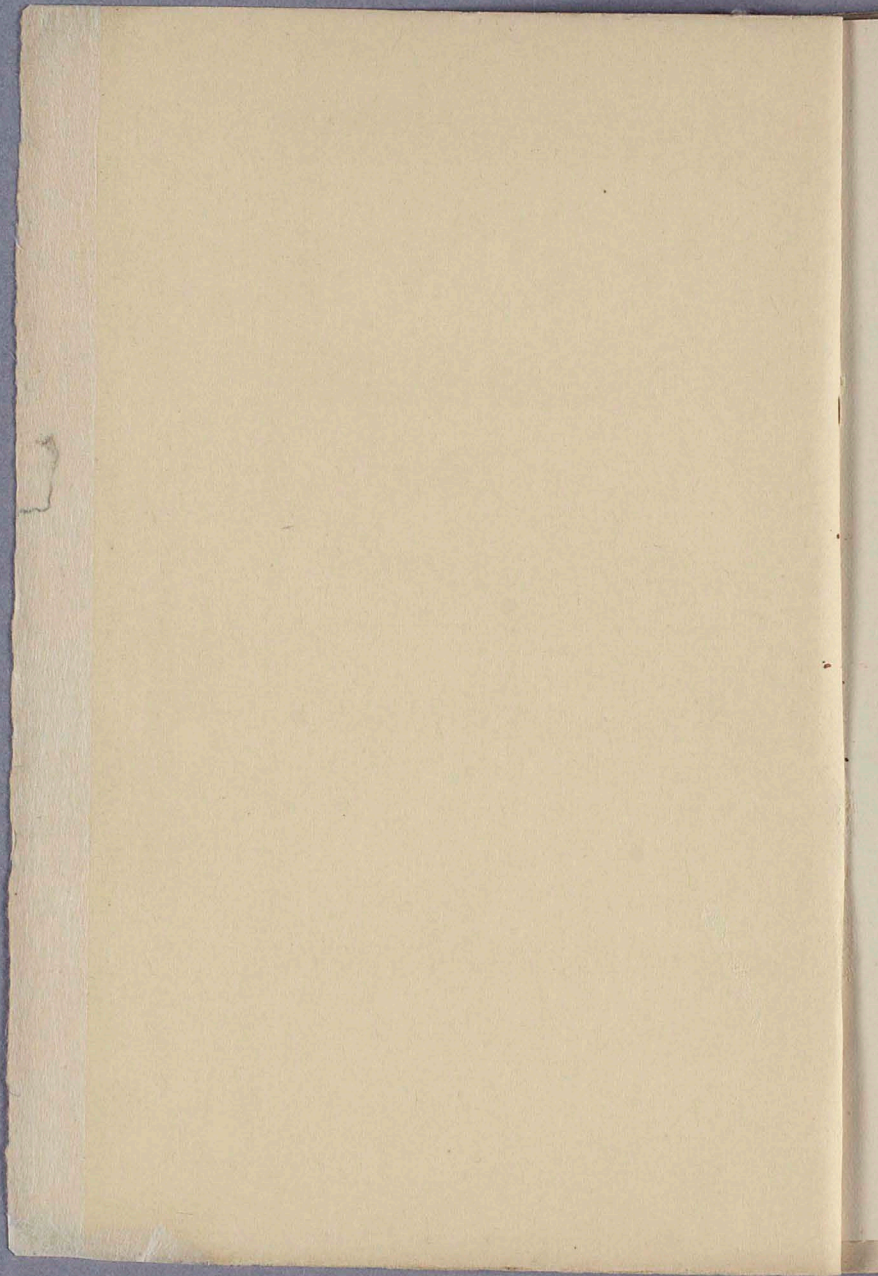


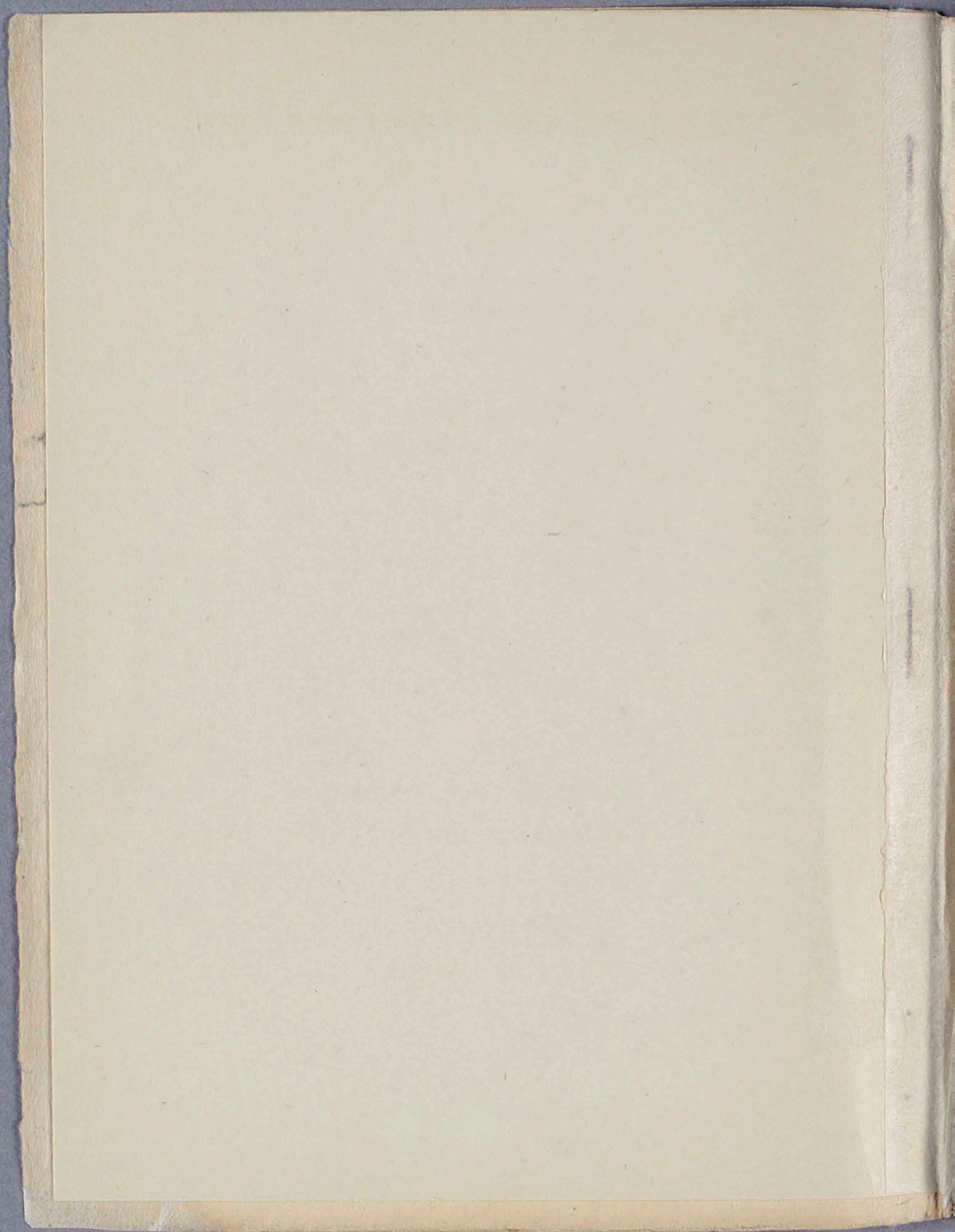
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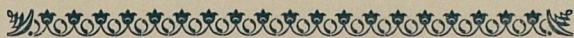
Issue 25 · Year 4
march 1923 april

WAYLAND WILLIAMS
JOHN PEALE BISHOP
PIERRE LOVING
EMMETT DUNN
JEAN TOOMER
HART CRANE









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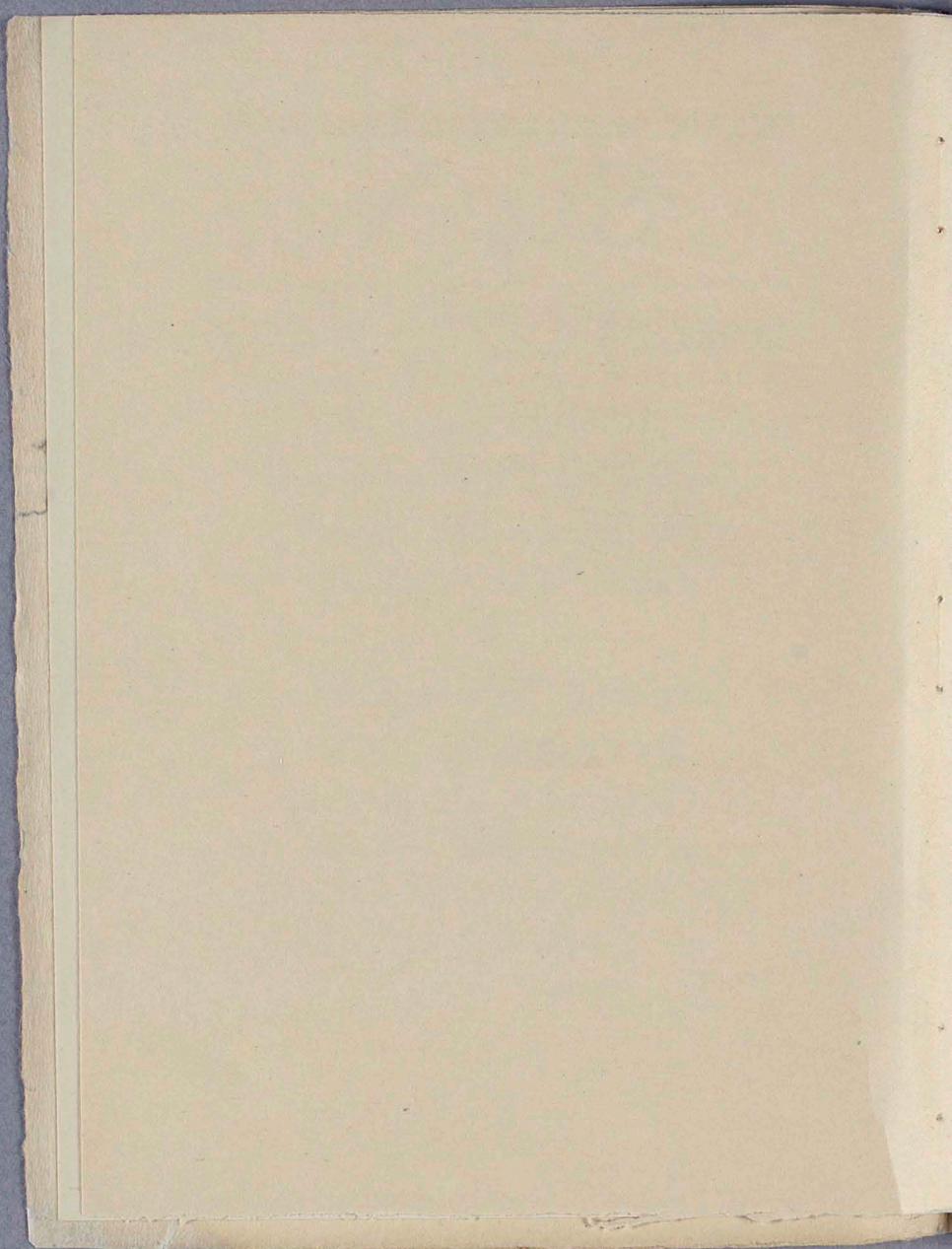
To PROMOTE *an* OPEN-
MINDED CONSIDERA-
TION *of* THEORIES
and PRACTICES
of ART

Director: Norman Fitts
Northampton, Mass.

Contributions & Criticisms
of Contributions Solicited

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IN THIS ISSUE

PIERRE LOVING: contributor to magazines too numerous to mention.

JEAN TOOMER: contributor to *Liberator*, *Broom*, *Little Review*, *Modern Review* & *Double Dealer*; author of *Cane* [B&L].

HART CRANE: Secessionist.

WAYLAND WILLIAMS: contributor to Issues 12, 14, 18, 19, 21 & 23;

EMMETT DUNN, to 19, 20, 21 & 23;

JOHN PEALE BISHOP, to 20 & 24.

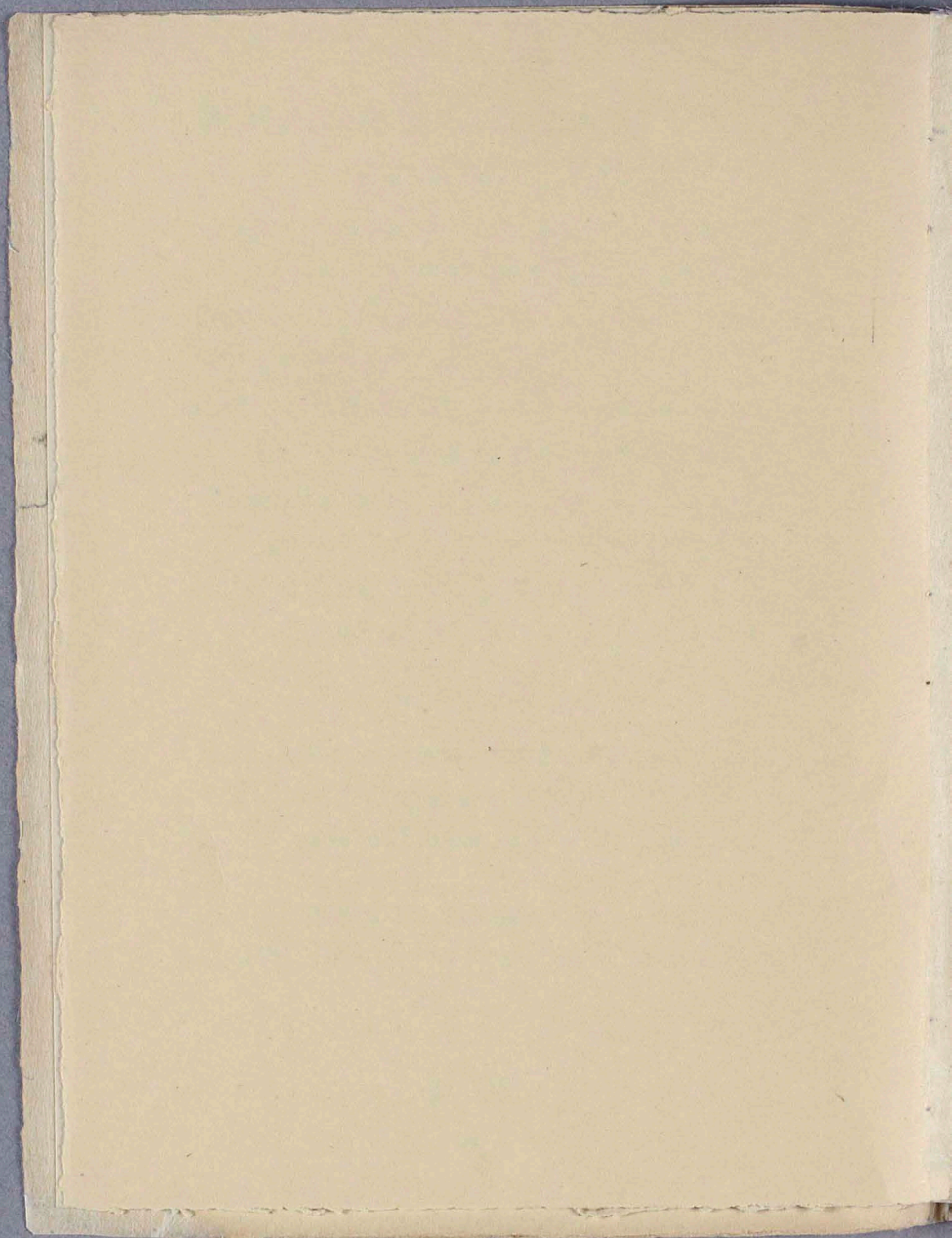
IN NEXT ISSUE

Malcolm Cowley, Pierre Loving, Max Robin, Lyonel Feininger, Anne Zimmerman, A. V. Churchill & Wm. Troy.

Note: E. E. Cummings won the 1st,
Emmett Dunn 2nd prize in Issue 23.



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SMUT

BEING A KIND OF ODE
ON THE INTIMIDATIONS
OF IMMORALITY

THERE is something about it. Nature was in a jocund mood when she made animals, and it seems ungracious not to join in her jocundity when we contemplate physiology. It's a terrible kind of person who can't laugh at the animal in himself; he seems only partly created. Modesty, in its physical sense, is justly regarded as the silliest and most contemptible of the virtues.

Smut is no respecter of wealth, rank or nationality, but it has a profound respect for age. It is intrinsically difficult for people of widely different ages to enjoy a rough joke together. The youth is bound to feel shame for what he knows and perhaps for what he does not know; the ancient feels shame for either too much or too little experience. Persons of similar age presumably have similar knowledge and experience, so there is less embarrassment between them.

Shame inevitably comes into it, as well as merriment. It's too bad that it should, but it does. It's a rather pathetic feeling. Reflect on the meaning of the Latin word *pudenda*—the things of which one should feel ashamed. Why

on earth should a person feel ashamed of anything he has not made? Yet many persons persist in this shame—in fact rather pride themselves on it; and to them the best thing appears to be to assume obliviousness.

We are emerging from a somewhat prudish age. It might almost be said that we have emerged. Our elders say we 'lose' something when we give over that polite obliviousness. Possibly, but at least a part of what we lose is well lost. Smut does harm to no grown person with a sensible view of life. It is not easy even to see what those dangers are which smut is supposed to have for the young person, which are said to divert him from contemplation of blameless wedlock and four children—that awe-inspiring institution, The Family. The twentieth century would seem to have wrought a change for the better here. Its writers, painters, ballet directors, et al., have to a certain degree shown up the absurdity of the Puritan attitude. You can't reasonably condemn as base the work of a Deity whom in the same breath you describe as all-beneficent. Respect is due to anyone who has the courage to tweak the figleaf off the image of so perverted a piety.

Other ages have been less prudish; in fact all ages were less prudish than the Victorian. It is not clear, however, that freedom from prudery

has been of any great assistance to literature, to consider its case alone. Great works survive in spite of their smutty passages, or at any rate independently of them, very few because of them. The Elizabethans, Homer, Horace, Swift—you could cut out all their dirty parts and still have the best. It would seem that smut is not one of the great themes of literature.

Still, now and then one appears who does something with it. Petronius is an example, Rabelais another. I am in a splendid position to hold forth on two of them, as I have just finished *Ulysses* and am reading Casanova's *Memoirs*. Both are works of talent if not genius; both are smutty, but very differently so.

Joyce throws down the gauntlet to prudery so hard that it bounces, with an effect rather detrimental to the value of the gesture. He puts down in cold type things that would bring the proverbial blush to the cheek of the proverbial dragoon. But he has a sense of humor and some sense of balance, and in his close forces his theme into a sort of Browningsque grandeur. The appalling thoughts of that woman lying in bed, rising and falling and ending on the famous "yes I said yes I will yes"—(it will be famous, if it isn't)—, fling on the mind the picture of a humanity vile and

stubborn but brave, positive and on the whole worth admiring.

Casanova's genre is quite other and much subtler: the art of conveying the dirtiest meaning by the use of words which could be used with impunity in the presence of the Ladies' Aid Society. The best smutty limericks do that. There was a neat example in the last *S&N*, at the end of a poem thing by E. E. Cummings, the 'naif boy'. Casanova describes himself in some rather wild situations, yet the man he portrays is consistently urbane, sincere, appreciative of the more pleasing aspects of mankind—in short, a gentleman. When he acts in an ungentlemanly way he admits the fact with a regretful candor that acquits him.

Ah, but how few of us are Casanovas and Naif Boys! For the moderns, intoxicated with the joy of figleaf-tweaking, forget one rather important thing. Namely: smut is a weapon so dangerous, so prodigal of ridicule and odium to the person who uses it badly, so instant in its appeal not merely to 'good taste' but to that cosmic physiological shame, that only genius or the greatest caution can prevent it from stabbing its wielder. A person who uses it unwisely or unnecessarily or unurbanely need never hope to stand before the world as a martyr or a savior or a knight errant

of good sense. To the unsympathetic he becomes a maggot; to the most friendly, no better than an odious little boy showing off odiously. You have heard someone tell a raw story in an after-dinner speech, and not get away with it?

I feel I am about to be accused of good taste. Oh reason not the taste; only fools argue about taste. If I am challenged, as I am perfectly willing to be, let it be on the truth of what I assert with such fulsome obviousness. Use smut if you feel you absolutely have to; but remember, oh remember! that a man great enough to use it to his own advantage, much less the world's, is born not oftener than twice in a century, at the most liberal estimate. That being so, your chances are approximately 2 divided by x — x representing the total number of human births on this planet during the century in which you were born.

WAYLAND WILLIAMS

DAUGHTER OF HERODIAS

LANGUIDLY she held out in pale curving hands,
As though she were a salon Salome,
A teacup that seemed headless . . . talking glands
And who was still the minor poet of the day.
She swayed a thought and shook her avid head
Bell-coifed and bronzer than a Canton Bell,
Rippling away meanwhile in Manichean tones
Of Jolson and Maillol, of Chaplin and Floyd Dell,
So that he sank his teeth upon two scones . . .
Her voice allured him like fleet whirling limbs
And slipping veils and noise of cymbals' clash;
But she was lisping echolalian hymns
Till his imagination grew a rash:
Her girdle slithered in a fall of chatter
And Herod saw Jokanaan on a platter.

PIERRE LOVING

THE COMING OF CUMMINGS

*Cada uno es como Dios le hizo
y aun peor muchas vezes*

SANCHO PANZA

Quare fremuerunt gentes?

VULGATE

There's glory for you

HUMPTY DUMPTY

THE 'naïf boy' of the Secession group has recently unburdened himself at the expense of Mr. Vinal and of others almost too numerous to mention (a hundred million, following his figures but not his punctuation). As far as I can judge from his rather inexpert use of English and from his more unfortunate ignorance of horse-breeding, his action is in the nature of a minority report, albeit somewhat loud and perhaps a trifle offensive.

I do not share Mr. Cummings' stated dislike for clichés; I find them useful. To call a spade a spade may be trite but is at least correct. Whereas Mr. C.'s antipathy for them is carried to the absurd point of changing the appearance of the language and to the misspelling of recondite terms (though this latter may be chiefly due to ignorance and a meagre acquaintance among poultry fanciers not unnatural in a Harvard man).

Certainly, also, his objection to the use and reuse of certain ideas would be worthy of more reverent consideration were it not that his own manner of expression bares him to an attack from the rear. Consistency in such matters may or may not be desirable, but there can be no doubt that Mr. Cummings in bedaubing Mr. Vinal has plentifully besprinkled himself. He who couches his objection to clichés in the most 'used and reused' terms in America cannot but invite displeasing comparisons. The pitiful picture of Mr. Cummings crouched upon his 'sternly allotted sandpile', crying out against the continual dropping of clichés upon his devoted head, loses much of its pathos when we more truly envisage him squatting in the frying pan, making obscene gestures at the fire.

I leave to the statisticians of the *Saturday Evening Post* to compute the ratio of the number of persons who use and reuse the idea of Helen of Troy to the number who use and reuse the idea of 'Eventually Why Not Now'. I fear Mr. Cummings would be greatly dismayed at finding himself in the majority and that his effort to avoid an imaginary Scylla has deposited him in a very real Charybdis.

One imagines Mr. Cummings in mad flight from a hundred million clichés. Finally he has out-

distanced his pursuers. He takes momentary respite in some outhouse in far-off Aneitum. He draws a deep breath, thinking himself safe. But, alas! all is vanity. His own cliché, which he shares with the readers of the *S. E. P.*, crawls through a knothole and bashes him firmly on the occiput amid the appreciative laughter of the anthropomorphic inhabitants.

EMMETT DUNN

EPITHALAMIUM

WHEN first my beloved came to my bed
It was as though the midnight had seen pass
Morning on the march, or that great bird of the
Dayspring, newly mewed, plumed in loud brass.

My breath abandoned me and my veins failed.
Silence came all sighing to my mouth.
My knees went down before her naked feet
And lust dropped from me like a loosened cloth.

JOHN PEALE BISHOP

OPEN LETTER TO GORHAM B. MUNSON

I LIKED your piece in November *S4N*: the concentration on America, the acceptance of the machine, the attitude (the only healthy, the only *art* attitude) which uses modern forms, and not the hurt caused by them, as the basis of a national literature. (The life around me is pregnant and warm, dynamic, tensioned, massed, jazzed, lovable. If my dinner digests well, I love it. There is no spiritual resistance. I had been in every powerhouse in the city years before I dragged myself into the Corcoran Gallery. And I neglected the 'poetry of the people' for such things as motorcycle motors, dynamos and generators. The first thing that I attempted to draw was a street car. The first thing that I made from cardboard was a battleship. There is not a statue in Washington with the living beauty of line and balance of certain Pierce Arrow cars. And the National Museum looks mouldy beside any automobile show window.)

But there is something lacking in your program. Take the machine: you get form, simplification, at least the basis for strangeness, abstraction. All right. Does that exhaust your machine? Not by a damned sight. A toy model of a machine would give you these. What's lacking in the toy?

Power, friend, power! And if *Secession* doesn't watch itself, there's where it is going to fall down. Not in criticism, but in imaginative writing. Your imaginative writing too easily thins out into what is trivial and inconsequential and weak. A weak machine is ready for the scrap heap. Whatever its design, what significance is there to a machine rusting in a junkman's yard? what to a poem, sketch or novel that lacks stuff, power, deep organic functioning? that can do no work?

To me, these considerations do not raise the weary question as to whether or not the purely aesthetic in literature is the prime factor, is exhaustive, is sufficient. This thought does come to me: that the dualism of form and substance is largely specious, that great design does not rise from puny matter. The form of a machine for dislocating fly joints would inspire no one. The form of a sketch that locates fly joints can claim no greater virtue. I want great art. This means I want great design. As a means to this end, I want great substance, great power.

JEAN TOOMER

EIGHT MORE HARVARD POETS

[BRENTANO]

THE main bulk of this collection credits Harvard with little more than an even gait with recent Oxford and Cambridge anthologies of similar intention, and helps to prove that there are as many incipient 'Georgians' in America as in England. The fact would hardly warrant mention if beyond this margin of quietude there were not the more animated gestures of two poets who have at least convincing manners. The attenuated Woodberrian echoes still haunt the banks of the Charles, but beside the fresher reactions of Malcolm Cowley and John Brooks Wheelwright even the disguise of vers libre fails to rescue their notes from the embrace of familiar nostalgias and worn allusions.

In this well bred and predominating group (whose tradition certainly needs no present defense) Royall Snow is the only one to approach an interesting idiom. He has a rather true sense for classic diction, though he fails to carry his expression through to the point of valor. Like the others, he gives scattered couplets that are pleasant and all-too-quotable, but there is scarcely a poem from any of the six poets of this group which is satisfying as a completed statement.

A genial pedestrianism, however, in several of Malcolm Cowley's poems indicates the possibility of a 20th century 'pastoral' form. A faculty for fresh record, city and road panorama, and ironic nuance, all make Cowley's experiments quite valuable. For one who can so well afford to stick closer to home, he deliberately allows French and 18th century influences to intrude too notably in several instances; yet practically all of his poems achieve consistent form. I think that its austerity and sense of timelessness make *Mountain Valley* his best accomplished poem. Its intonation is suave and deeper than the graded accents of his other poems; its rhythm is accumulative of something less amiable, yet rarer and more abstract than his usual 'Chaucerian' method of observation includes. Cowley seems to be civilized in the same sense as the older Chinamen. His alertness is a steady reassurance against crudities or bathos wherever his technical facilities may lead him.

John Brooks Wheelwright has little of Cowley's refinement, but the stertorous drive in several of his poems carries with it real emotional significance. The Hamilton poem, which best exemplifies this quality, is certainly one of the three best poems in the anthology, and the last verse of

Closing Gesture is a statement so imaginative and balanced that it should be quoted:—

*Myself,
stand against the black drift of storms,
trustful as the appealing brave, praying with his
arms,
invincible as Hamilton in granite,
firm as a colossal crucifix upon a mountain trail
forever changeless against a changing sky.*

It is good to find a poet with the power of fusing ideas with such subjective intensity that the result is poetry. Wheelwright's stringency is a rare quality in American poetry. We have had it in Robinson; but, unless I am mistaken, Wheelwright is emotionally more generously endowed, and, in spite of several second-rate poems, he offers interesting conjectures.

A detailed record of the Muses' bouts at Cambridge is included in Dorian Abbott's able preface. Turning poets loose is a natural privilege of universities, but it will never become, at least in our America, a popular inter-collegiate sport. The Fates are kind in this, even though the idea of the undergraduate anthology seldom gets as much encouragement as it really deserves.

HART CRANE

COMMENT ON ISSUE XXIII

Poem : E. E. Cummings

Like all true genius, he has exploited certain elements in his civilization to the limit. I defy anyone to write even a second-rate genuine poem incorporating effectively the advertising slogans which are a more vital part of our life than the agricultural decorations of Keats. Too late! Cummings has done it perfectly—and other poets may as well try to rewrite the Divine Comedy. Furthermore, this poem is a complete knockout of the tubercular nightingales declaiming in their coffins.—J. FREEMAN

Writing should be at least as dangerous a pre-occupation as tightrope walking or traveling in the subway at rush hour. He injects a savagery nasty but tonic. Let's have more nausea, hard fists, cruelty.—G. B. MUNSON

Outrageous climactically, but to the point and quite funny.—W. R. BENET

Best possible person to counteract the undergraduate sweetness and obfuscation that occasionally so annoys me.—J. P. BISHOP

Cannot be the greatest aesthetic fun unless we take him seriously.—D. GREENHOOD

I agree with him thoroughly.—F. D. GRAB

An idea and cadences.—L. GILMORE
Every day in every way, etc.—H. D. WINNEY
A delicious and deserved satire on the Dorian
Grey pose.—R. HUNTER
Rather long in coming.—R. M. NEAL
Nice bit of satire.—W. W. WILLIAMS
Studied cleverness; J. Weaver rehashed with a
side order of Mencken.—A. A. ROSENTHAL
The beauty of *this* will certainly give Vinal no
pain.—P. GRAY
Not beautiful, nor educational.—E. HOFFMAN
Clever, but not poetry.—L. E. SMITH
I wish he would write something more like *The
Enormous Room* and less of this Poet Latrinate
matter.—J. CARTER
If *I* had submitted this stuff, you would have said
I was crazy.—J. L. FOWLER

Rain Forest : Emmett Dunn

A mood (doubtless the right one) caught and
surely communicated.—H. M. PARSHLEY
This poem reminds one of what one day one may
remember.—J. T. NICHOLS
Transports me to it.—P. S. EMERSON
Made me see most.—J. CRAWFORD

Thirteen l's and 15 r's to 12 lines make for good tone-quality.—K. MOORE

Costa Rica ain't the only place it rains. Ever been in Philly in July?—R. M. NEAL

I suppose he still has the passport to prove definitely he was in Guapiles.—J. CARTER

Rapid Transit : Wayland Williams

Shows most 'consideration of theories and practices of art' and least concern over the eternal ego.—R. GRISWOLD

Expresses well and strongly our own observations and feelings.—P. S. EMERSON

A thought shouting for expression.—H. SMITH

Everyday realism used to the best possible advantage but—the sow's ear.—H. M. PARSHLEY

Not in his best manner.—J. CARTER

Something Bad : David Greenhood

Very bad indeed.—J. CARTER

As bum as Cummings.—J. L. FOWLER

It can't be that bad.—J. T. NICHOLS

Even worse than he thought.—F. D. GRAB

Even worse than my own.—K. MOORE

On the contrary, rather good.—L. E. SMITH

Barring his conception of Hell.—C. PHILLIPS
Does not make me 'listless'.—E. L. WALTON

After Slight Acquaintance : Barbara Sessions

Exhibits that restraint and sense of latent power
so sadly lacking in most of this issue's contributions.—E. R. DUNN

Prettiiness and sentiment are all very well in the
home, but they're not meat.—J. CARTER

Song : Margaret Sherwood

Lyric realization of something essentially true
and too often condemned.—L. E. SMITH

Rather well done.—H. E. PRELLER

Sweet and reviving.—E. HOFFMAN

Old St. Edna-'though-I-love-you-tonight-shall-I-
love-you-tomorrow' stuff.—R. HUNTER

Pretty, trite, tinkly.—J. CARTER

She and her superb mountain-climber on a shifting
avalanche are worthy of one of Ellis's petites
histoires.—J. P. BISHOP

A Woman I Met : Loring Andrews

Sweeps me along with a force elemental yet
spiritual.—P. S. EMERSON

A poem, protest and exultation.—L. E. SMITH

Bold.—J. L. FOWLER

I'll bet Master Andrews never said to any woman
at a dance "Let us be frank, etc.", but rather,
"Where can I get a drink?"—J. CARTER

Conte drolatique.—E. D. GRAB

Equality : Cecile Phillips

Clean cut, well expressed.—P. S. EMERSON

Should be labeled *S4N6*.—R. GRISWOLD

It's high time they stopped trying to write poetry
altogether at Smith.—J. CARTER

Relativity : Power Dalton

Beautiful idea well phrased.—H. M. PARSHLEY

Made me feel most.—J. CRAWFORD

She mustn't read so much Millay.—J. CARTER

Improvisation : Louis Gilmore

Beauty well expressed.—P. S. EMERSON

Very emancipated to use so technical a word as
orgasm in love poetry. If he wouldn't be shocked,
I should like to retort with the current vulgar
synonym.—J. CARTER

Ballade : Edward Weston

Amusing.—W. R. BENET

Made me laugh most.—J. CRAWFORD
Poor stuff well done.—J. CARTER

The Echo : Ella Hoffman

Good except for repetition.—J. L. FOWLER
Should return to *Kindergarten*.—J. CARTER

A Hawk's Nest : J. T. Nichols

Shows talent.—P. S. EMERSON
Appeals to me.—H. F. PRELLER
Why does he think it necessary to defend Chicago?
Is he a 'young hawk'? Is he blue under the
chin? Is he virile?—J. CARTER

Crupert : Kathleen Moore

I wish young ladies who wish they could kill
themselves would get their wish.—S. V. BENET
I wish she had.—J. CARTER
I wish she could.—R. GRISWOLD

Two Portraits : Kenneth Burke

Interesting, vivid, tricky.—L. GILMORE
Vividly compressed.—L. E. SMITH
The oversoul zoölogist!—C. PHILLIPS
Weak and dirty.—J. CARTER

Dreams : H. S. Baron

Liked it.—J. CARTER

June Shore : Betty von Nardroff

A fine image.—R. HUNTER

I wish she wouldn't do it.—J. CARTER

Trinity : Norman Fitts

The serious poetry of 'passion', 'beauty', 'longing', etc., has been overworked, needs a day off. Life centers sportively in things like this, Burke's, and Cummings'.—J. TOOMER

Satiric rhymes must be absolutely smooth, with no inversions or false accents.—J. P. BISHOP

Cheap.—J. CARTER

Nocturne : John Frazier

Especially good.—H. F. PRELLER

Not so bad.—J. CARTER

Earth Sorrow : Harold Vinal

Ultra-simplicity.—A. A. ROSENTHAL

Priceless.—J. P. BISHOP

Keats overwhelmed by nature.—P. S. EMERSON

The expert cribber!—C. PHILLIPS

'Spare me the beauty of another bluff' is the best line; so true.—W. R. BENET

Being, it is to be presumed, technically a male, he ought to know better.—S. PUTNAM

I urge him to come out as a debutante, get married and start keeping house until the children arrive to take his mind off this girly-girly business.—

J. CARTER

Conquest : T. R.

Has neither rhyme nor reason, beautiful sound nor denial of fact.—E. R. DUNN

What is it expected to convey?—J. L. FOWLER

Beyond my comprehension.—E. L. WALTON

Rot.—L. E. SMITH

Gorton Fish Flake ad?—H. D. WINNEY

No wonder he's nameless.—J. CARTER

Worst thing the *S4N* ever printed.—F. D. GRAB

Letter to the Editor : Charles Sweeney

Secessionists that will pay some attention are more valuable than Founders that slide from under, though their language be odd and their meaning obscure.—W. W. WILLIAMS

MORE COMMENT ON ISSUE XXII

Literary Secession : Gorham B. Munson

One ought to be willing to face opprobrium and exert one's self on behalf of genius, and I am in sympathy with Mr. Munson's hardihood in fighting for underrated genius. I am opposed to waste motion, and, for the artist, associated effort involves some degree of waste motion. I feel that good taste, Puritanism, Victorianism and religion are in no way at variance with the most dazzling kind of aesthetic achievement. The amount of native gift which the artist has is the one thing that signifies. With Mr. Bassett, I feel that we need not secede from mediocrity. In the young men of from 20 to 26, is there one whose work does not suffer from a lack of maturity? Superhuman tasks prematurely attempted shake the public's faith, and no one likes the strained voice. We condone the partial knowledge, haste and raucousness of our prodigies because of the possible genius we anticipate. To find colossal gifts and exhibit them is, I think, the need of the hour.—MARIANNE MOORE

He lays out his material for building the Tower of Babel and then slips away without having done it. Amazingly enough, the material slips away with him.—R. GUTHRIE

Propaganda, advertising.—L. GILMORE
The journal of his insanity.—L. HAROLD

Secession? : Richard Bassett

As always he writes too soon. His article is, I take it, rather readymade, guaranteed to fit without adjustment. He has said more than anyone else in the issue. His feet stay under him well. Strange to say, words are merely a means of expressing an idea, according to him. He has a fine style because it can say things intelligibly and positively. His ideas are damned good. Pat him on the back for having intelligence and logic, but don't let him throw out his ideas as though he thought they were bastard children that he had better thrust forth into a cold world before they get used to being part of the family. I want to see him fight. He has good foot-work and a carried-through hard wallop, but he will strike before he sees an opening and before he can get all his force into the blow.—RAMON GUTHRIE
He thinks more than he says.—L. HAROLD

After Hours : Kenneth Burke

He carries accuratism to such a point as to be a triumph.—M. COWLEY
He lays out his stock in trade, or rather his stage

properties—pregnant Italienne, Jew, shop-girls, sweat, and neurasthenia—, does his juggling act artistically and mechanically, bounces the giant dumb-bell on the floor to show that it is really made of rubber balloons, and goes off the stage bowing acknowledgement of the forced applause of the knowing and obliged.—RAMON GUTHRIE
Sensual degradation.—L. HAROLD

Girl with Orange : Duerne

A chef-d'oeuvre. I am using it as a graph of the various European exchanges for the next month as well as a metro and autobus map and a chart of the probable rises of the Seine. You printed it wrong side up. I had seen it before with the right side at the bottom and called *Widowed Yak with Cocktail*.—RAMON GUTHRIE

Insanity.—L. HAROLD

At the best, reading or looking into the ultra modern stuff, the Gertrude Stein, Duerne et al production, I can but gasp out with Christopher Sly: "'Tis a very excellent piece of work; would't were done!"—C. J. FINGER

Introductory Remarks : Daniel Dourouze

Sound philosophy.—L. HAROLD

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Too many of your writers think that radicalism implies obscenity and that vulgarity is an object in itself. As a matter of fact they are as untrue to life as Tennyson at his most King Arthurish and a whole lot less profitable. I can't be bothered with your Dadaists, your obscenities and your priggish young founders of new movements.

I am no Puritan; in fact, I hold them to blame for such perversions as you have printed, and I know all about the swing of the pendulum. The *S4N* does not prove anything except that boys whose minds are muddled by the idiotic prohibitions of current morality have found a better place to write their self-condemning stuff than on the walls of public wash rooms.

Alas for the Greeks and for beauty! Go to Keats, et al, if you want to know what sort of a return I could welcome to a code that understands the beauty of the body and of passion as well as our hard but cleanly vigorous New England Brahmins have understood the beauty of the mind and whose spirits aspired to the stars. I could welcome the *S4N* if it aspired to the beauty of the earth and the fullness thereof, if it understood the song of the pipes of Pan and the wild terrible splendor of the Furies. But it seeks

beauty of no kind,—only drab ugliness and all that might be healthily animal coming out dirty for having been in a sewer so long.—SARGENT LEWIS

THE writing game was never more interesting than it is today. There were never more people willing to experiment, and the public was never more patient with the experimenters. The world is growing so complex that the authors of the past generation have failed to keep up with it, and one can find fresh material everywhere. Writing in 1923 is quite as adventurous as hydraulic engineering or arctic exploration. The casualty list is higher but there's lots of fun for those that keep alive. Go ahead with the *SN*; it's great stuff.
—MALCOLM COWLEY

OF all the smarty, arty, cheap, weak collections of 'little poems' turned out by the little people who turned Issue 23 into a Kommunity Kitchen for their new, neurotic, faintly sickish, dished-up efforts, only one was passable, and that was written by a New York accountant. There was neither manliness nor strength in the entire issue. To write good poetry, or good prose, or to do anything good in art or life, one must be possessed of simplicity and strength as well as brains.

What I read in Issue 23 made me feel as if I were let loose in the *Rotonde*, face to face with weaklings, Lesbians, homosexualists and rotters.—
JOHN CARTER

THE *S4N* is original, attractive, not stunty, withal, in makeup, and its contents might well be the envy of more ponderous affairs. If I were a man of means I'd send you ten times the price of it.—WALDO FRANK

You probably realize that the *S4N* is only riding the wave for the zest of the moment and that, when the wind dies, it will have to sink, along with the rest of youth-pandering journals. It is hopeless.—LEWIS HAROLD

It is because of the vigorous independence of its editor that Mr. Bishop assigns to the *S4N* a significant position in American letters. So far, in his opinion, Mr. Fitts has escaped the professionally censorious on one side and the snobs of parlor liberty on the other. His magazine, whatever may be its other shortcomings, has therefore exploited a middle territory neglected by other 'advanced' publications.—N. Y. HERALD
(Paris Edition)

THE *S4N* has acute indigestion. Most of its selections taste as if they had been written immediately after a long session with sour pickles and exceedingly rich cream. What was the old saw: Whiskey after beer, have no fear; beer after whiskey, pretty risky? I don't mean that I'm agin all poetry that doesn't feature the heroic couplet or all prose that doesn't tie Him and Her together with a \$1,000,000 wedding present from father. For a magazine to be satisfying, however, I demand a sense of humor. It is jake to have three or four carbolic-acid poems and essays, but when the ensemble reminds me of a Pullman porter's voice at three akk emma I refuse to applaud. Go ahead and criticize and tear down—I like to watch the wrecking gang—but let some of the Irishmen crack a joke now and then. In other words, don't take us to the city morgue the day the fumigator has been applied.—ROBERT M. NEAL

FOR sheer good writing and honest thinking aloud, with a spice of humor at times very subtle and delicate, but always original, get a line on *S4N*.
—CHARLES J. FINGER (in *All's Well*)

AN original and instructive magazine.—N. Y.
TIMES

LETTER TO ALL *S4N*-ERS

MUCH criticism of the *S4N* is obscurely motivated by preconceptions only indirectly applicable—such as friendship for myself (or the lack of it), reaction to other contemporary American periodicals, distorted generalization of one sort or another—rather than by judicious intelligence. To all such my reply must be “Please pass the salt”. The occasional recurrence of a more dangerous criticism, however, based upon ignorance, demands the attention I now intend giving it. . .

Three and a half years ago I brought forth in New Haven, Conn., a new publication, conceived in optimism, and dedicated to the proposition that out of a comparison of opposed viewpoints (with attendant attacks and counter-attacks, and with subsequent experimentations and reactive critiques) comes aesthetic progress. Time has taught the advisability of certain insignificant changes in its operation and content, but the *S4N* is essentially the same today. An individual *S4N*-er's disappointment at my printing artistic theory or practice contrary to his own is therefore equivalent to disappointment at my adherence to the *S4N* tradition, as well as an infallible symptom of the ignorance I am trying

to dispel. For the mystic symbols, S 4 N, (I find it necessary to reiterate) stand for nothing but faith in the principle of growth through disagreement.

If I had not great faith, also, in the applicability of this principle to the conduct of a magazine, I should not already have devoted so much time, energy, enthusiasm and money to the *S4N*; and, if certain others of you had not shared my faith, Issue 25 would not be in your hands. Building up a magazine from zero is no snap of the fingers. I have had to contend against lack of coöperation as well as of money, against resistance both active and passive, against antipathy, indifference and downright ignorance. Now that the *S4N* has made a name for itself, that its assets overbalance its liabilities, that it is displayed in a hundred bookshops in America, England, France and Germany, I suppose I may be pardoned a certain amount of satisfaction—in which gratitude to my helpers is not unmingled with an inclination to make triumphant (if undignified) gestures in the direction of my hinderers.

I suggest that, hereafter, general indictments of the *S4N* based upon dislike for individual contributions would better be translated into specific and reasoned assaults upon the contributions in question, and furthermore that those

capable of writing better copy themselves either submit it to the jury of our aggregate discernments or softpedal their penchant for facile derogation. Let us have more clear thinking, more fairness, more insight into the real reasons for our opinions.

The future development of the *S4N* will doubtless be along lines already evident: the informal essay of its early days will become more and more controversial; the created work of art, more 'male'; the comment and criticism, more apposite and enlightening. I shall allow no consideration whatsoever to influence me in the accepting of copy more than (1) controversiality of tone, (2) originality of concept, (3) independence of spirit and (4) skill of execution.

Hundreds of minor arts magazines are mushrooming into existence all over the world, each bravely and stubbornly championing its pet theory, group or region. With these the *S4N* has sympathy but scant point of similarity. An open-minded consideration of *all* theories and practices of art is the policy in which it takes its stand, to live or die in. Dixi.

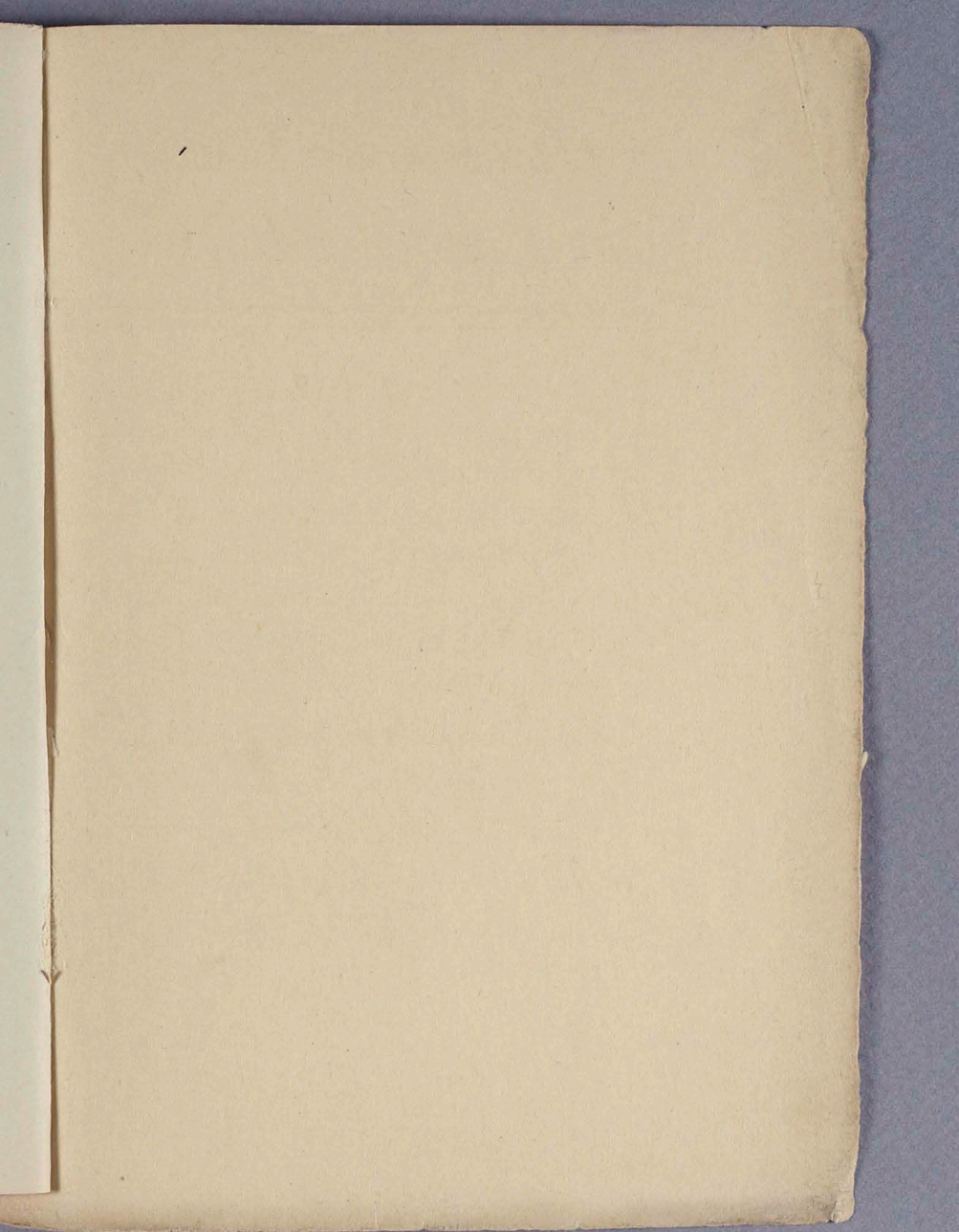
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