

The PHOENIX NEST

CONTEMPORARY POETRY: BY WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

HENRY HARRISON, the indefatigable poetry publisher at 430 Sixth Avenue, sends up three recent offerings. They are "The Golden Trove," by Francis Potter Daniels, "Trumpet Call," by Grace French Smith, and "Luminous Token," by Bertha Williams. To these Mr. Harrison adds an anthology edited by himself called "A Poetry Concert."

The first-mentioned book is slightly better than the second, though I regret to say that both are pretty bad. Miss Williams is more of a poet than either, and that's about all one can say for her. "A Poetry Concert" is chiefly out of key. As an example of unconscious humor I recommend in it "Custer's Last Stand." What is the use of perpetuating such stuff?

A valuable textbook, a large anthology which is designed to supplement a former volume, "English Prose of the Eighteenth Century," is "English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century," edited by Cecil A. Moore of the University of Minnesota. This is a big, thick, and heavy book and contains abundant extracts. You have a little of everything, from Matthew Prior to George Crabbe. There are generous introductions to each writer. You have poets as widely different, of course, as Pope and Burns—for while the eighteenth century suggests to us always the highly-mannered and formalized, it is to be remembered that the age could also boast one of the freest natural singers that ever lived and wrote poetry, viz: Robert Burns.

Russian poetry is less familiar to us than the Russian novel, therefore you will probably be interested to know that Oliver Elton has translated verse from Pushkin and others, and that Edward Arnold has published the book in London whence Longmans, Green & Company, this city, imports it. I must admit that Russian poetry leaves me rather cold and that translation of this type seems a singularly dry proceeding. When I read

*With tears and merriment and pain
My rivulets of rhyme resound
Here at thy feet.
Each rhyme runs fleet
And weaves a living linkèd chain,
Forgetting its own bank and bound.*

I don't care who wrote it or who translated it, it is simply mighty poor verse, the kind of thing you could write with your left hand while taking a nap. When I read "The snow still whitens on the lea," I am reminded that that kind of writing went out practically before I was born. You can't use an expression like that nowadays and get away with it. As for the stories told of Czars and Popes and Workmen, most of these fables are dull.

From Santa Ana Junior College, Santa Ana, California, comes the eighth volume of the California Intercollegiate Anthology of Verse, which appears yearly. This is called "First the Blade." There's little in it that waylays the reader, and yet, on the whole, I prefer it to the Russian

poetry. A patriotic effort is Lois F. Boyle's editing of an anthology of Texas poetry, "Texas Legacy" (The Naylor Company, San Antonio). *Verb. sap.*

Dorothy Quick, whose "Changing Winds" is published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, is a pleasant writer who has been laboring in the vineyard for some years. She expresses herself both seriously and humorously. But, alas; her work mainly lacks distinction of expression. There are two books here by Antoinette Scudder. Mr. Harrison, above referred to, has published her "East End, West End," and the

Chicago Bookfellows have brought out her poetic drama, "The Henchman of the Moon." The first is to me the more interesting, though Bernard Palissy's famous story makes a rather good plot for a poetic play. The narratives of "East End, West End" are of our day; and for the first time this afternoon (which is a very hot one) I find a book of verse I can read without a mild feeling of nausea—except for that eighteenth century poetry. It's somewhat prosy, but it's such a lot better than the other little books, that by contrast it seems quite glamorous. Miss Scudder tells what goes on in the little grey houses of a motorists' camp. She has gathered together some odd and tragic people and doesn't narrate their stories badly. I think, however, that she might do more forceful work if she wrote simply in prose.

Jay G. Sigmund, an Iowan, is vice-president of a large insurance company in Cedar Rapids. Gradually his poetry has made

*"The lions in front of the Art Institute
looked more like Lord Palmerston
than ever"*

writes **CHRISTOPHER
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its way, because of its genuineness. "Burr-oak and Sumac" is number one of the Cornell College Chapbooks published by the English Club of Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Iowa, the series being edited by *Clyde Tull*. This is an attractive paper-bound brochure, and its contents is alive, for Mr. Sigmund writes of the ridgeroad folk he knows. "Sea Gulls Follow a Plow" is a refreshing poem. The following sonnet illustrates Mr. Sigmund's merits:

RIVER DRAMA

*The first few pintails scan the bayou shore
To see if ancient enemies are crouched
Within the cat-tail blinds . . . they dip
once more
Beyond the rushy swale where now is
couched
On drying grass the driftwood which will
soon
Provide a fire for the nights of Fall,
When lean hounds on their chains berate
a moon,
Hung high and white and casual over all.
The blue smoke of an early shot reveals
How false the refuge which these nervous
wings
Will find along my river; daybreak steals
Among the birches . . . now the red
dawn swings
Across the bent sky as the loud guns hail
Their leaden shower and the strong quills
fail.*

Literate and sometimes delicately done are the poems in *Helen Frith Stickney's* "Prelude to Winter" (Banner Press, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia). This book was one of three prize-winning entries in the national poetry contest conducted in 1933 by *Versecraft*. *Flora Brent Hamilton* died in that same year, and, being a student of the sonnet, left behind her both a brief essay on "Sonnet-Outlines" and a series of sonnets of her own. Bruce Humphries of Boston publishes her book. There are sonnets both in English and French, and there are translations.

From such quiet and classical matters we are projected into *John Houghton Allen's* "Song of Randado," poems from the Kaleidograph Press of Dallas, Texas. *Kenneth C. Kaufman*, *J. Frank Dobie* and *Stanley Vestal* have praised this heartiness. Here is, truly, cloth of gold of romance:

*We shall lie down, as the hot sands cool
And the yucca is a black ghost by night;
We shall lie down, our heads on our
saddles,
In the camp of the Forty Moons, to rise
And ride where the purple morning-
glories are.
Through the white arch, from the smell
of sage,
Down the cobbled streets, all old and
precious,
By the winding white walls to a hidden
door,
By adobe walls to forgotten loves.*

These few and fierce songs and ejaculations are impossible to classify, but the vaquero spirit in them is real. Their turbulent words are untamed but convey an atmosphere extraordinarily well. The little book has many technical faults, but it also has a genuine singing quality, a swagger, and the impress of a personality.

Double-Crostics: No 68

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

								1	2	3		4	5		6	
7	8	9	10		11	12		13	14	15	16	17		18	19	20
21		22	23		24	25	26	27		28	29	30		31	32	33
	34	35	36	37	38		39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46		47
48	49	50		51	52	53	54		55	56	57	58		59	60	61
62	63		64	65	66	67	68	69	70		71	72	73	74	75	76
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117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126		127	128	129	130	131	
132	133	134		135	136	137		138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146
	147	148	149	150		151	152	153	154	155	156	157		158	159	160
	161	162	163	164	165	166	167		168	169	170	171	172			

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-three words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find by reading (from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Unless otherwise indicated, the author is English or American.

The solution of last week's Double-Crostic will be found on page 17 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

- I. To act irresolutely (colloq.).
- II. Russian dramatist, novelist (1860-1904.)
- III. Greek letter.
- IV. Double-dealing (comp., colloq.).
- V. Novel by Disraeli.
- VI. Making excessive distinctions.
- VII. Intricate pattern.
- VIII. Clearings; crevices.
- IX. Severe trial.
- X. Ridiculed in writing.
- XI. Owner of man-eating horses (myth.).
- XII. Astringent substance.
- XIII. Carpenter's tool.
- XIV. Became manifest.
- XV. More indistinct.
- XVI. Tribe defeated by David.
- XVII. Absolute, complete.
- XVIII. More tidy.
- XIX. One gigantic in size or power.
- XX. Tale based on history.
- XXI. Attractive.
- XXII. Gilbert & Sullivan fans.
- XXIII. Prohibition violator.

WORDS

76	136	111	45	149	12	146	159	132	57	62	17	
143	37	101	79	72	77	39						
125	4	51	41	25	48	104						
158	107	114	18	28	31	165	105					
14	171	133	153	169	144	30						
83	141	61	20	122	74	113	35	135	22	6	86	127
85	3	108	151	160	123	68	15	137				
109	81	1	55	13								
8	166	106	121	90	53							
7	56	11	117	154	139	29	63	87				
134	19	32	49	5	164	156	71					
84	42	91	65	124	155							
60	98	115	172	150	94							
21	99	75	145	116	170	16						
168	67	131	140	58	118							
148	27	96	2	80	89	66	162	47				
69	147	92	50	161								
142	54	64	24	152	34							
44	95	38	163	126								
102	70	88	129	33	52							
10	43	82	73	36	26	112	93					
157	130	9	119	46	40	138	97	167				
100	120	23	78	110	128	103	59					