LATE AUTUMN AFTERNOON

TO REGINA.
Grey, fingered with flickering threads of light;
Silence, broken by restless quavers of music.
Greyness, music, a fragile peace;
A playing thought of slumber.
And on my lips faintly disturbing fingers,
And at my heart Love's hand, like a child's hand,
Stirring me half awake.  —ELSIE GIDLOW

EDITORIAL

LES MOUCHES FANTASTIQUES recommences, after a meditative silence, as an unprejudiced publication devoted to art and artists modern and not modern, young and old, and to life as it is related to art and artists.

Art is not apart from life, but intimately and vitally conjoined with it. If, in fact, the words "art" and "life" were not so persistently misused by so many of those employing them, one could say without fear of misinterpretation, Life is art, art is life; but it seems that only life's more vulgar manifestations are accepted as veritable life and that art is commonly visualized as unreality, an extraneous growth that life would be infinitely more comfortable without, (perhaps it would be more comfortable!); or else as some delicately woven thing remote from life and irreconcilably divided from it. Whereas, in truth, art and life are interwoven.

They who assert that only the vulgarities of life are its realities, its crudities truth, its commonplaces beauty, have yet to discover the sanguinary, unsatisfied pulse that leaps in the covered depths of life's breast like a seeking youth-passion. But evidently they are incapable of discovery. They can never be beauty's pilgrims.

Hundreds of thousands live and speak as though art were all silver and scent and impossibility, and life a melange of labor, propagation and eating. With what have they covered their eyes and ears? With what have they stifled and choked the great songs of their being? Someone may reply to this by telling me that humanity is becoming more utilitarian and, consequently, utilitarianism is the great and revered god. I know this. I know that utilitarianism is a requisite and good foundation. But it is only a foundation. What of the structure? There are those who labor at the structure, serene-faced, with laughter in their souls; those who work feverishly in devil-driven abandonment; and those who play yet, curiously, add by their play much to the beauty. But below all these is the mass that toils at the foundation. Perhaps it is best that it should know nothing of the structure—and yet!

Even while realizing that devotedness to art is for the few, I sometimes wonder if it would not add a shade of greatness and refinement to the many if they had only a little appreciation for and understanding of life's noblest self expression.—E. A. G.
AIR

O love! sing me a little song,
For I am very sad.
My eyes grow misty with the salt of tears.
And all my soul is sick.
As unborn children in the mother's womb
Hang heavy as they grow,
So sorrow hangs in me and bears me down,
Who have born all things since my time began.

O love! I love too much, I know,
And find the loving pain,
For all my gift of love bears not new love.
Only my faith begets a little wonder at its constancy.
And shall my gift be good
In sight of any man when one I love
These days finds it not good in sight of him?

—ROSWELL GEORGE MILLS

TRIUMPH

Cold, remote and cold
Is the glory of a star;
Old, oh, very old,
The world-sick angels are!

They have the stars' nearness;
I, your approaching eyes.
They in their locked palaces
Have little to make them wise.

Dark as Truth is dark,
The shades that fall at will:
Stark, cruel and stark
The wind that sways them still.

But we are young and strong:
No wind can quench our light
While love illuminates
The deeps of every night.

—AILIEL RIECHARDT

THE IRONIC TOUCH

FOR E. A. G.

We stand on the threshold between Life and Death:
Gladly would we welcome in Death as a guest,
But life insists on staying with us.

—L. HARCOURT FARMER
A READING BY YEATS

While all the eyes in the oblong hall stared at him with their various expressions and unexpressions and he, the poet, sat silent on a chair, not regarding at all the people he had come to amuse, some of his own words, insistently fingered my memory:

“What portion in this life can the artist have
Who has awakened from the common dream
But dissipation and despair?”

words more wistful and unhappy than any I have read; and I could not forget them through the ebb and flow of his reading. It was not that his attitude or manner even whispered of despair, but the sadness that comes to poets who think, and dream overmuch, and that is half-sister to despair, was constantly in his voice, rich as it was with that same sad, wild magic one is enslaved by in his poems. His voice is the complement of his poems, for Yeats is a bard at heart. No violin, no organ has stirred me, furrowed my imagination as did Yeats’ chants of his disturbed, beautiful, fairy-haunted Ireland, chants which are equally, I feel, chants of his disturbed and fairy-haunted heart.

“I wanted to sing of the places around the spot where I was born,” he confessed, “the places I knew well and loved; but it was always myself I put into the poems my feelings and emotions.” Yet one does not question his intense affection for these places. Myself, I felt that he was one of those who find their completest truth in nature’s nakedness, as contrasted with the overclothedness of sophisticated life. There are two types of people to whom nature is the all-giver: those happy-souled, crude, yet curiously refined first children of her brown, rich body, who never betray her for the red-lit eyes of cities; and those opposite ones who are born with a sad weight of experience on their spirits, and who are perpetually obsessed by that “nostalgia of the infinite” spoken of by one of the French Romanticists, Gauthier, I believe. Among these latter I placed Yeats.

From his poems I had inferred that he looked for and found in those illusive, lovely beings that play or weep in the silent and green places of earth, and appear to those who dream with clear eyes, the delicate and desired things that rarely come as gifts from those one loves; and when his voice lingered on this tale and that tale of the fairy-folk I knew I had guessed truly.

But there is no being so desolate as he over whom the fairy-spell has endured and been broken. For him, indeed, is nothing left but “dissipation and despair”, for he learns that he is alone and without the strength and hardness to endure loneliness. Poets of Yeats’ type rarely possess hardness enough to permit of their enjoying spiritual loneliness and it is tragedy for them if some myth lure them up a mountain, then leave them there where the sun is too bright, the wind too bare and the crags too bald.

I hope the fairies will never desert their god-son for he needs them, and we need the magic and the singing, simple wisdom they give him for his poems.

—ELSIE GIDLOW

GOD AMUSES HIMSELF

In a vast shadowy place pierced by sharp stabs of sunlight an old man sits. His face droops low over his withered hands, and the long end of his dusky garment winds interminably through space. It trails across a world, and on it gleam innumerable eyes, as stars. And as He sits, wrapped in silence, His ministers,
whose names are Pleasure and Pain and Love and Suffering and Despair catch in a huge net myriad birds, and lay them fluttering before Him. And He, with His slender fingers, that seem like claws, so long have the nails grown, slowly, feather by feather, plucks the struggling things, and strews the feathers about Him riotously. When they are nude and dumb with agony, He flings them along the length of His garment, to become a star, perhaps. I have been told that they become stars.

—ROS WELL GEORGE MILLS

SUICIDE

They told me that I must play at chess with God, for all men play that game with Him. They brought me before Him in a mighty house where all was silence save for the ticking of an enormous clock that marked the rise and fall of centuries. And when the dull red and black board was laid across our knees, and He moved His pawn a square, I heard a woman's scream, and saw, when I moved it to play, that my hand was the hand of a child. I looked on the Face, and saw nothing, only emptiness, with a faint gleaming deep in the void.

And the clock ticked monotonously, repeating through infinite corridors.

Again He moved, and it was a queen He shifted, and when I moved my knight, I saw that my hand was the hand of a man. But my moves were always false, and one by one I lost my men.

The clock ticked ceaselessly, monotonously, and the echo came faintly from the infinite length of corridors.

The game went on interminably; He won continually. I felt the weight of time bend on my spirit as my hands waved feebly about the board. I looked again at the Face, and found it blank as before, save for the cruel glimmering in the emptiness. His hand shifted quickly, and the fingers were thin, with ridges at the joints.

Tick! The clock sounded interminably. By and by, I heard nothing but the horrible ticking of that clock. I would not move my hands to play, I wanted to stop the game. Only His implacable hand came out relentlessly, monotonously, like the ticking of the clock in its insistence.

Suddenly, I kicked violently, and upset the board with its fantastic array of men in God's lap.

And I heard the clock no more after that.

—ROS WELL GEORGE MILLS

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