

# THE POEMS OF THE MONTH

Selected by Elinor Wylie

THE December magazines—or rather such of them as it was possible for one swift and industrious reader to consume—contained in the opinion of this reader much good verse. I have found it extremely difficult to refrain from choosing at least a dozen poems and relying on an indulgent editor to find space for them; but since I am limited to half a dozen, here they are, and I shall hope that you discovered the others for yourselves. I am particularly struck by the fact that the best verse printed during this auspicious month was written by the young. Turning to Mr. de la Mare I am immediately repulsed by the word *unbelliferous*, nor can I honestly say I like Thomas Hardy's poem in "The New Republic" with anything approaching the whole-hearted liking I have for those of Mr. Auslander and Miss Bogan. These two poems, one so pleasantly sleepy and the other so refreshingly sharp, are good examples of their authors' distinct and striking gifts.

I had hoped that I would find Winifred Welles's poem about Gabriel in the December "Measure", but I see that it did not appear until the January issue of that most delightful little magazine, which is bringing out a surprising quantity of fine stuff at present. The December number has excellent work in it. I like Maxwell Anderson's "The Beggar God" and also Francis Carlin's charming lyrics, but since I must choose I like best of all Maxwell Bodenheim's sonnets to his

wife, of which I think the first is possibly the more distinguished, though it seems a thousand pities to separate them. Perhaps the editor will let me put them both in.

The other poems which I have selected are both by young writers; in fact I think Mr. Bodenheim must be the Methuselah of my group. In spite of my very strong predilection for rhymed verse I find both of these poems too charming to resist.

## DAWN AT THE RAIN'S EDGE

The drowsy, friendly, comfortable creak  
Of axles arguing and wet spokes gleaming,  
When old empty tumbrels blunder dreaming,  
    too sleepy to speak,  
Blunder down the road in the rain dreaming.

And the house-lights rub at the shining dripping shadows  
Over the windows; through the drenched silver willows; everywhere:  
In the sulphurous fluctuant marsh this side the steaming meadows  
Where black weeds trouble the moon's drowned hair.

There is a sudden fuss of dragged feathers  
and the swing  
Of winds in a hissing burst of raindrops; then  
    a cry  
Of colour at the hill's rim; a strange bright glimmering;  
And a lark talking madness in some corner of  
    the sky.

Joseph Auslander  
—*The New Republic*

## MEDUSA

I had come to the house, in a cave of trees  
Facing a sheer sky  
Everything moved: a bell hung ready to strike,  
Sun and reflection wheeled by.

When the bare eyes were before me  
 And the hissing hair,—  
 Held up at a window, seen through a door,  
 The stiff bald eyes, the serpents on the fore-  
 head  
 Formed in the air.

This is a dead scene forever now,  
 Nothing will ever stir;  
 The end will never brighten it more than this  
 Nor the rain blur.

The water will always fall and will not fall,  
 And the tipped bell make no sound.  
 The grass will be always growing for hay  
 Deep on the ground.

And I shall stand here like a shadow  
 Under the great balanced day,  
 My eyes on the yellow dust that was lifting in  
 the wind  
 And does not drift away.

Louise Bogan  
 —*The New Republic*

## TWO SONNETS TO MY WIFE

### I

Because her voice is Schönberg in a dream  
 In which his harshness plays with softer keys  
 This does not mean that it is void of ease  
 And cannot gather to a strolling gleam.  
 Her voice is full of manners, and they seem  
 To place a masquerade on thought and tease  
 Its strength until it finds that it has knees,  
 And whimsically leaves its heavy scheme.

Discords can be the search of harmony  
 For worlds that lie beyond the reach of poise  
 And must be captured with abandoned hands.  
 The music of my wife strives to be free,  
 And often takes a light unbalanced voice  
 While madly walking over thoughtful lands.

### II

My wife relents to life and does not speak  
 Each moment with a deft and rapid note.  
 Sometimes a clumsy wierdness finds her throat  
 And ushers in a music that is weak  
 And bargains with the groping of her heart.  
 But even then she plays with graver tones  
 That do not sell themselves to laughs and  
 moans,  
 But seek the counsel of a deeper art.

She drapes her loud emotions in a shroud  
 Of glistening thought that waves above their  
 dance,  
 And sometimes parts to show their startled  
 eyes.  
 The depths of mind within her have not bowed  
 To sleek emotion with its amorous glance.  
 She slaps its face and laughs at its surprise!

Maxwell Bodenheim  
 —*The Measure*

## MOODS OF WOMEN

*Going home, six o'clock; summer evening*

Men go to women, mutely, for their peace,  
 And they who lack it most create it when  
 They make, because they must, loving their men  
 A solace for sad bosom-bended heads. There  
 Is all the meagre peace men get—no other-  
 where,

No mountain space, no tree with placid leaves,  
 Or heavy gloom beneath a young girl's hair;  
 No sound of valley bell on autumn air,  
 Or room made home with doves along the eaves  
 Ever holds peace like this, poured by poor  
 women

Out of their hearts' poverty, for worn men.

Genevieve Taggard  
 —*The Lyric West*

## THE LOVE-SONG

I am more tall to-day than ever before;  
 So great is my pride, as I sing aloud your song,  
 That the city street seems like the deck of a  
 ship

Breasting far waves of cloud. The world moves  
 thus

Out on its seas of air to the tune of your song,  
 Rising and falling under the straight noon sun.

You would never know your song, I am shout-  
 ing it so,

But shouting is fine, when the waves of the sea  
 run high!

Loud notes flung to the wind and carried away  
 Down through the shining water and shining  
 air!

Shouting is fine, when a ship moves under your  
 feet,

And all of your being is full of remembered  
 song!

I am so tall to-day! I can almost forget  
 Your notes were made for another, and not for  
 me;

And sung in the quiet dark with a voice that  
 trembled—

Now from afar, and under the deep noon sky,  
 I do not care to know if she understood—  
 Let there be shouting—shouting into the sun!

For to all the world the street is only the  
 street

Where one may pass who sings that her heart  
 is full;

And none must know that the street is plung-  
 ing before me,

Downward and down to the constant rhythm  
 of singing—

Sucked to the whirlpool dark in the surging of  
 music—

Rudderless—lost—in the song that is not for-  
 gotten.

Bernice Lesbia Kenyon  
 —*Scribner's Magazine*

# TO THE FRIENDS OF "OUT OF THE SHADOW"

By Rose Gollup Cohen

*(This paper originally was part of a letter to a friend and was not intended for print. But this friend, who is also an editor, urged me to publish it, and I consented.)*

*Not having had a public in mind then, I soon blissfully forgot even the one person for whom it was intended. It is rather intimate, almost too personal. But since it is to be used at all, I beg to dedicate gratefully this bit in answer to the many friends and reviewers who have shown a deep and kindly concern for my book, and who have wondered how it came to be written, what led up to it.)*

AFTER my marriage,—of which there is a suggestion at the end of "Out of the Shadow",—because of my belief in economic independence for women, and also because for me personally it was necessary, I continued to work until my little daughter was born. And now twenty-four hours' work a day began for me. We lived on the East Side in three rooms of a small rear house. Close to our windows the dusky wall of a big church rose. The sun never came into our house. My baby was not strong. I had to stay in a great deal, and life closed about us a bit. Now and then singing came from the church. My baby must learn of the beautiful things outside in the world. "Listen, darling, listen,"—I propped her up in the crib. "Listen. Music." And she listened attentively and then pursing her baby mouth repeated slowly, "Muk—sy". My baby must also know flowers. When I bought soup greens I divided the bunch in half; part went into the soup, and part, the freshest, greenest bit of parsley, went into a tiny blue vase. I placed it on the mantel where

the baby could look at it from the crib. "See, dear heart, flowers!" A friend who heard me once exclaimed, "Why Rose! You are giving the child the wrong idea of what flowers are." But my baby seemed immune to wrong ideas. For she never said the word. She grinned deliciously. She screwed up her little mouth, but the word that always came was "prettie".

I managed to find time to brood. "Wretched being," I told myself. "With the love of the two, how can you!" But it was so. Our doctor, who was our fairy during these days, —indeed during all our days she has been more than "doctor" to us,—said, "How is it, oh, how is it? Your race has gone through so much, suffered so. Yet you have never learned to be patient." But it seems to me that I was patient, most of the time anyway.

Sometimes letters came; then I looked forward with joy and excitement to answering them. But to write even the shortest letter involved such hardship and labor. My spelling was wretched. To this day I can spell the smallest word in a half-dozen different ways. It was also hard to decide where a sentence should begin and where it should end. Often a whole evening was spent, precious hours when the baby was asleep, in answering a single letter. And then just as likely as not it would never be sent. I could not bear the thought of the recipient's seeing it. And the cause for discontent seemed more clear. "I cannot even write a short letter without hard-