

5-1-1938

Belles Lettres, 1938

Eastern Kentucky University, The Canterbury Club

Follow this and additional works at: http://encompass.eku.edu/upubs_belleslettres

Recommended Citation

Eastern Kentucky University, The Canterbury Club, "Belles Lettres, 1938" (1938). *Belles Lettres*. Paper 4.
http://encompass.eku.edu/upubs_belleslettres/4

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Literary Magazines at Encompass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Belles Lettres by an authorized administrator of Encompass. For more information, please contact Linda.Sizemore@eku.edu.

Belles Lettres



1933

Belles Lettres

An annual anthology of student writing sponsored and published by the
Canterbury Club of Eastern Kentucky State Teachers College

At Richmond, Kentucky

Agnes Edmunds, Editor

Lucile Nunnally, Assistant Editor Clyde Johnson, Business Manager
Roy B. Clark, Ph. D., Faculty Sponsor

VOLUME FOUR

NINETEEN THIRTY EIGHT

CONTENTS

A Beautiful Word	<i>Billy E. McLaughlin</i>	5
Vient de Mourir	<i>Carmel Leon Jett</i>	5
I Took the Black of Night	<i>Billy E. McLaughlin</i>	6
When I Die	<i>George Evans</i>	7
Perfect Murder	<i>Ernest Combs</i>	8
Where I Know Home	<i>Lucile Nunnally</i>	10
Two Sonnets	<i>Philip Hodge</i>	11
Impressions	<i>Vivian C. Moore</i>	12
Shadows	<i>Edith Haddix</i>	12
When I Recall	<i>Billy E. McLaughlin</i>	13
Stones and Man	<i>Vivian C. Moore</i>	13
This Was a Moment	<i>Clyde Lewis</i>	14
Remorse	<i>Genevieve Parris</i>	19
Love	<i>Lichel</i>	20
Defeat	<i>Ruth Catlett</i>	20
Restoration	<i>Carmel Leon Jett</i>	21
This Life I Live	<i>George Evans</i>	22
Oh, To Be a Lean Giant	<i>Billy E. McLaughlin</i>	22
Thomps Darby's Mill	<i>Iva Pearl Stacy</i>	23
Fear in the Dark	<i>Lucile Nunnally</i>	27
1918—1938	<i>Carmel Leon Jett</i>	28
A Glimpse at Eternity	<i>George Evans</i>	29
Even as a Boy	<i>Billy E. McLaughlin</i>	30
Love Is a Woman	<i>Clyde Johnson</i>	31
Soot	<i>Johnny Center</i>	32
The Heart to Lose	<i>Ruth Catlett</i>	32

*'Tis strange, the shortest letter which man uses
Instead of speech, may form a lasting link
Of Ages; to what straits old Time reduces
Frail man, when paper—even a rag like this,
Survives himself, his tomb, and all that's his!*

LORD BYRON

A BEAUTIFUL WORD

by Billy E. McLaughlin

A beautiful word
Is like a jeweled drop of silver ;
It bursts in brilliance,
When it comes into the air,
Leaving behind
A trail of scintillating flashes.

VIENT DE MOURIR

by Carmel Leon Jett

You are gone away like a silver arrow of rain :
Gone like a crystal streak of spring rain.
The silence of Eternity patters down drop by drop,
And clings tremblingly to these peach blossoms.
Let nothing move lest, by mistake,
Glistening, silent Eternity be shaken out of the peach tree.
Watch it splash—Eternity, spattering on the grass.
The tears of God, or forsaken drops of silver rain?

You are gone away—forever gone away ;
And Eternity is settling here in the peach orchard,
Its brilliance trickling over the wet limbs of the peach tree.

I TOOK THE BLACK OF NIGHT

by Billy E. McLaughlin

I took the black of the night
And spread it around your shoulders
So that you might have a cloak
To clothe yourself against the coming dawn.
I pushed away the beams
And made a path of shadows
Underneath vast heaven,
So that you might outstrip them all
And be the first to greet the rising sun.
My work was finished
When you mounted to the brink
And faced the glory of the breaking day;
Old night crept down from your shoulders,
Like a thief,
And hid his dismal shape in a dark cavern.

Still you stood upon the edge,
Head thrown back, arms outstretched, little breezes
 playing in your hair,
And I, beneath you in humble worshipfulness,
Suddenly gasped,
And gaped,
To find a thing of beauty, so unmasked,
To be so brave and daring,
Wild and free.

WHEN I DIE

by George Evans

Mourners, shed not a tear for me.
This lifeless shape with senseless mind
Is not to weep for, but to bury.
Give it over to Storm and Wind
And Earth, for these in truth perform
The final rites of every man,
Since from clay on Genesis morn
God made the first and laid his plan.

New Earth reclaimeth, grain, by grain,
What she gave up at God's command
When He, in fancy, shaped His form
In yellow clay and common sand.
God breathes in us and gives us Breath;
We sin and pay for it with death;
And Earth takes back what she has given,
All but the Breath which lives in Heaven.

So mourn not this which is Earth's due,
But pray my breath will be returned
To Him who gave it and not sent
To fan Hell's fires . . . forever burn.

What do we find so sad in death?
Are we so vain, so short of sight,
So bound with ego, pleased with breath
Of living? Can't we see aright
To know that this is but a passing
From a life to everlasting
Life? We are but part of this
So subtle plan of One Supreme.
We die to reach eternal bliss
And to fulfill His fondest dream.

PERFECT MURDER

by Ernest Combs

Slippery Lewis shivered. It was cold here in the narrow alley, but he escaped most of the rain that came slithering down upon Chinatown. This nasty weather suited his purpose exactly. He ran his hand under his slicker and felt of the hatchet stuck in his belt. It was a handy weapon.

The Chinese are a clever people. They almost never use barking guns. A hatchet or a knife makes no noise. A sudden blow from the dark and the deed is done. No noise, no alarm. That was the clever part of Slippery's plan. White men almost invariably use guns to kill their enemies, but he was going to use a hatchet on Nick Leeper. The Chinese would be blamed. No one knew he was back in town. His car was parked at the other end of the alley. He would drag the body into the dark alley and then get out of town before it was discovered.

Slippery stuck his head around the corner and looked down Wong Street. Nick was in Lee's Tap Room less than fifty yards away. Somewhere in the distance a clock struck one. Nick would be coming soon. He always stopped in Lee's about twelve-thirty every night. And on the way home he would have to pass the alley where Slippery stood waiting.

Slippery knew that Nick was regular in his habits. He had watched his enemy for a week before making his plan. Nick followed the same routine every night. He always left Lee's at one and walked to a taxi station three blocks north of the Tap Room. There he engaged a cab to take him home. Tonight he would never reach the taxi station, for when he passed the alley Slippery would be waiting.

The murder would be perfect. Of that Slippery felt certain. His plans had been made carefully. No one would be able to identify him as the killer. The perfect crime, funny that Nick should be its victim, Nick who always maintained that no crime could be perfect. Only political pull could save a criminal from the law. They had many arguments on the subject in the days before Nick caught Slippery cheating in a card game. He had beaten Slippery up before he ran him out of town, and Slippery

wasn't the one to forget. Revenge would be sweet, doubly so, since he would never be connected with the crime. Yes, it would be a perfect murder in more ways than one. His gloved hands would leave no finger prints. His identity would never become known.

Again the waiting man peered from his hiding place. Someone had just come out of Lee's. It was Nick. There could be no doubt about that. The light from the window of the tap room was bright, and Slippery could distinguish the features of the stockily built man who started rapidly down the walk. Nick was walking close to the buildings in order to avoid part of the rain. Slippery had hoped that he would. It would make things simpler. He pulled his head back and drew his hatchet from under his slicker.

Above the patter of the rain Slippery could hear the sound of approaching footsteps. His victim was drawing near. He raised the hatchet and stood poised for the blow. The wind howled mournfully down the alley. The footsteps became louder. Slippery's heart began to beat faster. Then Nick stepped out before him, and he brought his hatchet down hard to commit the perfect crime.

The clock in Lee's Tap Room showed 1:01. The skinny little barkeeper finished wiping a beer mug. He put it on the shelf behind the bar and turned to his boss, a big red-faced man with a scar across his left cheek.

"Who's the guy that just left?"

"Nick Leeper. He's one of the Carone mob."

"How come he's so touchy about his derby? He laid it on the bar, and when I accidentally knocked it off he almost had a fit. The hat didn't even get dirty cause he grabbed it before it hit the floor. And the way he handled it, you'd have thought he had hold of a bomb or something."

The big man snorted. "If you wasn't new around here you would know about Nick's darby. He's funny about it. He won't never wear any other kind of hat, and when anybody touches it he always acts like he did just now."

"But why be so touchy about a hat? It won't break." The little barkeeper's face looked puzzled. He turned and started wiping off the bar.

"I don't know that it's true," the big red-faced man said, "but some of the fellows say that when the Carone

mob pulls a safe cracking job, he carries nitro in it.”

The little barkeeper gulped. There might have been some nitroglycerin in that hat tonight. And nitroglycerin will go off if it receives a shock. What if Nick hadn't caught that hat? What if—He shuddered at his thoughts.

A terrific explosion rent the air. The barkeeper dived on the floor amid the shower of bottles that came tumbling from the shelves above. The explosion shook the whole block, and most of the store windows within a distance of several hundred feet were broken.

Slippery was never identified as the murderer of Nick Leeper. Detective Collins, the city's best, was given charge of the case, but he failed to find a single clue that would help him identify the murderer. The battered mass of burnt flesh that had once been Slippery Lewis would not have been recognized by his best friend. And as Collins reported to the chief, “You just can't take the finger prints of a man whose hands have been blown completely to bits.”

WHERE I KNOW HOME

by Lucile Nunnelley

Stark and grim Destiny takes me
Into some dark land I do not know;
And there, I fear, he will forsake me
Where I know no longer home—
Where I know no longer home.

Cool zephyrs may play around my grave;
Icy snows may blanket me in white;
The tempests of winter may howl and rave
Around my tomb—lonely and sad—
Where I know no longer home—
Where I know no longer home.

But if on the breeze there floats a refrain
To me in my dark and dreary bed—
The sweet, sad call of the far away train
Then I will know home—
Then I will know home.
As it pines through sunny meads and vales—

TWO SONNETS

by Philip Hodge

I would take you to some dew-strewn, grassy place
At dawn, where the first morning torches flame,
There to lie, I to look into your face
Breaking the silence to repeat your name.
There we could watch the sun's rays come
To match the deeper glow within your eyes;
And I would look and find myself made dumb;
To gaze into my selfish paradise.
There we would lie at some morning's dawn,
Alone, with just the earth, the sun, the dew:
There lying till the night is fully gone,
I with the morning in my eyes and you.
I want no future but this dawn-break place,
The new day's sun, to look into your face.

The meadow is so like a lake tonight,
With moonlight depths and waves of wind-blown sage,
And ripples moving, capped with soft moonlight,
To welcome us, as though of some presage.
It is a lake of moonglow 'neath us here,
With wavelets, movement, and a beckoning.
There is no shadow of foreboding near,
No token of a later reckoning.
This is a valley we are standing in,
A moon-filled valley like a moonlit lake,
A place for love to come to revel in,
A place where lovers' hearts can never break.
This is The Place, this moon-lake that we stand above;
Here we may lie, this night, and drown in love.

IMPRESSIONS

by Vivian C. Moore

I sit beneath the trees among the stones,
But see them not.
I see instead
Long lines of marching blue and gallant gray.

The soft winds blow about my head.
I hear them not.
To me there comes
The cannon's roar and trampling feet.

The sun shines down in warmth and beauty,
But leaves me cold;
I feel the dread
Of death for those who die
Before they can grow old.

SHADOWS

by Edith Haddix

Shadows dancing on the wall
Fleeting, fanciful shadows, all
Bring to the aged, through misty tears,
Forgotten memories of other years.

Shadows dancing on the floor,
Sometimes less and sometimes more,
Are to the child with tangled curls
Magical children from other worlds.

Each shadow creeping o'er my head,
Black on white from firelight red,
Is a long wished for welcome guest
Bringing peaceful sleep and contented rest.

WHEN I RECALL

by Billy E. McLaughlin

When I recall that granite will decay,
And that the towns men build will tumble down.
And that these trailing ghosts of yesterday,
Like rain, will slowly sink into the ground;
Then when I think: How cruel this stolid life;
How bright we shine, and yet how pale we be;
How these, our works, so mingled in this strife,
Are but examples of inconstancy,
Then say I this: Why all this care and toil?
Why must we labor in these filthy lands?
God knows, we cannot strike away the coil
Of fate, with just these puny groping hands.
We strive to reach a goal, and then we must,
With pigs and harlots, sink into the dust.

STONES AND MAN

by Vivian C. Moore

Forever with silent voices
Stones call out to man.
They tower in majestic cliffs,
Or loom in lofty mountain peaks,
Hiding their heads in the stars.
And by their terrible grandeur
Man must feel his humbleness.

Tiny pebbles on the seashore
And sand, the scattered laughter of
the stones,
Speak to man of their permanence
And his early passing.

O Man, hear the voices of the stones,
And leave behind you deeds
As imperishable and grand.

THIS WAS A MOMENT

by Clyde Lewis

Age was in that room. Age, heavy and sleeping, like a drowsy dog in a corner. Years lined the walls. Voices whispered from the shadows and from the old double-pendulumed clock on the mantle as it ticked in monotonous rhythm. Figures marched in the flames which burned yellow to blue on the hearth, figures working with heavy artillery in red Virginia mud, figures on horses that reared through the dirty gray smoke of battle. There was life in that room. Life that lived on through age and death, pretty faces and bearded faces, faces torn with pain. A nation was in that room, a nation where rolling plains ran into wooded hills and rivers flowed deep between, where men had come in pink infancy and grown to live and love and curse and drink and kill their brothers. Blood was in that room, streams of dark blood flowing in a torrent from the heart of people. War was in that room, gray, grim war, smiling through heavy red lips over sharp teeth. Shiloh and Nashville, the cold mud of Vicksburg. Yankee packets on the Mississippi. Yellow newspapers telling of slaughter. Antientam, Frankfort, Sherman's march to the sea. There was music in that room, sweet music of youth, now dead forever, the stirring, thrilling, silver music of bugles that goes with youth. The song of a woman in a hall filled with candles. And though the room was old, it was forever young, for here the years had been caught and stacked on one another in shadows where one might come and look, but never feel them again. They were ghosts of the long past dead. Lost ghosts held in the flames on the hearth and the double pendulumed clock and a rose with dry dusty petals crushed between leaves of a book.

The old man sat, and the cold October sunlight, slanting over the leaves, streamed yellow through the dark fringed drapes and glinted in the eyes of the Maltese cat on the arm of his chair. He rubbed the cat gently behind its ears, listening to its feeble purr, now thinking of many things and now of nothing at all.

"Good old Toby," he murmured absently. "You are not

so young as you were once. The dogs will catch a fat, lazy old cat, if he runs loose like a young tom. . .”

There was a young voice from another part of the house and the old oaken door opened slowly.

“Uncle Eb. . .”

He turned in his chair, his old eyes peering under his shaggy eyebrows. “Eh?” he said. “I’m right here by the fire. This darned house gets colder every year. It’s a barn. A man needs a fire to keep him warm. A good crackling log fire that he can feel. These furnaces ain’t worth a dang. I know, because I’ve seen ’em come and go. Give a man a good fire he can feel. . .”

Ellen came and curled up on the rug at his feet and the Maltese cat stretched lazily and rubbed against her knee.

Eb pointed with his pipe stem. “Smart that Toby. Can’t fool him on anything. He’s more sense between his ears than all the rest of this house put together.”

“How old is Toby, Uncle Eb?”

He paused to think. “Toby is twenty-one years old this summer. He was just a kitten when you were born.”

“He seems so much older,” she said. “He seems almost as old as you, Uncle Eb.”

“Toby is as old as I am,” he said. “We’re just alike. We’re able to understand each other. Toby’s the only thing I’ve got left.”

For a moment he was silent, puffing contentedly at his pipe and looking at her bent yellow head as she patted the cat.

“What’s the matter now young’un?” he finally asked.

She looked up at him with bright eyes, forgetting Toby in her eagerness.

“Uncle Eb, guess what—I’m in love.”

“About time,” said old Eb. “About time. You’re near twenty now. When your great aunt was that old. . .” he stopped short, checking himself as if the fire had hushed him. You’re like her,” he said. “Not so pretty because you’re too thin and your eyes are too big, but then she was a handsome girl. . .”

“I just wanted to tell you about it,” she said. “I’m

afraid to tell Mother. She'd be as mad as the devil. You know how Mother is. . ."

"Hmm," he grunted and then looked hard at her. "Your mother knows best for you," he began slowly. "Your mother. . ."

"But she wouldn't understand like you would."

He grunted again, "Perhaps not. But I'm an old man. . ."

"Is love anything at all, Uncle Eb? I mean what is it supposed to be?"

"Now run along. What's an old man to know about such stuff as that? Leave me and Toby alone and get on with your young man, whoever he is. He's probably some young scamp who'll break your heart—but you'll never be satisfied till you let him."

"He's wonderful," she said. "Uncle Eb, I want you to see him. I want you to. . ."

He waved a withered hand comically. "Run along. I don't want to see who you're worrying your crazy head about. Toby and I, we're beyond that now. . ."

"You'd like him a lot," she said. "He's tall and handsome."

"I know," he replied. "They all are. Now get along with you."

After she had gone, he smiled to himself, quite forgetting that Toby had slipped out of the room. It was a bitter smile that froze on his lips and stayed there, a thin line chiseled on wrinkled gray stone. He was sitting like that when Hester came bustling into the room.

"Where's Ellen?" she asked.

"I don't know," he said. "She was just here a minute ago."

"Ellen worries me." She frowned, showing up the wrinkles on her forehead. "She's been acting strangely lately."

"She is young," he smiled. "All young people are like that."

She seemed not to have heard him. Her eyes were glued on his pipe, which had burned out in his hand.

"You've been smoking," she accused suddenly.

His lips twitched. "What of it? I alway smoke my

pipe. Lord knows, it's all I've got left to do. It don't hurt nobody."

"Doctor Jonson told you to quit," she scolded.

"I'm ninety-two years old," he shouted. "And it never hurt me yet. Doc Jonson just wants to earn his money."

Her voice suddenly became the whine that announced coaxing. "Now, Uncle, we all want to help you. We're not trying to be mean. We just want you to be well. . ."

I'm an old man," he murmured. "It's only a matter of a little while with me. I know that."

"Now you quit that kind of talk," whined Hester. She laughed nervously and began to dust off the old clock. "We ain't gonna have no more of that kind of talk around here. You've got a long time yet, if you listen to us instead of being so stubborn. . . It's for your own good. . ."

Her voice droned on and on, like a log in the saw at the mill, or the sparrow behind the red barn thirty years ago. He suddenly forgot her completely and sat drowned in the past.

When she had gone, he stirred uneasily and loaded his pipe again. In the middle of the process he stopped and gazed in wonder at his long, bloodless, old parchment-skinned fingers. They were like the ghostly talons of a withered claw, and he dropped the pipe and sank back into the chair.

"This hand," he muttered to himself. "I once could grip a rifle and once could lift Anny as easy as a bird. . ."
And then the thoughts came.

He saw Anny lying in bed as she had been twenty-one years before, when she gave him the Maltese kitten.

"It's not bad, Eb. . ."

Twenty-one years. A war and a new generation. The red barn torn down. Hester married and Ellen. . .

"He's a cute little thing, ain't he, Eb? Keep him for me. He's almost as much as you are. . ."

Twenty-one years. Days of rain and days of sun. Grass in the yard before the house and over her grave under the jutting rail of the old crooked fence, and flowers nodding and dying twenty-one times.

Twenty-one years and your bones get weak, your joints get stiff, and your eyes get watery. Years and months and

weeks and days of watching and waiting for life to claim you and then you find it plodding by your porch.

Twenty-one years of it. You watch youth growing old and yet not as old as you. You talk to the shades that have vanished. You listen to jargon from strange tongues. You grope in the blackness for strength.

"Now don't you worry, Eb. Things will be all right. Don't be too bitter, Eb. . ."

Those were her words; he had heard them. Her lips had moved as she spoke them. Her eyes had smiled at him. Her gray hair had lain on the pillow.

But now she was there in the flames, still smiling, and saying to him:

"Don't be too bitter, Eb. . ."

The torture of twenty-one years! The loneliness of the damned, the longing, the pain. . .

The faces of friends now long dead. Places now changed and forgotten. Deeds yellowed on pages. Once flaming life still glowing.

The double pendulumed clock brought him back with its softly ringing tick. He stared at it, entranced. Watching the long hand, he jumped.

"If only," he muttered to himself. "If only. . ."

But no. It ticked on. Thlick-thlack, thlick-thlack. Seconds. Minutes. Streaming on. Piling up in the old room.

"I am alone," he whispered. "All alone. And I am ninety-two years old."

There was laughter in the hall and he recognized Ellen's voice. It was the healthy happiness of youth. But only for an instant did he hear it. Then it was gone.

"This," he told himself, "was only a moment. All, only a moment. And it was up long ago. . ."

He reached for Toby, who should have been sleeping on the rug.

"Keep him for me, Eb. He's a cute little thing."

When Hester came into the room her face was drawn.

"Uncle Eb," she said softly, "Toby. . . He got out of the house and that big dog of the Barons' . . ."

Ellen was behind her with the ball of bloody fur in her arms. She was crying softly.

"Toby's dead!" she cried. "Oh, Uncle Eb..."

Hester looked up from his chair with her eyes wide. "My God!" she breathed. "Ellen, call a doctor quick. He's ... Uncle Eb ... speak to me ... It's Hester, Uncle Eb ... Oh my God! He was all right just a moment ago."

He did not hear her, for he had already passed with the hosts of that room. The family might come there, but they could never hear the whispers or see the faces in the flames on the hearth, for these had gone with him. This was only another room, with a burned out fire, an old man's corpse, and a mangled cat.

Only the clock defied age. It continued to tick, marking the second, singing the triumphant song of time—singing, although no one heard:

"This was only a moment. And now the moment has ended."

REMORSE

by Genevieve Parris

Love came to me when I was young;
But gently I put it aside;
Tied my letters with snow-white ribbon,
While love slowly died.

It was maturity I wanted:
The wisdom of the seers,
To help me know my heart,
To understand my soul;
Then I'd find my true love,
A gallant knight of old.

The years went by; I met great seers;
Gleaned of their fruits, and reaped success,
To find that youth is blind.
The love I gently put aside in playful glee,
To sup with years,
Had ever since eluded me.

Hopes and dreams have crashed to earth.
What mean fame and success?
High born one or of low estate
Love and love alone brings happiness.

LOVE

by Lichel

Love blew my heart into a wine-red bubble,
Beautiful—brief,
A thing of grief,
Hardly worth the trouble.

DEFEAT

by Ruth Catlett

God whispered, "Heaven has come to you.
Make the most of it for a while."
And the soft gloss of an angel's wing
Caressed my sleeping smile.
I stretched my arms toward Heaven,
That vast and infinite space.
The gates of Heaven moved apart
To frame my loved one's face.
God whispered in a tender voice,
"It was not to be."
And heaven went as it had come,
Suddenly.

RESTORATION

by Carmel Leon Jett

I lingered in the twilight waiting for God
Till the pale moon-shadows clambered over the white wall-
ed horizon

And stretched themselves along the edge of the world.
I waited for God's step on the mountain,
And the keen-breathed silence smote open my bosom.
Then I hurled my heavy heart through eternity
And fell forgotten by God and alone.

Before the morning mists, I rose heartless from faith's
spacious funeral
And covered my head with the ashes of dawn.
On slow feet I moved up the mountain thoughtless
As the late sky of still stars.

Suddenly the earth was timeless!
A bolt of fire unbridled eternity, and the moon fell,
And the stars dissolved in rainbows.
A radiant light was everywhere glowing and glancing and
gleaming.

Fountains of music caught the fallen moon
And spilled its silver in great rivers over the barren world.
Faint fringes of green showed on the distant hills
And came gloriously up the long, empty valleys.

Fragrant as wind-wafted rose petals, the air was sweet to
my nostrils.
I breathed life and my heart came back resurrected, puls-
ing and beating with song.
The world was filled with the sound of its singing.

Then I looked for God again—on, on under all the heaven,
And I saw on the last mountain, disappearing under the
rising sun,
The trailing hem of His long, green garment.

THIS LIFE I LIVE

by George Evans

This life I live must surely be
Some plot, some plan, some destiny
Of His. He must be leading me
To fill some part, for when I see
So much about me to be done
With such short time and only one
To do the job, I stand alone
And feel an urge that's not my own
And hear a voice within me cry
For action! I know I must try
To rid this world of fear and doubt
And evilness, but not without
The promptings of that grinding voice
That I must follow, not by choice,
But by some preformed, destined plot
That rules my life and casts my lot.

OH, TO BE A LEAN GIANT

by Billy E. McLaughlin

Oh, to be a lean giant
Who treads unafraid the courses of the centuries;
Whose husky laughter roars past mighty lips
And thunders unceasingly through all eternity.
Oh, to take a heavy spear
And thrust it mightily through all the years
Until its tip grows red
And sprinkles sparks out onto every day.
Oh, to lay me down in some green field
Beneath the quiet glow of fading day
And touch my fingertips upon the twilight of an evening sky.

THOMPS DARBY'S MILL

by Iva Pearl Stacy

In the hills of eastern Kentucky on the banks of Troublesome Creek stands an old watermill. Near the mill is a sign which says, "Thomps Darby's Mill—Brand Your Turns Boys."

The mill wheel has been still these many years, and the water gates are decayed—but years ago the mill was a busy place, and the water rushed through the gates with the joy of work well done. The mill was owned and operated by Thomas Darby, a native of Kentucky. Thomas had never married. He was a favorite of young and old—and was known for miles around as Thomps or just Darby.

When Widow Grey died leaving a boy of eight on the mercy of the world, every one was surprised that Darby should ask to take the boy.

"I cain't see," said Silas Green, who owned the only store for miles around, "what he wants that thair no 'count boy of Tom Grey's fur. He will never 'mount ter nothin. Bad stock I sez."

Silas puffed his pipe and commented on Darby's action for two weeks. Dan Young's barn burned and the excitement of Darby's protege was forgotten in the wake of other things.

Meanwhile, Darby was sending Joe to the public school close by the mill. The young boy became known as Darby's Joe. Joe was the pride of Darby's heart. As the old man prospered, young Joe grew into manhood. Darby wanted the boy to have every chance for an education. When it became known in the neighborhood that Darby was going to send Joe away to school, there was more comment. Silas Green and his wife, Mandy, again took the lead in discussing Darby's affairs.

"I sez, sez I, ter Thomps, 'Thomps, that thair boy hain't fit fer decent folk ter be with. We have stood him on er-count of ye, but the son of er murderer hain't got no rights to the chances ye are givin' him.' And, Mandy—do ye know what that feller sez ter me?"

Silas was so excited he forgot to light his pipe.

"What did he say, Silas?" asked Mandy anxiously (she intended to listen very closely so she could tell it Sunday to the women at church).

"He said—he said fer me ter mind my own business and I'd get along better! He said he guessed Joe would be a sight more joy ter him than Sam was ter us if we only knew!"

"Why the old—old—why!" All Mandy could do was to splutter in astonishment.

The day for Joe to leave was drawing near. As the day approached, Thomps spent longer hours at the mill. In the dusky evening, as the whippoorwill's call echoed from the hill sides, Thomps could be seen walking slowly homeward. His steps were slow and his greying head bent low.

"Joe," said Darby a few days before the time for him to leave, "I want ter give ye somethin' before ye leave."

Darby reached upon the shelf and got a Bible. Once worn with much use, it was now covered with the dust of a decade.

"It were my mother's, Sonny," the older man said kindly. "I would like fer ye ter take it with ye if ye don't mind."

"Why, of course I'll take it, Uncle Thomps," Joe said as he took the precious book from Darby's workworn hands. "Thanks so much. You have been so good to me that I feel I can never repay you." The boy's eyes filled with tears of gratitude.

"I have loved ye, Sonny," Darby said huskily. "No matter what happens I always will. Ye won't forget hit, will ye, Joe?"

"Never, Uncle Thomps. I can never forget how good you have been to me."

The day for Darby's Joe to leave arrived. The older man's heart was dull and heavy. Joe bade Darby good-bye with tearful eyes—for he truly loved his benefactor. Darby watched Joe until he could no longer tell whether the speck was Joe or an illusion caused from his own tear-dimmed eyes. Darby went slowly into the house.

As the sun ended its day's travels and started to rest behind the majestic hills, it peeped through the crevices

of the house. The man known to the outer world as Thomps Darby was kneeling in prayer. He was only a sinner before God. The sun sank lower and lower behind the hills—the night covered the world in darkness, and still Darby prayed.

Years passed. Darby's Joe had returned from school and now worked in a nearby town. Darby's head was snowy white and his steps feeble with advancing years. He knew his time on earth was short. His thoughts were of the past and the terrible wrong he had committed against Joe and the woman he himself had loved. Old Darby knew he could never find favor in the sight of God unless he told Joe.

Joe, a frequent visitor at the mill, noticed the worried expression on the old man's face. He wondered what was worrying him and decided to ask him.

"What is wrong, Uncle Thomps?" Joe finally questioned.

"I guess I might as well tell ye, Sonny," the old man replied with a sigh. "Seat yourself."

Joe sat down; old Darby folded his hands in his lap, turned his eyes toward the West, and began his story.

"I was borned and raised about ten miles from here. I was a wild 'un when I was young. There was many scrapes I got into that I hain't proud of. Then I started courtin' old man Kelly's daughter. She were the prettiest thing on this creek. I quit my vagrant ways and was goin' to settle down and make a home for Sally, but she ups, without a word to enybody, and marries Tom Grey." The old man paused as if lost in thought. Joe leaned forward tensely and said, "Go on."

"I hated Tom Grey," continued old Darby slowly. "I hated him for makin' Sally love him. Tom was good to her in his way, though. But he soon come to drinkin' and gamblin' and pore Sally had a hard time." Old Darby hesitated for a few moments and then continued his story. "Jess Stallman and me was cronies. We comes down here on 'Troublesome and puts up this mill. He were my best friend—Jess was." He stopped and began again more slowly, "One day there was a quarrel at the mill—a mighty big quarrel, too. Jess tried to keep Silas Green's boy and Tom from fightin' and they both turned on Jess. Tom was

shore mad; he said he'd kill Jess if he didn't mind his own business. Silas' boy just looked mad. That night on his way home Jess was kilt. I swore that Tom Grey done hit. On the strength of my story he was hung. I saw him hung; I saw Sally die of a broken heart. A year after they hung Tom, I help pull Silas Green's boy from under that boulder over yonder. Before he died, he said he was the one that kilt. Jess. Dan Young and me thought that we wouldn't tell Silas and he don't know hit yet. That is all of my story, except the part ye already know, Sonny. I tried to be a father to ye. I loved ye as my own son—as I loved your mother. I thought ye had better know before I left this world—I wanted your forgiveness as well as God's."

"My forgiveness!" shouted Joe. "Why, you—you—you murderer!" Joe turned and fled.

Darby arose slowly and stumbled into the house. He knelt near the window, and as he prayed he wept bitterly. The sun peeped through the crevices and made a halo about his snowy head. The sun sank lower and lower below the horizon. Night came over the earth and all was covered in purple shadows—still old Darby knelt in prayer.

Months passed and Joe did not come to see Thomps. The old man was hardly able to go to and from the mill now. Silas Green again started gossip in the neighborhood on Troublesome Creek. "What'd I tell ye, Mandy?" he croaked one afternoon. "That Darby's Joe has got too stuck up to even come see Thomps now. He hain't been thair in five months."

Everyone on Troublesome Creek commented on Joe's absence. Old Darby alone was silent.

Meanwhile, Joe thought over old Darby's story and his bitterness subsided. Many thoughts raced through his mind. The old man had been good to him. He had sacrificed much for his schooling. "He did not need to tell me that story," mused Joe. "I am sorry I acted so hastily. He was the only one that cared after Mother died. I will go to him and tell him he doesn't need my forgiveness. He has more than paid for his rash deed."

Putting his words to action the next afternoon, Joe went to the mill. He called the old man's name, but got

no response. Thinking Darby had fallen asleep, he stepped inside the mill. As his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he saw old Darby's vague form outlined in the rocker by the window. Joe stepped up to him and placed his hand on Thomps' shoulder. "Uncle Thomps," he said softly, but the old man did not answer. He had gone to the Great Beyond with a serene smile on his kind old face and a prayer for Darby's Joe in his heart.

Still in the heart of the hills of eastern Kentucky stands the old mill on the banks of Troublesome Creek. The water rushes through gates long decayed. The old wheel moves no more. The sun peeps through the crevices of the old mill house as if to spy again upon a grey-haired man kneeling in prayer. Near the mill door is still the sign, "Thomps Darby's Mill—Brand your Turns Boys."

FEAR IN THE DARK

by Lucile Nunnelley

A red moon sulked in a star-lit sky
That was perfumed with the breath of night;
Alone I lay and breathed a sigh
As my conscience asked, "Are things all right?"

With no reply into sleep I sank
As Quiet reigned o'er night supreme;
Wine of repose and rest I drank
In my travels through the land of dream.

But into my room I heard Fear tread
Where all was still in shadows and night—
Clothed in black, he neared my bed
And clutched my throat, throbbing with fright—

Down into mine his dark face leered
As his strangling grasp gave no release—
"What have you done today?" he jeered.
"Only conscience, free, will give you peace!"

1918—1938

by Carmel Leon Jett

God, there is no need of this grim sinew by sinew stripping
down of the soul,
This naked agony of bleeding.
Quickly sever the monotonously pulsing heart.
Drown the Being with red life; get them dead with an over-
dose of living.
They are drugged addicts of Eternity, feeding on dreams
of hereafter.

You see their world of pale faces like a shimmering pool
heavy with lily hearts,
See cypress-shadowed sorrow fling night upon them—
Night with her high winds churning up waves to the stars,
Rolling over their gaunt frames, whistling through the
gaping network of their wounds.
You see them in a mad maelstrom of hope clutching at
broken straws of dreams.

War is a carnage of men—fight and hope for hereafter.
Rotten death smells on the wind.
Dream amid the gassed stench of maggoted flesh—
Peace lies at the end of the sunset somewhere in the hidden
valleys of the world,
Caught in a dewdrop, lodged on a moonbeam.

Meantime, they will sway zealously treading the winepress
of hearts,
Till drunk from the too thick vintage, they are bowled over
and trodden on.
Too late they find themselves blinded with sodden blood,
Yet the white dream of hereafter fires their brains,
And their suffering lips stumble feebly over the syllables
of Eternity.

God! For sudden obliteration of life built on hereafter!
Give them present brotherhood.
There is no need of this grim sinew by sinew stripping
down of the soul,
This naked agony of bleeding.

Twenty-eight

A GLIMPSE AT ETERNITY

by George Evans

I sat by the sea and heard the tide
Beating out the never ceasing
Rhythm of eternity;
And felt, for the space of a thought,
The touch of passing time
Brushing against my conscience;
And, for a moment, lost myself from me
Sharing with Time the wisdom of her years;
Her silent power, her patience, her unbending will
My own!
Lost in Time itself, unaware of its presence
Yet wrapped, encompassed, soaked through my soul
With it,
A part of it, sharing its eternity!
Seeing dear visions of one thing as all
And all things as one
Throughout all the world:
Little men upon a little stage
Clumsily acting out a part
That never has nor ever shall be
Written to the finish.
Seeing all this through Time's impersonal eyes.
Only looking on to see and gravely nod my head.

EVEN AS A BOY

by Billy McLaughlin

Even as a boy,
Along the level roads
And high into the mountain tops,
He steered his solitary way.

All alone he stood and watched
The rising and the setting of the sun.
All alone he watched the tiny flowers grow.

Down through the town
And past the river's edge,
Deep into the woods
And high into the sky he gazed,
And said naught but:
"It cannot be too beautiful for words."

This was the way he lived,
And we, in our small way,
Ignored him, yet heaped insults at his head.

But he, who lived down by the river,
Who communed with the sun and the stars
And the whispering breezes and the tiny buds,
Looked back at us in pity and distress.

Then he set down the beauties of the world
In a galaxy of words,
And now we, too, have understood.

LOVE IS A WOMAN

by Clyde Johnson

Her smile
Is a promise
Of virgin forests,
Cool ivy overshadowed,
And naiads dancing where vaporous fountains
Are dropping their tears.

Her voice
Is laughter
And music,
And clearly through ripples of water it passes
Then flashes—
As morning, when standing on tiptoe,
Embraces the sun.

But—
Her frown
Is the sneer
Of a leering Medusa,
Smooth, shining, and velvet.
But writhing and coiling
In wiley deceit.

SOOT

by Johnny Center

I have a strange light feeling in my being...
I am riding above the clouds
in the stratosphere...
in heaven...
flying freely forward!
The steam, white from the coldness,
covers the ground as a big white blanket of snow...
disappearing suddenly as if by magic...
exposing knolls anointed with
green grease-paint...
A black-faced fireman
sweating the sweat of heavy labor throws joyfully
a last shovelful of coal into the mouth of the
hungry monster...
It coughs me up, black, greasy, and spits me on a
green floor in
murderous manner...
I have a heavy feeling in my being...
I am walking on hard concrete...
the choking breath of a heartless, happy giant.

THE HEART TO LOSE

by Ruth Catlett

Sometimes in life it is given to us to know a person whose magnanimity is so great that he enjoys his own eclipse in order that radiance may belong to others. I have known such a person. I am remembering the first time I saw him—a big, awkward boy with eyes that indexed the sincerity of his soul. There was nothing in his appearance then to tell us that he would become Betty's rival for the scholarship crown of the year.

Betty was a steady, plodding little thing with dubious I. Q. and a heart fired by ambition and a thirst for knowledge. She was such a mouse-like person that it was something of a shock to all of us to find her leading the class by the end of her junior year. None of us envied Betty. She wasn't the sort to excite active opposition, so Betty wore the laurel wreath—until Jack came.

The first indication of a conflict between the two came in geometry class two weeks after Jack came. It was a day of brilliant sunshine, and the light was pouring in on Betty's funny little face like a caress. The teacher, rocking furiously in a gasping chair, was assigning loci problems to the class. When Betty's assignment was given, she piped out in her apologetic way, "I didn't get it. I'm sorry. I'll work on it tonight."

The usual procedure began. Of course if Betty hadn't worked it, none of us could be expected to have it ready, but it was a polite custom for the teacher to ask us individually if we had worked it. The routine answers ended suddenly when Jack said, "I can work it." Nobody spoke. I remember the stark fear that stood in Betty's eyes as she turned with the rest of us to look at him as he went to the blackboard.

That was the beginning. I began to feel sorry for Betty as the weeks went on, for it was so pathetically evident that she was outclassed. She studied harder than ever, and her eyes were often dark-circled when she came to class. She must have known that it was useless from the first. There never was a problem in the intricacies of geometry that Jack couldn't work, never a passage in literature with which he was unfamiliar, never a physics equation that he couldn't solve. His was the rich, full mind of the genius. Betty's mind was a wilderness of memorized fantasies. She had a prodigious memory and a great ambition, and nothing more.

There was no one of Betty's private fields in which he did not surpass her in that first semester. And we all sat back and watched it happen. None of us knew exactly whom we should want to win, for we liked Jack as much as we respected Betty. It made my heart ache to see Betty's eyes, but in fairness to ability and knowledge I knew that those scholarship awards were Jack's.

It was at a New Year's Eve party that Jack first learned that he was in Betty's way. He had always admired her quiet diligence, and at any social activity he devoted himself exclusively to her. I was trying to find my favorite orchestra on the radio when they sat down near me.

"I don't feel as if there were anything in the world I want right now, do you, Betty?" he asked.

She didn't answer for a minute, and when she did, her voice had a little quaver in it that made me afraid for both of them. "The one thing I want most in the world has never been farther from me," she said.

He looked amused at her seriousness, but there was interest in his, "And that is?"

"No, Betty, no! Don't tell him," I whispered. But I knew she would.

Her reply was quiet and steady. "To be valedictorian this year," she answered, looking into the fire.

There was no sound for a full minute except the raw blasts of music as I twisted the dial nervously. I dreaded his next words, and Betty's face was very white. "You will be valedictorian," he said finally, simply like a child, and left the room. Betty sat motionless by the fire. She was still sitting there when the whistles and horns proclaimed the New Year.

The change was so gradual that no one but Betty and I noticed at first. He grew moody, irritable, and impudent to the teachers. He refused to recite in any class, though he never said that he could not. I have seen him close his lips firmly when words must have been struggling within him. The old routine began. Betty was once more queen.

I watched him commencement night as Betty gave her valedictory, and I think I knew some of the courage it took for him to smile at her as she came back to her seat. The eulogies began, and they were showered upon her by faculty, speakers, and students. Three medals were presented to her with appropriate tributes. That little funny face of hers was all aglow with joy, and her eyes were like stars. Jack watched her all the time, and once I saw him smile, a queer, secret smile to himself.

I thought I knew some of the sacrifice it took for Jack to relinquish his right to glory that night, but until I saw his father's face, I hadn't appreciated the greatness of his deed. His father was on the front row, and his face was puzzled and hurt. There was a slump to his shoulders as he rose to leave.

The tears were streaming down my face, and I didn't care.