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"The Music of the Human Heart"

This poet is distinctly worth knowing. He is the truth where our "red-bloods" and magazine socialists are usually a rather boresome pose.

As Mr. Selver has tried to make his anthology representative of all the qualities and tendencies of contemporary Bohemian work it is not to be supposed that they are all of the mettle of Bezruc.

One hears with deep regret that Vrchlicky is just dead, after a life of unceasing activity. He has been a prime mover in the revival of the Czech nationality and literature. He has given them, besides his own work, an almost unbelievable number of translations from the foreign classics, Dante, Schiller, Leopardi. For the rest I must refer the reader to Mr. Selver's introduction.

Ezra Pound

"THE MUSIC OF THE HUMAN HEART"

This title-phrase has not been plucked from the spacious lawn of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. It grew in the agreeable midland yard of Mr. Walt Mason's newspaper verse, and appeared in a tribute of his to Mr. James Whitcomb Riley, whose fifty-ninth birthday anniversary, falling on the seventh of October, has been widely celebrated in the American public libraries and daily press.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Mr. Riley's fine gift to his public, the special happiness his genius brings to his readers, cannot, for lack of space, be adequately described, or even indicated, here. Perhaps a true, if incomplete, impression of the beauty of his service may be conveyed by repeating a well-known passage of Mr. Lowes Dickinson's *Letters from John Chinaman*—a passage which I can never read without thinking very gratefully of James Whitcomb Riley, and of what his art has done for American poetry-readers.

Mr. Dickinson says:—

In China our poets and literary men have taught their successors for long generations, to look for good not in wealth, not in power, not in miscellaneous activity, but in a trained, a choice, an exquisite appreciation of the most simple and universal relations of life. To feel, and in order to feel, to express, or at least to understand the expression, of all that is lovely in nature, of all that is poignant and sensitive in man, is to us in itself a sufficient end. . . . The pathos of life and death, the long embrace, the hand stretched out in vain, the moment that glides forever away, with its freight of music and light, into the shadow and bush of the haunted past, all that we have, all that eludes us, a bird on the wing, a perfume escaped on the gale—to all these things we are trained to respond, and the response is what we call literature.

Among Mr. Riley's many distinguished faculties of execution in expressing, in stimulating, "an exquisite appreciation of the most simple and universal relations of life," one faculty has been, in so far as I know, very little mentioned—I mean his mastery in creating character. Mr. Riley has expressed, has incarnated in the melodies and harmonies of his poems, not merely several

“*The Music of the Human Heart*”

living, breathing human creatures as they are made by their destinies, but a whole world of his own, a vivid world of country-roads, and country-town streets, peopled with farmers and tramps and step-mothers and children, trailing clouds of glory even when they boast of the superiorities of “Renselaer,” a world of hard-working women and hard-luck men, and poverty and prosperity, and drunkards and raccoons and dogs and grandmothers and lovers. To have presented through the medium of rhythmic chronicle, a world so sharply limned, so funny, so tragic, so mean, so noble, seems to us in itself a striking achievement in the craft of verse.

No mere word of criticism can of course evoke, at all as example can, Mr. Riley’s genius of identification with varied human experiences, the remarkable concentration and lyric skill of his characterization. Here are two poems of his on the same general theme—grief in the presence of death. We may well speak our pride in the wonderful range of inspiration and the poetic endowment which can create on the same subject musical stories of the soul as diverse, as searching, as fresh and true, as the beloved poems of *Bereaved* and *His Mother*.

BEREAVED

Let me come in where you sit weeping; aye,
Let me, who have not any child to die,
Weep with you for the little one whose love
I have known nothing of.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

The little arms that slowly, slowly loosed
Their pressure round your neck; the hands you used
To kiss. Such arms, such hands I never knew.
May I not weep with you.

Fain would I be of service, say something
Between the tears, that would be comforting;
But ah! so sadder than yourselves am I,
Who have no child to die.

HIS MOTHER

Dead! my wayward boy—my own—
Not *the Law's*, but mine; the good
God's free gift to me alone,
Sanctified by motherhood.

"Bad," you say: well, who is not?
"Brutal"—"With a heart of stone"—
And "red-handed." Ah! the hot
Blood upon your own!

I come not with downward eyes,
To plead for him shamedly:
God did not apologize
When He gave the boy to me.

Simply, I make ready now
For His verdict. You prepare—
You have killed us both—and how
Will you face us There!

E. W.

THE OPEN DOOR

Fears have been expressed by a number of friendly critics that POETRY may become a house of refuge for minor poets.

The phrase is somewhat worn. Paragraphers have done their worst for the minor poet, while they have