their natural mother — elegant, gracious, stately besides, and lovely in conversation to the last. I mean her public plays and the speeches of her orators. We have Pericles's word for it and we have, still to be seen, her beautiful architecture.

She also was like a mother, the good providence of the home. The Athenian loved Athens because he loved himself. She is mine, he said, with every nerve in his soul and body resonant with the words. At the rising of the sun and the going down, therefore, it was his constant thought, his religion, by which he saved his soul and his body. Afterward he went the downward course and sank to thinking imperially and so degenerated till his feelings became tepid like those of any modern. I suppose that in the long life of a nation the moments of intensity are few and far between.

February 22, 1916.

Poetry, which almost everyone in America is now writing, fails because of two reasons. In the first place there is this doctrine of service — everyone must serve, it is a woman's doctrine, and America is a woman's country. Some time ago I met a most refined and charming woman and she praised Brother Sunday, and said that she

made it a practice to attend his services. 'In the name of common sense, why?' I asked. 'Oh,' she replied, 'he is doing so much good.' There you have the doctrine of service in its crudest form proclaimed from those pretty lips. The second reason is that there is no leisure and this because of the newspapers and the habit of the newspapers. There is not a nook in all America, however shady and sequestered, not hurried by them.

The doctrine of service is bad because it enfeebles the sense of truth, for I am sure that you will agree with me that every poet hates that kind of crudity, so popular in journalism, which is unsifted truth. Anything, false or true, will do for the people who serve. Like the Catholic Church, they are persuaded that they are out for something more important than the merely true. The poet, because of that inner sincerity which is the very root of his being, and which is his intensity — like that of a grieving mother who will not be put off with half-answers from the doctor — seeks and seeks always for the truth which has been many times sifted. In his methods of reproduction of finite things he may employ every artifice of metaphor and bold figure, but the inner feeling must not be falsified in expression in one single tittle, neither may it be tempted by any kind of self-indulgence or self-glory into falseness toward the facts by which it is excited. The vice of Byron's poetry is that he had not this 'caution' toward truth. He wrote out of the heart of a fictitious Byron when he rushed into what Keats calls his 'magnanimity.' Shelley was always the 'cautious' thinker and had the poet's virgin heart. Had he lived, he would have cast off his 'magnanimity' which all came from the large head

full of the cold brains of the philosopher Godwin.

It is because of their sincerity and their passion for the unsifted truth, that poets will always form an aristocracy, leaving service to the servile class, just now mostly composed of women. You remember the curse laid upon Eve. The doctrine of service brings people together in gregarious multitudes. The poets' quest of truth separates poets even from poets.

October 19, 1917.

It is my belief that if the whole world had spoken Greek we should not have their great literature.

The other day I was at — and was maintaining that after the Hohenzollern and their dynasty we should next have to face a more insidious autocracy — that of the mob, and that the only thing to be done was to disestablish and disendow the great democracies and in their place start small democracies. For, said I, the mob is the danger, big democracies meaning big mobs and small democracies small mobs. Just then — arrived and we received him with enthusiasm and I told him my argument. At once he made a very important modification. He said the mob is not the danger but the mob psychology.

The mob psychology is already in the world control and we are all busy in finding out how to flatter it. It is the heir of the old autocracies, a forceful and pushing 'chip of the old block,' and it has the charm of youth, and some of us have discovered that the movement or philosophy of internationalism and of no patriotism is the nicest titbit we can offer to this new minotaur. What between facility in acquiring foreign languages and good translation, a book published in one corner of the world rapidly passes and circulates everywhere. It is as if

Æschylus and Sophocles were forced to write their plays for the Roman Empire rather than for their own little city.

November 2, 1917.

Until the war came to upset our calculations, life had become exceedingly pleasant and exciting to live, yet not worth thinking about. In ancient days, in Elizabethan times, life was terrible to live and tremendous to think about. Quiet men must have died of fright. I am sure they did, even if sometimes it was only a living death; and yet poets found the food by which they live.

In the great lights and shadows of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* and *Othello*, and in the drama of Webster, people saw reflected the life they knew, and as they believed, the only kind of life possible on this sinful earth, an audience metaphysical, fear-struck, wonder-struck, or melted in pity, and all thinking about Fortune and the image of life and death — in a word a poetical audience. Smilingly we go to the plays of G. B. Shaw or Ibsen to admire the cleverness of the playwright or for a logical satisfaction and we come away discussing the issues of tea-drinking or vegetarianism or that storm in a teacup, married incompatibility — or the birth control.

November 18, 1916.

There is the artist who is sociable in his work and there is the solitary artist. To the first order belongs Meredith. Dostoevsky is a solitary. Meredith possessed every kind of pride. Intellectually, and as a man of class, he was proud. He was insularly proud, like the Englishman. Pride comes from conscious relation to his fellow man. Dostoevsky never sought for social relations and so these various kinds of pride that Meredith enjoyed

and sometimes revealed in, were unknown to him. His nature was not social, and his convict life and strange experience forced him away to live in his own company. A clever man, a man of genius, entering into society meets with so much stupidity and antagonism that he is forced to armor himself in the panoply of some kind of pride. Dostoevsky escaped the necessity, but if his convict life and experience did not make him social, how could this? They taught him something infinitely more valuable to the artist. If you are forced to live with people and you won't, often can't, live socially, there is only one thing to do that you may live, and that is to study these people exhaustively, so as to find the something that may lubricate a little the painful contact.

A hard, insensitive mind would find it in a continual contempt; the affectionate and sensitive Dostoevsky found it in pity and love and tenderness. He could not exchange ideas and words with these people. Had he attempted to speak his thoughts they would have been insulted, and revenged themselves by constant insults. So he watched and loved and pitied and understood. Thus he became the great writer. He found in human nature his own particular world of truth and as he learned its secrets and its scope he bent before its magnitude of suffering and before its splendor of possibility, and this gradually came to mean deepest humility. The solitary man at all times, if he be really a solitary, is humble—for a man can only be proud when he is eminent and distinguished in society. A man alone with himself perforce very quickly realizes that he is only an atom in presence of the sun and moon, the past and the future. He may, indeed, hope that being a man he is chief of created things, but that

is not enough upon which to found personal pride. It is too faint, and besides it concerns all mankind—a pride we share with millions is not enough for personal exultation.

July 3, 1916.

Thinking about Henry James, I wonder why he is so obscure; truly one's attention goes to sleep or wanders off when trying to make him out. I think it is for one thing that he has a very limited vocabulary with a great many shades of meaning to describe and only a few words. Necessarily, he again and again uses the same word or the same phrase in widely different senses and that is bewildering to the reader who has not much time to spare. Then he varies very little the shape of his sentences. He writes as if he dictated and did it for his own ease in a sing-song voice. He ought to have taken for amanuensis somebody who was at once a critic and a friend and not too much of an admirer—somebody who would insist on understanding and who would not be put off.

I said in my lecture that one can hear the very voice of Shakespeare and how various is that voice and how it provokes and engages the attention. It is his own music, yet he would have you follow it, so that he leans toward you and sings it into your ear, or stands away and makes it resound to all the echoes. Another source of our difficulty in reading Henry James is that it is only almost at the very end of his book that we see his people. Tolstoi's first care is that you may see his people and then comes the comment and the long unfolding. In both there is suspense, without which a story does not exist. But in James it is his cunning to make that suspense dull and tiresome, holding you in spite of yourself. In Tolstoi the suspense is terrible from the first,

but so fascinating that you do not look to the end of the story, so as to lose none of it. If you gazed long enough at a tapestried wall perhaps the figures would begin to move. It is only after many readings that I enjoy a novel by Henry James.

October 25, 1917.

I have just read a novel of Turgenieff. He differs from Conrad in that he gives way occasionally, with artistic restraint, to emotion, and it is right that he should do so. Conrad is too proud, too much the aristocrat of letters. Art and poetry should reflect life and, like life, contain everything. That again is the dramatic poet's opportunity; prose, comedy, humor, tragedy, and all the emotions as well as the feelings. I have already said to you that I think emotion is feeling which has passed into the nerves, and takes possession of the nerves. The feeling, indeed, is weakened, there is loss of intensity, but the recompense is great, for it has become a pleasure. Niobe weeping for her children would refuse emotion as she would refuse all pleasure, but poetry is not always high tragedy. In this country they worship pleasure, and have come to think that emotion is all in all, and that is bad for poor literature and for everything else. But American ladies like it and they are supreme, being, as they are, the irresponsible sex. It was not so when they were mothers with large families. Then the man was the irresponsible sex, who would risk everything on a throw of the dice, quite happy if he could only weep or laugh or be angry.

September 12, 1916.

The realistic artist has for his object to spread his sense of the pleasing. He is like unto a mother, with an ugly child — she knows the child is

ugly, the averted looks of her friends have told her so; besides she knows the standards of taste and that they are all against her. And yet, though she knows it so well she is not convinced. The child to her is pleasing.

That anything is pleasing is not enough to make it beautiful. That it be beautiful, the springs of excitement must be touched. In an affectionate woman's heart these springs are often touched — when there is no one near to put her out of countenance she finds her child beautiful. If this excitement, this exaltation of affection visits the realistic artist, he not only makes the ugliness he has created pleasing, he makes it beautiful. Falstaff is always pleasing. There are moments when even he is — not quite — yet almost beautiful. The poor and the miserable who live in the midst of the ugly, are grateful to the realistic artist who helps them to make their lives pleasing. Mirabeau spoke of his own ugliness and of what a help it was in his career of demagogue, and he once spoke of his 'sublime' ugliness. He was an artist of genius and knew how to make it pleasing — and the people, surrounded by ugliness, were grateful; it was a ray of sunshine in their dim lives and doubtless his ugliness at times *was* sublime, so that it shot a ray not merely of sunshine, but of lightning and storm in among these people until they were proud of their ugly faces and of their ugly lives and ways which at once became, for them, the symbols of energy and power. To this day it often happens in Paris, that the ugliest women are the ones preferred.

Imagination mounts with a slow wing and shuns crowds. Congestion is the essence of democracies and imagination in a democracy is oftener a stranger and an outcast. For I

think poetical imagination is simply affection. The man with a poetical mind finds his happiness and himself becoming absorbed in some person or some thing which is other than himself; and since this is a matter of time and place and opportunity a man of affection will get away to be alone with his friend or with his garden, or to be beside his lake or his sweet-heart. He wants a deeper acquaintance with these things. Affection is studious, with the passion of the student for learning new and deeper things. We speak of love as the central feeling in art, and what is love but the exaltation of affection? and is not the poet's 'love' nothing more than affection familiar to us all, and especially to women and children, crowned and endiademed. The acorn of poetic genius is nourished by the most amiable of all the feelings the gentlest, tenderest, and the weakest.

August 20, 1917.

Do you think that a novel is a work of art if you have the desire to read it a second time? I have just read a novel which is here held of high account. Its story gripped me and there was passion in it, but I could not be induced to read it a second time. And yet I have also the conviction that anywhere but in America the writer would have produced a work of art. His passion is pity for the poor and wretched, incidentally he writes a good story and his people are alive. Yet in the front of his picture stands his argument. In *Les Misérables* of Victor Hugo the pages are flooded with sympathy for the poor and disinherited, and yet this is only a background against which we have placed creations of ethereal loveliness. Besides, there is the sombre romance in the life of the hero of the

book. There is also wit, satire, and laughter and humor, and because of these, we read again and again in that book. Those writers of propagandist literature for their own contentious purpose, if for nothing else, ought to study the philosophy and technique of art.

The American writer is a man named ——, and I have an impression that he is at heart a journalist and that his altruistic passion is not really a passion, only an exploitation of a feeling which is just now current in novel-reading circles. If this be so, he is hopeless. You cannot make an artist out of a journalist.

Have you ever looked at Hogarth's pictures? His own idea of himself was that he was a moralist — to teach moral lessons his only object in his rather combative and bustling existence, yet with the real passion of the eighteenth century, and not as a self-seeking journalist. Who now cares for his moral lessons? They are out of date. Yet Hogarth remains among the immortals because he created women of a tender and appealing beauty and because of his humor, wit, and humanity.

There is another remark I will make, as appertaining to modern conditions. I have just been reading a French novel. Its hero is a doctor who is revolutionizing medicine and surgery. He is also an atheist and a progressive. His friend, who is a radical politician, begs him to help him in his politics and the man answers with an emphatic '*non.*' When asked for his reasons, he answers — '*Parce que c'est trop facile.*' It is an ever-present temptation to artists and poets to leave their own task with its concentration and stern labors and infinitely deferred hopes, seeking some far-off synthesis of beauty — to enter politics, where they can instantly be

put into possession of what looks exactly like their dream. Only—it is not the same; it is the substitution of the emotional for feeling, and the hero of the French novel, being an educated man, knows it. Of course the worldly advantages of the political choice are obvious. It was this drew Sheridan away from the writing of comedies. I wonder if he ever had any visitings of regret. Did the man of fashion sigh for his garret and Grub Street?

An artist and a poet should be too proud to enter politics, not because they are corrupt or mean, but *Parce que c'est trop facile!*

January 10, 1917.

There is a lurking doubt in most minds that poetry and the reading of it are a waste of time, yet poetry is merely affection trying for existence and for its triumph. Where the senses are feeble or easily dulled, the thinking faculty feeble, it is easy for affection to precipitate itself down the slopes of an abysmal sentimentality; and there are such poets, plenty of them, where the senses are all keyed up to their most perilous height, if you like to put it so. It is only the half-seen fact which misleads and where the thinking power is vigorous, the sophistries of passion and heat do not betray. In the true poet's mind, where the senses are keen and the reason strong, longing affection has a hard time of it. And then the poet has so many minds; the ordinary man has one mind—that of ambition or success or domestic bliss, but in the poet there is, always and ever active, a sense of the past and a sense of the future and a sense of the present with hope and manifold fears and courage and all his inclinings of love or anger or pity. With all of these many minds, as I call them, affection must make her

peace. Like a tired litigant she goes from court to court pleading her cause. Poetry is the record of that long litigation begun centuries ago and not yet finished. With a mighty intellect far beyond that of any scientist or mathematician or statesman and with senses keen as the senses of animals, love stands before the world and pleads that she be allowed to ascend that throne upon the lowest steps of which she is barely permitted to seat herself.

And yet, though affection pleads with such soft eloquence, she is a warrior maid. I know there have been pusillanimous poets. In the Victorian days these sang of fact and truth as a despot to be propitiated, and I remember the words of Wesley who wrote on the education of children: 'Break their wills, break their wills, teach them to kiss the rod with tears,' and how this kind of teaching was echoed again and again even for the adult generations of Coleridge and Wordsworth and Tennyson. These men were false to their calling. Blake scorned their unctuous submission and, rousing all his courage, fought against the despotism of fact and truth with a valor which is man's birthright and highest inspiration, and so he remains as compared with them a figure of glory and sincerity.

Poetry is at once the champion and the voice of the long history of affection and I will call none great among poets in whom I do not find intellect—or what may be called judgment of the most vigorous kind, the keenest senses and, last of all, temperance; for extravagance is as fatal to a poet as sentimentality, since both are false and no one can enjoy a poet who deals in falsehood. And for this reason among others you cannot respect a poet who allows himself to be deceived, and for that reason his poetry is for

you meaningless or rather it angers you.

The methods that poets show in dealing with fact and truth where these obstruct or oppress, form an instructive page. Tennyson, full of the scientific spirit, made gracious submission or forgot them; Shelley railed against them, and affection came to him in the stress of battle as Thetis came to Achilles; Shakespeare put a great many hateful facts into his Iagos, etc., and into Falstaff—each time with a kind of laughter touched with pity for Falstaff, and with anger and pity also for Iago, since affection has a quality all its own by which it defies the moralist.

Intellect and the senses and temperance: there is yet another sign of the true poet—fantasy. Though a poet should not deny, or yet submit to fact, why should he not imagine a paradise in which with conscious and deliberate purpose facts are rearranged and the world's laws turned topsy-turvy so as to give fair play to the life of the affections? Yet, even here, neither the poet nor his readers can permit themselves to be deceived. It is part of my enjoyment of Virgil to know that Venus, when she talks with Æneas and gives her mother-counsel, is not really a young girl of nineteen, or in fact Venus at all, for it is honest fantasy and deception practised with my eyes open and the poet and I coöperate; but at other times I expect the poet to think straight, neither deceiving nor being deceived.

Tennyson and Wordsworth and the rest had little fantasy, their respect for fact and the laws of truth kept them locked up fast in their prison. That is why they could not write drama; drama which, of the right kind, is all fantasy and dream and the licensed extravagance of the freed imagination.

January 19, 1916.

When a poet writes with high enthusiasm for duty and moral ideas and 'uplift,' he loses all his royal liberty of choice and becomes a slave and the eloquent servant of his age: Wordsworth, for instance. I find that in reading Wordsworth I have always made a practice quite unconsciously of hurrying over the ethical part and read with attention only certain things said, as it were, accidentally or incidentally in these great and much-admired passages. I used to think that this was a fault in myself, and that I ought to have responded when I did not respond. I now know differently; the poet in me was offended. I would not have humanity, which has come into all its rights by virtue of poetry, speak with this artificial and ashamed kind of speech.

Browning is a great sinner after this fashion; he is always an ethical fellow, and he is popular because he persuades people that he likes it, and that everyone ought to like it. That line of Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*, 'Stern daughter of the voice of God,' is merely Old Testament rhetoric. You cannot put the Ten Commandments into poetry any more than you could the fifth Proposition of Euclid. Wailing and lamentation and anger at hard necessity as of a spirit in exile is poetry, and it is that of the great masters. Man should be free as everything should be free, and must abate none of his pretensions. That is the creed of poetry. Wordsworth and such like are slaves, and their language is that of slaves—namely, rhetoric. They are not uttering themselves, they are preaching and exhorting their fellow slaves and flattering their masters. To read Wordsworth is to sink back into willing captivity and lose your pride.

September 20, 1917.

I believe that the future of poetry will concern itself more and more with psychology. We are becoming tremendously interested in each other and in the drama of life. We used to divide people into the sheep and the goats, and that ended it. We are now all abroad in the world of speculation, and we look to the poets, for we want not merely to know. We can leave knowledge to the men of science. We want to feel or, rather — since we do feel, as is shown by the passionate interest, almost too great for endurance, with which we watch in the newspapers, and in novels and stories, the fate of sinners and their disastrous histories — we look to the poets that they may, by some 'heavenly alchemy' touch these feelings so as to make them creative and not as now a mere barrenness and an exhaustion.

Of late I have been constantly reading Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and I feel that he was intensely interested in psychology, and that he accepted none of the conventions. In appearance he did so, but not in reality.

January 10, 1917.

Poetry is the champion and the voice of the inner man. Had we not this champion to speak for us in the gate, externality would swamp the world, and nothing would be heard but the noise of its machinery, of its wheels and pulleys and their deafening uproar, and in its loneliness the inner man would be almost extinct, not entirely so since he is one of the immortals.

We profess to represent the whole of the inner man, and we give only part of it. Even Tennyson enervates and the American poets, except when they take to shouting with Whitman, seem to have no other object than the joys of a pensive enervation. To read much

in them is to experience a sudden loss of dignity and courage. With them I contrast Blake, in whom I find all that delights in the poets that enervate, but my dignity does not suffer, and my energies are not weakened. Though there is much sounding of the trumpet, the flute notes are not lost, but are there all the time with their penetrating sweetness, and the whole man rejoices. I do not complain of any violent assault being made on me by these other poets, that is not their way, but I am drugged with some pleasant opiate; and these poets themselves are aware of it, for thence comes their predilection for the shouting Whitman.

Meantime, here we have this external world. It is impossible for me to do justice in words to its power and splendor. It has captured G. B. Shaw so that he can see nothing else, and all the newspapers work for it, partly that they are in its pay but chiefly that they love it. Now the machinery of this vast and intricate world is driven by the animal in man — this blinded animal, strong and blind as Samson, toils mightily in the mills, and G. B. Shaw and everyone else tells us that they are the mills of God. And perhaps they are — I know not except that we cannot or will not do without them; yet I and those of us who have not been like Samson, blinded, will not work in them. All this terrible unrest, those anarchists and socialists, are part of this world, and a sign that matters are not going very smoothly in these 'Mills of God' among these blinded people.

As to Whitman, no doubt he does not enervate; he only deceives, filling his readers with a kind of windy conceit of themselves, so that windy conceit is now accepted among the cardinal doctrines of a true democracy. Yet he is a great deal more than this, for though he is not the poet, he

is the bard, the prophet (which we are told is not the man who predicts, but the man who speaks out), and he is emphatically the voice and the champion of the man, occupied with externality. If Rachel, bereaved of her children and refusing to be comforted because they are not, could be induced to go forth and rouse all bereaved mothers to listen to her voice and share her thoughts, she would have been their bard and the bard of all bereaved motherhood. Had she been left to

her own sorrow and to a loneliness into which no one else could enter, not God himself, and had the gift of utterance been bestowed upon her, she would have become for all time the *poet* of bereaved mothers.

Well, I do not know how to say what I would say, but I remember Blake's doggerel: 'A picture should be like a lawyer presenting a writ,' and Bacon wrote that it is not enough that a thing be beautiful, it must be wonderful.

The Irish Statesman

## DREAMS

BY ARTHUR E. LLOYD MAUNSELL

DEAD leaves that scatter in the wind,  
 You once were green.  
 Faint scents that bring old loves to mind  
 That might have been.  
 Years have forgotten you, and yet  
 You stir between.

Old notes of song, those bygone years  
 Once heard and knew,  
 Weak, striving things that move to tears,  
 As dream songs do:  
 You weave a subtle discontent;  
 Ah! why do you?

Dream loves that creep into the heart,  
 Who loves you so.  
 You rest with us awhile, then part,  
 Why do you go?  
 The hours are vain and weary then,  
 As well you know.

The Anglo-French Review