

Hugh McCrae, O.B.E..



410309

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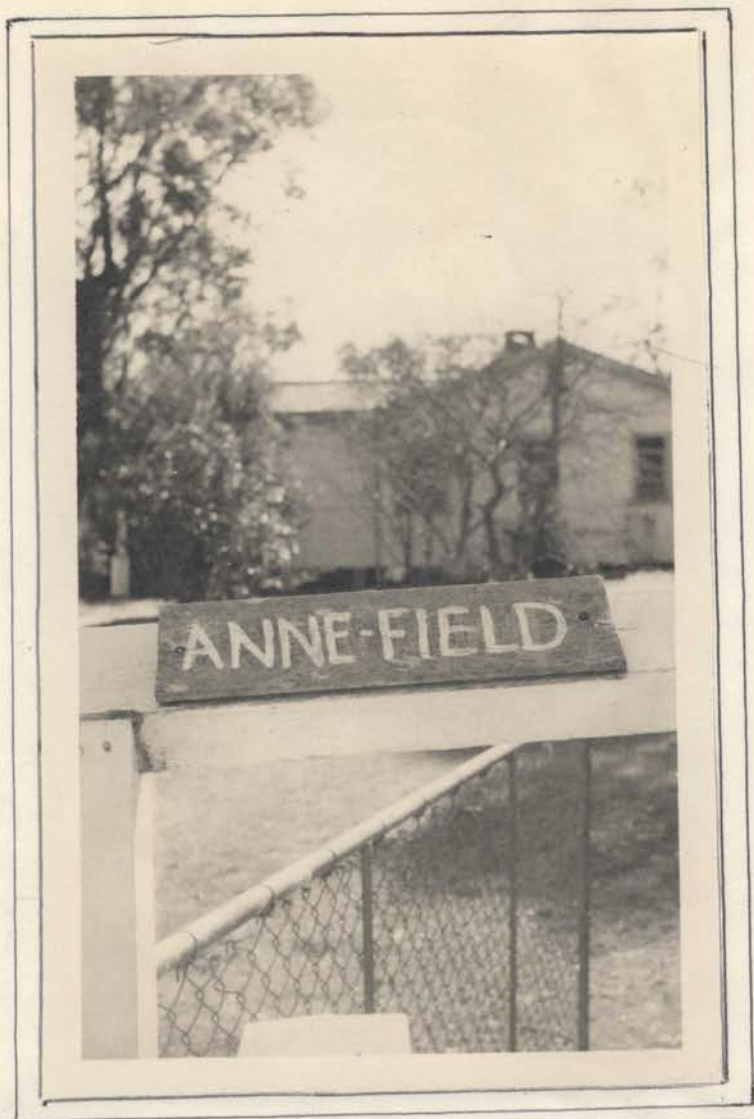
Dedicated to Margaret.

Overleaf

The cottage in River Road, Camden, where McCrae spent many years, and which he affectionately called "The Shackeau".

"...smallish bedroom, empty at present except for a stretcher, mattress, blankets, etc.; and my father's chest of drawers, bebauched, lying down with a broken back...as though the carriers had had their wicked will of it...had loved it - then ridden away...View through the window of Bob's orchard; and across the road a paddockful of lupins; dark leaves, almost black; and flowers on top, blue, like the blue rubbed off the bellies of mountains during their night walks abroad...That which I wished to have, I have; no man might ask for more; since vita (if its rustica) is the vita I adore...Oh, but you should see my kitchen..."

From a letter to Dora Moore,
Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany, p.56.



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Chapter 1.

Background to McCrae's Poetry.

- i Early biographical and literary background.
- ii 'Vitalism' and Norman Lindsay.

i Early biographical and literary influences

Hugh Raymond McCrae was born 4 October 1876 at Hawthorn, Victoria. His paternal grandmother was a Gordon, a lady of pioneering spirit, whose story, recorded in diary form, telling of the hardships suffered during the early settlement of Victoria, McCrae edited in Georgiana's Journal: Melbourne One Hundred Years Ago.¹

McCrae's father, George Gordon McCrae (1833 - 1929) was a minor poet whose literary and artistic associates included Marcus Clarke, Henry Kendall, Adam Lindsay Gordon, 'Orion' Horne, John Shillinglaw and Charles Conder. They, and many others, are drawn with lively insight in Hugh McCrae's My Father, and My Father's Friends.²

The senior McCrae's acquaintances extended back to Nelson's day, for Horne was present at Nelson's funeral.³ Hugh McCrae remembered, as a small boy in 1879, sitting on Marcus Clarke's knee,⁴ and through these friends, and his father, he links the literary life of the 1860's to the twentieth century.

This background gave a depth to McCrae's literary

1 Angus and Robertson, 1934 (Second Edition, revised by Huntly Cowper, 1966).

2 In Story-Book Only, (Angus and Robertson, 1948).

3 Ibid, p.3.

4 Ibid, p.3.

outlook, noticeable more in the prose writings than in the poetry, but affecting his creative expression as a whole.

McCrae's father was an extremely likeable person with artistic and musical, as well as literary talents. He was, in fact, a "perfect child's father".¹ He had travelled - making an expedition to the Seychelles in 1889 - and was a sufficiently skilled raconteur to keep his family of small children enthralled. He played with the children imaginatively, taught them jokes and tricks, as well as introducing them to the delights of music, art, poetry and history. His example encouraged Hugh to write.

I wrote and drew because my father wrote and drew. Being the youngest of the family, I was constantly with him; and we were great friends, he calling me 'Jack', and myself calling him, 'George'. Most of our mornings were spent in walking about Hawthorn, sometimes in the park or else along the Yarra... He would read his letters under a hedge... would draw on the backs of envelopes, cows, almost unrecognisable; even less like cows than cows are themselves... sketched lovers, too; always in the attitude in which we 'caught' 'em... On afternoons he'd sit to a table... And since we were partners I'd sit at the opposite edge, and write too.²

¹ Story-Book Only, (Angus and Robertson, 1948), p.45.

² Harry F. Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany (ed. Walter Stone, 1967) p.60.

McCrae was educated at the local Hawthorn grammar school, including Latin studies in his curriculum. Memories of this boyhood, not always happy ones, stayed with him throughout his life. Some of these early experiences form the subject of essays in Story-Book Only, usually being illustrated with McCrae's own pen-drawings, full of movement and vitality. Freudians would find here a fertile field, for McCrae had the ability to recreate the vividness and immediacy of childhood hopes and fears - of the barber and his razor; of being thrown into deep water by his schoolmaster; of bloodthirsty child companions and a cruel music teacher; of church-going and sabbath restrictions; and of family picnics to the beach.

McCrae's first youthful verse - 'To a Pot of Beer' - was published in a local paper while he was still at school. The result of this contribution was that he was warned of a repetition by the local parson, who disapproved both of the choice of subject and the sentiments expressed.¹

But McCrae was taking the first steps toward his ultimate career. Upon leaving school at seventeen, he studied art for a short time, then became articled

1 Story-Book Only (Angus and Robertson, 1948), p.65.

in 1894, at his father's insistence and expense, to a Melbourne architect, who taught him "how to make tea at lunch-time sweetened with condensed milk."¹ It was while in this position that he met the Lindsays. The first meeting with Norman was rather dramatic:

Across the top of my drawing-board I looked, six stories down, into the middle of Collins Steet, where fashionable people paraded among actors, musicians, and all sorts, during most of the day. One morning, in the building opposite, a window flew up rapidly. The sun was shining and I could see clearly the arrival onto the roof of a young man whose radiant personality was destined to influence the rest of my life. About nineteen years old, looking almost too slim in his shirt and trousers, he loped along the cornice to a precipitous edge, where, after balancing himself, he sat cleverly down. A full-sized sketch-book, which required the use of both hands, came to rest in his lap; and while he knocked some ashes out of his pipe, I noted, from my observation-post, his (even at that age) dictatorial nose - les yeux d'aigle! - a Beardsley fringe; and a tarboosh like the ace of diamonds topping off his adventurous head.²

McCrae discovered, after meeting Norman Lindsay, that he and his brother Lionel were both employed as artists - Norman on The Tocsin, at the same time contributing to other periodicals, including The Bulletin, while Lionel had illustrated several early poems which

¹ Story-Book Only (Angus and Robertson, 1948), p.66.

² Ibid, p.66.

McCrae had had published in the Melbourne Free-Lance.¹ The association with the Lindsays was to continue throughout McCrae's lifetime, being a source of strength to him personally, although of less certain benefit to him creatively. Undoubtedly it gave his writing impetus and direction in the initial stages.

In 1895, wearying of the office routines that accompanied his position with the architect, McCrae left, to devote his full time to the writing of verse and the penning of his sketches and illustrations, usually satirically humorous, for the Melbourne Punch, The Bulletin, The Rambler, the New York Puck and a little later to The Lone Hand and The Bookfellow.² From 1896 his verses appeared in The Bulletin, his main literary outlet at this stage, and in 1901 he had one of his poems, 'The Murder Night', included in The Bulletin Reciter, an event which gave him much joy.

On 4 May 1901 McCrae married Annie Geraldine Adams, whose family had a property at Avoca, Victoria. Shortly afterwards, the young couple moved to Sydney, for a brief period sharing a house at Lavender Bay with Norman Lindsay and his wife, and then settling at Chatswood. As a result of his friendship with Lindsay and as a consequence of his own literary activity

1 These poems are reproduced in Appendix 1, one in facsimile to show Lionel Lindsay's illustration.

2 Many of his early cartoons were signed 'Splash'. Early verses were often signed 'Ticket-Taker' or 'Trouvère'.

McCrae soon became part of the Sydney scene, meeting a large number of the leading figures of the day.

It was natural that McCrae should have been most interested in literary and artistic people, and it is his relationships with these which form the basis of many of the essays in Story-Book Only, simultaneously revealing McCrae's own personality as shy, hearty, fun-loving, yet somewhat mysterious - a man quick to laugh and over-eager to please. Will Dyson, Randolph Bedford, J.F. Archibald, A.G. Stephens, Victor Daley, Bernard O'Dowd, Christopher Brennan, Sir John Longstaff, Henry Lawson, J. Le Gay Brereton live again in a world rumbustious yet self-conscious, presented from a time when Australia was still trying to achieve a national identity distinct from both colonial ties and the jingoistic brand of nationalism of which the bush balladists, and much of the turn-of-the-century poetry, was representative.

Along with the joviality, there was, too, a certain frugality in McCrae's character, all-too-often occasioned by the dire financial straits in which he found himself, both in the early years and later in life. Never, at any time, did his considerable talents bring him enough to live on comfortably, although he usually managed to scrape through.

This shortage of money was the main reason for McCrae's attempts to earn his living in the early years of his marriage by his artistic skill rather than by a concentration on the poetry, which he preferred. At this time, too, he wrote a novel, submitted it to a publisher (Kettlewell), but had it rejected. He was advised to try an American publisher, but as far as is known, never did. Certainly, it was never published.¹

Although McCrae was devoting himself mainly to his drawings, a growing number of poems was accepted by the various periodicals. He was grateful for what he learned from his rejections, although it must have been a disappointment to him financially. He wrote to A.G. Stephens:

Once again you have earned my gratitude by throwing out something which I knew too late to be no good. I read the wretched thing ('Music of the Moon') a second time after I had sent it to you and cried with rage. However it was lucky for me that it fell into the master-hand, otherwise I should have given it to the Bully (Bulletin) and been forced to resist money and ask for it back. The fault is they take my stuff so easily, and, having no criticism but my own to depend on, I am always in a state of hesitancy. . . I do wish to become a great writer. But this is the only time that I have said it, and, therefore, you are the only person who knows of my aspiration.²

1 In a letter to A.G. Stephens, 21 November 1906, in Mitchell Library.

2 Letter to A.G. Stephens, 30 August 1906, in Mitchell Library.

The McCrae's first child, a girl, was born in November 1906. Hugh told Stephens, "The Baby is Hideous!" remarking in the same letter that his wife (McCrae always called her Nancy) was "awfully well and looking more beautiful to me than ever I thought she could."¹ McCrae's own health, however, was causing concern, even at this early date (he was thirty), and a doctor told him his pulse was one hundred and fifteen when it should have been seventy. The doctor thought McCrae had Grave's disease.² This was the first of a long series of illnesses, none of them proving really serious, but cumulatively, having the effect of turning McCrae's thoughts inwards to dwell upon his misfortunes. The fact that the family frequently changed their living quarters could not have helped. At this time, (1906 to 1909) McCrae's letters show various addresses - Chatswood, Roseville, Wollstonecraft.

In 1909 McCrae told Stephens that he intended to apply for a Government job, but instead, the young family (there were two daughters now), moved to Hawthorn. There McCrae accepted a temporary position on the Melbourne Punch, where, from May 1910, he was responsible for a 'Sydney Page' as well as contributing

1 Letter to A.G.Stephens, 28 November 1906, in Mitchell Library.

2 Letter to A.G.Stephens, dated only 1909, in Mitchell Library.

jokes and cartoons. Although the regular income was most welcome, McCrae had his misgivings. He wrote to Stephens that he felt he was being false to his poetic talents, that he was not likely to see New South Wales again for a long time, adding "So I suppose I will never fly near the sun again. All the better: I'm safer on earth."¹

At this time, too, McCrae received the offer of a job as clerical assistant to J. Le Gay Brereton, in Sydney, but because of his employment with Punch had to refuse, although appreciating the thoughtfulness the offer displayed.²

By the end of 1910, however, the original holder of McCrae's position returned from overseas and McCrae's services were terminated. He promised Stephens, "I'll be back under your thumb by Christmas,"³ but the transfer seems to have been delayed.

The beginning of 1913 found McCrae back in Sydney, still doing freelance drawing and writing, still composing poetry (his first book of verse had been printed)⁴. His main employment at this time, however, was as Art Editor of The Comic Australian, a short-lived periodical which ceased publication in the middle of 1913.

1 Letter to Stephens, 25 April 1910, in Mitchell Library.

2 Letter to Stephens, 15 July 1910, in Mitchell Library.

3 Letter to Stephens, 26 September 1910 in Mitchell Library.

4 Satyr and Sunlight (1909, 1911)- see Chapter 11.

The strain upon McCrae of providing for his young family must have been considerable. Even when well established as a poet and literary figure, he told Rupert Atkinson how the gas had been cut off and how the butcher and the grocer had been "waiting at the gate".¹ Allowing for poetic licence in this account, there is ample evidence that McCrae lived as cheaply as possible, whether from choice or necessity. Nor would he accept the charity of well-meaning friends. He tells of returning cheques from Norman Lindsay and Rupert Atkinson, in the same letter stating, "Just reckoned it up. I haven't had a smoke or a drink or paid a bill for a month. . . a record."²

In spite of his many friendships, there was an aspect of McCrae's personality which led him away from too much fellowship and into the paths of introspection. Innate shyness was often hidden by overt joviality, but remained an essential part of McCrae's constitution, growing, as the years passed, into a solitariness and hypochondria almost pathological in its intensity, which eventually led him to shun most social contacts. This shyness

1 Letter to Rupert Atkinson, 1922, in Mitchell Library.

2 Ibid.

was a reality attested to by his friends and well-documented from among the many letters he wrote.

Indicative of the contradictory elements in McCrae's personality were the periods of utter joy as well as the deep depression he experienced. His letters usually show marginal drawings, alive with gusto and joie-de-vivre. One letter to Kenneth Mackenzie asks, "When shall we meet again? You and I and Norman?" and shows three frolicking satyrs cavorting around the margins.¹

When Mackenzie called a kitten by the name of Hugh as a compliment to the poet, the event was celebrated in a letter from McCrae, brimful of joy:

McBacchus Mackenzie,
Who, in a frenzy,
Will thwack us
And crack us
From Mondy to Wensdy...
So lo McBacchus !!
McBacchus Mackenzie!

The letter went on to talk of the kitten:

His quart-pot bellykin and eyes like
pointed tips of ivy leaves enchanted me.
He's 'the wine's red baby on the grass'.
He's poetry and Solera and Norman Lind-
say. He's Lieb Frauenmilch, Hoddy-Doddy
Merryboddy, girls-and-curly and every
laughing thing on earth. He's a bumper of
Tokay! And when he goes to bed he goes to
bed mellow, with a hic (hac hoc) and a
Heigh Punchinello! 2

1 Undated letter to Kenneth Mackenzie in Fisher Library.

2 Undated letter to Kenneth Mackenzie in Fisher Library.

It is this same joy reflected in much of McCrae's poetry, especially in the lyrics. It is this joy which gives rise to the ecstatic cry which concludes 'I Blow My Pipes':

I blow my pipes, the glad birds sing,
The fat young nymphs around me spring,
I am the lord,
I am the lord,
I am the lord of everything!

There were times of depression when McCrae felt that his Muse had deserted him. Spontaneity he valued very highly in his writing. When he felt this quality was lacking, McCrae became charged with frustration, holding a very low opinion of himself at such times. When he was well-advanced in life and well established as a poet, he still experienced these periods of depression:

Would to God I had a serious mind, but
the arts I possess have to be forced and
reforced and afterwards custarded with
jokes before I can hope to palm them off.¹

In his introspectiveness, McCrae attributed these periods of lesser activity to a personality flaw due to his heredity:

The McCraes never had backbones...I was certainly behind the door when vertebrae were given out.. The Browns, my mother's family, had one spine among the whole herd of them.²

- 1 Letter to Nettie Palmer, 1938, in National Library of Australia.
- 2 Letter to Nettie Palmer, 1939, in National Library of Australia.

Further to document the inherited nature of this disposition, McCrae quoted from Boswell:

Boswell: A basin of cold water or a horse-whip will cure laziness.

Johnson: No, Sir, it will but put off the fit!

Vance Palmer, who lived with McCrae for a time at Hawthorn, knew him very well. When asked about McCrae's personality, Palmer re-affirmed impressions which emerge from any study of McCrae:

I don't think he was a happy man. I think his high spirits often hid a very deep fund of depression. And he didn't like going out.. He didn't like making a speech or being taken notice of in public.. He was always talking about having no top to his head, and actually he didn't know much about political life, very little about everyday things. ²

McCrae was not, however, just a shy, innocent, self-conscious man. There was a complexity to his character which Norman Lindsay, more than anyone else, recognised:

Hughie McCrae is a devil of a problem to try to fit into words, because for one reason he was the most unique man I have ever met, the rarest, the most vital, and he was a man who had everything on the surface. You'd swear you knew everything about him. You'd think there was not an inhibition in him, and yet to me he was always a mystery. This strange mask, this perfect mask! As a matter of fact he was a hidden man to me always. I ought to

- 1 Letter to Nettie Palmer, August 1939, in National Library of Australia.
- 2 In John Thompson, Five to Remember (Lansdowne, 1964), p.36.

know Mac as well as anybody because I met him when I was a boy of eighteen, and I never saw him in a black mood, I never saw him in an angry mood. Yet there was always a mystery. He was always laughing. He apparently took life as one mad comedy. He preferred the company of people he could laugh at. And he was like the moon, you know, always turning its bright face towards you, never letting you see the other side, the dark side. 1

McCrae's daughters are on record to verify this dual nature of their father's personality.

"Everything was either glorious and wonderful and marvellous, or terrible, black, awful."² They agreed that their father was rather indefinite and unpunctual about appointments (he once did not turn up when Best Man at a friend's wedding), and all in all a very sensitive person.

This sensitivity and great gusto for life was embedded in the very fibre of McCrae's being. He revelled in this awareness, expressing it through his poetry, in his letters, and his prose writings. But there was a kind of defensiveness, of over-compensation, about it. He confided to Nettie Palmer :

I am terrified of being terrified - a kind of nervousness about the dignity and honour of the clan and I do love life. Every mouthful of air I take fills me with unsingable hymns. I believe I have a brain like a knot of roses and

1 In John Thompson, Five to Remember (Lansdowne, 1964),
2 Ibid, p.48 p.48.

when my head aches I imagine they are prickling me with their thorns to remind me to mulch their roots with Shakespeare and Catullus. ¹

In spite of any shortcomings in McCrae's personality, the essential humanity of the man was never far away. It shines through the poetry and the prose with a barely subdued luminosity. Some of the reminiscences which went to make up My Father, and My Father's Friends were delivered as public lectures. J. Le Gay Brereton was present, subsequently sending a congratulatory note to McCrae. It read, in part:

What a wonderfully vivid picture of the group you gave us, and (may I add) how strikingly you illustrated your own sympathy with what is humanly lovable.²

It is this sympathy which shines through McCrae's life constantly. His dealings with children displayed it, even affecting A.G. Stephens on his visits to the McCrae household, until the bearded critic romped and rolled with the young McCraes. When McCrae was asked by Joan Mackaness to illustrate a children's book she was writing, he declined on the grounds that his pen could not do justice to the joy and spontaneity which children embodied:

Write summat about devils and I'll illustrate 'em in sulphur, on asbestos

1 Letter to Nettie Palmer, 1920, in National Library of Australia.

2 Letter to McCrae, 14 December 1929, in National Library of Australia.

HUGH McCRAE

LECTURES AT THE

SAVOY THEATRE

BLIGH STREET, SYDNEY

Thursday Evening Dec. 12

(PART I.)

Friday Evening, Dec. 13

(PART II.)

SUBJECT :

“My Father and My Father’s Friends”

(George Gordon McCrae, Marcus Clarke, Henry Kendall, Adam Lindsay Gordon, “Orion” Horne, John Shillinglaw, Richard Birnie, Stephen Mannington Caffyn, Charles Conder, etc.)

Mr. McCrae makes them walk and talk, and go through their daily performances just as if they were still upon the earth. He knows the shape of their legs and the sound of their voices. Marcus Clarke ran along the street Birnie pranced and Caffyn stuttered.

They sang songs seldom heard nowadays; but these may be listened to again on December 12 and 13.

The most intensely personal dissertation ever put across the Australian platform.

Hear his story of the Dog in the Cab. Walter Montgomery and Jim Stiffe. George Watson in holts with Adam Lindsay Gordon. “Whiskey Hot . . . With Lots of Lemon in it!” George McCrae and the Ocarina. Charles Conder. The Truth about Horne and a Flea. Melbourne in the Sixties.

The Scandinavian Music Hall. The Salle Valentino. Count Freezingstern. Ali Ben Soualle and the Turcophone. Marie’s Wine Shop. Numero Quarte Vingt Douze, Elizabeth Street. Iron Pot Headaches. Little Esmeralda and her something-kind-of-goat.

Damn the Double Coconut !!

Management: JOHN GRIFFITHS, c/o Palings.

plaster; world without end. But kids is kids. They brighten the home, deepen love, mess about the floor, infuse courage, scribble on the walls and sustain the charities of life. It would be a terrible world, Dear Joan, if it wasn't embellished by children; but I'm damned if I can draw 'em. 1

Along with the prized quality of spontaneity, McCrae valued another child-like attribute -simplicity. He had a great love for simplicity in art, whether in poetry, drawing, music or sculpture. It was this quality which led him to assess Robert Burns' 'The Mouse' as "one of the most admirable things I have read in my life."² Similarly, he praised the simplicity of and the economy of line in the sketches of George Finey after visiting an exhibition of his work. He commended Finey's use of single lines and "his healthy, roaring, rough-house exuberance; a clap on the shoulder, a kick on the behind."³

It was on account of his love of simplicity, and of a related quality, sincerity, that McCrae disliked the work of Jack Lindsay, as well as having personal reasons for disliking him. He saw a deliberate lack of simplicity in Jack Lindsay's whole approach to literature:

1. Undated letter to Joan Mackaness in National Library of Australia.
2. Letter to Nettie Palmer, dated only 1937, in National Library of Australia.
3. Letter to Vance and Nettie Palmer, undated, in National Library of Australia.

To me he remains Egyptian: he is a mystic primarily because he is obscure; and there can be no doubt that his intricate style has been planned to bamboozle the general intellect. A supercosmian soul, with Abacadabra written all over him.¹

McCrae strove for simplicity in his own work, so that he was able to write, obviously later in life, "I've tried to be simple all my life, and now I find, too late, I should just have been simple and not tried."² But, as he found out, while one might strive earnestly to be simple in expression, subjectivity intrudes to such a degree that the reader does not necessarily interpret the work simply. Acknowledging this, McCrae wrote, "It's strange how often one should write clearly for oneself yet never be able to estimate the entanglements there are for other people."³

In spite of these complexities, as a rule McCrae presented to the world the happy-go-lucky manner of a pleasant, fun-loving man. Closer acquaintance showed a shy, retiring personality underlying the jovial appearance and manner. This was accompanied by a basic insecurity which was occasionally the means whereby he was goaded into action by his friends. It was this very tendency which led to the writing of several poems, in-

1 Letter to Vance Palmer, "Nov. 24 or 25", in National Library of Australia.

2 Undated letter to Vance Palmer in National Library of Australia.

3 Letter to Nettie Palmer, February 1932, in National Library of Australia.

cluding the rollicking, somewhat sardonic 'Red John of Haslingden'. H.M.Green saw McCrae being influenced by old ballad poetry, to which McCrae replied "Not much", but the question rankled with him a little. When Bert Stevens refused to believe that McCrae could write anything of length, his anger was fully roused. Stevens goaded him, "You are a poet of little things. Length defeats you. Sequence defeats you", McCrae reported Stevens as saying. McCrae's reaction was immediate :

Imagine me as Cain on the day he determined to swat Abel ! I rushed home to Roseville thinking up 'Red John' in the train; still thinking him up on the track to our house, our shambles, our castle, palace, wotnot. Wouldn't eat. Just wrote, becoss I couldn't help myself. Began in the breakfast room and stanza'd the finish in bed. Early in the morning of the next day, I submitted the result to Bert, who, like God in Genesis, opined 'dat vos goot'.¹

Although there has not been unanimous approval of this poem by the critics, McCrae himself liked it. When asked by Mackaness to supply the names of the favourites from among the poems he had written, McCrae supplied seven titles, among which, in fifth place, was 'Red John'. It is idle to speculate whether Australian poetry might have been richer if more people had challenged McCrae to reveal the skills he undoubtedly possessed.

¹ Letter to George Mackaness, 7 May 1943, in National Library of Australia.

There is no doubt that McCrae's poetic art was much more strongly a product of his unique personality than of any set of literary sources. He prided himself on his originality. When thanking Kenneth Mackenzie for the kind words written about one of the volumes of collected poetry, McCrae wrote:

The part I like best is your explanation to Tom Moore and Co. that I am my poetry.. not a Proteus-poet who transforms his authorship into travesties of Whitman, Yeats, Eliot, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Bridges, or even (alas!) John Keats...yet isn't able to be himself. Having no original in his ego, he remains forever many bodies else.¹

Kenneth Mackenzie knew both the Lindsays and McCrae well, often speaking of this original quality in McCrae's work:

He (McCrae) joined with them, shared the good, wild life of youth and those days, and in a flash was -not became - the writer of the earlier poems. McCrae never learned this magic of jewels and flesh and flowers. He knew it all from the beginning.²

Mackenzie also remarked upon how much of McCrae's personality was embodied in his poems, quoting the aptness of the French proverb, "the style is the man", or as he also put it, "A profound contemplation of the poems evokes the true mind of the man."³ McCrae's comment on this was that, "A man's book is not so much

1 Undated letter in Fisher Library.

2 Kenneth Mackenzie, 'Hugh McCrae and His Poetry', The Bulletin, 6 September 1939, (Red Page).

3 Ibid.

his mind as it is the picture of his mind."¹

There is some speculation that McCrae might have been influenced by the French poets -the Lindsays introduced him to Baudelaire's work, for instance - but McCrae specifically denied this. He dismissed the question with a weary sigh and a definite "Oh no, no, no."²

McCrae was often questioned about the influences upon his work. Story-Book Only, with its personal reminiscences sheds some light upon these, but specific influences are hard to discover. Norman Lindsay knew McCrae better than most men, declaring:

I tried to find out what was the basis of his aesthetic, and the only people I could pin down were Chaucer, Spenser and Burns. Burns was very strong, and all the eighteenth century writers - Boswell particularly. He knew Boswell by heart, but I could never get any talk about contemporary poetry with him. He just didn't read it. ³

Lindsay nagged McCrae into reading Byron, especially Don Juan, but McCrae did not like it, nor did he finish reading it. But he did like Spenser, so much in fact that his daughters tell how their father used to strain his eyes at night reading him, sometimes

1 The Bulletin, 30 August 1923, (Red Page).

2 Recounted by Ronald McCuaig in John Thompson, Five to Remember (Lansdowne, 1964), p.44.

3 Norman Lindsay in Five to Remember, p.50.

aloud to the children. Dickens, Chaucer, Spenser's Faerie Queene and frequent incursions into Balzac were the usual items of nightly fare.¹

McCrae had little liking for the work of Walter Scott, considering him too long-winded for pleasure - an opinion he shared with George Gordon. He loved Laurence Sterne, however, once copying out by hand the whole of The Sentimental Journey.

There is little doubt, too, that even though McCrae's father was a poet, there is no direct influence here, in style, or, perhaps with one exception, in content. One early critic, however, thought otherwise:

Two things count in his (McCrae's) literary life. One is the genius invested individually in him; the other is a literary heritage from his father, firing and sustaining his imagination, feeding its growth in the first place, shaping its direction since, and never for an instant out of his pen.²

No evidence is given to support this viewpoint, and a study of George Gordon McCrae's work shows that there is little in common between the two. George Gordon wrote two stilted aboriginal romances, 'Mamba' and 'Balladeadro'; a "little prison epic" of four thousand lines - 'The Man in the Iron Mask'; and a slight book of

1 In John Thompson, Five to Remember (Lansdowne, 1964), p. 50.

2 An anonymous article, 'Australian Writers-McCrae' in The Bulletin, 3 February 1937.

verse, The Fleet and the Convoy. A contemporary review of the earlier poems compares George Gordon's style with Walter Scott's - a comparison McCrae at least, would not have liked. "Over them both lies a patina of romantic and poetic associations created by the diction."¹ While this comment is true of both the McCraes, so it is of any poet, particularly with lyric poetry.

If there is any influence of father on son, it is much more likely to be, and in fact was, the general tendency of a son to follow in his father's vocation and interests. McCrae grew up with literary friends, was thoroughly familiar with well-known and established writers of the time; he inherited an interest in literature, in poetry in particular, but one is forced to agree with Kenneth Slessor that, "There is nothing whatever of George Gordon McCrae in Satyrs and Sunlight or in any of Hugh McCrae's later poetry."² Slessor goes on to state the position as he does see it:

If influences are to be discovered, they come straight from Hugh McCrae's reading or from his own and not his father's friends. And in many ways the friends of Hugh McCrae's youth were as magnetic and compelling as his father's. They included Will Dyson and Edward Dyson, George Lambert, Randolph Bedford, J.F. Archibald, Christopher Brennan, Arthur

1 In The Colonial Monthly, quoted by C. Hadgraft, Australian Literature: A Critical Account to 1955 (Heinemann, 1960), p. 37.

2 'Australian Poetry and Hugh McCrae', Southerly, XVII (1956), p. 128.

Adams, Frank Fox, Victor Daley, John Longstaff, A.G. Stephens and the two Dalleys, Will and John. There was also that incredible family, the Lindsays.

And if McCrae's friends were a remarkable group, so his reading covered an interesting group of authors—not widespread in range of time, but influential in the development of English literature. It included Boswell, Aubrey's 'Lives', Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, Smollett, Fielding, Jeremy Taylor, Southey's prose, Herrick, Gay, Spenser, Burns, Defoe, Sterne, De Quincey and Hazlitt, but almost none later than Disraeli.¹ Rabelais, as well as Sterne, was admired for his droll humour. There are many traces of both in Story-Book Only.

Among McCrae's literary friendships was a long exchange of letters with Walter de la Mare, commencing as far back as 1925. At this time de la Mare was living at Twickenham, and often signed his letters to McCrae, "Love from Twicks.". McCrae was inordinately proud of this friendship, often quoting extracts from de la Mare to his other correspondents. In one of these letters, de la Mare is quoted as saying that he had been re-reading a volume of McCrae's poems. "I love its contents - its high spirits, the rich and racy English, the humour,

1 See Appendix IV for a complete list of authors with whom McCrae was familiar i.e. actually stated that he had read, and in many cases, quoted from. It was compiled from Story-Book Only, from his other prose writings, especially his letters, and his poems.

the downrightness, the tang, the half-hidden romance and feeling..."¹

Again, in reference to My Father, and My Father's Friends, de la Mare wrote that he thought it "brimming over with humanity, humour and insight," remarking approvingly upon "the telling little episodes and stories and literary allusions, but for what is absolutely unforgettable and moving, I think the last ('My Father's Best Friend')." ²

From among the poetry, de la Mare expressed a preference for 'O Deep and Dewy Hour' and 'The Mouse', congratulating McCrae with:

How odd it is that though there is just a far-away echo of the Elizabethans and (an unusually sensitive) Herrick here, they are wholly original. If you can explain how a few words manage that I should be much obliged.³

This "far away echo of the Elizabethans is seen in McCrae's work, not only in the diction, especially in the compound words, but also in a distinct Elizabethan characteristic. Groom has claimed that: "At their best, the Elizabethans could make the moment

- 1 Letter to George Mackaness, 3 February 1953, in National Library of Australia.
- 2 Letter to George Mackaness, March 1945, in National Library of Australia.
- 3 Letter to Nettie Palmer, 27 June 1949, in National Library of Australia. I have tried unsuccessfully to gain access to McCrae's letters to de la Mare.

immortal, but they could not engrave enduring character in granite."¹ This is one of the principal qualities in McCrae's poetry - the art of making the moment "immortal", for even the casual reader of his verses will recall the coming of the stallions in 'Ambuscade', the hawk "entowered in the sky" of 'Muse-Haunted' or the vernal freshness of the dawn in 'The Elves o' Spring'. His is the ability to suspend a moment in time and to examine carefully its causes, its ramifications, and its implications for man and his awareness of the world surrounding him.

ii 'Vitalism' and Norman Lindsay.

But if McCrae had distinct sympathies with the pastorals of Petronius and the vitality of the moment as the Elizabethans portrayed it, he also had much more immediate connections with the ideas of Norman Lindsay and with what has come to be known as the Vision School. McCrae began to write in that much-discussed period of Australian development - the 1890's. Although his first efforts were indifferent verses, published almost exclusively in The Bulletin from 1896 onwards, it was not until the early years of the next century that he approached the standard which is

1 B. Groom, The Diction of Poetry From Spenser to Bridges, (University of Toronto Press, 1960), p.55

normally associated with the name of poetry. However, as some of the biographical material in Story-Book Only shows, his literary roots must be considered as end-of-century.

As has been pointed out by Wilkes,¹ it is fallacious to date the periods of literary development from social or economic periods, and the eighteen-nineties should be regarded as forming part of a period of continuous development. It is possible, within this continuum, to discern utopian and nationalistic elements,² or vitalist and nationalistic elements as Buckley has maintained.³

Certainly there is evidence in McCrae's work to support Buckley's thesis about vitalist manifestations, as well as a strong strain of utopianism. Although nationalism was common in the work of McCrae's contemporaries, it is almost completely absent from his own. But he is the perfect example for Buckley's argument, which he elaborated further in a later essay:

The two chief lines of influence seem to me to be a kind of utopian humanism or insistence on the soul's radical innocence, and a kind of vitalism, or insistence on releasing the basic powers of life.⁴

- 1 G. Wilkes, 'The Eighteen Nineties', in G. Johnston(ed.) Australian Literary Criticism, (Oxford Uni.Press, 1962).
- 2 Vance Palmer, The Legend of the Nineties (Melbourne University Press, 1954).
- 3 Vincent Buckley, Essays in Poetry-Mainly Australian (Melbourne University Press, 1957).
- 4 In G. Johnston, Australian Literary Criticism (Oxford University Press, 1962).

The strain of utopian humanism is traceable through O'Dowd, through Mary Gilmore, in some of the work of Vance Palmer, and in McCrae, although in a subsidiary role to the vitalism - that form of it which Buckley defines as "reliance on the supreme importance of the moment, on joyful self-expression, on impulse and sensation, with an overture played by an orchestra of resuscitated Pagan deities."¹

There are other aspects of vitalism; that emphasising the metaphysical status of the Will, a mental energy beyond morality in its conventional forms; a reliance on the power of nature, with whose evolution man must co-operate; a mental or aesthetic Dionysianism dealing with the flesh in a rather distant, abstract manner; and all these forms exist in the vitalist creed as expounded in Creative Effort² in 1924 by Norman Lindsay. There is evidence to suggest that McCrae agreed wholeheartedly with Lindsay's statements in Creative Effort, but it is an overstatement to hold that he had arrived at the same position independently. McCrae was not a theoretician; he rarely thought through a philosophical position ("Why should I philosophize? / Being happy I am wise."), yet he

1 In G. Johnston, Australian Literary Criticism (Oxford University Press, 1962), p.23.

2 Norman Lindsay, Creative Effort-An Essay in Affirmation (Cecil Palmer, 1924).

had, in an intuitive way, adopted aspects of the vitalist view, especially that emphasising the importance of the moment. When Lindsay formulated the theory in some detail, enlarging it beyond what McCrae had used in his own aesthetic, McCrae was able to agree with it wholeheartedly.¹ It should not be forgotten that most of McCrae's best work was written before this formulation took place. To say that it resulted from Lindsay's theories or that McCrae was the leader in the field with Lindsay and the others in the Vision school following,² both of these points of view are not in accord with the truth.

Norman Lindsay's Creative Effort was published in 1924, almost thirty years after McCrae had had his first poems published, and fifteen years after the publication of the first edition of Satyrs and Sunlight in 1909. There is a strong argument for assuming a kind of parallel development of the two -Lindsay and McCrae. But just before Creative Effort was published, Lindsay sent the manuscript to McCrae for his comments. After reading it, McCrae penned him an enthusiastic letter, and fortunately this letter has been preserved in Mitchell Library. Among other

1 See p.35

2 Morris Miller, Australian Literature: From Its Beginnings to 1935 (Melbourne University Press, 1949 (1956)) maintained this.

things, McCrae wrote, "I leap towards you, as a giant towards the trumpets of a hurricane. All that you say has been attested in my heart longer than I can remember."

In Creative Effort the theory is postulated that there is no necessarily-improved after-life, but what Nietzsche calls an 'eternal recurrence', and as a consequence man can improve himself only by willing himself to creative effort, as Lindsay saw the Greeks had done. Thinking is not enough; it must be transmuted into action, for creativeness is the one permanent element in man. It is essential to effort that existence should be hard, painful, uncertain, as man develops through continuous struggling. His perceptions are increased in range and refined to greater sensitivity. Art is, then, not a mere entertainment, but part of this essential process, bringing form to chaos and carrying the mind a step beyond the earth. Creativeness is seen as the highest good and destructiveness as the greatest evil.

Art must serve, also, "to stir sensation, both physical and mental, as deeply as possible" and "to be morally vital, must be gay, laughter-loving, seeking joy as the symbol of its highest exultation."¹

¹ Creative Effort, p.49.

Art, where it touches the most vital of all issues, which is sex, the stimulus of Life's rebirth, will be frank, licentious, shameless, seeking every image which may emphasise the gesture of desire, adoring the naked body, surrounding it with the emblems of happiness, strength, courage—in short, will impose on the mind that embrace in passion which may be transferred to the embrace of the body.¹

Art must combine Beauty, Passion, Rhythm, and concern itself with presenting vividly and concisely the problem of existence. Technical perfection is not creative art, but the real artist must go beyond this and give something original to life.

The grave is not an end for Lindsay, but a "preliminary affair, a mere curtain-raiser to the real drama of effort,"² for the highest effort man is capable of is to create great art. He should bring to it not only the greatest dexterity of craftsmanship but the highest power of intellectual vision.

There is a community of interest among the various branches of the arts, and so the labels of poet, artist, musician and intellectual should be deleted.

You must replace them by such terms as Vitalised Organisms, a greater inward vision, the power to think clearly, to understand the senses, to analyse their perception of beauty, passion, sensation; and by an added clarity of sight to perceive delicacy of form, and so select what is beautiful in external things; the power to add to the common process of hearing,

1 Creative Effort, p.50.

2 Ibid, p.95.

an exquisite perception of cadences, tones, rhythms; the ability to put these things in the articulate form of words, so that they become apparent to less-sensitive organisms; in fact, to perceive and analyse and put in created form the vision of Life. The power to do these things is the rarest and highest development of which the human mind is capable.¹

This artistic development reached its peak in the Greeks, who are seen as reaching from barbarism to civilisation in a step, thus supplying the foundation of Western aesthetics and morals. Because of the insight given by them, we should study and learn from their achievements. "We, who owe the genesis of all high consciousness of earth to the Greek effort, how can we sufficiently adore it?"² asked Lindsay, answering by his artistic endeavour and his attempt to bring about a Greek renaissance, with echoes from McCrae, Slessor, FitzGerald, Jack and Philip Lindsay.

While the universal problem is to produce life, the individual problem is to improve its quality - to develop Mind. The highest morality consists in a deep awareness and consciousness of man's real nature, with the inner vision which stimulates this consciousness in other minds. Shakespeare's art was great because it was of this kind. Zola's was not great art, this novelist being seen as "a demented photographer who photographed

1 Creative Effort, p.106.

2 Ibid, p.285.

the wrong things."¹

The vitalist, in Lindsay's terms, seeks for all that expresses the highest and most sensitive perception of Mind itself, this expression manifesting itself in creating beauty from its inner perception of beauty, of intellect, and of all that reveals mind. Creative effort offers to the poet the perception of beauty or emotion by the analysis of words, and "drags us out of all inertia of mind, of all Nirvana of entertainment."² Creative vision is "The highest form of expression that earthly consciousness can reach" and we must learn to put it first in our lives because it inevitably carries with it the perception and revelation of all that is universal in feeling and intellect and because" it arrives at the expression by a preknowledge already implanted in the mind at birth."³ Material beauties only hint at the real beauty (in a manner analogous to the way in which objects of sense reflect, in poor measure, the 'forms' or ideals in Plato's universe), and, as a result, "creative art...not only perceives the beauty of actuality, but it adds to its observation of what a thing is a perception of what the thing might be."⁴

1 Creative Effort, p.85.

2 Ibid, p.180.

3 See the comments of Kenneth Mackenzie on McCrae's creativity on p.19.

4 Creative Effort, p.219.

Because of this, the two greatest utterances in philosophy this earth has so far possessed are Plato and Nietzsche, who both "concerned themselves with conditions of belief only as structural conditions in the projection of an Aesthetic of Mind, with which all Creative Energy is concerned."¹

It is easy to see why Lindsay aroused the cries of the 'wowsers', as he called them, for the creative mind expressed delight in sex. "To express the beauty of femininity; to respond by songs and pictures and melody to the impulse of sex will be the evidence of morality, and no stupid opposition from the dull social mind must deter its expression."² Swinburne was condemned because he sang to a beautiful antique statue of femininity, instead of to passion itself. Tennyson and Wordsworth were "escaped curates" and "evasionist". Only Burns and Byron met with Lindsay's approval, for "Nowhere else has the human heart and mind been exposed to us so frankly or in a finer manner."³ They were seen as the expression of passion itself. Rabelais, Dickens, Chaucer and Petronius form a brotherhood of laughter and humanity and cleanse the world through the laughter they arouse; But in spite of their cathartic effect (in good Greek

1 Creative Effort, p.235.

2 Ibid, p.238.

3 Ibid, p.244.

fashion), they fall short of greatness, for "their love for Life brings us to the best that is in man, but there it stops."¹ Even though they do not go beyond this, they fulfil one of the dicta of the creative artist given by Nietzsche, "To slay that highest devil, the spirit of gravity; to believe only in a God who could know how to dance."²

Self-revelation of this nature grows as the result of experience. Sensation is our sole means of self-realisation. By our power to experience alone grows the power to develop. And "development does not grow by annihilating passion, but by recording passion."³ For Lindsay, our highest symbol of passion is beauty:

Beauty, therefore, becomes the definition of Mind in its highest, for this power to define carries with it the power to perceive, and so an impetus is given down the whole descending scale of all that is merely human on the earth.⁴

With this vitalist theory McCrae agreed thoroughly and wholeheartedly. He emphasised, perhaps more than Lindsay, that this theory dispensed with the current Christian view that man's salvation had been won by the Crucifixion, or that man was at the

1 Creative Effort, p.252.

2 Ibid, p.254.

3 Ibid, p.266.

4 Ibid, p.266.

mercy of, and subject to, some theory of predestination. Because both these views were seen as leading to a relaxation of effort, of an admittance to a higher state by means of another's vicarious effort, they were rejected in strong terms. "Christianity sets out with the object of killing all human endeavour", wrote McCrae, adding, "I have never disputed the opinion of man being both God and Devil in himself. How much more ennobling it is to rise upon the several strokes of one's wings than to fester, effortless, in the predestinate pit."¹ And to dispel any last doubts that Lindsay might have had about the reception of his theory, McCrae wrote:

You needn't have hesitated in sending me your Mss. any sooner, because I am with you for the whole of the distance, and the more bell-ropes you cut, the more brambles will I pack into the porches of the Cathedrals. It will be a dry fire, and a good saving one when it begins. How keenly you cut into the Apple of the Church! And how the Ringed Maggot twirls among the powdered seeds!

Finally, McCrae summed up his attitude to the Lindsay doctrine by, "You will see by so much paraphrasing and scribbling of quotations that I can add nothing to your argument." However, after his signature on the letter, McCrae added the following:

Creative Effort

These are the conclusions I have arrived

¹ In his letter to Lindsay attached to the manuscript of Creative Effort, in Mitchell Library.

at

Viz: That it points to a higher morality than any which has ever yet been promulgated. That it brings us to the very mounting-block of Man's Ascent i.e. Self-Endeavour. That it states plainly "To do what is already done is to be doing nothing."

That Man (being his own god) is positive in his aims; not working in the dark... That the infallible sign of the Child of Genius lies in his provisioning for other Children of Genius to follow in the hereafter.

That it is as a barrier against the common herd that "the gods have set sweat in the path of excellence"

"Of his lineage art thou, and of his offspring By verrey ligne."

McCrae concluded this appended statement with quotations from two famous writers - Berkenhead and John Earle. The latter forms a fitting tribute to Lindsay:

I grieve not now, that old Menander's
vein
Is ruin'd to survive in thee again;
Such in his time was he, of the same
piece,
The smooth, ev'n, natural wit, and love
of Greece.

This love of Greece was evident in McCrae's poetry also, along with many of the other elements of the vitalist credo. There is the same uninhibited joy; the acceptance of sex as a natural and joyful aspect of life, especially the chase as an essential part of the sexual experience; the inherent goodness of nature and man's essential oneness with it; the pantheistic ideas, with man's god being within him, to be expressed

through his own efforts and activities; the concentration upon the vitality and importance of the moment, with a sensuous romanticising and emotional fantasy. But it is still not possible to say that McCrae had these characteristics because of his contacts with Lindsay. As frequently happens, an aesthetic code may well be formulated after its main congruent elements have been practised for a period, and this is true of Lindsay's theories. Although there is evidence to prove that Jack Lindsay composed poetry directly from inspiration gained through viewing Norman's paintings and engravings,¹ McCrae's position is not nearly so straightforward.

The two, McCrae and Norman Lindsay, met about the turn of the century when both were at an extremely impressionable age. McCrae, ever generous, freely acknowledged the impact made upon him by the better-read Lindsay:

To Norman I owed my first uninterrupted view of Parnassus - of the 'dei agrorum silvarumque' - he it was who magicked me into the presence of Faunus, most ancient King of Italy; yet, discovering all Fairyland, discovered nothing of himself.²

But McCrae also states in the same account how books

- 1 In The Roaring Twenties (Bodley Head, 1960), Jack Lindsay tells how he would visit his father with just this end in view (p.92). Some of his poems in Vision were written in this way.
- 2 Story-Book Only (Angus and Robertson, 1948), p.68.

and common tastes brought and kept them together; how he was able to borrow from the Lindsay bookshelf Shakespeare, Cervantes, Rabelais, Burns, Boswell, Byron, Heine and others. In return, McCrae lent Sterne, Smollett, Fielding, Jeremy Taylor and the "eloquent poesies" of Edmund Spenser. Lionel Lindsay made McCrae familiar with the Fleurs du Mal of Baudelaire, describing this collection in terms which could well apply to much of McCrae's own work:

The Fleurs du Mal, my dear McCrae, enchants me...clearness of outline, suggestions of mystery, the psychology of space, colours, odours - the - er - liberating charm of evil - the eternal nostalgia - that's it - nostalgia - the eternal nostalgia for BEAUTY!¹

In the subsequent years there was almost continuous contact between McCrae and the Lindsays. After his marriage, McCrae and his wife lived with the Lindsays (Norman and his wife), in Sydney for six months. They were never far apart, except when Norman was overseas or when McCrae was in America in 1914. And always there was the constant influence of Norman's elfish personality. Norman helped McCrae master the difficult art of drawing, helped him also to sell the products of his labours. McCrae stated:

Under his direction I slogged along in great style; and if ever I despaired, he

1 Story-Book Only, p.70.

said, 'Bad conscience' in the same tone as 'Bad dog!' I know it from experience. There's only one reason for bad conscience, and that's neglect of work.¹

Even in the later years the two visited each other constantly. McCrae described one such visit to Vance Palmer, later including the account in Story - Book Only:²

Another visit from N.L. and Rose, N with lovely grey hair pulled to a point over his forehead. Eyes crackling with electricity...Millions and millions of words ...too many at once to get into my ears, they found my nostrils and tried to rush up my trouser-legs; so that after he had gone, I had to shake my clothes and hang 'em across a chair before I could put 'em on again. Wish you had been here. Here's most fascinating.

As is to be expected, where there is an interchange of ideas in a field of common interests, each affected the other. From Lindsay's viewpoint, then, there was some profit in the association, also. "Putting aside all personal affection and friendship for Hugh McCrae, I find it impossible to conceive my early years in this country without his poetry."³ After stressing the importance of The Lone Hand as a vehicle for the early work of both of them, Lindsay pointed out it first gave them a chance to have their works produced in a decent format, and emphasised the importance of this for inspiring the artist. "I know that Satyrs

1 Story-Book Only, p.72.

2 'The Visit', p.86.

3 Norman Lindsay in Southerly, XVll (1956), p.123.

and Sunlight vastly inspired the sort of imagery I was seeking to define pictorially. The urge to illustrate it was irresistible..." And again, in the same discussion:

For myself, poetry has always come first with me in the arts, for inspiring an imagery in form culled from the spectacle of life, and I have been amazingly rewarded in the poetry produced in Australia in my time. In youth, I had the lyrics of Hugh McCrae, some of the finest in the English language...¹

The dual nature of this exchange was re-iterated by Lindsay in a letter to myself from Springwood. "Yes, between Hugh and myself, there was a constant exchange of imageries. I drew inspiration from his poetry, as he did from my pictures."² Yet Lindsay did not regard himself as being the 'source' of the poetry. In answer to the question about this source, Lindsay affirmed, "The sources of McCrae's poetry came from his own inspired mind, but the poets who stimulated him most were Chaucer, Spenser and Burns."³ Lindsay added the caution:

But it seems to me that the academic mind can never understand the creative mind. The Creative Mind comes to earth already fully equipped for self-expression in art. The academic mind is the product of studying the Creative Mind.

An interesting exchange, throwing light on this

1 Norman Lindsay in Southerly, XVll (1956), p.126.

2 A letter to the writer from Springwood, 19 August 1965.

3 Ibid.

question, occurred in the columns of The Bulletin in 1923.¹ David McKee Wright and McCrae had met in the street, and in the course of conversation McCrae evidently made the statement that a poet writes primarily for himself. Heine once said:

Poetry, dearly as I have loved it, has always been to me but a divine plaything. I have never attached any great value to poetical fame; and I trouble myself very little whether people praise my verses or blame them.²

But this was not what McCrae meant. Rather he took the position that a poet wrote as an expression of his own creativity. If his work found a market, well and good, for even poets have to live, but the audience is an added attraction, not the purpose of the effort. For McCrae, the poet took his art seriously, not as a "divine plaything." McKee Wright disagreed with what he thought was McCrae's position, and shortly afterwards there appeared in print an article by him, making out a public case for his particular point of view.

McCrae was quick to respond. He took McKee Wright to task for using a private conversation for public discussion. However, as it turned out, McKee

1 'Interesting Poetry' by Hugh McCrae in The Bulletin 30 August 1923, (Red Page) was the original article. Then followed McKee Wright, 'Secret Poetry', 13 September 1923, (Red Page); Norman Lindsay, 'A Disclaimer', 20 September, (Red Page); Hugh McCrae, 'A Last Word from Hugh McCrae', 4 October 1923, (Red Page).

2 Quoted by Matthew Arnold, Lectures and Essays in Criticism (ed. R.H. Super, 1962), p.107.

Wright's article had been in the printer's hands before the controversial conversation had taken place, and McCrae later apologized. However, as a result of this correspondence, several important points were made public. In his first letter, McCrae acknowledged his debt to Lindsay:

To Norman Lindsay, I owe everything. He has illustrated my volumes, actually sold them on the strength of his work, and finally given me (as well as the money reward) his original pictures for the decoration of my house. But the debt to him extends further, because there is hardly a verse I have written which has not been suggested by something he has made before me. How could I - less than anybody - refuse him the enjoyment of such magnanimity?

McKee Wright rushed into print to answer McCrae's statements. He denied the truth of McCrae's generous acknowledgements of his debt to Lindsay. "It is finely generous, but on internal evidence, it is not true."

Lindsay then entered the argument to give his version of the affair:

Hugh McCrae has committed an act of lesè-majesté to his own genius; and as his extraordinarily generous abnegation of self is made on my behalf, I must hasten to deny it. I could not dare to assume any responsibility for an expression in poetry so rare and beautiful as McCrae's. Nor is its utterance due to anything save the driving force within him. It is the essence of his subconscious being, not an intellectual exercise in emulation of any expression of mind. If he were wrecked on a desert island, without books, pens, pictures

or paper, he would write poetry on the sands. Nor can poetry of such quality as his be illustrated. The static plastic form must lag behind the winged word It is rather on my conscience that I have appended decorations to his poems which may have got in the way of the poems, and which are at best appreciations in deference to the works they assume to illustrate.

McCrae had the last word, however, in this exchange. In his rejoinder, he referred to McKee Wright's remark about Lindsay's influence :

I do not mean that every picture Norman Lindsay draws will find its counterpart in some single verse I have written. My lines do not contain separate metrical translations of 'The Garden of Happiness', 'Scherzo', 'Unknown Seas' or 'The Comedy Ends', but generally, I have drawn largely upon the spirit which has given these pictures to the world.

It was, McCrae reaffirms, the community of interest which drew the two together and maintained their friendship. "I myself am inclined to mingle among the nature-worshippers, and I seem to win more, and to win more easily, in the companionship of a friend so perfectly in accord with my own feelings."

It is true, from a consideration of this evidence, to say that Lindsay's influence upon McCrae was more a social one, in regard to the assistance given to the poet, in regard to their mutual friendship, and in regard to the statement made that they fed on the same

spirit. McCrae did not write poetry to embody the Lindsayan creed, or because of Lindsay's views on form or choice of theme. The conclusion must be reached that this type of influence was not accepted by McCrae. He shared a common spirit of joy, of sensuousness, of emphasis upon the moment, but he did not wholeheartedly embody the extreme vitalism of the Vision school. It is fruitless to speculate upon the wisdom or otherwise of this action. Jack Lindsay, in retrospect, thought it beneficial to McCrae's work:

Though Hugh was a thousandfold right in sheering off from our domineering ideas, there was that in him which shrank from any conscious effort to grasp the principles of art. Therein lay both his strength and his weakness.... It enabled him to evade the crushing impact of a philistine society on his lyric gift. It enabled him to conserve that gift in an art of remarkable purity, but at the same time it inhibited his development.¹

The concrete imagery in McCrae's poetry was most likely due to the same forces which made it an essential aspect of the Vision doctrine. Kenneth Slessor attributed his own use of concrete imagery to the early influence of Vision. In talking of his part in the Vision movement, Slessor described the magazine as:

1 Jack Lindsay, The Roaring Twenties (Bodley Head, 1960), p.100.

A very odd mixture of Nature and Greek mythology and all kinds of thundering pronouncements, and a lot of it I never agreed with. I did agree on one point of the dogma. I agreed very earnestly. That was our insistence on the concrete image in art, and our hatred of the abstract image. That has been my attitude to poetry, at least, ever since.¹

As an example of what he meant by abstract imagery, Slessor contrasted the 'vision splendid' of Paterson with the concrete imagery of McCrae in:

They only see the stars, where I
Between my cups, admire,
Bright-spangled children leap the sky
Through hoops of golden fire.

Again, this insistence upon concreteness, although a common characteristic of Vision poets and an essential plank in their platform, was a feature of McCrae's work while the Vision ideas were still to be formulated. No doubt there was many a discussion of them among the artists in the Lindsay circle for considerable periods before publication, and it is equally likely that they were arrived at as a result of McCrae's beliefs, embodied in his earlier poems for some time previously.

There emerges from a study of McCrae's personality and background, the picture of a poet occupying a unique position in regard to his literary ancestry

1 Kenneth Slessor, interviewed by John Thompson in 'Poetry in Australia', Southerly, XXVII (1966), p.191.

and friendships, yet a poet whose personal characteristics led him to stand aloof, to a degree, from contemporary influences. Whatever has been accepted into his aesthetic has been transmuted by his characteristic personal traits and beliefs.

Chapter 11.

The Early Poetry: 1896 - 1909.

The policy of The Bulletin from its inception in 1880 until at least 1909 seems to have been one of encouragement to budding poets, even though many of the verses published attained a standard below that of genuine poetry. A paragraph published from time to time as a guide to contributors included the advice:

Strictly Original matter contributed to The Bulletin will be paid for. The Editor will be glad to receive and consider contributions as under:-

1. Original humorous or political matter, illustrated or otherwise.
2. Unpublished anecdotes of living celebrities, or people who ought to be celebrated.
3. Humorous poems (from eight to forty-eight lines preferred).
4. Serious poems, of similar or greater length, especially those suitable for pictorial illustration.¹

It is helpful, before looking at the type and range of verse written by McCrae in his early days of publication, to consider the variety of subject-matter in the published verse of the day, as a guide to the degree of typicality or uniqueness of his work. Most of the verse of the period was in The Bulletin, but The Australian Magazine, Cosmos, The Antipodean, The Tocsin, The Triad, The Bookfellow and The Lone Hand also contained poems and verses, as well as predominantly humorous magazines, such as The Rambler.

1 From The Bulletin, 20 September 1890, but appearing irregularly over many years.

With the exception of the juvenile verse published in a local paper, and three 'poems' in the Melbourne Free-Lance, McCrae's first published verse appeared in The Bulletin on 31 October 1896. This was 'Owner Going West', a rather rambling narrative purporting to set out an advertisement for a haunted farm, and foreshadowing the supernatural, eerie element which appeared more strongly in the later poems. This supernatural element, which is strong in most folk-lore, was apparent in other verses at the time, such as Dyson's 'German Joe'¹ or Randolph Bedford's 'Eurowie'².

From this time, 1896, through to 1903 when McCrae's first poem appeared using a mythological or faery reference,³ up until 1909 when Satyrs and Sun-Light was first published, a very wide range of genres and themes was treated by the poets of the day.

Much of the verse, especially in The Bulletin, which published by far the greatest amount of it, was little more than doggerel, some of it expressed in colloquial language in an attempt perhaps to be both realistic and more successful in reaching a wide readership.⁴ Before 1897, such verse was usually unsigned,

1 In The Bulletin, 27 January 1894.

2 In The Bulletin, 10 December 1894.

3 'The Return' in The Bulletin, 13 June 1903.

4 The Bulletin was aimed at a predominantly country readership during this period, as a glance at its contents will show.

or signed only with the poet's initials (or sometimes with a pseudonym, such as the 'Ticket-Taker' and 'Trouvère' which McCrae used for his poems, and the 'Splash' he used for his drawings).¹ Verse appeared under the page headings of 'Various Verses' or 'Pepper and Salt'. The Christmas issue of The Bulletin really did its best to make the poet's lot a seasonally happy one, for the quantity of verse printed (and illustrated by Norman Lindsay, Souter et alii) was greatly enlarged at this time.

A survey of these periodicals and of the volumes of collected verse published during this period shows, as one would expect, lyrical verse appearing consistently throughout.² McCrae's lyrics fitted easily into Daley's world of 'Sunset and Fantasy' where:

A scented song blown oversea,
As though from bowers of bloom;
A wind-harp in a lilac tree
Breathed music and perfume.

Narrative poems are well-represented, many, especially with the bush balladists, with Australian and topical themes. In addition to the well-known examples of Paterson, Will Ogilvie and Edward Dyson, many narratives from lesser-known poets are available

1 These were verified by consulting A.G. Stephens, Autobiographies of Australian and New Zealand Authors, a bound, undated, typescript volume in Mitchell Library. For other possible pseudonyms of McCrae, especially in the later period, see Appendix 11.

2 A large number of examples exist. The poetry of Daley and Neilson alone provide many.

from a review of the current periodicals. James Brunton Stephens' long poems; J. Farrell with his 'Dalton's Rise'¹ carried forward the art of the long narrative, with an epic flavour, which George Gordon McCrae had liked, demonstrating the popularity of this poetic form with its strong similarity to a story told by camp-fire or hearth.

Some of the contemporary narratives used well-known events as their subjects, such as the unsigned poem which appealed with more gusto than grace to the Australian interest in the Melbourne Cup.²

Nor were current political events free from comment of would-be poets. 'Retrenchment' by 'Ironbark' is a fair sample:

'Tis a time of deep depression, there's
retrenchment in the air;
There's a cutting-down of prices and
wages everywhere....³

which was not very good poetry, as well as being rather dubious economics.

From 1887 onwards, the poems of Henry Lawson appeared regularly, with their social and political comment.⁴ J. B. Stephens' 'Fulfilment' (an ode on the union of the Australian states); George Essex Evans' 'The Nation Builders'; William Gay's 'Australia Infelix'

1 In The Bulletin, 27 December 1889.

2 'Idyll of the Cup' in The Bulletin, 23 November 1889.

3 In The Bulletin, 13 January 1894.

4 The first was 'A Song of the Republic', The Bulletin, 1 October 1887.

and the poetry of Bernard O'Dowd all expressed opinion, in verse, upon a wide range of social and political issues, especially on the lively one of the federation of the states.

Themes paying homage to the beauties of nature were well-represented in the verse of the period also. Much of Victor Daley's work,¹ that of George Essex Evans and of J. Le Gay Brereton embody the current interest in natural phenomena as a fit topic for verse. There was little or no attempt to probe the noumenon behind these phenomena, but the approach was purely sensuous. In Brereton's collected verse, Sea and Sky, the poems are grouped under headings which portray this interest - with 'Shadow Fire', 'Rumour of Waves' and 'The Shoreless Sea'.

Yet, if love of the country-side with its natural beauty, and a patriotic love of country moved the poets to sing,² so the reverse emotion prompted verse. Arthur Adams could lament:

The wide sun stares without a cloud;
Whipped by his glances truculent
The earth lies quivering and cowed!
My heart is hot with discontent -
I hate this haggard continent !³

Imitation of established overseas poets was also indulged in quite frequently, by McCrae as well as by

- 1 For example, 'At Sunrise', The Bulletin, 27 December 1884.
- 2 As in G.E.Evans, 'Australia' in The Antipodean, No.3 (1897), p.89.
- 3 In The Bulletin, 4 March 1899.

many of his contemporaries. This was, no doubt, because some of the poets had been read in their collected editions, but also because the periodicals, especially The Bulletin, had a policy of making available to readers examples of the work of well-known poets and writers from other countries and periods. From time to time in The Bulletin, extracts and whole poems were published from Kipling, D.G. Rossetti, Swinburne, Bret Harte, Walt Whitman and others, and this practice was especially noticeable in the 1890's. Two poems written 'after Burns' might be given as examples of this tendency - 'A Song of Sorrow' and 'The Elder's Prayer' - both by J.H. Greene.¹

And if poets learned more about poetic techniques from their contemporaries, so they tried to educate, in turn, their own readers. Didactic themes were frequent, especially in conjunction with the narrative form. 'The Ancient Sailor Man'² tells how a sailor had been thrice wrecked but each time had swum ashore with nothing but his Bible. The moral was clear - both to seafarers and, by extension, to others who might wish for an effective form of insurance. Steele Grey's 'De Profundis'³, G.E. Evans' 'Ode to the Philistines',⁴ J.B. Stephens' 'The

1 The first was subtitled 'The Layment of a New Chum', The Bulletin, 31 January 1885, and the second, in the same periodical, 16 December 1895.

2 By Titus Salt, The Bulletin, 3 October 1891.

3 The Bulletin, 1 April 1893.

4 The Bulletin, 10 February 1895.

Chamber of Faith'¹ and Victor Daley's 'The Ascetic' and 'Sir Francis'² were more directly didactic.

Classical themes, although not as popular as some of the others, were used more than rarely. Alice Werner, the authoress of 'Bannerman of the Dandenong', wrote several poems on classical subjects in The Bulletin.³ Both James Hebblethwaite's collected verse,⁴ and poems in The Bulletin by J. Liddell Kelly used classical themes freely.⁵

Attempts were often made to link the classical theme with a contemporary native setting. E.J. Brady tells how the ships of the Dreamers were followed through classical lands and eras and then along the routes taken by Hartog and Tasman.⁶ Similarly, a poem by George Powick Brown links the interminable travel of an Australian swagman with the eternal labours of Sisyphus, and his endurance with that of Atlas.⁷

One of the strands appearing in McCrae's poetry was a recreation of the medieval scene. Medieval themes and language were used by his contemporaries, also. E.J. Brady in 'Sic Transit' serves as an example:

- 1 The Bulletin, 10 February 1894.
- 2 From At Dawn and Dusk (Angus and Robertson, 1898).
- 3 Two poems in The Bulletin, 17 February 1894 dealt with gladiators in Capua ('In a Theatre') and with Lucius Sergius Catiline's exploits ('Sonnet').
- 4 'A Rose of Regret' in A Southern Garland (Bulletin, 1904).
- 5 In The Bulletin, 19 December 1896.
- 6 E.J. Brady in 'The Ways of Many Waters', The Bulletin, 30 April 1898.
- 7 'The Austral Curse' in The Bulletin, 5 June 1898.

its simplest form, but Adams and certainly O'Dowd approved of this poetry for social purpose.

O'Dowd criticised contemporary poetry for not doing enough of this socializing - of informing its audience of social evils which needed reform. He wrote "I think that contemporary poetry is saying nothing in a multitude of beautiful words, phrases and forms."¹ In his own poetry, which in the case of Dawnward? he dedicated 'To Young Democracy', he protested against high rents, love of money, despair and fashion, and as one critic put it, "attacks Evil in capital letters."²

A further kind of protest poetry, closer to the heart, no doubt, of many of the poets, depicted the literary scene. 'A Song of Southern Writers' commences with:

Southern men of letters, vainly seeking
 recognition here-
 Southern men of letters, driven to the
 Northern Hemisphere
 It is time your wrongs were known; it is
 time you claimed redress-
 Time that you were independent of the mighty
 Northern Press.
 Sing a song of Southern writers, sing a
 song of Southern fame,
 Of the dawn of art and letters and your
 native country's shame.³

1 In Poetry Militant. An Australian Plea for Poetry of Purpose (T.C. Lothian, 1909), p.15.

2 Cecil H. Hadgraft, Australian Literature (Heinemann, 1960), p.131.

3 By 'Joe Swallow', (a Lawson alias), in The Bulletin, 28 May 1892.

a position based upon a misconception of this view.

So Roderic Quinn could sing:

O, lady, come from Arcady,
 In days like these, for thee, for thee,
 What peace? What hope? What joy remains?
 Return thee to thy sylvan glade,
 String roses in a blushing braid,
 And there unmake what time hath made.¹

A further example of poetry presenting an idyllic life to which the reader is invited occurs in Steele Grey's 'Optimist to Pessimist', where he pleads:

Come live with us in Arcady;
 Sell that sad face to Holy Joe;
 To gladness give your heart in fee;
 You'll find life's tempests gentler blow.²

This view of poetry being rightly concerned with things other than the immediately real was, apart from the bush balladists, quite widely held, certainly among the minor poets and versifiers writing in The Bulletin and the other 'literary' journals of the time. The use of Arcadian symbols and mythology, which Vincent Buckley³ refers to in his analysis of the Utopian elements in Australian literature, was sufficiently widespread to make examples easy to obtain from even a cursory survey of the current writing.

This emphasis of poetry was itself the subject of

1 In 'A Dreamer' from The Bulletin, 31 March 1894.

2 The Bulletin, 28 April 1894.

3 Vincent Buckley, 'Utopianism and Vitalism', Australian Literary Criticism (ed. G. Johnston, 1962).

I pity him who has not swung
 The thyrsus in the air,
 And followed Bacchus, blithe and young
 With vine-leaves in his hair,
 And heard the Maenads sing
 And the mad cymbals ring.

.....

Then let us unto Bacchus sing
 Evoè! Up and down -
 For Bacchus is the wisest King
 Who ever wore a crown:
 His vine-leaves hide from view
 More wit than Plato knew.¹

Daley uses this mythology in the Australian setting also. While a nymph strays "out of Ida's vale, or fields Elysian", Dian and Flora frolic upon the banks of an Australian River of Romance.² Yet, a few years later, Daley queries the Australian Arcady:

The brown hills brood around me, crowned
 with gums of sombre sheen;
 They look like drowsy giants all in
 smoking caps of green.
 There's not a voice familiar, or a face
 that's known to me:
 The Lord He knows, but I suppose, that
 this is Arcady.

He continues in the same vein until the conclusion, pleased only with the final prospect:

But, please the Lord, on Monday morn, I'm
 leaving Arcady.³

In a further poem, Daley compromises, and has Pan banished from the regions inhabited by man, but

1 The Bulletin, 7 December 1901.

2 In 'The River Maiden', The Bulletin, 11 December 1897.

3 The Bulletin, 13 April 1905.

reigning still, alone, in the silences of the country,
where:

The reeds with secrets quiver
Around that lonely isle
Set in the Northern river
Where Pan reigns yet a while.¹

A similar ambivalence is found in the work of Frank Morton, who went to some pains to point out that as far as contemporary poetry was concerned, Greek mythology was no longer appropriate:

Eros! the times wax late; the gods of
Greece
Are mere dead names - Pan, Psyche, Pros-
erpine. . . .²

Yet, a few years later, he writes gaily of "Paphian nymphs" and "glamour Elysian" and sings:

Old Pan and all his nymphs are here,
For this is Passion's flowery way.³

The same mythological imagery was used by Edward Dyson in creating the sylvan atmosphere in 'The Gippsland Nymph':

It was a sylvan brook in strange old Greece,
Where naiads lurked, and satyrs broke the
peace;
The breeze lisped the pleading notes of Pan,
And through the glade an angry maenad ran.⁴

Arthur Bayldon, too, set Apollo in Australia,

1 'The Lost Muse', The Bulletin, 14 January 1903.

2 'At Twenty', The Bulletin, 20 August 1898. The same idea was also expressed in 'Sunt Lachrymae Rerum', The Bulletin, 24 April 1897.

3 'To Nance at Noon', The Bulletin, 23 September 1899. Also in 'Out of Eden', 28 October 1899.

4 The Bulletin, 17 February 1900.

attention to McCrae's verses in the periodicals. 'Kelly in Greece'¹ and 'The Monk and the Faun' demonstrate further Esson's interest in mythology.

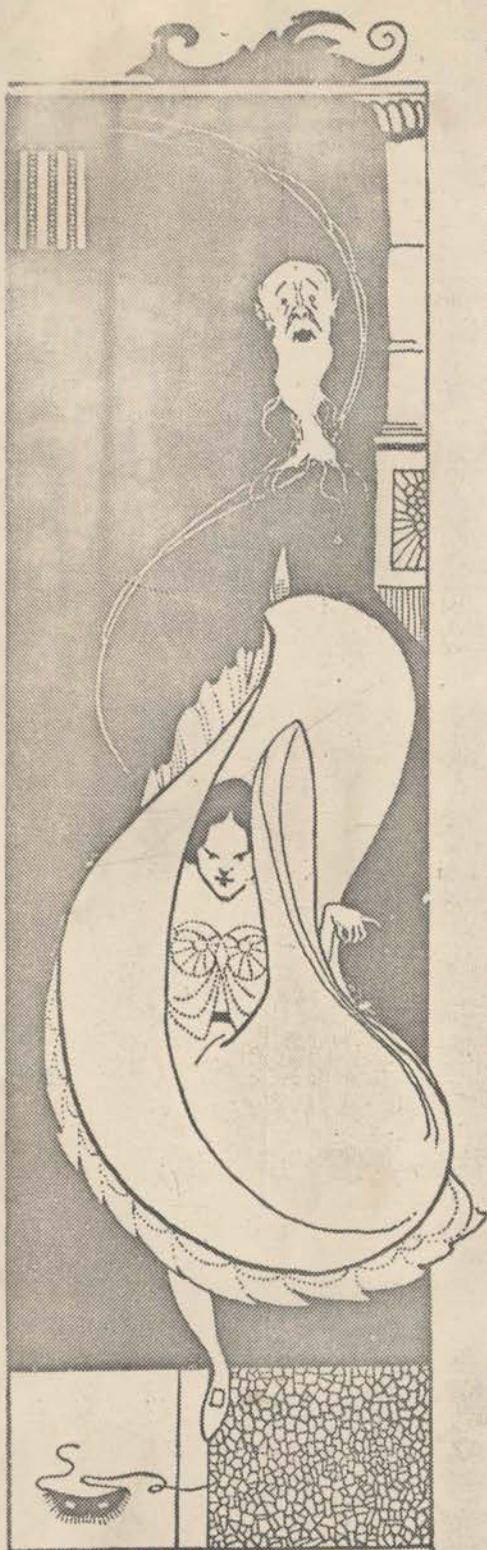
It is well to remember that the use of mythology was by no means confined to poetry during this period. Short stories used it, as in C.J. Dennis's 'Epinodas and the Satyrs'²; and 'The Satyr'³, by the same author, was illustrated by Norman Lindsay, who drew the reader's attention with billowy females, stark satyrs, lusty gods and fleeing nymphs.

The art of Norman Lindsay, and to a lesser extent that of McCrae, contained strong elements of rebellion against the puritanism which Lindsay called 'wowsersism'. This led to a great deal of unfavourable publicity, but nevertheless extended the size of the audience. This attempt to shock exists only in a very limited way in McCrae's poetry, but is found in some of the early poetry of others in the period. For instance, 'The Songs of Sin', in not very good verse, enticingly depicted a scene which Lindsay was to draw with infinite variations and considerable skill a little later. The third stanza reads:

1 The Bulletin, 18 January 1906.

2 The Bulletin, 12 December 1907.

3 The Lone Hand, LX (September 1911).



AUSTRALIAN, by Hugh McCrae.



ENGLISH, by Aubrey Beardsley.

TWO NOTIONS OF SALOME.

HERE'S the fausse slut
 and gret kinges daughter:
 She danced so wel
 (Hir fader taught hir
 When she wer yonge,
 uponne a griddle
 Red hott, the whyle
 he playd the fiddle)
 She daunced so wel
 Seynt Johann the Jew
 Quite lost his head—
 Helas! doux yeux!

We fling a chorus from our lips
 Unsteady all, but bold;
 While lucent, luscious liquor drips
 In crimson drops and gold.
 A nude Bacchante beats the rhyme,
 Astride a cask on high,
 And swings a bottle to the tune
 We drain our goblets by.
 We may be out of time and tune
 Our voices cracked and thin,
 But all is perfect when we croon
 The swilling Songs of Sin.¹

All of this evidence about the use of mythology at the turn of the century demonstrates that any poet, including McCrae, who used Arcadian imagery, satyrs, fauns, centaurs, naiads and maenads, was not flying in the face of contemporary practice. The Bulletin and a little later The Lone Hand abound with examples of them. Probably part of the reason was the classical emphasis given to much of the education of the period, for those few who partook of it at the upper Primary and Secondary levels. One can argue that here is evidence of the 'fin-de-siècle' romanticising and decadence, equivalent to the Aubrey Beardsley productions of the English scene.² Or one can theorize about this practice as a reaction against the jingoistic emphasis of the bush balladists.

But the fact remains, that as well as demonstrating the wide range (and mediocre quality) of the

1 'The Songs of Sin', The Bulletin, 29 April 1899, signed merely with 'McG'. Victoria.

2 There is direct evidence that Lindsay was influenced by Beardsley's themes and techniques. McCrae, too, had his 'Yellow Lady'. See also the illustration opposite.

Australian verse of the time, this brief review shows that all of the poetic types used by McCrae, and many of the themes, were in common use when his work was first published. Lyric poetry; medieval, supernatural, religious, mythological themes; humorous and narrative verses were all to be found. His uniqueness, if we can speak of it, is not in his choice of these poetic themes, nor in the genres in which he wrote. If there is a uniqueness - and the fact that he is commonly associated, by the general reader, mainly with Arcadian mythology, would suggest that there is - it is either in the use made of these standard themes and devices, which the poet's personality or art transmutes into something different from the products of his fellows, or in a uniqueness of quality. These possibilities need to be pursued through a closer examination of McCrae's mythological poems.

If McCrae's poems are dated from the time of their publication, usually in The Bulletin but occasionally in The Lone Hand, The Clarion or The Bookfellow, then the first poem to contain any mythological reference was 'The Return', published in The Bulletin, 13 June 1903. A survey of the periodicals likely to contain McCrae's poems shows a total of one hundred and forty-four published up till the end of 1909.¹ This was the

1 Another twelve are included in Appendix 1, but have not been counted, being from undated manuscripts.

year of the publication in Sydney of his first book of poems - Satyrs and Sunlight: Silvarum Libri¹- which was later reissued from Melbourne, in 1911, as Satyrs and Sunlight.² Of these one hundred and forty-four poems, seventy-six were included in this first book. All but eleven of the one hundred and forty-four poems can be dated from their appearance in periodicals. These eleven poems³ first appear in Silvarum Libri and as no earlier date is available for these the 1909 date has been assigned to them.

An examination of this early poetry, from 1896 up to 1909, shows that mythological references occur quite frequently, and at least in some cases, may be said to have definite symbolic purpose. An early example of this is 'The Home for Pegasi'.⁴ This poem was not included in any of the collected verse editions of McCrae, but was included by R.G.Howarth in the 'Uncollected Poems' section of The Best Poems of Hugh McCrae.⁵ The pegasi are used in a rather droll manner to represent the poetic or creative force of the poet.

1 Satyrs and Sunlight: Silvarum Libri (John Sands, 1909) with pictures and decorations by Norman Lindsay. The seventy-six poems in this volume are included in the total of 144.

2 Satyrs and Sunlight (Lothian, 1911).

3 'The Uncouth Knight', 'Achilles' Quarrel with Agamemnon', 'Four Etchings', 'The Gaberlunzie', 'In an Old Forest', 'L.L.', 'Old Satyr', 'The Phantom Mistress', 'Satyrs and Women', 'Sensual Love' and 'Tantacalladon'.

4 In The Bulletin, 2 July 1903.

5 (Angus and Robertson, 1961).

McCrae tells, with tongue in cheek, of espying a herd of pegasi in a dusty yard, most of them showing distinct signs of ill-treatment. When he asked the man in charge about them, he received the reply:

This 'ere is the last long home
Of worn-out Pegasi.

They, all of 'em, wuz owned by men
With barrow-loads of hair,
And wuz treated werry bad
(Exceptions here and there).

And that 'un with the scraggy wings
Held shameful round his face,
Was rid by Mister Tennyson
A most ungodly pace.

And there is 'Omer's bloomin' nag,
The fittest of the lot;
And that 'un, Virgil's - Ovid's too,
Still sweatin', reekin' hot !

This 'ere belonged to Paul Verlaine,
A spanker in his time;
An' this was Robert Browning's steed,
Near strangled with a rhyme.

And that square-legged, stubby prad
Bucked Whitman to the sky
(Say; spot that 'Stralian 'orse out there,
I'll have 'im by-and-bye!)

'But who,' I ventured to remark,
'is this spur-bloodied thing;
The only one of them that's dead
And bald and feathering?'

'Oh, 'e belonged (I thought yer knoo)
To Roodyerd Kipperling !'

It is a matter of interest to conjecture who had been using the 'Stralian 'orse' this particular poet had his eye on, or whether, in fact, it was a brumby yet unbroken !

A similar use of the Pegasus is made in 'Aubrey Allingdale', an uncollected poem first published in The Bulletin in 1905.¹ In this light-hearted narrative, the poet keeps his Pegasus "champing hard, and stamping down below" while he waits to collect payment for a poem submitted to the editor of a literary magazine. The editor, however, points out the considerable debt the poet owes to Shakespeare, Milton, Donne, Jonson, Herrick,² Chatterton, and offers to pay the young man threepence - "for your fine signature."

The first "serious" use of mythology, however, as has been stated, occurs in 'The Return' (1903). Here, in an atmosphere part faery and part medieval, the poet laments the absence of a lover. The mythological references - to philomel, the Naiad, perhaps the tiger - are incidental:

And O, the heart o' me,
Here is a pretty looking-glass
Set in a silver tree,
'Fore which she used to pose and pass
In sweet conspiracy.

And here the agate-headed pin
That, with the silky net,
Did hedge about and gather in
Her hair's bright coronet.
O, splendid herione!

1 The Bulletin, 13 July 1905.

2 McCrae had an experience somewhat similar to this with an editor, which also involved Herrick's poetry. He came out of the incident with his reputation unstained. See p.261.

Here do you see the verse of love,
 The lovely versicle,
 Inscribed - below, a flying dove -
 Above, a philomel...
 Behold her scented glove!

And here's the belt she always wore,
 With jade in every ring,
 And, at the end, a tiger's claw
 To make a fastening
 (Deep-hidden metaphor).

And see, her double candle-stick
 Upon the bureau stands
 This morning, with a blackened wick,
 And streaked with snowy bands
 Of wax, blown thin and thick.

But she has gone, for aye, away
 And left these things behind
 (To add forgetfulness each day
 To eyes that would be blind)
 In profligate display.

Nay! Hark!.... I hear her petticoat
 Lap-lapping like a wave
 That bears a Naiad-child afloat;
 And O, again that stave
 Of music from her throat.

Beat high, glad heart o' me!
 Go, place the pretty looking-glass,
 Set in its silver tree,
 Where she may pose again and pass
 In fresh conspiracy.

The "Naiad-child" simile does little to add to the clarity or focus of the imagery, but rather contributes to the enchanted atmosphere. The "flying dove", the philomel and the "Tiger's claw" are invoked for the same purpose: McCrae is calling upon mythology and folk lore to create a magical world of his own. This poem also illustrates the sensuous appeal of McCrae's

poetry, with its onomatopoeic expression.

The first poem to make a consistent use of mythological figures, however, is the rather longer 'On Some Musicians' (1904). McCrae is seeking to convey the thought that any popularity an artist (poet) has or may gain as the result of his creative effort is for the product of his art, not for him as a person. He adopts a mock-serious tone, especially in drawing the moral in the last stanza. A satyr espied a dryad and using his neglected flute, blew a sweet tune to such effect that the dryad was attracted through the woods toward him:

And so he drew her, thread by thread,
 Until he even felt her head
 Hide in his breast,
 Where now there seemed that all the store
 Of myrrh and cassia, musk and more
 Were sweetly pressed.

Not satisfied with the mere presence, the satyr's "greedy lips forsook the flute" to kiss his prize. Immediately the spell was broken, the dryad exclaimed, "I loved your music; never you - Old Evil-Face" and fled. The disillusioned and mocking conclusion warns the reader:

And so such Satyrs of to-day
 As fancy, when they lightly play
 An instrument,
 That maidens sigh for them a lot,
 Should bear in mind this god, and what
 He underwent.

Although this poem is not a very good one, very uneven in quality and retaining some of the ill-chosen words (e.g. "lot" above) which too often mar McCrae's poetry, it does succeed in creating a sequence of vivid images which paint clearly and appealingly a particular setting and activity. The Satyr's throne of "flowery-netted silver stone", the woodland fountain's bubbling, the "glow of dewy leaves", the "honeyed tip of the flute" and the dryad's "elfin ringlets, set with drops/ of golden pollen from the tops/ Of sacred pines" contribute towards the creation of an atmosphere of enchantment, a suspension of belief in reality. The last stanza breaks the spell with the abruptness of a hypnotist snapping his fingers to awaken his subject.

It is this ability to enchant the reader, to convey him away from the everyday world into the Arcadian world of leafy glades, dappled sunlight and "starry empyry" which comes closest to justifying McCrae's use of satyrs and dryads. If an occasional harshness of sound or a grating, ill-chosen word rocks the boat of his dreams, then this may serve only to lull the visionary further under the spell, or at worst, break the dream abruptly. It can be argued that this is just escapism, but usually McCrae's vision adds something to our own understanding of the natural world, helps us to reshape or redefine our attitudes to elements of

the natural world and of man within it.

In a fragment, 'The Satyr's Lass', a similar reference is made to the satyr's power to draw other creatures by his music. In this poem, however, a "blind white woman of the brook" is drawn irresistibly when she had "sobbed to listen when he played the tune/ The dryads danced to." It is interesting to speculate upon the poet's singing as the dryad's playing, and the effect upon the receptive reader is of a shared experience, so that he is afterwards, in part at least, attached to the poet, understands his views and intentions.

The satyr recurs frequently throughout the whole time-span of McCrae's poetry. In the early period, which is our main concern here, the satyr figures also in 'South Wind' (1906). If 'On Some Musicians' took the reader to play out the course of a satyr's beguiling of a dryad, this poem takes a particular event, the poet's hearing of a sound, and freezes the action which simultaneously takes place:

I heard her sandals in the leaves,
Like wings, fly down the crackling way,
That led by circles mid the trees
To where the woodland waters lay.¹

With slight variation, a repetition of the opening stanza

1 This is the characteristic which Judith Wright speaks of when she says (Preoccupations in Australian Poetry, p.107) that the poems are "momentaneous" - that is, they spring from a moment.

closes the poem. While the repercussions of this wind-made sound upon the poet are being considered and absorbed, its wider effects are examined:

The little manikins let loose
The teams of panting mice who drew
Their roped-up carts of hazel-nuts
As she came gaily passing through.

The hornèd satyr, mid his wives,
Awoke; and, creeping from his hole,
Called loudly on her name, then ran
To see the path by which she stole;

While, up beneath a rain-washed cliff,
His thyrse at rest against a pine,
Blithe Bacchus mocked him wantonly
Across a bowl of seeded wine.

And e'en the elfin sprite, who jiggèd
A galliard on his pointed toes,
Did cease, and freed the bumble bee,
Long pent his prisoner in a rose.

The crafty pixie, under-ground,
At work with lanthorns in the earth,
Threw down his spade and hailed the maid
With gusty hurricanes of mirth.

And, in the sky, commanded by
An angel-pilot, brave and fair,
A fleet of clouds, with flying shrouds,
Sailed swiftly through the crystal air.

The gentle fawns, with budding horns,
Leapt madly o'er the tangled brake;
Nor 'gan the huntsman speed his dogs,
Nor from his belt an arrow take.

On every side, from far and wide,
Both man and beast came to her call,
Save young Narcissus; o'er the tide
Of his own beauty magical. . .

Nought could him stir - the very fir,
Deep-planted in the mountain slope,
Was never stronger held than he
For robbing Echo of her hope.

.

The mythological figures are used here to bring out some of the ramifications of a natural event in such a way that the reader feels the quintessential spirit of nature, not so much in its effect upon man (for now this poetic man is an observer of nature and a participant only in spirit), but in its balance and breadth - the disturbance of one element has implications throughout the whole natural order - a concept similar to the Elizabethan view of the inter-relatedness of natural aspects and the widespread effect, of any upset, on the normal or established pattern.

In a poem a little later still, but yet in this early period, 'Credo' (1906), the Satyr represents a state of being or of mind which the poet wishes to outgrow. This state includes qualities of tentativeness, a lack of definite direction. The opening line commences with a wish - "O to be strong again!" and then the poem details the ways in which strength would be manifested. The second stanza considers some of these:

To know that life once more holds something
to be striven for,
To laugh at stings of storm, to lift among
the languid mesh
Of lust and love-gone-mad; to smite the
satyr to the core
And well-spring of his heart; to rise with
winged heels a-thresh..

In contrast to the aimlessness which is deplored, the "winged heels a-thresh" reflects a wish to have the purpose of Mercury, the winged messenger of the gods

who knew exactly where he was going. This is a child's whistling in the dark to bolster his sagging courage, parallel to the attitude of Robert Frost in his 'Desert Places'.

The satyr appears in an unusual context in the intensely moving, religious poem - 'Voices of the World(1908):

Deep as the groaning of the wakeful sea
In some black cavern of a starless coast,
Meek famished monks with bitter voices
hail

The Father, and the Son, and Holy Ghost.

But one, a boy, whose tender lip still
keeps

The rosy colour from the spring of life,
With finger-hidden face bows down and
cries:

"Hate dwells in peace; Love only lives in
strife!"

While, far beneath the frozen stone-paved
stall,
He hears the jolly satyrs tramp the earth,
Full-bellied, to their ancient revelry,
Mid clashing cups and wholesome dryad mirth.

Aye me! the long tears splash; his hands
move out

Then close, all bloodless, into prayer
again.

"Dear God," saith he, "in this thy chosen
house,

Love starves... Grief shares his steward-
ship with Pain..."

The noisy revelry of the satyrs and dryads contrasts with the humility and tears of the penitent. Representative of an animalistic materialism, the satyr yet represents a type of love. In contrast to the "Love starves...." of the last stanza, however, the satyrs

are "full-bellied". Obviously the spiritual love of the monk, and the event of Christian significance denoted by the use of "stall" is different in type from that embodied by the satyrs. But this difference is still a limited one. The satyrs suggest a pagan but "wholesome" mirth that religion represses. The monk at his prayers has chosen suffering and pain; but this poem suggests that a choice such as this involves, of necessity, suffering and hardship.

A similar lament for joys forgone is revealed by the satyr himself in 'Old Satyr'. Lying at the mouth of his cavern, he dreams of his childhood, when his mother carried him:

Past palaces shadowed by mountains
As tall as the star of regret.

He dreams further of several moments of disenchantment, when once he had a pretty maiden within his grasp, only to have her suddenly change into a rose-bush. His regret and unhappiness is expressed in the rather pit-
eous:

And I weep to myself in the darkness,
And grope for the Cupid of clay
I fashioned one beautiful autumn
For a god to whom I might pray.

This is agnosticism, but it is significant that the final verse hints at a partial revelation with "Ere ever my heart understood." Perhaps the poet has realised that his Arcadian world, with its happiness, is evasive and escapist, and that even here, reality intrudes.

The traditional characteristic of satyrs as sexually forceful is upheld in 'Satyrs and Women' (1909). In the dream, the poet sees the satyrs capture their prizes, and with anguished cries, drag them off. When he awakes, however, the poet realizes that in reality, the position is reversed:

And this was my dream, then,
That satyrs chased women -
But, waking, true matters
Showed women chasing satyrs -
O would 'twere a dream then!

Although it is dangerous to read too much autobiographical content into poetry, it is doubtful whether McCrae would object to the position he portrays as real! This is as close as he comes to the anti-wowserism of the Vision school. He is not nearly so forceful as Lindsay in protesting against sexual puritanism, which prevailed at the time. But then again, none of McCrae's work was banned, while Lindsay had a constant battle with the censor and with wowsersish critics.

In 'Bacchanalia' (1907), satyrs are mentioned only as part of the scenery which McCrae powerfully describes. This poem exhibits several of the finest of McCrae's qualities - his vivid sensuousness, his controlled use of rhythm and imagery, and the pageant-like unfolding of a succession of brilliant scenes.

The only other appearance of the satyr in this early poetry is in 'Ambuscade' (1909). In a skilfully

portrayed scene, mother satyrs are attacked by black centaurs. Their safety is in jeopardy until:

A roar of hooves, a lightning view of eyes
 Redder than fire, of long straight whistling
 manes,
 Stiff crests, and tails drawn out against
 the skies,
 Of angry nostrils, webbed with leaping veins
 The stallions come!

Although this may be excellent poetry of its type (Judith Wright regards it so), there is nothing uniquely satyr-ish about it. In fact, one tends to forget that the poem is dealing with satyrs and centaurs, (only brief mention is made of them), and it is understood and enjoyed just as satisfactorily if one envisages ordinary mares under attack from any horses (Australian brumbies, for instance) and saved by the sudden and opportune arrival of their defending stallions. In fact, I venture to suggest that most Australian readers would regard it primarily in this light.

I think this highlights one of the dangers in the use of mythology. It has to be maintained continually and consistently throughout a poem. If the poem is a long one, if its topic has some other connotation for the reader (as 'Ambuscade' has, both for a bushman and for a reader familiar with the bush balladists), then the mind tends to revert to the more familiar or common imagery and characters. That is, unless the mythology is used and sustained effectively, it is better not used at all, for it has this all-or-nothing quality about it.

The centaurs figure in three other poems beside 'Ambuscade'. In 'Bacchanalia' they are given the mundane task of pulling Venus' chariot. They add a little atmosphere, perhaps, but are not at all important to the poem. In the other two poems, 'I Blow my Pipes' and 'Fantasy', they are used as types of elemental energy, sexually expressed (Freud's libido?):

The sweaty centaur leaps the trees
And bites his dryad's splendid knees

in the first poem, and although we can agree with Slessor about the inaptness of an abstract adjective in "splendid",¹ we can perhaps agree that the imagery does add a feeling of animal-like revelry and uninhibited naturalness to the joie-de-vivre striven for - a feeling which culminates in the triumphant:

I am the lord,
I am the lord,
I am the lord of everything!

The same characteristics of the centaurs are portrayed in greater detail in 'Fantasy' (1907). The centaurs are a disruptive element, both with their chase of the dancing wood-women and the kicking of Pan, and in the noise and disturbance they create in their pursuit. This disruption is sufficient to destroy the poet's fantasy. Do the centaurs represent certain aspects of

1 Kenneth Slessor, 'Australian Poetry and Hugh McCrae', Southerly, XVII (1956), p.136.

man's nature which militate against inner peace and interfere with creative processes of a superior order? We might surmise this, but McCrae often warns of reading into his work meanings which are not there.

In terms of frequency of usage during this period, the figure of Venus is most common. Appearing first, strangely enough, in 'The End of Desire' (1906), she represents sexual love rather than any higher form. In this particular poem the picture of desire, with which Venus is associated, is extremely transitory and ephemeral, for when the poet tries to seize the object of his desire, she vanishes, leaving only a pile of dust. The description of the whole event is nevertheless unsure - suggesting that the poet himself is unsure of the occurrence, even as part of his fantasy. Again, this is support for the view that McCrae did not seriously and actively promote the Vision programme of shocking the staid. Perhaps it is true, as Judith Wright maintains,¹ that McCrae worked in the space cleared for him by the more militant Lindsay, but it must be remembered that at this time McCrae was working before Lindsay's main impact was felt.

The other uses of Venus to conjure up the vision

1 Preoccupations in Australian Poetry (Oxford University Press, 1965), p.99.

of love portray an emotion equally brief. In 'The Bridegroom' (1907), Antony falls to Venus from his "battle-car", but the implications of this are not pursued. She has an equally brief existence in 'Bacchanalia', where, although drawn in more detail upon a bed with oaken wheels pulled along by seven centaurs, her presence fades mysteriously. She drew her hand from her breast, and

Threw dove on dove to weave a canopy
Of wings between her and the watching moon,
Until she faded, dim and shadowy,
As some deep blossom in a dark lagoon.

Venus further produces pigeons at will in 'The New Year' (1908). Her relationship to Cupid (who is the "manikin of Venus") is given¹, and the warmth of her real nature is contrasted with the wintry winds on another occasion.² Cupid tries to appear during the winter, but is rebuked by the poet and told to wait until spring, which incidentally, is the month of May in the poem, not the Australian September.

Although Venus is recognised in the mythological scheme of McCrae's poetry as the Goddess of Love, the rule of Jove is acknowledged as supreme. 'On Some Musicians', 'Metamorphosis' and 'Mon Reve' show this, but

1 'Below the Moon', The Bulletin, 4 July 1907.

2 'Cupid Rebuked', in Satyrs and Sunlight. The Ms. of this poem, 1907, is in Mitchell Library.

the executive, day-to-day authority in the poems rests with Bacchus, the god of wine and revelry. He, the Nietzschean symbol of joy, is the one who mocks the satyr in 'South Wind' when he tries to see the wind passing. It is his singing we hear in several poems, defying the puritanical elements and inviting all to join in the revelry of natural singing, dancing, drinking and eating - the senses unrestrained.

The stock mythological figures of Cupid, Silenus, Bacchus are joined by the less specific "elfin sprite" and "crafty pixie" of 'South Wind'. The "goblin ghouls" of 'Her Ancestor' and the nymphs, dryads, naiads, and fauns are all used in a rather incidental way. They have meaning if we accept their contribution to the atmosphere of the poems - to an other-worldliness where naïveté and natural simplicity blend with the imaginative elements of childhood and Arcadian serenity. They have meaning if we accept this as adequately portrayed in fleeting images which come and go and leave little trace - as a meteorite leaves a faint glow after flashing across the sky. They have little meaning if we take this to be a consistent use of figures and images to communicate ideas. They are emotional forces, extremely transitory, as emotions can be, but not really of great importance for the understanding of the body of

McCrae's poetry nor for the establishment of the idea of the Australian society as a rebirth of the Greek, a cause for which Norman Lindsay and the Vision school as a whole tended to use them. McCrae's Arcady has none of the reality of Spenser's. It is not inhabited by real people whom we get to know and recognise by their characteristic habits and activities, and perhaps it is not meant to be. The mythological figures represent a diffusion which does not aid the intellectual function of poetry, no matter how this is interpreted. They do make a limited contribution to the emotional impact of the poems, and of course, give the poetry a certain charm which appeals to the child-likeness in all adults. Certainly, at least in this period, their effectiveness must be considered positive within this narrow frame of reference.

It is here, too, that Norman Lindsay has performed a disservice to McCrae. By his etchings and drawings, freely distributed throughout the original Satyrs and Sunlight, in the margins and elsewhere, of satyrs, nymphs and centaurs, of Pan and Bacchus, the reader comes to expect a world of such creatures in the poems. But he is disappointed. This expectation is unfulfilled, and even though the etchings may have been extremely helpful in aiding the sale of the volume, (as Lindsay's

drawings always did), to a degree it must be considered that they do this under false pretences. The repetition of these drawings around poems which have no mythological content is misleading (as in 'Eheu Fugaces Labuntur Anni'). Even where there is mythological content, it is very doubtful whether good poetry needs, or benefits by, even the best illustrations. In fact, after making this comment, I find that Lindsay himself had subsequent doubts about this procedure.¹

In addition to the use of mythological figures, McCrae uses language with mythological associations, which serves to achieve a heightening of effect. "Manikin", "faery", "thyrses", "syrinx" are all suggestive of Arcady, which term, incidentally, is used only once in this period.² "Helicon", "Parnassus" and "hybla" appear, but again incidentally, as in 'Muse-Haunted' when:

He heard, and dreamed the night-wind on
The moon's gold horn was blowing,
The music of far Helicon
A-down Parnassus flowing.

Perhaps this allusion conjures up certain associations (although in a very limited way to the average Australian; perhaps more so then, (1909) than now), helps to

¹ See p. 43.

² This is in 'The Wild Man's Dear' (1908), and only then in reference to a pipe playing "a jolly tune of Arcady.

achieve a certain atmosphere, but is not greatly contributive to the poem's effect overall. Yet the poem is reasonably successful. There is something haunting, especially about the conclusion, where the poet, awaiting inspiration, sits:

The hawk entowered in the sky,
 The lonely lord of heaven,
 At daybreak saw him solitary;
 And yet again at even.

Another Australian poet, Peter Hopegood, speaks of the Australian delight in Arcadia as the "resort of the individual questing mind".¹ He sees the mythical people of the Australian bush, the aboriginal dingo-people, emerging in some poetry as naiads from the billabongs, and states that in his opinion "the appeal (for mythology) exists at both native and imported levels". There is little in McCrae's Arcadian imagery to support this view. McCrae's naiads are not aboriginal, neither are his fauns and dryads. They are friends of Pan and Silenus, and are traditional, somewhat generalised beings, but if they must be identified more specifically, they are pure Greek, inhabitants of the Golden Age to which the poet would return for wisdom, for intellectual enlightenment, for emotional catharsis.

1 'Arcadia for Today', Southerly, XLX (1958), p.233.

Hopegood is on surer ground when he claims:

"Here, as elsewhere, each concept remains unique - McCrae's, for instance, differs from Lindsay's as from those of divers others, each to some extent athwart its rivals." ¹ The Arcadias of Lindsay and McCrae do have a great deal in common, but still a basic difference remains, and this is that Lindsay's was serving a far more marked protesting function than McCrae's. Lindsay's inhabitants of Arcadia were there, among other things, to enable him to protest against the prudishness of a still-Victorian, puritanical society. His nymphs were prominently-breasted (impossibly-breasted, one critic wrote), and wore no clothes at all. His fauns and satyrs were obviously male. There was usually a Bacchanalian revel not too far off in Lindsay's depiction. A glance at Lindsay's illustrations for the 1928 Satyrs and Sunlight will show this. If some of this Lindsayan view rubbed off on McCrae, it was not necessarily a good thing for him artistically. For one thing, it has led to an over-enthusiastic linking of McCrae's poetry with mythology, when so much of his work, and some of the best of it, has no mythological reference.

1 'Arcadia for Today', Southerly, XLX (1958), p.233.

It is uncertain whether McCrae had any conscious theory of myth, as many of the people who knew him spoke of his impatience with theories in general and his dislike of abstractions of any kind. Jack Lindsay wrote: "Hugh hated abstractions and generalizings with all the 'negative sensibility' (in Keats' sense) that made him the poet he was".¹ Chisholm remarked that "many of McCrae's brilliant imaginings give the impression of having burst upon him from an outer unknowable, like his 'dust blown up against the face of the moon'. Chisholm recounts his first impressions of McCrae's poetry and describes the impact as "meteoric". To him, the presence and effect of an unknown Infinite was suggested in two ways - by McCrae's poetry and by his personality. But Chisholm denies that such an Infinite could communicate with mankind in the way suggested. Instead, he finds himself agreeing with the prefatory note which Conrad wrote to The Shadow Line:

Whatever falls under the dominion of our senses must be in nature and, however exceptional, cannot differ in its essence from all the other effects of the visible and tangible world of which we are a self-conscious part. The world of the living contains enough marvels and mysteries as it is; marvels and mysteries acting upon our emotions and intelligence in ways so inexplicable that it would almost justify the conception of life as an enchanted state.

1 The Roaring Twenties (Bodley Head, 1960), p.100.

2 A.R. Chisholm, 'Magic Without Hocus-Pocus', Southerly, XV11 (1956), p.147.

This is McCrae's position, then, that his 'infinite' is Life itself, in life and nature, and is revealed in the great fleeting moments which come to man. There may be a link, here, with the recapitulatory theory of G. Stanley-Hall, for, to quote McCrae,

I know that my heaven will be
To go through the wild olden world
Of earth-sweet memory.

Man's experiences reveal to him some of the mysteries of life, but he interprets them continually in terms of his past experiences, those of his own and those of his ancestors, which every individual life, in some measure, recapitulates. It is here that the myth comes in - these are real experiences of the past, and so they can throw light on the present activities of man. Thus McCrae's satyrs are both symbols of the past and living in the present.

But although McCrae's poetic world is inhabited by satyrs and nymphs, his experience goes beyond these phenomena into other regions. His personality was many-sided, and the uncertainty and lack of definition in his mythological world is a reflection of his basic attitude to life. The basic insecurity in his mind manifested itself in ambivalence, in an emphasis upon contrast in his poetry in various guises. This is apparent in the early poems - for example, in 'Once a Rose Flourishing', an uncollected poem from 1903. The contrast is

made between the glory and beauty of the rose on the bush and its tattered remains, trodden into the street by man:

Into the sweep o' town,
 Into the flood o' feet,
 A rose fell down and down.
 Ah me! the bitter street
 Dressed it in drab and brown,
 Pilfered its honey sweet.

Only this very morn,
 Blushing with life, it came
 Out of the sceptre thorn,
 Flashing like fire and flame.
 Poor little early born,
 This is thy early shame.

.....

So the poor woman-thing,
 Lifting you back to light,
 Guiltless of love or ring
 Sank and sank out of sight -
 Once a rose flourishing;
 Now in eternal light.

The analogy between the rose and the world of humanity is indicative of McCrae's belief that no matter how beautiful the world of fantasy or mythology, the real world is cruel, relentless and destructive. Even though this is a slight poem, and there is constant danger of reading too much into poetry, there is here the glimmering of the Rousseau doctrine of the innate goodness of man, a goodness which is often contaminated by the artificiality and corruption of society. Is McCrae saying that there is an escape from this into the pure world of ideas? The last line is ambiguous - deliberately so. It could mean that the flower, or

rather its 'spirit', has progressed into a more harmonious world, perhaps returned to its Platonic 'form', or it could be that the rose, previously ignorant of reality, now knows how relentless existence really is. This assumes a personification of the rose, but the whole tenor of the poem suggests this, as well as the knowledge that McCrae uses this device frequently in other poems. In fact, it is the woman who is the object ("woman-thing"), in contrast with the superior beauty (and hence actuality), of the rose.

This sense of the ephemeral nature of existence, with the recurring motif of decay, is felt again in another early poem - 'The Fallen Statue'. Here the question is posed of the nature of the force which causes the decay:

O sad, O sad white thing!
 O miracle of Art!
 What windy hireling
 Hath flung thee here apart?

O uttermost despair,
 O mystery of Fate;
 No night, nor skill, nor care
 Can thee reintegrate.

.

God wot the time is now
 Arrived the world may see
 The mould upon thy brow,
 For all Eternity.

.

And time will never cease,
 Nor will thy fetters fall,
 But climb and blind thy name,
 From off thy pedestal.¹

This emphasis upon the hostile nature of the world and its inexorable influence, reinforces the acceptance of the second alternative in the previous poem.

The author of 'The Fallen Statue' is clearly a captive of worn out Romantic fashion. The repeated negatives, the rhetorical language ("O sad, O sad white thing!"), archaic expressions ("God wot"), contribute to a Romantic overstatement, which the sense of inevitability achieved so finally and so bleakly in the concluding stanza perhaps eludes:

And time will never cease,
 Nor will thy fetters fall,
 But climb and blind thy name,
 From off thy pedestal.

The same dark picture of despair appears in 'The Plain'.² One feels the chill of the supernatural with the description of the plain, with the moon magnifying the "sad monotony" (sad, again!), and there is malevolence abroad when:

No wind was there to stir the air,
 To pile a hillock or to plough a line
 Athwart the acres of that plain;
 No sound arose, no single sight or sign.

1 The Bulletin, 19 May 1904.

2 The Bulletin, 28 July 1904.

Even though it is apparent that each individual is mortal, there are times when the thought predominates that the race itself will continue. The threat of extinction, suspended like Damocles' sword over us, cannot subdue the spirit, as 'Love Divided' makes clear:

But, unsubdued and winged for endless
 flight,
 My purer love, to her in Heaven, has fled.¹

But the material identity of the individual man cannot continue indefinitely without the impress of time taking its toll. This is the theme of 'At Even':²

When lamps above are lit, and lamps below,
 When Night and Slumber, hand in hand,
 Foot the long path that Nature's finger
 draws
 Across the sea, and thro' the land,
 I, wearied by the maze and whirr of life,
 Its ceaseless clang, eternal grind,
 With buzzing brain and heavy-lidded eyes,
 Stretch forth my hand and draw the blind.

In some sad time, when night will come to
 lodge
 For ever in this fleshly frame,
 When the dim light my soul has burnt is
 dead,
 And all of me that's left - my name;
 When Death hath claimed me for a bedded
 spouse,
 When tolling bells are married to the wind,
 And, in the nuptial room, the candles burn -
 Some other hand will draw the blind.

1 The Bulletin, 9 March 1905.

2 The Bulletin, 14 March 1907.

This is not an old poet looking ahead a couple of years into the waiting grave, but a man writing in the prime of youth. When this was written, McCrae was just thirty. To write like this was, in part, a matter of following the Romantic conventions, but there is more than this in McCrae's poetic utterance. There is the beginning of what is to develop, later, into a morbid preoccupation with death. The attitudes of these few poems are reflective of the elements in McCrae's personality which belie the superficial joviality of his outward relationships with friends and acquaintances.

But the lyrical McCrae is well-represented at this period, also. It is through his lyrical poems that McCrae is better-known to the general reader. McCrae, the singer of songs, the Bacchic reveller and disciple of the Australian Pan is far from the morbidity of 'At Even'. Some of the lyrical poetry, it is true, has its serious moods, but most of it reflects the vast joie-de-vivre and joviality seen by his friends.

The earliest example of this lyricism occurs in the uncollected 'Pipes O' Three',¹ but even here there are signs of the bitter spring which is never far beneath the surface:

1 The Bulletin, 9 December 1899.

life's mortality is found in 'Lines':

In the moaning of a river,
 As it wears away the stone,
 In the rustling of the rushes
 Comes the soft and gentle tone,
 Comes the murmurous singing tone
 Of the hearts a-gone before me,
 o'er the river's
 Stepping-stone ¹

An epitome of these elements of lyricism and barely submerged violence is seen in the early 'Prayers and Threats'. ² This poem also shows the sudden and unnecessary flaw which frequently occurs in the early poetry, whether from carelessness or design. Note the jarring 'prop and fence', which could possible be a sop to the 'Australianism' school of poetry, but which, for whatever reason, is out of character with the rest of the poem:

Towers of daisies will I build,
 Pine will I burn and frankincense,
 And snowy flour all newly milled,
 If thou will be my prop and fence,
 If thou wilt red her face for me
 With shining love's temerity
 As onyx cups with wine do be.

I will pile altars up with fruit,
 And spill white oil across the ground,
 And stroke the singing gold-haired lute
 Into a sweeter tide of sound,
 If me, uncompassed, without chart,
 Thou, in supremely gracious part
 Lead to the latchet of her heart.

1 The Bulletin, 27 October 1900.

2 The Bulletin, 14 February 1903.

But I will break and mutilate
 Thy frost-white image into sand,
 And strew the atoms, nor abate
 Till nothing of thee stop to stand,
 And I will devastate thy shrine,
 If thou dost put but cold incline
 Into her heart for heart of mine.

One may surmise about the object of these prayers and threats, but in view of subsequent statements of McCrae's, it is most likely to be God. The use of "Prayers" suggests this, and the "threats" are in keeping with an aspect of his personality too.¹ One could argue that the Goddess of Love was being addressed, and this is of course possible when one considers his use of mythology elsewhere. But it is possible that the poem is purposefully removed from the mythological atmosphere by the use of mundane words and images - the "prop and fence" mentioned earlier, the "snowy flour all newly milled," the "atoms" and the uneven texture of the poem as a whole. It would appear that here is the first real evidence of the anti-Christian attitude which is later reflected much more vehemently.

But lest it be thought that all of McCrae's lyrics have their dark side, there are many poems in both the early and later poetry which are sheer, unalloyed joy. One of the earliest of these is 'Bianca,'

1 See p. 35 giving McCrae's comments upon the manuscript of Lindsay's Creative Effort.

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Blow, blow wind, blow! Trouble and care
 Flee with the clouds across the air.
 Love is the song I sing today;
 O let me sing that song always!
 Blow, blow wind, blow! Trouble and care
 Flee with the clouds across the air.¹

As well as this double-sided lyricism, McCrae displays an interesting aspect of his creativity in his attitude towards the supernatural. This interest first appeared in a poem published in 1901 and later collected in Satyrs and Sunlight - 'The Murder Night'.² This eerie poem was the forerunner of at least ten from this early period in which an atmosphere of barely concealed terror is created and maintained. Although this poem is concerned with the commission of a murder, there are strong supernatural overtones. The effect of the murder upon aspects of surrounding nature reminds us of the Shakespearian theme of the correlation between the affairs of men and the natural world - a disturbance in one meant a correspondence, an upheaval, appearing in the other. It is more than a simple murder which the poem describes, for once it has been committed, the correspondence of the natural-human elements is exemplified in the mixing of the blood of the murdered man with the raindrops from the storm, as well as by

1 The Bulletin, 28 June 1906.

2 The Bulletin, 7 December 1901.

the swallow which "flutters with fright / And dies at the top of the wall" (Yes, at the top - another reversal of the natural order, just as murder is a reversal of the social order). And while it is not necessary for this interpretation to be true for the poem to be enjoyed, the madman who committed the murder could easily represent mankind, appreciating the rose in his trembling hand, but in spite of his appreciation, causing death and destruction wherever he goes.

The atmosphere of 'The Murder Night' is cleverly maintained by means of the expressive language - the jerky syllables of alarm - "flutters", "gutters of blood", "in queer little jerks and leaps" and the "gibbering" of the madman. The poem concludes:

The paddocks are striped with flood,
And under the barn-door creeps
A silent gutter of blood
In queer little jerks and leaps.

And the nested raindrops splash
And mix with the sinful stream,
That writhes in the lightning flash
Like a snake in a fearsome dream.

While up on the bald wet hill
A gibbering madman stands,
And sniffs his horrible fill
Of the rose in his shaking hands.

The same tense atmosphere is built up in 'The Plain', which has already been mentioned in another connection.¹ We see the emptiness of the plain, the

1 See p.90.

the stars, the moon, the stillness - the only sound is the thumping of the traveller's heart - when suddenly we realise that hope is vain at the sight of the skeleton's shadow:

And then I knew 'twas past retreat,
Past hope, past life - this plain I travelled on.

McCrae has the ability to build up a picture, as does a lightning-artist, with a series of brief, vivid flashes of colour, of action, of sounds, in such a way that, whether pleasant or hideous, the effect is one of vividly-increasing tension. This technique is seen in 'The Day of Judgment',¹ which begins rather quietly, but soon introduces the tone of horror and malevolence so characteristic of this type of poem in McCrae's hands. The kaleidoscope of images builds up like a crazy collection of scenes from Dante's Inferno; or, more aptly, from one of Norman Lindsay's rollicking paintings of pirates, negroes, buxom wenches, sweating bodies and leering, lust-filled eyes.

At times, too, the supernatural effect is built up slowly and patiently, more in the fashion of an etching. 'Sixty Miles Away'² begins with the gentle, homely ticking of a bedroom clock, with a man snuggled warmly between the blankets, listening to the rain, as

1 The Bulletin, 13 April 1905.

2 The Bulletin, 15 June 1905.

The dreary drops drop endlessly upon the
 wooden sill -
 And the wet gum-boughs shuddering with
 fear.

This same sense of inevitability occurs in 'The Children of Rahab'. Again the vivid description, as an old prostitute stands at the mouth of a lane, her eyes

....as pale and as white
 As the eyes of a shad that is dead
 Exposed on a stall to the light
 Of a kerosene torch overhead. 1

Her hair is the colour of rotted straw and the toothless grin makes her appear like the "Mother o' Sins." Beside her are her two young painted daughters, suddenly being filled with horror as they realise that their mother now appears as they will appear in time to come, and that they have no hope of avoiding that fate:

For they know that out of their eyes,
 (Belladonna'd and nervously bright)
 The very same skeleton pries
 That is grinning beside them tonight.

If promiscuity gets short shrift at the hands of fate in 'The Children of Rahab', so it does again in 'The End of Desire'. Man, once again, is thwarted by circumstances and forces beyond his control, and in spite of the eloquent attractions of "that golden woman built for love", there is no satisfaction in the pursuit:

1 An uncollected poem from The Bulletin, 6 February 1905.

I took her closely, but while yet
 I trembled, vassal to my lust,
 Lo! - nothing but some sarcenet,
 Deep-buried in a pile of dust.¹

The symbol of decay caused by a power unknown and uncontrolled, had led to the disillusionment of the human who gave chase to its supposed pleasure. This is what life is like, ultimately, and beneath the surface, for McCrae.

At times, against some evidence to the contrary, one wonders whether McCrae equates this supernatural power with God - a God with whom man has a relationship which differs from that accepted as normal by the orthodox Christian church. This relationship is plumbed more deeply, still in an atmosphere of horror, in 'The Vision'.

McCrae dislike hypocrisy in all its forms - literary as well as religious - and effectively conveys this sentiment. This same effectiveness operates in 'Tantacalladon', heightened by the favourite device of repetition:

The dragon, mid an avalanche of glass,
 Bursts through the casement o'er the soaking grass,
 And down his jaw, in red, upon the weeds....
 In red, upon the weeds, the green glove
 bleeds.²

Although there are, in this poem, several names whose

¹ The Bulletin, 24 May 1906.

² From Satyrs and Sunlight. No earlier publication date obtainable.

meaning or origin is not traceable, either by Kenneth Slessor ¹ or myself, there is the same conflict between despair and hope, harmony and discord, being carried over into the supernatural.

This ambivalence is found in 'Mandragore', where "the Devil tugs to toll God out of power" and man dares to set himself up to challenge the power of God:

To strike him Hellward in one frightful
glance
Of devastation to the Stygian flood.

Unlike some of the previous poems discussed, however, this one begins in a violent, unearthly mood and closes with a sense of grim foreboding:

Shriek upon shriek! And from the blackest
night...,
A flame, exultant, suddenly is flown...
A turret window, seeming in the sky,
Stares down in gloom its giddy length of
stone.

Alas! What sounds of direful woe were they
To break the iron silence of the hour...
Like the dry hinge of some desponding bell
The Devil tugs to toll God out of power!

And who that man so bold against the stars,
Daring his Maker with a glove of blood
To strike him Hellward in one frightful
glance
Of devastation to the Stygian flood?

Across the cobbled path the long knife bleeds,
Its sticky stream spells death within my
heart,
As round a silken harlot-hair I read
Of this red crime the lusty love-gods part.

1 Southerly, XVll (1956), p.132.

The pregnant clouds are bursting into
 birth,
 And down the sullen quay the sharp rains
 roar;
 Love, that was meant to plant the seed of
 life,
 Tonight has sown the dismal mandragore.¹

There is an air of mystery about this poem which makes us want to know more about it. This mystery is heightened by the references to the mandragore, or mandrake, which supply one level of meaning. Mythology has it that this plant included among its mystical properties the habit of shrieking when pulled from the ground. It was also "supposed to be a creature having life, engendered under the earth of the seed of some dead person put to death for murder."² It was also reputed to have aphrodisiac properties, introduced into the poem by "harlot-hair", the "lusty love-god" and carried forward by the images aroused by "pregnant" and "birth". Just as the mandragore was an imitation, or poor copy, of a person's shape and qualities, so the love spoken of in the poem is a poor substitute for the real thing.

For all its power, (and it is a powerful poem - in mood, language and force of imagery), 'Mandragore' lacks a precision and clarity which would make it a

1 The Lone Hand, October 1907.

2 Quoted by Brewer, Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (Cassell, 1870 (1962)) from Thomas Newton, Herball to the Bible.

better poem. But it does show that McCrae could achieve a hitherto undisclosed strength and impact when writing on supernatural themes.

The supernatural and the medieval were combined with an emphasis on their common denominator of folk lore. In a poem originally entitled 'Ballade'¹ but included in Poems as 'Gallows Marriage', these elements were combined. There occurs the transmutation of a maiden, wronged by a king, into a dove. There is a sudden death in retribution when providence is called as a witness of innocence, and a final reunion when the girl's lover is hanged on the "Southgate tree" - all supernatural happenings believed to be true in medieval times, and events frequent in traditional literature.

While the poems cited above have dealt with the supernatural, there are others which treat this theme in such a way that the term 'religious' could well be applied. McCrae wrote "I agree with Green about the lack of (but not the need for) spirituality in my poetry."² While McCrae must be granted the privilege of choosing his themes and treating them as he sees fit, in spite of his confession he does come very close

1 In The Lone Hand, July 1907.

2 In a letter to George Mackaness, 8 May 1943, in the National Library of Australia.

to spirituality on occasion. In the early poem, 'The Ragged Book',¹ a contrast is made between man's love for God and God's love for man. The whole tenor of the poem leads the reader to accept the superiority of God's love:

Last night I read within a ragged book
Telling of love unquenchable as God's,
And O, I laughed to see each letter crook
Like sooted twigs on crackling cypress-
rods.

Such love could ne'er be part of man his
fate;
The bloody passions of the flesh make pain;
A thousand thousand stars shall abdicate
Ere you and I can see such love again -

Such marble love, stone-white, and peace-
able;
Enormous, huge; it tops the very sky,
Reaching to earth and back, unceasable,
Beyond the confines of philosophy.

But we of little wit, and sifted thin,
Have not the worth or stable strength to
meet
So boundless grace of godly origin;
Nay, rather seek an equal sweet for sweet.

Man's love, uncertain, and as often base,
Is full of fire and lusty hardihood;
And love, not kneeling, finds especial place
With stubborn hearts, and is accounted good.

We want not clovered peace; the sap of life
Yearns for the clash of glaives and play of
shields;
Our souls go, winning, through the smoke of
strife
Into the swart sun-hidden battle-fields.

1 The Bulletin, 10 May 1906.

We like our boist'rous kind; the flesh
 tight-set
 Across the muscles of a mighty arm
 Can build for love a holy coronet,
 A place of refuge safe from all alarm.

The love of God...The candle-lives of
 priests
 Mumbling obeisance in a stained-glass tomb!
 For all their dress, our drinking and our
 feasts
 Were ours by Nature from our mother's womb.

Live! Let us live and love each other
 through,
 Ours is the love of lusty hardihood;
 True love can never kneel and yet be true;
 By standing ye shall prove your love is good.

But lo, God's love is very peaceable-
 Too great for us. It tops the middle sky,
 Reaching to earth and back, unceasable,
 Beyond the confines of philosophy.

In both content and at times in form ("Such love could never be part of man his fate" and "Enormous, huge; it tops the very sky") this poem reminds us of Hopkins. But of course McCrae is not a Hopkins. Where Hopkins calls for submissiveness as the pathway to love, McCrae calls for independence and uprightness, both literally and figuratively, and even for defiance. He says:

True love can never kneel and yet be true;
 By standing ye shall prove your love is
 good.

But the poem makes the point that man's love is inferior to God's because of man's irreverence ("I laughed to see each letter crook/Like sooted twigs on crackling cypress-rods"); because of his "bloody

passions"; of his lack of "wit" and "stable strength." Because man's love is "uncertain, and as often base,/ Is full of fire and lusty hardihood," is stubborn and "boist'rous", and, with the exception of "The candle-lives of priests/ Mumbling obeisance in a stained-glass tomb", is not meek; for all these reasons it is inferior to God's love. By its very greatness, "such marble-love, stone-white and peaceable" is superior. Surely this is a religious poem, inasmuch as it leads one to think about, and even perhaps accept, what is usually considered a religious viewpoint. Surely too, one could argue that there is some spirituality in this poem.

It could be argued, too, that 'The Vision' is a religious poem, with its emphasis upon the need for sincerity and the avoidance of hypocrisy. It is the "mitred beast" who is punished", despite his gabbled Latin prayers/ And cries on God's neglected name" and he goes to his doom supported by a "recreant priest." One is reminded of the Biblical injunction given to the elders by Jesus "that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you",¹ when we read in 'The Vision':

1 Matthew 21:31.

As mentioned earlier, the first poem McCrae had published in The Bulletin was 'Owner Going West', telling of a countryman's description of the farm he wished to sell. The only catch is a ghost, which the owner is only too happy to include at no extra charge. This is hardly an inspiring theme for a great poem, and of course this is not one, but in the description of the ghost there is the first hint of the skill in portraying the horrific which McCrae used many times subsequently:

Blood is on its face of woe,
 Bloody stains are on its gown;
 Blood is on its breast below,
 Blood from fingers dripping down.

As may be expected, the sales prospect is somewhat deterred by the thought of the inclusion of the ghost in the deal:

Thank yer, yes, I like the place;
 But, excuse me, I should smile;
 Don't care for that thrown-in case
 Of the ghost of Rheuben Pyle.

The rest of the light verse is of much the same standard. It includes such titles as 'Joseph Jones', 'When Vera Fries the Tripe', 'Clitter-Clatter', 'To a Barmaid' and 'Goodbye For Ever'.

Some of these humorous verses have an ironic twist at the end. For instance, in 'Clitter-Clatter' a spry young lady is described as she trips down the street to the chatter of the onlooking males of the

town. Her appearance and promise affect the poet also, but he is abruptly brought back to earth by her reply to his approaches:

'Sir' she says, 'I pray you flatter
Not yourself more than is meet.
Other hearts there are, and fatter,
That I flatten 'neath my feet.¹

Sometimes the poems are complete with small sketches done in a typically McCrae style. Anybody who has looked at McCrae's letters will know that he illustrated many of them in an extremely skilful style - usually humorous, but sometimes with an underlying pathos. Some of these are reproduced in Appendix 1. Other samples of this art can be seen in Story-Book Only. Once, when McCrae was autographing copies of his latest book at Angus and Robertson's, the artist William Dobell bought a copy and asked McCrae to write in it. When McCrae hesitated, Dobell suggested: "To an artist not half so good as myself." Amid much laughter, the inscription was made.²

'Goodbye For Ever'³ and 'A Tale of Tragedy'⁴ are lighthearted treatments of the theme of marriage. To illustrate the quaintness of McCrae's thought, 'A Tale of Tragedy' tells of a man who married a poetess

1 The Bulletin, 11 May 1903.

2 Letter to George Mackaness, 17 March 1949, in National Library of Australia.

3 The Bulletin, 1 February 1906.

4 The Bulletin, 26 July 1906.

who neglected her domestic tasks in favour of writing verse. He pines away with worry and neglect, but at last gained his revenge in an unusual manner. On returning home one evening, he sees his wife composing on the lawn. He made the most of his opportunity:

'Why bless my heart,' Alphonso said,
'Such chances but occur
Too seldom,' and he straightway rolled
The roller over her.

He rolled the roller over her,
He rolled her smooth and flat -
And now Alphonso's New Wife has
THE OLD WIFE AS A MAT!

As a general rule, however, McCrae's sense of humour is kept out of his best verse. Poetry is usually a serious business for him. Occasionally, however, it shows through in a cynical wryness, as in the ballad, 'Red John of Haslingden':

Lord how we laughed to see him fall,
The forest echoed with our mirth:
"Well done, Red John, good man and tall,
Thou hast inherited the earth!"

But not a sign or word vouched he,
Lying his length below the tree -
"God rest his soul," the page-boy said,
"For surely Red John now is dead."

"Then woe is me," quoth Hugh McShane;
"None better ever walked the sod;
Alas that this brave wight is slain -
He owed me twenty guineas odd." 1

The reaction of Hugh McShane to Red John's death is

1 The Lone Hand, January 1908.

perhaps unexpected but typically Australian in its cynical practicality. McCrae understood the Australian character fairly well, as Story-Book Only shows, especially in the first two sections - 'My Father, and My Father's Friends' and 'My Friends, and I'.

There are several narratives in McCrae's poetry, some of which have been collected, but most of which must still be read in the periodicals (or in Appendix 1 herein). One of the earliest examples, perhaps not a true narrative but containing many of its elements, is the rhythmical 'The Gabo Light'. While properly regarded as a simple poem, it yet contains a carefully controlled metre and an effective rhyme. It is far from great poetry - it lacks much content or capacity to stir or involve the reader - but in its mechanical way it is reasonably effective, especially when it is considered that it was the second poem McCrae had had published in The Bulletin, and certainly one of his earliest attempts at writing. The poem begins:

Have you been round the Gabo Light
 On a night
 That's bright,
 With a sky full of stars? -
 On a coasting-boat with a boiler so thin
 You could let out the steam with the prick
 of a pin;
 And a screw that goes with a whirr,
 With a stir,
 A gurr,
 And a series of jars

That jolt out the bolts that are holding
 her frame
 From the bellowing waves and newspaper fame.¹

The poem goes on to describe the same passage in stormy weather "when the white / Seas fight / On the circlet of rocks" and "when women turn pale to their tightly-latched lips".

As in his other poems, so in his narratives, the bitter is never far below the surface. It seeps up from time to time, usually near the end of a poem, as in 'The Wedding Ring'. A weeping woman, the subject of much misfortune, puts her wedding ring in a blind-man's tray. Not knowing of her genuine distress, he thinks the gift is from some "Jill-flirt blithe" and speaks his thoughts aloud, with the result that:

For shame the woman's tears fell down
 In drops of bitter salt,
 To hear her called by evil names
 Who never did a fault.²

Occasionally the narrative is invested with an ethereal quality which sets it apart from the other poems. The uncollected 'Evelyn' has such a quality. It tells of a poet's love for a girl - a love attested to by the flowers, stars, river-spirits and nightingales - but there is a bitter-sweet ending:

1 The Bulletin, 2 January 1897.

2 The Bulletin, 27 August 1903.

humour, alternating with fits of depression, McCrae keeps throughout his life a youthful, almost juvenile outlook. This is reflected in the attention to the season of spring and its vigorous accompaniments. It is part of his failure to face up to reality, or rather, to gloss over the undesirable aspects of it. He cannot wait until:

Freezing Winter drops her pennon sad
And Spring rides in, triumphant lord again.¹

The coming spring is welcomed joyously by all the world, by Nature, by the animals and by man; and even by the fairies who show their delight by riding the ram, decorating his horns with flowers, chasing the lambs and pelting the bull with clover-seed:

The glad mad world is merry when
The elves o' Spring come prancing round.²

The effect upon man is likewise exhilarating, leading to beautiful singing, but one cannot but feel that one is viewing a fool's paradise. The "glad, mad world" may be appropriate in more than the comical sense.

We may take the point of view that the poem 'Spring' leads us to where even a man at the point of death ("A day's march off the grave") "walks backward

1 From 'Sonnet', The Bulletin, 25 January 1906.

2 'The Elves o' Spring', 'The Lone Hand' September 1907.

Vengeance shakes the livid torch of
 And chapless Death his yellow gaze doth
 strife
 throw
 Out of a tower, upreaching to the sky,
 From whence he all may spy...¹

but the reader's attention is directed forcefully to the happy aspects. The reader, like the people in the poem, are called to join the festival. There is still a sense of foreboding, but optimism, even escapism reigns, and the New Year overcomes the forces of the old.

This rather dubious and insecure optimism becomes the pessimism which bubbles to the surface in some of the later poems, as in 'So the Week Goes',² where the succession of events becomes discouraging in its inevitability. This is a variation on the earlier theme of the mortality of man, and the poem is saved from despair by the attempt to maintain some lightness of language. "Gruff" Wednesday, a "knave" called Thursday, the picture of Saturday "stretching his length" and Sunday "tumbling in himself" all work to this end. Again, the poet is interested in the passing of time, but cannot bring himself to face up to its full implications. It must be "jollied" to make

¹ 'The New Year' in The Lone Hand, February 1908.

² From Poems, 1939.

it palatable, not to the reader, one feels, but to the poet himself.

When the winter does come, the "sharp sweetness" of the dawn scene is tempered by the poet's retreat from the season's real character and qualities:

I will arise
And in the stinging shower forget gold
motes,
Thick pillows, blankets, books; travel
the wholesome road,
And give my body to the sun.

The "gold motes" suggest comfort and well-being, with the warming sunlight streaming in through doorway or open window. McCrae has developed a highly effective technique for ensuring the vividness and immediacy so characteristic of his poetry, as well as the fine control of the atmosphere and general 'feeling' imparted by a poem. The way in which these effects are achieved show, more than anything else, the skill of McCrae the poet. When at his best, unfortunately too rarely, McCrae is an impressive poet, with a wide range of competent techniques.

One of these is the frequent use of colour, not indiscriminantly, yet neither in a way that can be called wholly symbolic. Colour is used in the normal processes of communication with the reader, but also in a manner that creates the tone or atmosphere the poet is seeking. "Gold" and "golden" are frequently

used with the connotation of the exotic, the enchanted, the faery. So "gold-eyed grass", "lake of gold", "the day burns gold", "tears of gold", "hoofs of gold" and "powdered gold" vie with the more poetic "golden fire", "golden woman", "golden wine", "golden pollen" and the supreme compliment given to the Yellow Lady and to Norman Lindsay on his birthday - "Ah Golden One!"¹ Add to this the quite common compounds - the flowers "helmed with gold", "gold-winged Phoebus" and the beautifully descriptive "gold-girdled marmosets", and it is apparent that McCrae is using this colour in an attempt to attribute a romantic haze to the objects described, to let us know how he reacts to them, and perhaps to persuade us to an appreciation of, and an agreement with, the content of his perceptions.

From the world of gold there is a marked difference to that of silver. These objects are not so exotic; not so linked with adventure or legend, but are more reserved, more delicate, if somewhat colder. Thus McCrae sings of the twilight scene "where leafy ladies chanted silver songs/In chorus to the thrush's melodies."² He writes of lovers romping "till the still/Deep moon lays down her bowl of silver light"

1 'The Yellow Lady' and 'Norman Lindsay; Birthday, Feb. 23'.

2 From 'Oblation' in The Bulletin, 20 June 1907.

and of the ship's lantern "whose silver light can only find the sea."¹

The delicacy of nature sets the scene for the lyrical 'Mariana', where the lily sent a slender, silver-frosted finger/Thro' her little secret window with a million leaves enscrolled."² "Silver passion", "silver wings" and "the silver-sweet and flowing" sound of bugles all add an enchanted quality to the scenes depicted.

Similarly, the traditional colour of magic and anarchy, red, is used for richness - "red fire", "red stars", "red smoke", "the wine's red baby" - and the colour of violence and revenge, of "Tophet's red avenging lake" and of the "scarlet-coloured beast" of Babylon.

McCrae was particularly fond of using white in his imagery. It has usually one of two characteristics - either purity and pleasantness or the starkness and pallor indicative of horror and death. He uses an extremely interesting range of compounds with this word, also. In addition to the usual "white as milk", "snow-white dove", "white marble house", "white moonbuds" and "white-wooled sheep" there is the less usual

1 From 'The Plain' in The Bulletin, 28 July 1904.

2 In The Bulletin, 2 March 1905.

"white as the cloud of delight", "thin white song", "salt-white shields" and the "white-horned gem" of the moon. The "whited wall" hints at the other use of white, a very graphic one. A prostitute's eyes are as white as "the eyes of a shad that is dead"; a blind man has eyes "like white stones of the sea"; and we are reminded that even the fairest woman "must soon repair / To be the worm's white bride". The white moth is the omen of death in another instance.

On occasion, yellow can be the accompaniment of death, also. "chapless Death" has a "yellow gaze", but usually yellow is a colour of mellowness. The dawn is yellow, and so are a tiger's eyes. A bird sings in "the yellowing morn" and the poet relaxes in "the yellow pleasure of candle-light".

In addition to the common colours, McCrae uses some that are relatively rare. A dappled fawn has "dewey eyes of saffron sheen", a cat is "greening her eyes on a flame-litten mat", King Paladin rides a "moon-coloured mare", while Satan's furnace burns umber and pools "flame ochre". "Blue-veined boys" look deceptively delicate, and the "death-black" colour of a "flooded fold of sarcenet" hides what proves to be the hollow object of the poet's wild passion.

McCrae was once asked by Joan Mackaness for his opinion of her verses. Of one poem he wrote: "Silently"

goes well with "pale gold", which has no sound at all; a remark not so absurd as it might seem, because most colours like to hear themselves speak."¹ He then quoted:

Read Simon Mague where he tells
How Adam painted seven hells
Three coats, throughout, with scarlet yells.

This special use of colour is explored further in a poem - 'Winds' - where the wind takes its colour from its surroundings - green through the trees, blue over the ocean, golden through the corn and so on. It is likened by the poet to the soul of man, which reacts to its surrounds in the same way. The poem's final stanza, printed in italics, demands:

O gusty soul that lives within,
Why dost thou flush and fade,
Wind-like, to flame and icicle -
Red Rahab and White Maid!

It is obvious that McCrae comes out strongly in favour of the passionate, the excitement, the creativeness of red. Not for him the neutrality of whiteness, for he writes in the penultimate stanza:

The white wind moves in the white moon's
wake,
With straight white streaming hair,
And ever she wails in words that ache
The burthen of despair.

Instead of the purity of whiteness, there is the frustration of chastity (the moon), with its accompanying ache and despair. There is a similitude to death by

1 An undated letter to Joan Mackaness in the Mackaness collection in National Library of Australia.

drowning here, too, with the white streaming hair providing a visual image, reinforced by the accompanying mournful sounds.

Along with the intensification of perception that the vivid emphasis on colour brings, McCrae employs sounds to heighten effect and immediacy. So we actually hear the "moaning of a river" and the rustling rushes, the "murmurous singing tone" of departed spirits and the drowsiness of "the busy thrumming bees". The "rattle" of the country train and the flute's "wanton sighing", the fiddle's "scrape" and the "wee chuckling of the clock" convey us into a world of homeliness, contrasted with the "gabbled prayers" and "mumping priests" of scenes not so familiar to most. Bugles "ring with glee" at one time; death is "musicked through the glen" at another, while oblivious to it all, the King's child "gobbles the milk o' the Queen's ain breast" and the "snuffling mares" grow restless under the black centaurs' gaze.

McCrae's preoccupation with the effective representation of sounds is discernible from the very earliest poems. When, in 'The Gabo Light', there are no words adequately to convey the sounds of the ship, McCrae creates his own. So the ship's screw goes with a "whirr", a "stir", a "gurr" and a "series of jars" while the

weather is calm, but as the sea becomes rougher, with a "wheezy dumpetty de-dee."

There is a whole range of sounds, both in the early poems and in the later, recalling musical instruments which represent a particular mood - solo or in concert. In addition to the flute and 'cello music, there is the soft, far, sonorous note of the horn playing the overture to 'Muse-Haunted' - a delight remarked upon by Douglas Stewart:

He heard, and dreamed the night-wind on
The moon's gold horn was blowing,
The music of far Helicon
A-down Parnassus flowing.

Commenting upon McCrae's skill in this art, Stewart says:

To make words soar in this way into pure music, as distinct from the verbal melody that remains, how ever lovely, earthbound, is an extremely rare accomplishment in poetry,¹

and goes on to say that there is no parallel to this skill in Wordsworth, Shelley or Coleridge, but sees some of the Elizabethans (Herrick, Suckling, Lovelace) coming close to it, with a song such as Shakespeare's 'Ariel's Song' being closest.

Other poems of McCrae's use this instrumental music - 'The Watchers' (with its bugles blowing "silver-sweet and flowing/Across the sleeping corn"); 'Now Do the Entering Trumpets Sound', 'Fantasy'

1 Douglas Stewart, 'McCrae and Music' in Southerly, XVII (1956) p.139.

and the drums and trumpets which accompany the dancing in 'The Mimshi Maiden'.

The absence of sound is also used to great effect when needed. In 'Metamorphosis' there is an early scene of muted sounds, the "rippling wreath of bubbles" and then even this is hushed until:

There was no sound; such revery
Possessed that thoughtful nook...
The music of a moving tree
Which rose beside the brook
And drank its water-that, alone,
(Like some great sonnet read,
Hushed to a whisper), made a tone
Of gold on silver thread.¹

There is a deliberate and effective avoidance of sound here in the use of "moving", "rose" and "made a tone" suggesting that McCrae can exercise a considerable control over his poetry.

The sensuousness is increased also by McCrae's use of words and phrases which re-create the odours and scents of the scenes depicted. Some of these scents are sweet, as in the "honey-scented trees" of 'Australian Spring' or the "musk and warm odours" of 'Mon Reve'. Musk roses and marjoram, myrrh and cassia and the "sweet fragrance" of flowers mingle in a romantic world of sights, sounds and scents.

At times these senses are so intermingled that they defy separation, as when:

1 In The Bulletin, 7 June 1906.

The odour of camellias came
 In faint, sweet fragrance o'er the stream,
 Like the pale perfume of the flame
 Far stars surrender in a dream.

When one reads 'Below the Moon', one is reminded of the Elizabethan poem of courtly love, with its exaggerated compliments to mistress or lover:

The meadow spider shall unloose his tent
 Here in the hollow which your shining head
 Hath consecrated with its curls, and lent
 The slumbrous odour of their fragrant red.¹

At times, too, the odours of the poetry mask unpleasantness, serving to enforce an image, or to make a contrast, as in the "scented silken sin" of 'Love Divided'. In 'Day of Judgment', painted in a breathtakingly swift series of verbal brush-strokes, amid the vividness of sights and sounds, there are "ships with the vapours of Hell". The harlot goes to her doom, leaving a pungent smell of sulphurous fumes:

Rivers of money go streaming...straight
 from the mines in the mountain,
 Smoking of Death and Destruction, and wrea-
 thing with sulphurous garlands
 The harlot, as high as her bosom, submerged
 in the torrent....²

In an apostrophe to Death, "who hast all women for thy prize", the desirable nature of some of his conquests - of Helen, Cleopatra, Thisbe and Cressida - is contrasted with some of the rougher and less desirable members of their sex:

1 The Bulletin, 4 July 1907.

2 The Bulletin, 13 April 1905.

These slot-mouthed women, with big, bang-
 led arms,
 Once fought like dogs the vikings on their
 decks,
 Feeling the plaited wounds beneath their
 palms
 Break midway open, and the frothy flecks
 Of sweat jerk downward, as the salt-white
 shields
 Stank in the morning sun.....¹

The bluntness and force of the "stank" well suits the rancid odours of this scene, with its less gentle ladies.

As well as this controlled employment of sight, sound and scent, there are innumerable examples of equally specific and effective sensuousness. The tactile imagery of 'Day of Judgment' permits us, indeed forces us, to feel the horror of the lover seeking the object of his affection, amid the carnage of that scene, by his sense of touch alone. The very impressive "mumbling" conjures up images of dogs gnawing at a bone:

Mumbling the heels of the lover, who gropes
 with his feet on their
 faces,
 To take to his arms a forlorn one.

It is interesting to digress briefly to point out that A.G. Stephens was a great help to McCrae in these early years (as he was to many poets and writers). The fascimile of the manuscript of "Day of Judgment" shows how Stephens altered some of McCrae's original words, a

1 'The Bridegroom!' The Bookfellow, 21 February 1907.

THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT.

M

~~mines of~~

Stars falling in thousands; Birds on the shoulders of an gals
Singing a mystical psalm; Negroes wash up by the sea;
Arrow-heads pecking the valleys; Poisons of gold and of purple
Swarming with cherubim children; Dragons all over the earth
Spouting the sepulchred coffins... Ships, with the vapours of Hell
Swelling their sails and careening... Lanterns, seen under the Ocean
Streaming, then hurriedly shrouded... Heads, of their bodies disengaged,
Threat'ning each other with curses, rolling blind eyes in their sockets,
~~Big heads~~ ^{grotes} the heads of the ~~beasts~~ who ~~leaps~~ with his feet on their faces
To take to his arms a beloved ~~farther~~ one.
Rivers of Money so streaming - straight from the mines in the mountains
Smoking of Death and Destruction, ~~and~~ ^{and} wreathing with sulphurous ~~flames~~ ^{jarls and}
The harlot, as high as her bosom submerged in the torrent.
Tigers at play by the light of a comet, held in the hand of a prisoner Gyaunt
Whose spires were forged at the striking of Vulcan under the earth, by order
of Hammon,
Millions and millions of ears of ears ere ever the seed of Knowledge and
Was planted in Eden.

H. McCr

N.S.W.

W. S. Stephens
- Burgein

R. Page

doubtful procedure ethically, but artistically beneficial. The very effective "mumbling", as can be seen, is a Stephens addition, written in the violet ink which was practically a Stephens trademark.

But even without Stephens' help, McCrae displays considerable skill with words - archaic and unusual, as well as the more common. Perhaps here again is the influence of Norman Lindsay, for in Story-Book Only McCrae tells of Lindsay's hobby of collecting strange and unusual words:

The wall above the nearest bed had been scribbled over with words, isolated, mostly long words taking up considerable space. Some of these I remember: 'Catadioptric', 'Metagenesis', 'Indurated', 'Psychological', 'Usufruct'; or, in a more voluptuous mood, some sailor-noun like 'Lobscouse'....for hash or stew. ¹

There was also, of course, the effect of McCrae's own education, which included Latin studies - the Aeneid and Anabasis among them - which traditionally have been associated with the enlargement of vocabulary and an interest in one's own language. ²

McCrae's vocabulary contained a considerable number of Elizabethan and medieval terms - no doubt acquired from his wide reading of Chaucer and Spenser. He

1 From 'How the Cub Was Licked', Story-Book Only, p.69.

2 Ibid, p.65.

uses word devices such as repetition and variation of word order for rhythmical and metrical accentuation. It is rather surprising, however, that although McCrae displays a considerable knowledge and control of word-usage, at times he seems to have a lapse which militates against his best poetic purpose.

The archaic "gyves" is used for "fettters" on several occasions, its use adding to the aura of antiquity which surrounded the "rain-black statue" given life by Mercury in 'Metamorphosis'. The Middle English "yclept" brings added authenticity to a medieval hunting-scene, as do "gyaunt", "glaves", "gonfallon", "shent", "dight", "leman" and the quaint "I wis" and "I ween". It can be argued, of course, that such words are an affectation, or at best, pedantry, but they do increase the medieval atmosphere. They certainly substantiate the claim of McCrae's extreme interest in words and it is most unlikely, knowing McCrae's character, that he is trying to impress the reader with his erudition. He made no claim to be a scholar, in fact, he expressed a wish to Kenneth Mackenzie that he might be one.

McCrae also uses many rare and unusual words. In 'Pantera' there is "with sleepy surmeh smeared the lids / Veiling thine eyes". "Surma" or "soorma" (McCrae's spelling is not given in the Oxford English Dictionary) is the black powder which Indian women use on eyebrows and

lids.

Similarly, "Let us brew biggen and flagon" uses the unusual "biggin" (as Oxford English Dictionary spells it) as a kind of coffee pot with strainer. Other rare words in quite a large range are "battaillous", "kraken" (a huge sea monster mentioned by Pliny), "smalt" (blue oxide of cobalt), "withy", "galliards" and "rigadoon".

McCrae's ancestry is visible in his dialect words, especially from the Scots language. So, in 'Thief's Song' the thief who awaits execution by hanging can sing to his mistress:

Hey, my sonsy buxom Jenny,
Ragged softling, good and true!
Here's a kiss and there's a penny -
Soon I'll dangle i' the blue.

Like to any hooked barbel
Snickt frae by his true love's side,
Till my body - cold as marble -
Sheds its soul to thee, my bride.¹

The barbel image is particularly appropriate here. This large, European, fresh-water fish has long fleshy filaments hanging down from its mouth; in a short time the same effect will be gained by the limbs of the thief's body as it hangs from the gallows. Its impact is heightened because this image has already been presented in slightly different form in the first stanza. The rope, or "shamble fibre", with small pieces protruding from

1 The Bulletin, 13 September 1906.

along its length, is visible to the condemned man "twixt the sun and cusped moon". The dialect is most appropriate here, in its contribution to the 'folk' feeling of the poem - a feeling of simplicity and childlike faith in an ultimate outcome more to the liking of the two lovers than the harshness of earthly existence.

McCrae also used Scots dialect when he composed a tribute to Mary Gilmore. One of the things he had in common with Mary Gilmore, whom he much admired, was a Scots ancestry and his dialect in this poem, and in another addressed to Norman Lindsay, establishes immediately a close bond of kinship with the subjects - a kinship which the content of the poems extends.

Writing as he did, with a wide knowledge of language and techniques which gave such rich sensuousness, McCrae had his early poetry praised highly by many of his contemporary critics. A.G. Stephens compared it with Francis Thompson's work,¹ and contrasted it with Shaw Neilson's (Stephens contrasted McCrae's "intense cerebration" with Neilson's "intense feeling").² O'Dowd

1 A.G. Stephens, The Bookfellow, 1 December 1911.

2 A.G. Stephens in a review of Cowl, R.P., The Theory of Poetry in England, The Bookfellow, 15 August 1914, p.173.

criticised McCrae's lack of social content and invited him to enlist his efforts in writing about themes closer to home.¹ While Bayldon criticised McCrae's failure to digest the imagery and ideas he adopted, resulting in "intellectual self-consciousness",² Lionel Lindsay praised McCrae's artistic digestion as "perfect", stating:

The unhackneyed imagery springs from the strength of the artist's capacity for visualising an object. It is in this mental sight that originality dwells far from the fields of eclecticism.³

But in spite of the contradictory nature of the early criticism, it is true to say that during this early period, McCrae had produced sufficient worthwhile poetry to hold out great promise for the years to come. Unfortunately, as will be demonstrated, this promise was only partly to be achieved. The superiority which McCrae had shown over the majority of his contemporary poets was not developed as fully as the early poetry led us to expect. This is one of the great tragedies of Australian poetry, and to gain an idea of its extent, an examination can now be made of the later period in McCrae's poetic life.

1 In Birth, V (December 1920), p.6.

2 The Lone Hand, December 1907, p.229.

3 The Lone Hand, January 1909, p.350.

Chapter 111.

The Later Poetry: 1910 - 1945.

From Satyrs and Sunlight in 1909, McCrae's poetic life extended through to 1945, his last volume of poems being Voice of the Forest,¹ although the verse drama The Ship of Heaven² and the prose collection, Story-Book Only³ were published after this. Before making an examination of the poetry which was written during this long period, it is necessary to observe, from McCrae's own letters and from the impressions of his friends, how his personality had developed and matured. There is general agreement that after the death of his wife in 1943 there was a marked deterioration in his personal competence, but it is evident that there had been, during this whole period, a complexity to his personality which escaped the notice of all but his intimate friends and relatives. The hidden elements gradually assumed more importance in determining McCrae's life - his personal relationships, his social habits and attitudes, and of most interest, his poetry. There are many letters available, particularly from about 1930 onwards, but some from the early period, to supplement the accounts of friends and the autobiographical material in Story-Book Only.

McCrae's shyness increased, still expressed in an

1 Voice of the Forest, (Angus and Robertson, 1945).

2 The Ship of Heaven, (Angus and Robertson, 1951).

3 Story-Book Only, (Angus and Robertson, 1948).

unwillingness to meet people, and becoming in the later years almost pathological.

"Don't expect me to talk; becos I simply can't."¹

"It will need an operation to make me able even to say 'How do you do?'"²

"I'm an enthusiastic unmixer; for instance, if anybody were to say to me 'Prepare to meet thy God' I'd dive for the nearest underground shelter."³

Right throughout McCrae's life, visitors found him hard to approach. There are many anecdotes telling how visitors went to visit him at Camden, only to come away unsatisfied. It was Ethel Anderson who recounted how the closest she got to McCrae on one occasion was to find his rocking chair still moving as she entered the lounge-room.⁴ He dreaded interviews, confiding to Nettie Palmer that he could face them only when "whiskied-up."⁵

This shyness partly accounted for McCrae's modesty - a characteristic well-known to his friends and well-documented. Kenneth Mackenzie experienced it when he supplied a Foreword to McCrae's Poems, only to have it omitted. McCrae wrote to apologise, stating

1 Letter to George Mackaness, 15 June 1933, in National Library of Australia.

2 Letter to George Mackaness, 12 May 1933, in National Library of Australia.

3 Letter to George Mackaness, 13 October 1940, in National Library of Australia.

4 Norman Cowper in Thompson, Five To Remember, p.39.

5 Letter to Nettie Palmer, 2 August 1941, in National Library of Australia.

he considered it too eulogistic and too difficult to live up to.¹ Nor was McCrae being false to his character when, after thanking the proprietors of Art in Australia for devoting an issue to his work, he wrote, "Other writers must follow; and, in the present situation, I am keenly aware that the last shall not be least."²

As time passed, the frugality that McCrae had always exercised became closer to poverty. Even though, in the later years, he was in receipt of a small pension of £3 per week from the Commonwealth Literary Fund, McCrae found it very difficult to live. Many times he mentioned to Mackaness how much harder it was to live in the 1940's and 1950's than in Archibald's days.³ He tells also of having to sell some of his literary possessions in an attempt to make ends meet.⁴

As his career advanced, too, the much-treasured spontaneity of the early period seemed to slip away. He had to work much harder on the later poems, forcing himself, sometimes, to write at all. As McCrae lived at Camden from 1930, and Norman Lindsay at Springwood,

1 Letter to Kenneth Mackenzie, 30 May 1939 in Fisher Library.

2 Art in Australia, Third Series XL1 (December, 1931)p.5.

3 Letter to George Mackaness, August 1941, in National Library of Australia.

4 Letter to George Mackaness, 1 April 1950, in National Library of Australia.

there was not the direct force of Lindsay's energetic personality to encourage the constant effort McCrae had once been capable of. "To tell the truth I've been making myself write; and when I do that, the result is doubly terrible," he wrote in 1931.¹

"My pen is a fidgetty bitch and will neither go up hill or down hill except when she pleases."²

Yet in spite of this knowledge of his difficulty, McCrae was rather sensitive when anybody else noticed this lack or criticised the absence of the former spontaneity. Speaking of comments made in this vein by H. M. Green, McCrae said:

But I suffered stomach-ache reading his description of myself as an artist who works over everything he writes until it is as good as he can make it. Actually my stuff has been done at full gallop - no thought - only animal exultation. I have seldom altered a word.³

Although this was true in many poems, there were occasions when McCrae made many corrections. His favourite poem, 'Never Again' gave him some trouble. The manuscript shows that he had completed the first stanza in ink, and the remainder in pencil with many revisions. The final stanza had a rhyme scheme worked alongside

1 Letter to Nettie Palmer, 2 March 1931, in National Library of Australia.

2 Letter to George Mackaness, 15 August 1939, in National Library of Australia.

3 Letter to George Mackaness, 28 February 1945, in National Library of Australia.

On seeing a bird with a fairy in its mouth
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I came; a child, in childhood's hour;
Where rippling Spring was at its prime,
And saw — The figure of his flower! —
A fairy prince, in timely time;

Who watched, beside some amourette,
Between the derry petals laid,
Bright-coated flies ^{within} upon a net
His dancing-master spider made.

Their masquerade of Death was ^{mirth} for him:
And, with the smile still on his cheek,
The Duke of Birds, Sennacharim,
Picked up this Lord; and, in his beak,

Bore him away: either to die,
Or be his back-yard slave to dig
Beetles from bark, and worms, for aye:
Warning to me — when I am big.

Hughes: one.

- "train", "bane", "chain", "wane", "pain", "stain",
"lain", "slain".¹

Generally, however, the obtuse, the artificially difficult, were anathema to the spontaneous, exultant McCrae. Although he had many literary friends, as Story-Book Only recounts so vividly, he was not particularly fond of writers as a group, because he considered they were writers first, and people last. Speaking of writers, he said "As a rule I abominate a tribe which, with few exceptions, stays professional at home, in the dining-room, in the parlour, even in bed."²

McCrae was far from having an unprofessional attitude towards his work, and there is ample evidence to show that he recognized genuine talent, especially in the encouragement he gave to young poets (J. A. R. McKellar, Geoffrey Cumine, Peter Hopegood and others). But he could be scathing in his attacks when aroused over what he considered a literary injustice. When Douglas Stewart, as Editor of the Red Page of The Bulletin, attacked the grant made by the Commonwealth Literary Fund to Professor Moll, McCrae wrote, in his

1 H. Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany (ed. W. Stone, 1967), p. 71.

2 Letter to Nettie Palmer, 2 August 1941, in National Library of Australia.

private correspondence, of Stewart:

Anyhow, what he says doesn't count. He's a declared enemy to Australian literature and kids himself for having battered the Bulletin poetry column to bits. The only verses he accepts are written by himself."¹

Whether this is true or not is not particularly relevant here, but it does serve to show the presence of some vindictiveness among the jollity, and that where an injustice appeared to have been done, McCrae was eager to come out fighting.

There was only one man among all Australian writers whom McCrae really disliked, and this was a man with whom he had several public arguments, usually through the Red Page of The Bulletin. This was David McKee Wright. "He is the one man of all Australian writers whom I genuinely dislike."² But it was what McCrae considered were faults in personality or attitude rather than literary faults, which led to this dislike. McCrae was quick to disparage a lack of originality in others (he once pointed out at length how FitzGerald had used images previously used by Browning),³ but he was also quick to praise genuine evidences of originality. He commended this quality in Mary Lang:

- 1 Letter to George Mackaness, November 1940 in National Library of Australia.
- 2 Letter to Vance Palmer - undated - in National Library of Australia.
- 3 Letter to George Mackaness, 15 August 1933, in National Library of Australia.

Remember the girl stepping out of the
 cabaret in Paris, to immediately encounter
 The crystalline frigidity of stars...
 The fleshless moon's remote virginity.
 The purest genius. Something which can
 never be recaptured, never be paraphrased
and, without its context, never be
 stolen.¹

In the same letter, McCrae spoke of Paul McGuire's
 muse as suburban. "Billions of Englishmen write on the
 same level. La mediocrit e est un extreme vice en la
 poesie: better someone crackt in the sponce through
 banging it against the stars, too hard and too often..."²

Of all the criticisms made of McCrae's own poetry,
 none has ever called his poetry "suburban." There was
 a breadth of outlook in the choice of subject matter
 and more particularly in regard to the spirit with
 which the poetry is animated. Partly this is due to
 the nature of his personality, in its outgoing freshness
 and vitalist approach, but partly it is due too, to the
 experiences he had.

In spite of his singing, life was not all nymphs
 and pipes for McCrae. He had a streak of hypochondria
 in his make-up which was hidden from all but his closest
 friends. He gave many details of real and imaginary
 complaints to his correspondents. He described to
 Mackaness how he spent some time with each of his

1 Letter to George Mackaness, 31 March 1938, in
 National Library of Australia.

2 See p. 263.

daughters in turn, and became each day "a little nearer to the Crematorium and the Kingdom of Heaven." He mentioned a prones to blackouts, neuritis, heart trouble, and when drinking to excess, was told by his local doctor "Your heart, if you force it, will stop!" These bouts of ill-health were accompanied by deep depression, exemplified by a quatrain written to Mackenzie:

A poet's at his best dead drunk;
So here's a go," smooth Flaccus said,
A half-truth on the edge of bunk:
A poet's best when he is dead.¹

He poured out to his friend all his considerable troubles - the death of his wife, the suicide of his sister, the wrongful certification of one of his daughters as insane and of her attempted suicide. With difficulty her release was secured, but as McCrae wrote:

I'm forever happy for that.... but the consequent strain de-socialized me; injured an already precarious heart. Alas I suffer remorse while I think, often, of my neglect of Nancy. However, its good manners to appear merry; and when I go to town, I drink as much as I can: this reddens my cheeks, increases the sound of my voice, makes me 'larf' and clap my hoofs, so that Mackaness, seeing me, calls out to Bluddy Jefferies "Here's Hugo! Doesn't he look well!" Words, if he knew it, like clods dropped on the coffin of Mr McCrae.²

While it is not our province here to go into the details of these family troubles, it does help to know that

1 Letter to Kenneth Mackenzie, 8 December 1947, in Fisher Library.

2 Ibid.



Hugs in search of a friend

Dear Sir - You promised to Kim and you were Kim !!

to the same correspondent. McGrae confessed that he

A typical McGrae drawing, poignantly illustrating his solitariness, from an undated letter to Kenneth ('Kim') Mackenzie-Fisher Library.

they existed. It helps to understand the personality of the later McCrae - a personality varying between the heights and the depths, a variation reflected in the poetry.

McCrae's depression was often exacerbated by feelings of loneliness, when his thoughts turned to the world's lack of understanding and to death. He longed for a closer contact with some of those with whom he corresponded. He spoke with gratitude of his friendship with the Palmers, telling Nettie:

But my gratitude is shy gratitude and always edges out of sight the moment I most want it. I do wish you and Vance lived in Sydney so that I could see you often even if only from a window, walking by. I have lots of half-lost friends in Sydney - half-lost because I have become too achey and stiff to visit anywhere: as for the dead others, I shall soon toe the line with them....Chris Brennan, Henry Lawson, Furnley Maurice, Shaw Neilson (my favourite poet), A.G. Stephens, etc. etc. Did I say 'toe the line'? Private McCrae! Two steps to the rear! 1

This depression was accompanied, on occasion, by hallucinations and deep remorse. Only five months after the letter to Mackenzie just mentioned, a further example of McCrae's mental state was given in another letter to the same correspondent. McCrae confessed that he

1 Letter to Nettie Palmer, 1953, in National Library of Australia.

had been unfaithful to his deceased wife, filled himself with remorse because of this, and regarded himself as "hopelessly unworthy". At times he thought she had returned. He wrote: "Now, after years of avoidance, the situation has reversed; so that I search for her; or, at least, the shadow of her, here. This explains my determination to be alone." He went on to describe how he finally decided to take his life, so deep was his depression. He tried to throw himself under a train at Wahroonga station but "became terrified and fell only a yard away."¹

This imagined presence of his dead wife was attested to also by R.D.FitzGerald, who stated that McCrae often imagined someone was walking alongside him as he went down the street or about his errands.² His longing was many times expressed in letters to his friends: "I wish and wish and wish every day an impossible thing...that my wife might return."³

In another letter to Mackenzie,⁴ McCrae mentioned that he was close to a nervous breakdown due to malnutrition, and that when he went to town (he was then living in his 'Shackeau' at Camden) he would pray that nobody saw him. This was verified by a friend, Beatrice Davis

1 Letter to Mackenzie, 15 April 1948, in Fisher Library.

2 In an interview with myself.

3 Undated letter to Mackaness in National Library of Australia.

4 Undated letter to Mackenzie, in Fisher Library.

of Angus and Robertson's, who knew McCrae well from his visits to that publisher. She stated, during an interview, that McCrae would dodge his friends if he did not feel well, and so one learned not to approach him if he looked ill.

When Mackaness expressed his sympathy to McCrae on the first anniversary of Nancy's death, McCrae wrote:

Pity

When Pity came to die
 There was no pity left...
 Which is a reason why
 Not anyone bereft
 For Pity's sake could cry.

When Pity came to die
 It seemed not strange to us,
 To find weak Pity lie
 Unpitied.....
 Piteous! ¹

It was partly this deep sense of loss and remorse which occasioned in McCrae a strong persecution complex. He gave his address to Nettie Palmer in one instance as "At the Sign of All Hands Against Him", explaining his oversensitivity by:

I say this advisedly; since a literary junta here disparages me for having chosen to live apart; yet I'd be forgiven if it knew the cursed 'Why'....the awareness of there being for me little life left; another (and the principal) reason is that Nancy is here, at Camden, not to be seen; yet more with me

1 Letter to Mackaness, December 1944, in National Library of Australia.

than when she was alive. Because you have understanding I tell you this secret - for secret it is - so that you may know my necessity for staying alone.

When a visitor comes, N. vanishes like mist off a glass... and it might be weeks before I feel her presence again.¹

McCrae had great affection for his wife; yet his treatment of her caused him deep remorse after her death. He proudly, but rather pathetically, told Rupert Atkinson that Nancy called him "Hugoest". "Hugoest, my sweetheart's name for me. The superlative Hugo!"² He could recount this without any spirit of immodesty, but rather in attestation of the close bond between his wife and himself.

This love was, in a way, generalised into an affection for all women, indeed for the whole natural world:

I love women and I often wished trees could be placed in the communion of sex so that I might cajole a camellia-bush to sleep with me or that violets might float in the moonlight naked over my breast.³

In addition to the hallucinations which were conjured up by his longing for his wife, McCrae had further illusions symptomatic of schizophrenia. He wrote to Mackenzie:

After months of good health I awoke one morning full of horror. I sat up without a sensation of life, terrified to see

1 Letter to Nettie Palmer, 11 July 1949, in National Library of Australia.

2 Letter to Rupert Atkinson, undated, in Fisher Library.

3 Ibid.

myself coming towards myself! Then, as I rose, he moved away.

He mentions thoughts of suicide which he had had, and then continued:

Yet, although remaining in the world, I still feel I'm not part of it. I meet people and don't seem to be able to reach them; when they speak I hear the words but they are dead words....unanswerable...Your letter was the first to stir me...Half my trouble is that it is as much emotional as it is physical.¹

At times the conflicting elements of McCrae's personality terrified and disgusted him. He confided many of his thoughts and his fears to the Palmers - especially Nettie, who had always been a close friend:

I remain conscious of the presences of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde - have been conscious of them ever since I came to life; myself the stinking stadium wherein they fight; unbeknownst, I hope, to anybody except your 'umble servant, Hugh McCrae. Nevertheless, imagined noises, live scufflings of rats in the arras, make my galled nerves wince; if only for the reason that you and Vance might overhear.²

The acuteness of these personality deficiencies, however, was greatest at that time when McCrae had ceased to write poetry. There are obvious signs where they did affect his writing - particularly in regard to the introspectiveness, to the constant theme of man's mortality and the escapist attitudes in his poems - throughout his career. This will become more apparent

1 Undated letter to Mackenzie in National Library of Australia.

2 Letter to Nettie Palmer, January 1951, in National Library of Australia.

as a roughly chronological survey is made of the poetry from 1909 onwards.

After the publication of the 1909 Satyrs and Sunlight in Sydney, there followed a cheap edition in 1911 in Melbourne.¹ Although these two volumes greatly enlarged the circle of people who were familiar with McCrae's poetry, they brought him little in the way of financial independence. He still continued to write both poetry and prose, including some short stories, for the periodicals, especially The Lone Hand, The Bulletin, and The Bookfellow. He still contributed drawings and illustrations, mainly of a humorous nature.

In spite of these efforts he made a poor living. He was paid the magnificent sum of five shillings for the manuscript of 'Earth' on 28 August 1912, for publication in The Bulletin. He eked out his finances and made a strong impression on his listeners by means of a series of lectures given at the Savoy Theatre. These were on the subject of 'My Father, and My Father's Friends' and were largely the essays later published in Story-Book Only. They were very well received, the audience being enthusiastic both about the lecturer's content and down-to-earth manner of delivery. McCrae himself was so

1 There was also a 1913 edition, in which Satyrs and Sunlight and Poems by Bernard O'Dowd shared the one volume. See Bibliography for details.

pleased that he planned to take the series to the other capital cities in Australia, but nothing came of the idea.

In 1914 McCrae conducted a page, given over mostly to anecdotes, in The Lone Hand. This page he called 'The Merry-Go-Round', but it was short lived. He tried to enlist in 1915, telling A.G. Stephens that he expected to be in camp in eight weeks, but nothing came of that. Probably he was rejected on medical grounds.

Living at Coogee at the time, McCrae found Sydney provided him with a very bare existence only. He determined to accept the invitation to accompany Granville Barker's dramatic company to America, where he was to serve as an actor, artist and journalist. Reference is made to this in an essay in Story-Book Only.¹ At the time he wrote to Mrs Lala Fisher:

I have been in Hell quite a long time. No money. No work. Off to America on May 2.²

It is to the credit of Sydney that at a Farewell Dinner McCrae was presented with a purse of ninety-seven sovereigns. From manuscripts it is possible to reconstruct some of McCrae's activities in the United States. Signed contracts exist³ engaging him to act

1 'Granville Barker', p.8.

2 Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany (ed.W.Stone,1967),p.82.

3 Ibid, p.83.



WITH
A HUNDRED THOUSAND THANKS UNTIL
I CAN REPLY TO YOU BETTER

Hugh - McCrae -

MAY 1914.

A drawing sent to A.G. Stephens by McCrae on his departure for America - Mitchell Library.

in 'The Garden of Paradise' at twenty-five dollars weekly from 7 November 1914 and with Granville Barker's own company from 27 January 1915 at the same salary. McCrae acted in Anatole France's 'The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife', Shaw's 'Androcles and the Lion' and was a super in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Claude Rains was Stage Manager for these Granville Barker productions.

The dramatic enterprise was a limited success for McCrae. He soon tired of the constant travelling, of the long hours, the irregular meals and the shortage of food (it was too expensive for him). He was no great discovery as an actor, and so before long he was back in Australia (late in 1915). Although he had been used to hardships before he went away, he found similar difficulties, in a foreign land, more than he could bear. Some of his experiences he recounted in The Bulletin at the time. Others are in manuscript among A.G. Stephens' papers in Mitchell Library. All tell of his misery and his desire to come home.

On his return to Australia, McCrae picked up the threads of his previous life without difficulty. So glad was he to be back in his beloved Australia that he celebrated the occasion by writing a special poem which he called 'Home-Coming':

By blink of dawn I came
 Where the faint field embowers
 The brown bee round with flowers,
 Thorned stalks of scented flame,
 Gold cups and fluted bells,
 And long flat-seeded shells;
 Black earth and sweet green sleeves
 Of early aspen grass.
 Between the leaning leaves
 I felt the soft wind pass.

O God, for this good time,
 For sun and warm white rain,
 For hedge and stone and grain,
 My very heart doth chime -
 Glad to be home again.¹

McCrae's joy in his return gave him a new lease of life. He drew sketches and cartoons, particularly for The Bookfellow. He illustrated books (including Brooks' Australian Readers - Fourth Reader, Parts 1 and 11), and as the War was still in progress, he secured a position in the Censor's Office in Melbourne. His daughter tells how he used to play tricks on people while in this post, once posing as a German spy, much to the consternation of his government employers.²

During this period and immediately after the War, McCrae made several more attempts to gain recognition as an actor. In 1917 he appeared in a programme at the Playhouse Theatre, Sydney, in a playlet, 'Over the Hills'. In the same year he acted the part of Adam

¹ The Bulletin, 12 August 1915.

² In Thompson, Five to Remember, p.35.

PLEDGE
DEPT.



McCRAE. 07.

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McCrae the Artist had his lighter moments.
From A.G. Stephens' Papers in Mitchell Library.

Lindsay Gordon, to whom he was distantly related, in a film made by Bert Ives. In 1918 he played Charles the Wrestler in the Bert Bailey- Julius Grant production of 'As You Like It'.¹

It is still true to say, however, that McCrae's first love was his poetry, which he still continued to write. He was extremely casual about what happened to it after he had created it, however. His next book of poems, Colombine, was published in 1920 in an almost accidental manner. Norman Lindsay recounts the incident, for he and J.F.Archibald were standing in George Street when McCrae walked by:

We hailed him and asked him to come with us to lunch, but he excused himself from that invitation and was turning away when I chanced to say, "Have you been writing any new stuff lately, Hughie?"; at which he abruptly pulled a wad of MS. from his pocket and said "Yes, I've got some of it here."

Glancing through the poetry in his exquisitely neat script, I said "There's enough here to make a book. Why not offer them to George Robertson?"

"Do what you like with the damned things," he said, and strode off leaving in my hands the MS of the Colombine series of poems, later to be published by George Robertson, who generously refused to take anything from the work save the expense of producing it.²

Colombine contained twenty-eight poems which had

1 This information about McCrae's acting is to be found in Hal Porter, Stars of Australian Stage and Screen (Rigby, 1965).

2 From Norman Lindsay, Bohemians of the Bulletin (Angus and Robertson, 1965), p.16.

been published earlier (in the main, in The Bulletin, The Lone Hand and The Triad). There was nothing new in them, in that the themes from Satyrs and Sunlight were still present, the point of view was still the same and nothing had been added in the way of technique or experimentation. There was the same romantic overstatement and sentimentality as in the earlier poems. This is relieved by a refined sensuousness and brilliance of imagery, but the air of unreality exists. 'The Music of the Moon' has these elements:

I who, awake, have never heard
 The magic nightingale on earth,
 This eve, in dream, beheld the moon
 Lift, like a bell, its round white girth
 All garlanded with cherubim;
 And, from its mouth, there came a stream
 Of such sweet ringing that I sank
 Faint on my pillow; while a gleam
 Of lovely splendour o'er the night
 Bloomed, as a flower, in the bell,
 And showed the swaying tongue within,
 The old world Grecian Philomel.

The very complexity of the poem's expression helps to save the exaggeration of the romantic scene; it is grammatically but one sentence. This gives a control and produces a tension which avoids the worst of the overstatement. There is still the close association of the sensuous impressions - of sight and sound - and still the McCraean flaw. The "lovely" splendour is too abstract even for what is a purely abstract treatment.

The romantic overstatement is apparent in other poems from Colombine, also. There are two poems which use the "grave" imagery as a reminder of the mortality of man. In 'Earth', the love of natural phenomena constitutes the highest point of existence for the poet, and when mortality has taken its toll, his heaven will be the memory of natural beauty:

Green grows my grave in the grass,
Somewhere...Oh, let it be
Here in the land that I love,
My heart's own Italy.

The bee will hum to the bud,
And the bud will whisper to me
Of the dawn and the dew and the flood
And the season's mystery.

The song of the brook through the stones,
The song of the thrush through the tree,
Will mingle and marry and hush
With the music of moonlight and sea.

And mad with their musical chant
I know that my heaven will be
To go through the wild olden wood
Of earth-sweet memory.

Although a landscape of the soul or of the mind is being depicted here, the poem would surely meet with the approval of he who wished patriotic sentiments expressed in his poetry.

In 'Today', the romantic element has not only the grass growing on a fresh grave but also the strain of forgiveness for past wrongs and all the previous sensuousness, rendered more obvious:

The grass had drawn its tide across thy
 grave,
 And, like a pearl within its heart of wave,
 A daisy lifts its head;
 While, sweeter than the double reeds of
 Pan,
 Or violin of some soul-trembling man,
 The river sings a-bed.

And in the fragrant, blossom-spotted hedge,
 Or where the clover ripples in the sedge,
 Glisten the wings of bees.
 O heart o' me, O heart o' me, my love,
 Canst thou not hear the cooing, milk-white
 dove
 Between the crested trees!

I have forgiven thee - And thine error, too,
 I have forgot; O dear one, let me woo
 Thee, as thou art, in Death.
 I will thicket thy grave with roses red
 And gold - with thorns to guard and buds
 to spread
 Jewels at ev'ry breath.

The flaws are equally obvious here, especially the weak "man" in the first stanza. Even though the poet has outlived his lover, his time, too, is limited. Just as the buds spend their beauty with every breath of air, until they will soon have nothing left with which to beautify the grave, so the poet's offering is bringing him ever nearer to extinction.

Colombine has its poems with effects which make them appear as mere fragments. A good example of this is one with a medieval theme, but with overtones of mystery. It is as if we have a section from the middle of a poem. 'Now Do the Entering Trumpets Sound' commences:

O, have you seen the red fire burn? -
 From Crookham Mill I saw the flame,
 Blood-dropping, like a dragon turn,
 Mid-over Castle Corrilame,

And, scattered down the river-bank,
 The thin white thirsty stars
 Dabbled the water while they drank
 Between their visor-bars.

The poem tells a narrative in part, but we do not know enough of the action, do not know enough about the characters, before the poem ends with an effect that leaves the reader unsatisfied:

His milk-white steed doth seem a cloud
 But newly 'scaped from heaven,
 The sparks that blow about her hooves
 Red stars down-driven.

The poems in Colombine have a common love of nature which was present in most of the earlier offerings. The beautiful nature-imagery of 'June Morning' is as vivid and as effective as any similar poem from Satyrs and Sunlight but not more so. The poet's love of nature makes him maintain an extremely close contact with her. This affinity is clear in 'Under the Sky':

Here will I lie
 Under the sky,
 Green trees above me,
 All birds to love me....
 Nature and I.

Wish me good den
 And leave me then....
 This sweet forest wind
 Is more to my mind
 Than cities or men:

And, in the morn,
 I will see born
 That doe's dappled young,
 Whose father was sung
 To death by the horn.

Here will I lie
 Under the sky,
 Green trees above me...
 Nature and I.

While this affinity exists between the poet and nature, there is hostility from the non-poetic, or the non-perceptive. The doe's "dappled young" is born without the protection of a father because of this lack of understanding and the cruelty of the hunters.

Other poems carry forward this theme of mortality and of the differences in empathy with nature. Sensuality has its pleasures, but they are alloyed by the thought of the coming night:

And I laugh while I rise with the tide,
 And sink with the tide to the sun,
 My eyes to the eyes of my bride
 While the night cometh on.

The rising and falling with the tide conveys very appropriately the passivity and lack of control over the forces of life, yet with the partial oblivion which passion brings, the poet can forget the future and laugh while he is carried, like flotsam, to his fate. This is both escapism and fatalism.

Similar symbolism and a similar theme occurs in 'Enigma' where a young girl gains her first realisation of the truth of life:

change of pace, language, imagery and so on, but the overall effect of a poem is more important than the detail of its parts. Although McCrae has been criticised for the frequent use of dots to leave unsaid a phrase or to communicate a certain indefiniteness,¹ I find this unobjectionable. If carried on the spirit of a poem, the reader can receive mentally what the poet means by this device. The last line of the poem above uses it effectively, and so does the fourth last line.

McCrae's next collection was Idyllia, a slight volume of fifteen poems, printed in a limited edition by the Norman Lindsay Press. Although 133 copies were printed, only 100 were marked for sale. As a Foreword, there appeared a poem dedicated to Lindsay, making reference to the view of Australia as the most fitting place for a renaissance of Greek culture. This poem was 'Renaissance':

1 In a review of Douglas Stewart's collection of McCrae's poems in the Australian Poets series (Angus and Robertson, 1966), J.M. Allen writes in Poetry Magazine V (October 1966), p.31; "Among McCrae's poetic doodles something is isolated and emphasised too, usually the concluding verse; but not with ink: it is done with a line of exasperating dots. This may be a conscious mannerism or merely a sign of desperation, but it mars half a dozen poems."

Behold our eagle-eyed
 Olympian ride -
 The Muses by his side!

Certain, and high, his aim -
 Himself, his name,
 The very scroll of Fame.

Who doubts the soul's return
 While yet there burn
 In this imperious urn

Plato and Pheidias..?
 Engrafted as
 Not either may surpass!

In him the ancient hive
 Of sages thrive;
 Old loveliness alive

In strange sweet second Spring,
 Fresh flourishing,
 New colours now doth bring.

And, gloriously crowned
 With roses round
 Athens makes Grecian ground

Of her antipodes.
 Ionian seas
 Sing through our Southern trees;

And he who could fulfil
 This miracle
 Is with us living still!

So did Athena's spear,
 Most bright and clear,
 O'er Sunium uprear

A fire-flashing star
 From Attica - -

Although this is unexceptional poetry it makes quite clear how fully McCrae had accepted the Vision doctrine of the Greek rebirth. There is little else in Idyllia, however, to show that this doctrine vitally affected McCrae's creative work.

Of the fifteen poems, eight will be chosen for discussion. Three of these eight are lyrics, of the usual McCrae quality, with the now familiar overstatement, but with certainly no improvement in quality over some of the earlier lyrics. 'Pastoral', a country song appropriate to medieval England, is not very well written. The third stanza is particularly weak:

Sing the birds! We'll join their chatter
 Watchet eyes grow sweetly flustered
 Over syllabubs, and custard
 Cupid pours upon the platter.

'Robin Hood' is stronger, with more of McCrae's gusto. It is illustrated by one of Lindsay's voluptuous drawings, but really needs none:

Now is the Venus-time of lusty Spring-
 Behold his tents, his toils on every holt!
 Gems on each twist and flowers unbuttoning,
 Jack-i'-the-hedge, hip-tree, and meadow-
colt.

Now doth the partridge (cock unto his hen),
 Go tread...ash-grey with black, with white,
with red...
 Plait-foot, the merry game all greenwood
men
 Have done since Cupid first was bonneted.

So shall I wear this shoe until it fit;
 Thou art my leman, lady-under-me:
 Laugh not or we are shent...no doubt of it..
 Where the mare squeals, there the stone-
horse be.

'O Deep and Dewy Hour' has a delicacy which offsets the exaggeration and the over-sentimental imagery and language:

O deep and dewy hour
 Night's lonely flower,
 Oblivion bestowing -
 When dimly through my dream
 I hear the stream
 Between the willow flowing.

Pale moon-time sonneted
 By poets dead,
 Have lovers in their keeping
 Nor let one truant spark
 Dispart the dark
 Where she in peace lies sleeping.

There is still the unusual word knowledge that one finds throughout McCrae's poetry, as well as a delicacy and charm. These characteristics are evident, too, in 'The Yellow Lady', in some ways the forerunner of the later 'Mimshi Maiden' (1938). McCrae's Yellow Lady is just as mysterious as Aubrey Beardsley's, but more Oriental. Again, there is a lightness about the verse, which is precisely and finely wrought, but of no great weight. The second of the two stanzas reveals the sense of intimacy which McCrae creates, as if we are eavesdropping on a private conversation, or on something even more intimate:

And when the moon grew round and bright
 Like a coiled dragon, I would put
 Into my breast for sheer delight
 Your tiny rose-leaf Chinese foot
 While you would sing Ming's Song and write
 With long pink nails upon my skin
 The tender hymn that wailed the flight
 Of nights of sin: our nights of sin.
 Ah Golden One! Sharp-toothed Cheefoo!
 A thousand years ago, or two.

In 'Calvia', McCrae uses rhyming couplets and the 17th century device of cataloguing a lover's beauteous features. Again, there is a light, bantering tone, with humour freely added. There is also a development in this poem, due, it is true, mainly to the nature of the subject matter, but of a kind rather rare in McCrae's poetry:

Dear Calvia, unlaced, you show
 The happy land where fairies go
 To hunt your blushes through the snow.
 Blowing in horns they'll lightly spur
 Their tiny steeds of gossamer
 O'er changing fields of loveliness
 Accordingly as you undress;
 Or, if perchance at fault they'll win
 Toward some jolly shepherdkin
 To ask if he can help 'em trace
 That blush which started from your face...
 Then off again with thumbnail bounds
 'Mid waving whips and chiming hounds...
 The pretty mites through daisies fly
 Along the highway of your thigh,
 Some leap a hedge... the weaker chaps
 Drop down and watch for likely gaps.
 Now, from your hip, they view the pack
 In hot pursuit up Naked-Back,
 The blush (still hotter) climbs your throat,
 While, sharp and thin, the trumpet-note
 Summons the stragglers to the crest
 Of left or right half-uttered breast.

Alas! This dainty thing is dead!

Puff out the candle, darkness spread;
 And other blushes keep for bed.

A more serious poem, and one with a sting in the tail, is 'What the Deer Said'. This short verse expresses the joy of living characteristic of McCrae but with a restraint admirably suited to the subject. There are subtle changes in pace and a control of the force of

the poem leading up to the climax in the last stanza. The concern for the deer is further evidence for the love of nature apparent throughout McCrae's work. There is, too, the acknowledgement of divine judgement which, no matter what McCrae says to the contrary, shines through occasional poems:

If that thou, hunting me, couldst feel
 The keen swift pleasure that I know
 Of horses thudding at my heel
 And clear hot-winding trumpet-blow,
 Thine appetite would upward soar
 Higher than ever high before.

Whether I thrust through broken pale
 Below the silent orchard-side,
 Coasting the lilled brook, or sail
 Triumphant mid a barley-tide,
 Shouts and red coats be yours - and wine.
 My joy is greater still than thine.

I reckon not, though beset by death:
 This present hour is golden bright.
 Strong-hearted with reserves of breath,
 I lead the hounds a lightning flight;
 I die, and all is with me o'er -
 But men have sterner fates in store.

Then every rascal riding-rip
 (For aught that he may cock his hat)
 When God, with Satan for His "Whip",
 Comes posting down, will grant me that
 A deer's death's yet a death worth well
 The desperate chance of life in Hell.

Although this poem is touching in its way, I can't help feeling that the deer's attitude, as represented in the poem, is a nihilistic one. "You can kill me if you want to because you will pay" seems a strange position to adopt, and the underlying venom is contrary to the subdued joy which the actual chase gives the deer. There

poetry at least as well as his contemporaries and better than most. A further publication in the same year, 1922, showed that he was a superb writer of prose, also.

The Du Poissey Anecdotes consisted of a most interesting collection of short narratives and essays in the style of Boswell, and according to the title page, were written by Benjamin Harcourt and edited by Hugh McCrae. At the foot of the title page appears:

SIDE-LIGHTS on Samuel Johnson, Goldsmith, Gibbon, Swift, etc., by a MAN OF THE PERIOD. A book PREVENTED BY MR JAMES BOSWELL and described by him as being "TOO DANGEROUS FOR EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PERUSAL". Now published for the first time. A volume already old.....secrets and revelations of more than two hundred years' standing.

As E.V.Lucas commented, "It makes a very alert companion to Boswell", and this comment serves as a dedication. These essays will be discussed, along with the other prose in a separate chapter, but it is relevant here to glance at one essay in this fine collection- "The Poet Martin Attacked by Du Poissey". Here, a poem by 'Martin' (McCrae) - 'Hunt's Up' - is taken and given a mock analysis and criticism by Du Poissey. The light-hearted yet satiric nature of it can be seen when, after discussing the merits of the poet's use of a particular word, "rattle", Du Poissey suggests alternate ways of writing the lines:

Hereupon he began repeating the following lines:-

When he, all dust from head to thigh,
Across the stones and mire
Must ride to ribbands, post-and-tie,
Some sixteen pads at hire.

"Sir, what can be more ridiculous? How were it possible for one man to ride near two dozen horses to death in a day?...and that too, at post-and-tie. Martin is an idiot.... Nobody but Martin would say such a thing!"

Harcourt. "But, Sir,... you have only supposed Martin as having written it!"

Du Poissey. "And what jobber of the whole of the Kingdom of England, is going to let out sixteen horses in a parcel to a penniless carcass?"

Harcourt. "Martin never said so!"

Du Poissey. "In the name of the Prophet - fogs!... (A pause) Martin is a shattered gobemouche!"

It is apparent that McCrae has literary talents other than the poetic; the total effect of Du Poissey is considerable, and wholly delightful.

Another of these literary talents was brought to bear when McCrae accepted an offer of £7 per week in June 1927 to become co-editor of The New Triad, along with Ernest Watt. This position McCrae held until July 1928. Most of the poetry he contributed to this magazine he wrote under various pseudonyms. Many of these verses were merely 'fillers', but all show the McCrae spirit. Appendix 11 is devoted to them, together with a reasoned statement of why they are attributed to McCrae.

In 1928 there appeared the Fanfrolico Satyrs and Sunlight, a beautifully produced and well-illustrated volume with a long introduction by Thomas Earp. In spite of the title, this was a volume of collected poems, with various sections grouped under sub-titles. 'Sylvarum Libri' had thirty poems; 'Red John' had thirty-nine; 'Colombine' twenty-five and 'Idyllia' thirty-two. In addition there were three scenes entitled 'Orleans and Isabelle' and these formed part of 'Joan of Arc.' This was a rather confusing arrangement, as these titles did not correspond with their use in the separate volumes. For example, 'Idyllia' in the 1928 Satyrs and Sunlight had sixteen poems additional to those included in the separate volume of Idyllia of 1922.

Of the three poems added to the 'Colombine' section of the Fanfrolico Satyrs and Sunlight, two are worth mentioning briefly.¹ 'Lady, Gentle Lady' demonstrates the development within a poem, working up to a climax in the last line, that McCrae can use when he wishes. It also shows the characteristic use of compound words, in this case, bearing the weight of the

1 Six poems from Colombine were omitted from the 'Colombine' section of the 1928 Satyrs and Sunlight. These were 'Autumn Twilight', 'Garston', 'Sorceress', 'The Moon', 'Renaissance' and 'To Cecil E'. 'Reassurance', 'Lady, Gentle Lady' and 'Two Poems' (Evening and Morning) were added.

climax, and the use of a simile drawn from a scene common in the Australian country-side. The poem concludes:

.....How he made me shiver..
 All my world was waving wheat -
 Till at last he flung his quiver
Arrow-empty at my feet.

The remaining poem is really two poems linked together by McCrae to complement each other. They demonstrate McCrae's ability to sing in gentle, joyous tones, vividly, with a love of nature, and a controlled sensuousness which bespeaks the able poet. The title is 'Two Poems':

Evening

How tenderly the evening creeps between
 The fading curtain of this apple-bough,
 A ghost of rose and grey, mid foliage green
 Jewelled with stripes of rain.

Ah, look where now,
 Trembling, but joyous, like a challenged
 bride,
 The moon, along a bed of daffodil,
 Opens a cloud against her golden side..
 As one expectant of her lord's sweet will.

Morning

Come with me where early showers
 Hang the hedges all with flowers,
 And golden-legged robbers take
 Treasure of blossoms unawake,
 What time the sun, a sluggard wretch,
 Across the moving wanes doth stretch
 Unwilling arms, as one still loath
 To leave his bed, and lady, both.

As on previous occasions, there are weaknesses to which one can point - the rather stylized language, the distortion for the sake of rhyme, the use of weak words (e.g. 'all' in the second line of 'Morning'), but the overall effect of the poem is not really lessened by these faults. One learns that they are part of McCrae's work, revealing the lack of compression and of polish that leads critical readers to apply the 'dilettante' label to him.

The same characteristics are to be seen in the sixteen extra poems added to the 'Idyllia' section of the new Satyrs and Sunlight. For example, 'Bush Song', a gay lyric which begins:

Dragon-fly and bee are sailing,
Flitter-flutter,
Bright as butter,
Over grass and garden-paling,

uses the obsolete 'dingle' and 'beguiled' for the sake of an artificial rhyme. This poem contrasts the joyousness of nature with the disconsolate poet, concluding after five stanzas with:

All can lend of smiles, or borrow..
None so lonely,
I the only
Pale impatient child of sorrow.

Many of this group of extra poems deal with the subject of love - sometimes fulfilled but more usually unrequited. The best example of the love song from among these poems is 'Rosamund' (To Peradeezo):

Cloud piled on cloud mid phantom stars..
 The dark sea in her dancing-lace;
 And by a cave (a faggot chars
 From gold to black) a satyr's face
 Sneering to death at beauty white...
 A girl arrayed with fairest flowers,
 Upon whose lips a weeping knight
 Kisses of quenchless ardour showers.

But who is this, so like a crab,
 Crawls through a cloak behind the twain,
 His pigmy dagger twirled to stab
 Between the shoulders where the chain -
 Coat splits asunder?...Quick your brush,
 Creator, now, and uncreate
 This horror of your spawning! Crush
 The maggot...not one second wait...
 Jab ochre in his metal eyes,
 His lungs with blind sweet umber burn!
 Hamstrung with smalt and stuck with size,
 Sink him to hell! So serve the kern...
 Then o'er the cranny in his stead,
 A handsome tree of lilac spread.

Although many of these poems are competently written, they are not far enough ahead of the great majority of poems in Satyrs and Sunlight, written at least nineteen years earlier, to warrant any great rejoicing about improvement in scope or technique. They do not constitute a great body of poems which might reasonably have been expected over this time-lapse from one who had shown such great earlier promise.

Although an obvious artistic success, the Fanfrol-ico Satyrs and Sunlight added little to the reputation McCrae had already established as one of Australia's foremost poets of that day.

McCrae himself felt that he needed a change, but the lack of finance made this very difficult to accomplish. He tried to borrow money for this purpose, making

an approach to Rupert Atkinson for the loan of £150 to pay his fare to England.¹ Although Atkinson was agreeable to lend him the money, McCrae did not go.

Little good fortune came his way but McCrae continued to write. In 1933 Doris Fitton produced 'The Ship of Heaven' which he had written in the 1920's but which was not published until 1951.² The next year, 1934, saw Georgiana's Journal, edited by McCrae. This was in the form of a diary which had been kept by his maternal grandmother, illuminating conditions existing in the early days of Victorian settlement, particularly around Melbourne.

The next poetry published was the slight volume The Mimshi Maiden, containing only the title poem, 1938. This is a fairy-tale narrative with a humorous mock-oriental tone, telling of a maiden's love-affair with a tiger. There is a deftness and lightness to the fantasy - considerable charm but no great weight. McCrae himself referred to this poem as 'comic trivia'.³

The next year, 1939, there appeared Poems.⁴ This collection has a dedication to Norman Lindsay:

1 Letter to Rupert Atkinson, 17 March 1930, in Mitchell Library.

2 See Chapter IV for a discussion of this work.

3 Letter to Kenneth Mackenzie, 25 August 1939, in National Library of Australia.

4 Poems (Angus and Robertson, 1939).

To
 Norman Lindsay
 Professing thee, I lifted am aloft
 Betwixt the forrest wide and starrie sky...

Poems contains one hundred and twelve poems, eighty of them reprinted from earlier volumes, especially Satyrs and Sunlight, and thirty-two previously uncollected. Many of these new poems have biographical elements. 'Retribution', 'The Writer on His Birthday', 'The Old Man Speaks', 'The Happy Man' all show the poet's pre-occupation with the passing of time and the mortality of the human race. At times this theme is linked with that of the mutability of love, and the passing of man's powers of making love:

O gamesome Venus, pretty on the grass,
 Time 'tis for me to only look and pass -
 My leaping-days are o'er: I can no more
 Play a sweet play that we are one, alas!

Yet why alas? Since, so the day be fine,
 And young birds chirp, I take my happy path,
 Till night arrive, with friendly books and
 wine,
 To hum and nod - and nod - beside the hearth.¹

Some of these poems describe actual experiences McCrae has undergone. 'Camden Magpie' details his reactions to the sight of a magpie in a willow, a scene reminding him of a Hokusai painting. This poem was written in a very brief time, in one burst of activity, and betrays this in its immediacy of mood.

Another example of this type of poem is 'Camden

1 'The Old Man Speaks'

Town'. The poet is happy in his thoughts until his wife makes a demand which arouses a rage in him and causes him to walk through the district, meditating upon some of its finest aspects (including 'The Plough and Harrow' and Bruchhauser's vines). The poem opens:

When I have books and pens and ink,
 No one in Elderslie, I think,
 Is half so mad - or half so wise -
 Rhyming the times with chuckling cries
 To see the words across the sheet
 Leave pointed marks like pullets' feet;
 Till, rap-a-tap, the goodwife brings
 The news, with tea and buttered things:
 And then, when all is gobbled up -
 The plate as empty as the cup -
 She says "Although I know it hurts,
 I want your handkerchiefs and shirts
 To mend -"

I leap with rage and seize my stick,
 Like Hitler turned quite lunatic,
 Throw open drawers and cupboards wide,
 And canter down the stairs outside,
 Exclaiming "Damn!" and "Well, I'm blowed!"
 Until I reach Macarthur Road,
 And walk, and walk, and walk, and walk,
 "My God! These women! - how they talk!"
Ah, yes; but also, how they love...

.....

While living at Camden, McCrae appreciated the freshness of the countryside and the spontaneity and friendliness of its people. He preferred it, in many ways, to the squalor of the city, but missed the intellectual conversation and stimulation of the city. At this period, too, his wife was still alive, and the obsessive loneliness which was later to possess him had not yet reached its peak. 'Rake's Holiday' could

well be McCrae himself speaking:

'Twere better in a field to lie
 And hear the bob-'o-link
 Than, waking, in this city sty,
 To start when watchmen clink
 Their lanthorned staves across the stones;
 Or else, when, through the fog,
 The dead-cart trails poor flesh and bones
 Before a bastard dog.

But, though I'm going now from hence,
 Gadzooks, I shall not stay
 If I find only innocents
 Play sweethearts in the hay.

In this poem, as in many others, McCrae uses the pause and subtle variations in rhythm to good effect. The love of fun is always apparent, and on occasion becomes the main theme of a poem. In 'Scaramouche' this roistering humour expresses itself as:

A bachelor, through every shire,
 Upon a bouncing horse I ride,
 From boots to brain a boy on fire,
 The glory of the countryside.

Wher'er I light me down I kiss
 The first man's wife I chance to see;
 And if that wife's man takes amiss
 My knuckles pay his face the fee.

In 'Stirrup Cup' the same theme is played. We are told:

Men should live their lives with zest,
 Pledged to girls and golden song,
 Wine and horses...all the rest...
 Let me die while I am strong!

All this is hedonistic, materialistic and quite innocent fun, but there is also a more serious side to McCrae in these poems. The other, second, stanza of 'Stirrup Cup' betrays this:

Young and strong, I have no fears;
 Where's the lad would feel forlorn,
 Being dead a million years...
 Who was dead ere he was born?

So also does 'The Hanging Judge', where the cypress-tree is used as a symbol of mortality and the passing of time, and the laurel as recognition or fame:

Life's but a breath
 Twixt death and death,
 It needs no sooth to say;
 The midge that springs
 On gauzy wings
 Foretells our little day.

Man is a pawn
 To be withdrawn
 Whenever that God will;
 His words and deeds
 Are windy reeds
 Upon a flame-swept hill.

The grave's dis-grace
 Shall mar the face
 That glittered here with pride;
 The fairest fair
 Must soon repair
 To be the worm's white bride.

The Hanging Judge,
 He, too, must trudge
 The starless pike to Hell,
 To pay the tolls
 For all the souls
 He pluckt from Prison cell.

What worth is Fame?
 'Tis but a name
 Blown, world-wide, dustily -
 How slow, how slow
 The laurels grow,
 How fast the cypress-tree.

All is not melancholy, however, for there are, in these poems, some which are unalloyed joy. 'Spring' is one of these:

Now doth the devil, laughing, prance,
 To feel his bride, the spring,
 Become, with many a sidelong glance,
 Again his own sweet thing.

So is the fanciful 'It', reminiscent of 'The Mimshi Maiden', in its nonsense. So, to a lesser degree, is the lullaby 'Crepuscule' with its gentleness and warmth of imagery:

Now do the little buds enfold
 Themselves in cloaks of powdered gold.
 The spider dreams upon his leaf;
 The mouse, within the haycock sheaf
 Doth drowse, doth drowse
 Beside his spouse.

Then, since no fairy stays awake,
 Let us their good example take;
 And, softly bedded on this rise,
 Did filmy sleep invade our eyes.

The repetition of the long sounds in the first stanza is effective; and particularly apt is the "filmy sleep" of the last line.

Two poems from this collection recall the earlier McCrae theme of the chase. In 'The Unicorn', the chase is of a woman by a young unicorn "with hoofs of gold and lordly horn". The gods wished to make an example of him, and changing the woman into an oak, they made the unicorn transfix himself by his horn:

And thus young bachelors to-day
 Must take example of this case,
 Lest, lucklessly, a-hunting, they
 Grow victims to the things they chase.

In 'Strategy' it is both chaser and chased, both the man and the woman, who are victims. Both are subject to their mutual desire:

Each feint of his she with an equal meets,
 And though he hold her nothing can he gain-
 Poor thirsty one! The hollow place repeats,
 "Poor thirsty one!" as if to mock his pain;
 She into Echo turns - unwary whim -
 He calls her name; and she must come to him.

A more frankly erotic treatment of the same theme is in 'The Secret House' - a longer poem, and one making more call upon the reader's senses, touch and scent as well as sight and sound. The row of dots is used to effect by McCrae in this poem:

This strange sweet hidden chamber of my
 dreams:

.

There, the impulsive bed unfolds its treas-
 ury
 Of flesh clasped naked in a web of pearls;
 The very ashes on the breathless grate,
 Stirred by her beauty, multiply their eyes,
 Grow red with longing till, insatiate,
 Their glut o'ercomes them, and their gaze
 turns blind.

Musk and warm odours! Like the floating
 bloom

Aerial flowers shed invisible
 Around the body of the splendid girl
 Jove comes to ravish...Throw wide the win-
 dow,

Let the smoke go loose. The powdered candles
 Of the pine without will light the kisses
 Of love's interchange.

'Tis half the pleasure
 Counted o'er again, to sift the darkness
 Where a woman's near; to touch by fortune
 On a hill of love, or feel the passage
 Of her living breath make the veins warmer
 And the heart gain pace. To find a curled
 lip

Underneath the throat catch and hang sucking
 Till the secret house of Eros opens
 All its little doors; and- on that instant -
 To possess your soul and dare the godlings
 Take it back from you!

Although there is something of the conventional exaggeration of the romantic tradition in the first part (in its reference to the ashes in the grate growing red with longing for the lady's beauty), and this leads to an unevenness in quality between the first and second parts of the poem, the overall effect is of a very powerful, sensitive poem, embodying the best features of McCrae's talents. There is an extraordinary sensuousness, a fine control of pace and mood, a vividness of imagery and an aptness of language which are rarely achieved together in McCrae's work. True, there are flaws - "splendid" is weak, as is "let the smoke go loose", but the introductory line beginning in mid-flight, sets the tone, which is developed right through to the climactic shout of defiance against the "godlings" and their power.

Poles apart in mood and theme, and showing the versatility of McCrae, is 'The Fallen Prince'. This is a serious poem, rather poignant, and just as effective as 'The Secret House', but in a different way. It could be construed as making reference to Biblical incidents, or appreciated as an imaginary incident of an unknown prince fallen from grace:

O Father in the clouds -
 For ever dear
 To me, thine errant son -
 Pronounce, this longed-for hour,
 The doom I need;
 Hard death, to snatch me from
 Much harder earth,
 Where I, for punishment,
 Have so long toiled
 With hope to only win,
 Sometimes, a dream;
 A promise tricked in gold:
 - Bait for the eye,
 Contaminate within -
 Which, bitter, turns
 To sweet upon my tongue,
 And fills the mind
 With near-forgotten days,
 When I, a star,
 My laughing fellows led
 Up steepy heaven
 Its topmost ancient peak -
 And strook our wings
 In turn, until they rang
 Like crystal bells
 The icy silences.

.

We knew not God,
 And did esteem the fire
 A birthright dower
 That from our foreheads shone.

Four years after the publication of Poems McCrae's wife died. This was a blow from which he never really recovered. His loneliness and shyness increased, and even though, in his later years, he went to board with each of his daughters in turn, he was a very withdrawn and unhappy man.¹

1 On 4 July 1946, at Mosman, McCrae married Janet, widow of Horace Keats. The couple later separated and then divorced.

McCrae's next publication of poetry was Forests of Pan, published in Brisbane at the Meanjin Press in 1944. This book consisted of a selection of poems by R.G.Howarth "not hitherto reprinted" from the 1928 Satyrs and Sunlight. There were no new poems included among the thirty-eight in the volume. As the Fanfrolico Satyrs and Sunlight was a limited edition, and even then (in 1944) very rare, this new collection helped to make a broader range of McCrae's early work available to the general reader. This was the book, however, which McCrae advised Mackaness not to buy.¹

Enthusiasts for McCrae's poetry had to wait until the next publication of his work to read some new poems. When Voice of the Forest appeared in 1945 with its thirty-three poems, none of which had been collected before², it gave readers an opportunity to judge the degree of development which had taken place over a half-century of creative effort. These poems were the last published by McCrae, as the only other volumes were reprinted selections.

Voice of the Forest contained some "skipping-musick fine" as well as a few good poems of other kinds.

1 See p. 267.

2 Voice of the Forest (Angus and Robertson, 1945) had a Foreword by R.G.Howarth and a Dedication to 'Teddy' (R.M.Crookston). Three poems were from 'The Ship of Heaven' which had been produced but not yet published.

It was not planned as a final volume, or as the culmination of a lifetime's writing. 'The Author to His Book' gives McCrae's attitude:

This book - this heir of mine -
 Doth breathe: so shall I, too,
 In every written line,
 And yet again, when new
 Bright grandson books are born,
 Still dance and not decline...
 Though Gabriello blow
 Our skipping-musick fine
 To flinders with his horn.

In these new examples, the earlier hedonism is extended by poems advocating a materialistic and naturalistic happiness. But again, there was no attempt to construct and apply a philosophical position other than the refusal to be so involved, for this, too, is a philosophical viewpoint.

McCrae wished to avoid preaching at the reader. He stood for joy and a love of nature and simple living. This for him was wisdom:

Why should I philosophize?
 Being happy I am wise;
 Wiser far than others who
 Tear a woolly thought in two,
 Tear the two again to three,
 Three to four - Dull lunacy! -
 Mix 'em up in knots, and then,
 Go to bed, unhappy men.

I alone, I feel, am wise:
 Why should I hypocritize?
 Now I've sown my early seed,
 Even love I hardly need...
 Free from milk of Alma Mater,
 Friendled by the great Creator,
 Through his fingers glad to run
 Among the flowers in the sun
 All my day; and then, at e'en
 Die for joy that I have been. ('Oy! Oy!)

One can argue, as John K. Ewers has done,¹ that this is an evasion of the real issues of life. Ewers sees McCrae as recognising a dualism in existence and calling on the realm of fantasy to balance the stark ugliness of reality. This, though, seems to be an oversimplification of McCrae. There does not seem to be an attempt to counterbalance reality (the other-worldliness is not sufficiently coherent and important to the poet), but rather a concentration upon those facets of reality which accord with his interests and his view of what is important in life.² The simplicity argued for in the poem above is important. In arguing about the deep and abstruse issues, in regarding progress as technological improvement, we tend to neglect the more immediate and more relevant issues, such as human happiness. In this respect there is something of Thoreau in McCrae's insistence upon the simple life.

A more important charge that could be levelled in the light of this poem, however, is the lack of purpose of the happiness itself. It is a mere, selfish, animal exultation, not keyed to any principle but the vague friendship of "the great Creator", a being whom McCrae equates with the natural phenomena of the world as a

- 1 John K. Ewers, Creative Writing in Australia (Georgian House, 1945), p.76.
- 2 O.N.Burgess, 'Hugh McCrae and Robert Frost', Southerly, XVII (1956), p.152, denies the charge of escapism.

whole, at one time, and with a supernatural force at another. The joy of living as an end in itself is not a very sophisticated view to take, but it is not escapist.

Voice of the Forest has poems making reference to Greek and biblical mythology, as had the earlier works. 'The Blind Man Said' has Helen, Menelaus, Paris and Joshua side by side. It also has the McCraean habit of verbs formed from other parts of speech. So Menelaus "first felt his spright / Dishonest him". The same verb is used elsewhere (in 'Godmar'). A country visitor "gentled" the pain of the lonely poet. This device is an effective one, as also is the repetition of 'On a Day' - a medieval dance:

On a day,
A day,
A day,
On a distant summer day...
Every lassock played her lad,
Leg for leg, at "Heigh - go - mad";
Even beldames, dipped in stum,
Creakt for hopes some fire might come.

There is a glimmering of concern with contemporary social issues in this volume, with 'Prophecy' (1940) probably referring to Mussolini's position of power in Italy, a country in which McCrae was especially interested:

Fair blows the flag of Italy!
A poison-flower, I ween:
No bird of air, no honey-bee
Is cozened by its sheen.

But one, like Satan come to power,
Betrays a hot desire:

He'll wear it in his cap an hour;
Then stamp it in the mire.

Although this kind of poem is rare in McCrae's work, there is an epigrammatic quality about it which is evident in other poems from this volume - in 'Someone', in 'Quatrain' and in 'One Who Shall be Nameless'. This quality might well have been further developed by McCrae. Note the directness of this type of poem:

O Death, where is thy sting?
This is that dastard king,
On profitless parole,
Who could not save his soul:
And so he saved his skin

To wrap dishonour in.¹

The same grim, rather cynical humour of 'Red John' is still with McCrae in Voice of the Forest, appearing in 'Preparedness':

Beside his wife, Hob lies a-bed,
As every Christian spouse should do,
With book and candle at his head:
His blunderbuss and powder, too.

The word of God to save his soul;
The waxen taper for a light:
And twenty balls to blow a hole
Through any thief that comes by night.

They serve no whit! Man's enemy
(Despite of candle, book, or ball)
Sends conscience - pinching like a flea -
So Hob contrives no sleep at all.

1 Ex-King Leopold of Belgium is being referred to. This was given by McCrae in a letter to Chaplin, 4 February 1953. See Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany, p.51.

This picture of domesticity, if not married bliss, recalls 'Song of the Rain', as does 'In Praise of Marriage', which concludes :

Then let the whole world ring,
Green hill, green dell;
Each bird a bell,
In praise of marrying.

The human foibles and their effect upon the marriage relationship is humorously discussed in 'Interregnum', written in Scots dialect. Tam, coming home drunk, justifies his tippling:

"John Barleycorn's your faithfu' friend,

"Auld cruikit wife; so haud your tongue.
It is the drappie in ma ee
That makes ye handsome look an' young,
An' nae bit like the thing ye be!

"So ye maun let me tak' ma fill,
Ma fill; or I sall tell ye why -
You're only juist an angel till
Tomorrow's jugs o' maut are dry."

The joys of nature, and the joys in nature, are linked with the marriage theme in the title poem of the volume - 'Voice of the Forest'. This is a pleasant lyric, but again spoiled by the occasional ineptness we have come to expect from McCrae:

O happy, happy bird,
Who lies the leaves among
To hear the river sing
The song his mate had sung
When she was blithe and young -
The song that she had learned
From one she could not see;
A voice without a form,
That ran from tree to tree.

The song of life and joy,
Untouched by grief or pain.

And now the river sings
The old-young song again -
The song of life and joy
The sweetest liberty:
The song his mate had learned
From one she could not see -

A merry marriage-rime
For birds at trysting-time.

There are other pieces in Voice of the Forest, but they neither extend the range of McCrae's work nor show evidence of hitherto unused talent. It is on account of one poem, or rather a fragment, that Voice of the Forest is really worthwhile. In 'Fragment' are found the strengths and weaknesses of McCrae's art, but here the strengths blaze forth in such a way that they overshadow the fragmentation and the disjointedness. The vividness of imagery, the novelty of language, the barely-hidden violence, like the strength of muscular tissue beneath a smooth skin, fuse in sustained sentences which mount to give a poetic experience rare in McCrae's work and in Australian poetry as a whole. This is McCrae at his best. We can only deplore the rarity of the occurrence of this type of verse, for here is a talent which could have added a lustre and richness so badly needed by Australian poetry:

As if stone Caesar shook
 His staff across the wet
 Black passages, and took
 With marble eyes a yet
 Unconquered gaze of Rome;
 Marked how the cypress boughs
 Stood thick about his home
 As when he bent his brows
 Three centuries before
 Across some Gordian knot
 His civic business wore -
Hic jacet the whole lot.

What hammer fell? And whose
 The crushed white paper skull
 Mixed in the side-bank ooze
 Of mighty Tiber? Dull
 The mind and hand that first
 Wrought sparth and sinker-blade
 Knobbed clubs and spikes to burst
 The fairy spirit from the shade
 He entered in, when through a mesh
 Of aching tissues, blood to blood,
 And flesh on softly folding flesh
 Man with his woman made a flood
 Of kings and weavers, so the world
 Might fling about in sunny ways,
 Some to the hunt, and some, up-curled,
 Stung silent in the martyr's blaze.

When this powerful writing is compared with the delicacy
 of 'Scentimentaliste', the range of McCrae's talents
 can be seen:

Pretty pittosporum,
 Drowsy with nidor;
 Haunt of the wasp, or em-
 broidering spider:
 Sweet in September,
 At dawn, or at seven,
 But sweeter, remember,
 When, wearied of heaven,
 The moon through a cloud
 (Though, really, her lattice),
 Asks Vesper, aloud,
 "Oh, tell me what this is!

Too good for a human;
 Boy, girl, man, or woman:

It makes me so drunk,
 I'd kiss a she-monkey -
 Nor ever deride her! "

Pretty pittosperum,
 Drowsy with nidor;
 Haunt of the wasp, or em-
 broidering spider.

Within this range, however, McCrae displays little real interest in the mythology of the earlier period. He seems to have had no consistent policy of using mythological schema to establish a framework within which to communicate to his public and to share experiences. Instead, there is in the poetry after Satyrs and Sunlight, a wide variety of subject-matter and thematic material with occasional references to mythological aspects where the particular poem lends itself to this. Only in 'The Ship of Heaven' is the whole tone of the work "mythological", and this is pursued elsewhere.¹

Colombine, by its title, might suggest the mood of the stock Italian character translated into English pantomime. She, fairy-like daughter of Pantaloon, was the sweetheart of Harlequin and like him, was supposed to be invisible to mortal eyes. But McCrae's Colombine was very much visible. The title-poem of this volume, however, suggested the aeriform quality of the poems within it, as well as the theme of the chase, so popular with McCrae:

1 See Chapter IV.

Look how their shadows run,
 Swift as she flies from him! -
 Moths in the morning sun,
 Out of a garden dim.

But this mood is not consistently held, or striven for, and mythology plays a small part in the volume overall. The only satyr to appear is in a mild interlude from another version of the chase, where a lady, startled by her would-be lover's advances, is reassured that the animal which leaped up to startle her was not a satyr but a hare.¹ The poet's tongue is in his cheek, however, for the hare is traditionally a sign of bad luck, owing to the tendency of witches to transform themselves into that shape. In fact, in the whole of the rest of McCrae's poetry, satyrs occur only rarely, to startle usually, as in 'Rescue'. Apart from a casual reference in The Ship of Heaven,² the only other satyr to appear is in 'Forest Friends', a poem in the 'Uncollected' section of Best Poems, which may well be from the earlier period. This satyr has a problem:

What shall a satyr do
 Who hath no lover to
 Pair with him dancing?
 No Amaryllis or
 Venus or Phyllis for
 Kissing and glancing.

The second stanza has him competing with his shadow.

1 In 'Reassurance'.

2 The Ship of Heaven, p.79.

In the later poetry, too, Pan is mentioned only once - in 'To-Day' where the river sings "sweeter than the double reeds of Pan" - a figure of speech which contributes very little. Nor do the various dryads, naiads and nymphs of the early poetry fare much better. They do not appear in Colombine or Idyllia at all, but in a meditative lyric in Poems, nymphs accompany a goddess espied by the poet:

Dear girl, this eve I spied a goddess go,
Light-footed, with hound, and arrows to her
bow -

A jolly rout of nymphs with silver horns
Companioned her; and, ever and anon,
The dew-drops danced upon the woodland
thorns,
Mad with the music, whence the nymphs had gone.¹

Their place is taken by the more anonymous "fairies" who, as "fairy-sprites" in 'Song' play with the villagers during a rural holiday, blow the horns while the poet, as a child, is suckled by his mother; hunts the blushes of a disrobing maiden, or just talk to the canaries as in 'Country Visitor'. Oberon has the rank to rule over these nymphs on the few occasions when they are met.

Supplementing the fairies in the later poetry, a rare faun or faunlet, a solitary group of centaurs, a dryad and anonymous "sylvans" serve; certainly not the variety or the frequency of the earlier inhabitants of Arcadia.

1 'Evening'.

Specific mythological figures, however, occur more than rarely. Cupid is a favourite, appearing once in his traditional role in each of Idyllia and Colombine, as a quite important character in The Ship of Heaven, and twice in the uncollected section of Best Poems. At times he is Eros, the Greek equivalent for the Roman Cupid, but is still identified as the son of Venus.¹

Venus herself is usually the orthodox goddess of love, usually sexual love, but is introduced in one poem as "higher crowned Queen" of the waves. With his previous friend Bacchus, McCrae is somewhat disillusioned. He is "Blind Bacchus, rotten with the years", and wine is a "villain."

At times, McCrae uses little-known aspects of mythology and fits them into the local context. Ixion, who fathered the centaurs, appears in 'Ixion in Camden', becoming a part of the poet's imaginative experience:

To-day, my hunting eye beheld,
 Athwart the lofty heavens spread,
 A drowsing mother-cloud who fed
 Red-shouldered centaurs freshly born:
 Ixion's thirsty sons, a-row,
 As sharp as fire, each for himself
 Dragged at a dug, nor cared one whit
 If that his brother went without.

1 In 'Flour of Mustard'.

All this I saw from Camden Hill,
 And thought that I had seen alone
 Until a stranger tall and strong,
 Threw off a shadow while he said
 "Go up, thou bald-head! Be with them!
 They are my sons; and I? And I
 Ixion am.

The nightingale, the "Grecian Philomel", sings on a couple of occasions where the use of this poetic term is mere affectation. Similarly, stock figures, (Echo, Sycorax and Leda), are introduced into poems with little obvious contribution. At times the effect is especially jarring, resulting in a hotch-potch of imagery, as in 'Spring':

Pan on a tram! in a crooked horn blowing
 Wicked old tunes that set the heart going,
 And change, in our eyes, preadamite ladies
 From obvious frumps to Zoës and Sadies -
 Wicked old tunes. The ticket-collector
 Fancies he's Paris, Achilles or Hector!
 Sydney is Hellas. I drop in a coppice
 Two blocks and a half past the Bulletin office.

The standard of education among ticket-collectors has been drastically reduced in the last generation or two if these worthy gentlemen of McCrae's time were aware of Paris, Achilles or Hector! (unless perhaps, they were the names of race-horses!)

The tendency, then, to associate McCrae with Arcady, with a mythological world inhabited by satyrs, centaurs, dryads, Pan and Bacchus is even less warranted in the later poetry than in the early work.

In the long introduction to 1928 Satyrs and Sun-
light, Thomas Earp praised McCrae's power of using the

old symbols and protagonists of poets before him and commended him for infusing into them a fresh life of their own, thus creating a new world of nature and gods and men as coherent and palpable as that created by his predecessors. The satyrs, centaurs and nymphs may be regarded as presenting man's passions and lusty instincts in noble and tragic forms. Love is analysed in its subtlety and intensity and thrown into relief by being imaged forth in the persons and actions of the Arcadian cosmography. Along with this process, the strife, love and hatred of the medieval knight, saint and fool are suspended for our examination, which McCrae encourages us to make with the rationality of the Rabelaisian humorist:

Dear Rabelais, eternal lord
O'er all the realm of fun and wit,
Whose pen out-prickt the sharpest sword...

While it is possible to criticise McCrae for his emphasis upon the problems and trappings of the past, he was prepared to defend this practice, in so doing, decrying the poet's use of modernism for its own sake. His attitude here is summed up by an extract from an article McCrae wrote in 1908:

What we should rather observe is a temperate consideration of both (the old and the new) and a contempt for neither... To read Homer, Horace, Virgil, Theocritus, Pindar, is to

drink of the pure water of Helicon, clear and clean, and unspoiled by the hoofs of all the Pegasi of intervening centuries.¹

In taking this position, McCrae felt that the civilisation of Greece and Rome was the fountainhead of the strong wisdom of a notably philosophic period, and that if one is going to use any other source than his own creative individuality, then it is better for this source to be the original, rather than for the poet to be imitating "the man who imitates Blank, who imitates Keats, who imitated Spenser, who imitated Chaucer etc..²

McCrae praised Vance Palmer for this characteristic in 'The Camp'. "Here is no sharp staccato-talking parrot of the Muses, but a shepherd of Theocritus, his cheeks darkened with sun and rain."³ Three years later, McCrae was to praise R.D. Fitzgerald's The Greater Apollo-Seven Metaphysical Songs. "These are the springs of Helicon, shining in the air from between massed boulders of metaphysical origin."⁴ It is as if this belief in the rightness of the Greek wisdom is itself a subterranean spring in McCrae, bubbling at times to the surface, but mostly running beneath, giving sustenance to his creative thought and shaping his attitudes,

1 In an article by McCrae in The Lone Hand. November 1908, entitled 'The Ultra-Modernist'.

2 Ibid, p.118.

3 In The Bulletin, 10 July 1924.

4 In The Bulletin, 5 May 1927.

but not always itself visible. Perhaps this belief is explained by the tendency of McCrae's father to wake up his family in the morning by playing 'My Pretty Jane' or 'Sally in Our Alley' on alternate basso and soprano ocarinas, which offering George Gordon termed "Doric dithyrambics and Phrygian harmonies."¹

In the early days of publication of his poetry, McCrae had been praised as often for his promise as for his achievement. Hilary Lofting, an early writer in The Bulletin, summed up his praise of the poetry from Satyrs and Sunlight with "It has been a matter of constant surprise to me that this man is not famous from end to end of the world." This is an oft-expressed sentiment. Lofting went on to state, however, that McCrae's universal fame would come to pass:

Not for the Scots minstrel, nor for the
mocking gallant, nor even for the blithe
shepherd whose vision is so true and ins-
pired, but for the fiery tumult of wealth
that is not yet tapped."²

But Lofting's expectations were fulfilled only to a limited degree. Robert D. FitzGerald is one of the few people who saw a decided development in McCrae of the promise shown in Satyrs and Sunlight. He saw

1 In Story-Book Only (Angus and Robertson, 1948), p.44.

2 In The Bulletin, 30 August 1923.

Poems demonstrating the superiority of the middle and later periods "with their artistry, light, colour, imagination and fantasy (unrivalled in this country) over the earlier more experimental and more artificial preoccupation with classical mythology and medievalism."¹ Part of the basis of FitzGerald's view was his criticism that classical mythology in McCrae's hand ceased to be either classical or mythology. His nymphs and satyrs "would probably have surprised Theocritus";² and FitzGerald went on to suggest that their effect was a ventriloquial one, with the vitality being McCrae's and the figures themselves coming to life only within the limits of their artificial anatomies, whereas the later poems exhibited more vitality and reality, along with an advance in sureness and strength. The super-imposed, hypnotically induced life of the earlier poetry is replaced, for FitzGerald, by poems with more of the common earth, more of "the life of the elements, a life of blood!." Some falling away in exuberance is more than compensated for by an advance in sureness and strength.

R.G. Howarth considers that the demand for continuous development in a poet is not a legitimate one,

1 In 'Strayed Satyrlings: A Review of 'Forests of Pan' in Southerly, VI (1945), p.54.

2 Ibid, p.54.

quoting Yeats as one of the few poets in which this actually occurs, but even so, Howarth saw McCrae as keeping his poetry alive and moving forward. The "rich sensuousness" of Satyrs and Sunlight had given way to something lighter, freer, cleaner - the "skip-ping-musick fine" of the later poems. He praised the "verbal delicacies" of "Camden Magpie" and the "trolling catches" of 'So the Week Goes", and saw "humour, wit, fancy and symbolism" predominating over the earlier sensuousness. New devices of expression occur in the later poetry, with topical comments ('One Who Shall be Nameless') and epigrammatic poems showing McCrae "at his maturest and most characteristic, holding a fine tension between life and poetry."¹

One could take Howarth to task for his separation of life and poetry; as it is more usual, and more defensible critically, to regard poetry as an essential part of life, as an instrumentality by which our sensitivity to life itself is increased; or going further still, poetry is a way of regarding experience which increases our understanding and appreciation of it by widening and deepening our perception.

A view of McCrae's poetic development that is easier to sustain, is presented by Judith Wright in

1 In Southerly, VI (1945) p. 45.

her insightful comments on 'The Affirmation of Hugh McCrae'. After praising the achievement of 'Ambuscade', Wright continues:

Nothing so vivid, so immediate, so urgent in its imagery had yet broken into the earnest but not sensuous scene of Australian poetry. It must have looked as though this extraordinarily powerful poet would burn his way through all the conventions, the limitations, the littlenesses of the society he was born into, and go on to write some of the most splendid poetry ever written.

It did not happen....The springtime of his verse remained a spring; it somehow did not mature into the full compass of summer, autumn and winter.¹

And one must agree with Judith Wright when she sums up this view by saying "And Satyrs and Sunlight remained his main, as it was his first achievement."

In a comparison of Hugh McCrae and Robert Frost, O. N. Burgess states that McCrae's poetry had no well-knit philosophical scheme, no line of continuing technical experiment or 'movement', no phases of thought or feeling showing sociological pressures, but displayed the same excellence from beginning to end. "He is a painter-poet; he has sharp visual clarity; he does burst through the pages, lusty, gusty and robustious."² Burgess saw McCrae as having the same sub-acidity and good-humour of Frost, with the same

1 Judith Wright, Preoccupations in Australian Poetry (Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 100.

2 O. N. Burgess, 'Hugh McCrae and Robert Frost', Southerly, XVII (1956), p. 152.

Chaucerian simplicity and spontaneity of outlook and method.

The weight of the evidence would seem to be in favour, then, of the view that McCrae has not shown any real development during his poetic life. There is an occasional peak of achievement in the later period, but when the body of poetry is considered, the directness and lyricism, the pith and vividness of the earlier poems has not been exceeded by later attainments.

It is true, however, to say that McCrae's talents have been diversified as the years progressed, and no examination of him could be complete without reference to his verse-drama and to his prose writings.

Chapter 1V.

The Verse - Drama.

I have just finished reading Lamartine's 'Joan of Arc'. I have been meditating for about six months a really long poem and I had chosen Joan of Arc for the subject, but as I have never yet written anything more than about eighteen or nineteen verses together I had delayed until I should fix upon a likely metre. I think the most easily-travelling vehicle for narrative stuff might consist of simple words and little lines such as Chaucer used. I pondered over 'Paradise Lost' for an afternoon but felt like a fat woman on the edge of a precipice would - very giddy. Yet Joan has got to be done!¹

With these words McCrae expressed his intention of writing 'Joan of Arc', but as was often the case with him, his intentions outran his achievements. It has already been recounted how McCrae wrote his longest narrative poem as the result of a challenge from a friend,² but intrinsic interest in the topic led him to attempt a long verse-drama. The first three parts of this verse-drama were published in Art in Australia in 1921-22, and there the matter rested until in 1923 the fourth part appeared in Vision. However, the poem remained unfinished; in fact, McCrae did little more than begin it. Even so, the parts that do exist were

1 From an undated letter to Nettie Palmer in National Library of Australia. Because McCrae mentions his age in it, it can be dated 1920. It is probable that McCrae's father's interest in 17th Century France - an interest that led to the long poem 'The Man in the Iron Mask' - influenced Hugh's interest in Joan of Arc. As Slessor pointed out (Southerly, XVII (1956) there are also a few lines in George Gordon's 'The Fleet and The Convoy' suggestive of some lines used by Hugh in the fourth part of 'Joan of Arc'.

2 See p. 18.

included in Poems (as an Introduction and two parts); and in The Best Poems of Hugh McCrae a short third part was differentiated from the original section and the fourth part (from Vision) added.

Because of its unfinished state, 'Joan of Arc' cannot be examined as a verse-drama, or even as a long poem, but some comments are in order on the sections that are available, especially as McCrae's choice of his best poetry comes from one section of this work.¹

Kenneth Slessor has made a skilful analysis of 'Joan of Arc', agreeing with Tom Inglis Moore's criticism that McCrae had no constructive power. In fact, Slessor undertook his study of the poem because it seemed to him:

To exhibit more clearly than anything else both the best and worst elements of McCrae's poetry. It contains, that is to say, all the flood of colour and music and technical brilliance which makes his poems unique, as well as that lack of coherent structure, or relationship between whole and part, which is itself the seed of this verse-drama's fragmentary doom.²

With this opinion, an examination of the poem forces us to agree.

It is obvious, even from what is available of 'Joan of Arc', that it could never be performed publicly

1 See p.217

2 Kenneth Slessor, 'Austalian Poetry and Hugh McCrae', Southerly, XVII (1956), p.132.

as a drama. It contains a love scene which would not get past the censor in this country, as well as a part requiring quite complicated, intelligent (and gruesome) behaviour from a dog. It seems pointless, therefore to examine it for its theatrical qualities.

Below the title of the drama appears a quotation from James Howell, 3 March 1622, which sets the theme:

Joan of Arc

.....a Shepherdess, one June de Arque, who, putting on Man's apparel, drove the English out of Paris into Normandy. She used to go on with marvellous courage and resolution and her word was Hara Ha!
but she was taken prisoner, and the English had a fair revenge upon her, for by an arrest of the Parliament of Rouen she was burnt for a witch.

The Introduction to the drama, while revealing something of Joan's character, interestingly enough begins with her loves. "Always she loved the sound of bells. . ." Later on, when the King enters carrying the severed hand of Orleans, the rival for his wife's affections, the hand is apostrophised and described in terms of its loves. A further parallel exists with Orleans and Isabelle being depicted by their loves - for each other, and more widely, especially for Orleans, for love itself, or even for lust itself. There are many such parallels in the drama, even in the fragments of it that we have.

Joan's character is delineated in a few quick

stanzas - her innocence, her capacity to behold visions, her initial reluctance caused by innate modesty and humility, and at length her acquiescence, accompanied by a still-questioning attitude. The storm which occurs at the moment her decision is made highlights the seriousness of the charge given her, reminding one of the cataclysmic rending of the temple at the climax of the Crucifixion. But it is debatable whether McCrae's Joan is sufficiently impressed by her visions or her mission. At the end of the Introduction she is left asking herself why she has been chosen, which is a natural question, and why she must go to that particular destination, Chinon; but also McCrae has her asking why she should die. History would suggest, for its heroes and heroines, a more selfless role, and if, as happens here, the first reactions are thoughts of death, and death presented in such a way as to be inevitable, surely this attitude is not going to lead to the kind of sacrifice which is demanded by the events to come:

'Alas,' saith Joan, 'and must I die?
Wherefore to Chinon? Wherefore I?'

The Introduction contains a very vivid picture of St Michael:

And aureoled with rosy whorls,
His lion's fell of chestnut curls,
Under the cross-barred shield, forsooth,
Sinks to his baldrick's buckling-tooth.

This, however, and the moon's making his armour "glisten like strings of jangled rain", seems really irrelevant to an introduction - it contributes little to our understanding of the play to come, nor does it really add to the creation of atmosphere which is essential to the success of the narrative, with its religious, superstitious and medieval overtones: it is a poet's approach to the problem, not a dramatist's. It is concerned with a series of disjointed events, and before we can master the implications of the events, a new, different series of problems is upon us. There is a lack of coherence, of connection. No more, incidentally, is seen of Joan herself.

Part One of the drama is concerned with the illicit love affair between Isabelle and Orleans, so vividly detailed that public performance would be unlikely. The characters of these two unfold through their conversation and actions, while at the same time they introduce the King, whom Orleans is cuckolding, presenting a view of him which must be held with caution, for it soon becomes apparent with what type of eyes he is being viewed. Typically complicated imagery unfolds the events and characters, especially when both Orleans and Isabelle accuse the other of being unfaithful to their current love-affair. Orleans casts sarcastic comment upon one of Isabelle's other suitors in a passage typically McCrae:

What wise bird sung? -
 Was't Boisbourdon's red honey-tongue,
 Curled to your flowered ear-ring, drew
 The Duke a villain through and through?
 Liar and liar! Sweat or pout,
 He shall no that way paint me out!
 Such baby-bloods in tickling silk
 Who drag their empty thumbs for milk
 Would mad a woman..slip, or pass...
 Leeches in silver sleeves of glass
 Love better and more quickly cool
 The veins of Venus than this fool! 1

Again, in typical fashion, there is a constant cross-reference, adding texture to the verse. Isabelle drops dark hints that she knows a great deal about Orleans' escapades, but he feigns ignorance of her meaning with:

Bark like a dog, I'll sooner know
 So blindly doth this riddle go -

It is ironic that this "bark like a dog" is , in the not-too-distant future, to be the cause of his undoing and his death, for when he later leaves the Queen's chamber, the King's dog, Zangar, comes out, barks furiously, attempts to bite him and wakes the palace guards who arrest him.

Another example of this device of foreshadowing or prophecy occurs when Isabelle runs her fingers through

1 Norman Lindsay, inspired by McCrae's brilliant characters, Orleans and Isabelle, painted a water colour of them which for many years hung over the fireplace at the 'Shackeau'. Lindsay wrote, "Again I must thank you for this splendid poem. Without question it is your highest achievement yet." Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany, p.76.

the beard of Orleans while they are love-making. The Duke has just said that he would not let Isabelle go "Though Charles's self stood by to see", to which she replied:

Nay, an' you would, I hold so fast,
Wrist deep, and buried fingers, past
My second bracelet through this vast
Combed beard of yours, you cannot stir,
Strive as you will...

Yet, before very long, Orleans is dead, shot with an arrow loosed by Le Fol, and Burgundy gloats:

This arrow, feathered in his throat,
That holds not worth an English groat
His black, with blood-aigletted coat,
Through lace, through beard, it shrewdly
drives
To earth...

In this first part, too, the opposing view is given of Joan's character - not as she is but as reputation, especially malicious reputation, speaks of her. Isabelle comments upon her paleness:

Men say she's pale; so pale it seems
Witches have drunk her blood in dreams,
At owl-time when the moon is weak,
From her long throat and breast and cheek,

and states that she has been seen to have fits of rage, in one of which she seized her cat (Grimalkin, the reputed witch's cat) and "bit / the beating heart clean out of it."

Orleans, for his part, repeats a rumour that Joan can change her sex at will, but before Joan's

character can be further assailed, Isabelle's desire gets the better of her and the first section ends with the couple retiring to the pleasures of the bed. The Elizabethan device of a song in the garden serves as an Epilogue to this section and reinforces the necessity for caution on the part of the lovers, for:

Foes are forth, East and North
South and West and back again.

The caution of the song also prepares us for the horror and violence which are soon to be enacted.

If the first part is impractical to perform on the stage, so is the second, for it requires intelligent behaviour from Zangar, the King's dog. However, the unfolding of character goes on effectively, this time not by repute through the eyes of hostile witnesses, but through the actions and speech of the participants themselves. Upon seeing Zangar, Orleans' first reaction is "What blast of venery or chase / Hath roused thee, Zangar?" - a good question and a rather wry touch considering the activity which the Duke himself has been engaged in. Orleans, in fact, is built up for the observer as a shrewd, fearless, though venal aristocrat, and though portrayed in sweeping measure, he does come over as a real personality, one who can taunt Burgundy even though at the point of death and one who has large appeal to the sardonic Australian character. Toward the end of his brief life in the drama, Orleans shows that

he is a man of spirit as well as a rake. Under threat of instant death, he taunts Le Fol and Burgundy and in his death-speech wills various satiric endowments to his enemies. Having mocked Pierrot Le Fol by calling him Pierrette, he casts further grave doubts upon his enemy's masculinity by a bit of Elizabethan nonsense:

To Pierrot, then, I will
 My flourished handkerchief to stuff
 His cod-piece so it's big enough
 That every lady through the land,
 Must own Pierrot - Pierrette... a man.

Orleans' courage in the face of death does him no good and he is slain. We begin to wonder whether a man who could die so bravely, and for whom we have built up considerable sympathy, could be correct, in spite of his obvious weaknesses, about his assessment of Joan. Unfortunately, as the drama is unfinished, we have no way of following up this doubt, but it has interesting possibilities for subsequent development.

McCrae's poetic artistry is never far from the reader's view. His deliberate ambiguity leads to Burgundy's speech which concludes:

So I, Duke of Burgundy, have brought
 Cunning with lechery to nought.

There is skill in the description of Orleans' death agonies as seen by Le Fol:

Yet, so dresses Death
 His creaking ribs, the painful breath
 Flasks with blood....and either hand
 In agony walks through the sand.

This same artistry occurs in the vivid depiction of the scene where Orleans' body is decapitated - a mutilation ordered by Burgundy in the same tone as one talking of sport - a deliberately achieved effect:

God's madman! Whip him in the face!
 Then take this body and off-race
 The head of it... So shall ye lop
 His powdered claws until they drop
 Flat on the baggage of his cloak.
 To-morrow then, at Merlin's Oak,
 Teach me, Comte d'Eu, that lightning stroke
 Whereby, unfailing to thy call,
 At palm-play every whirring ball
 That skims the line is surely beat
 Back to thine adversary's feet...

And if this is not enough, this chilling scene closes with Zangar coming in and making off with one of the severed hands.

It is this bloody hand which is the subject of the King's speech in part three, which McCrae regarded as being among the best of his poetry.¹ As mentioned earlier, the consideration of the "loves" of the dead hand parallels the other uses of this device:

This flaggy hand loved fire and fur,
 Worshipped young flesh of paramour -
 Would itch, was rubbed, would itch again,
 Fled into gloves from wind and rain;
 Pluckt at a lute, or stoppt a pipe,
 Felt pears (or other fruit), how ripe -
 Could make a curl go in a round,
 Key into clink without a sound;
 Cast finger-shadows, Cat and Swan,
 At candle-time for little John,
 Men o' the hand, to jig and jet
 The Ragged Lord's Leg-Alphabet.

1 In an undated letter to Mackaness in response to his request for McCrae's favourite poems for an anthology (early 1940's). Letter in National Library of Australia.

Now art thou spent and may not win,
 Nor longer ride at anchor in
 Love's harbourage...Not catch a chin
 For thy lost body's appetite
 Thou canst not pick, not steal, nor fight..

There is irony in the Queen's song now heard from within:

Who falls for love he shall not flinch;
 Then, wounded past recover,
 'Passions are pleasant though they pinch',
 Sings every honest lover.

Then, before knocking on the door with the dead man's
 hand in a chilling, inhuman scene, the King proclaims:

This door where, time and oft, with pale
 Lasciviously pointed nail
 It was thine evil wont to scratch
 Round O's for Lust to lift the latch
 Now must thou batter into bits,
 Raw bloody neiff!
 Such deadman hits,
 All dull and echoeless, shall tell
 Unfaith dislodgedOrleans in Hell!

The fourth part of 'Joan of Arc', detached in
Satyrs and Sunlight as 'The Meadow of Chateau-des-
 Iles' was appended to the first three parts in Best Poems
 but adds little to the verse-drama as it stood.

Enough has been said here to suggest that as a
 drama for acting out upon the stage, 'Joan of Arc'
 could not have been retrieved by anything which could
 have been written to follow the existing fragment. As
 a verse-drama, for speaking, there is enough of the
 characteristic McCrae artistry to lead us to regret
 that the work was not carried to its conclusion. Although
 there is little point in speculating how McCrae hoped

to finish it, if ever he did intend to do so, there is certainly no sign of a drawing together of the disparate elements into any sort of dramatic unity. In addition there is, in what has been written, evidence of what must have developed into serious dramatic flaws. We must agree with Slessor that had McCrae continued, the various elements would have grown even farther away from Joan of Arc. J.T. Kirtley put it precisely:

Hugh McCrae was not gifted to write narrative poetry with dynamic lyrical brilliance. No lyric poet is...The Orleans and Isabelle sequence was scenic, the idea being to present a picture of a period by character sketches, and do sufficient of them to string them into orderly sequence. He would however have needed to have written a good deal more to have given order to the theme, and doubtless tired of the idea, while neglecting to do it while the emotion was forcing him. The tremendous dramatic intensity of the Orleans, Isabelle section would be hard to maintain. Hugh would have had to continue while the hot light of feeling drove him. ¹

Reluctantly, too, we must agree with Judith Wright that:

We may admire and enjoy what McCrae has given us; but we ought to admit that the very splendour and achievement of the fragments we have make the failure to complete them more deplorable. This is a case where it is excellent to have a giant's power, but tragic not to use it like a giant.²

And there is little doubt that there is splendour in some of the fragments. If we examine 'Joan of Arc'

- 1 Letter from J.T. Kirtley to H. Chaplin, undated, in part reproduced in Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany, p.77.
- 2 Judith Wright, Preoccupations in Australian Poetry (Oxford, 1965), p.107.

not as a dramatic work, but as a kind of medieval procession, somewhat like the 'Canterbury Tales' of McCrae's beloved Chaucer, there is an extraordinary richness and intensity in the poetry. As Slessor said:

Indeed, in its glowing dyes, its romantic gusto and its minutely finished detail, it has some of the effect of a fourteenth century illuminated parchment. It was in this spirit, with strokes of burning ruby, that Norman Lindsay painted his magnificent water-colour illustrations. And it seems that Hugh McCrae grows so intent on illuminating the tiny details of his manuscript, the tips of the angels' wings, the lips of the cherubs, the fire from the dragon's nostrils, that he forgets the larger chronicle which it is his purpose to describe.¹

This can be seen in the speech made by Le Fol just after he had killed Orleans:

The tears you spill, the drops of sweat
Are jewels for my carcanet,
Each groan proclaims the near approach
Of running footmen and a coach.
Figs barrelled, sucket, and conserves...
Marry, and shall, when weather serves,
Wind my own horn and carry fair
Hawks of the tower through the air,
Ride in long stirrups with stiff legs...
Drink Greek, or Spanish, to the dregs;
And spitting, in gold basins, yerk
Down carpets of rich Turkey-work.

In Slessor's criticism we have the fault of the work in a nutshell; and again, it is to be deplored that it should be so.

As a poet himself, Slessor comments, with awe,

1 Kenneth Slessor, Southerly, XVll (1956), p.135.

upon the "beautifully flexible eight-syllable line" which is used throughout - the same as Coleridge's 'Christabel' - and that in over five hundred lines there is no monotony or staleness in the rhythm. "On the contrary, McCrae shows that it is capable of the most delicate lightness or of passionate and dramatic intensity," Slessor remarks.

There are dazzling flashes of brilliant imagery, as in the picture of the idiot King's face after he had been terrified by the maskers:

And Charles's face, between the ears,
 Showed like an onion cleanly peeled,
 All wet and shining, while he reeled
 His drunkard's gait...

And there is all the blaze of summer in the serene and crystal clear poetry of the last section:

.....did we not see
 How short the shadows down the knee,
 How pulls the white-gold from the sward,
 While, navell'd in the clouds, the broad
 Sun, lustrant, showers fire and mirth
 Wide-where across our middle-earth.

The minute and accurate observation of McCrae is evident in many places. A good example is the one remarked on by both Slessor and Lindsay:

The sparrows draw their wings and shoot
 Their bodies through the hawthorn fruit.

But no matter what its moderate merits, they are not, by the nature of the situation, able to retrieve 'Joan of Arc' from being a collection of patchy, disconnected fragments - a load of soil with here and there the

glitter of gold.

More connected, but equally impractical, was McCrae's attempt at writing a musical fantasy. We have a fairly detailed account of how and why he undertook the writing of 'The Ship of Heaven'.¹ In response to a request from Rupert Atkinson that he write him a play to be produced by a system named the "Stage-Cinema-Interaction Process", which aimed to unite the techniques of the live theatre and the silent screen, McCrae created a play which is barely playable by ordinary techniques, even though it was produced by Doris Fitton and the Independent Theatre in 1933, to the music of Alfred Hill. The techniques to be used led to the extraordinarily detailed stage directions accompanying it, and even to the direct choice of the costumes and the main characters. McCrae wrote:

The matter of the costumes has also to be considered, because an actor attaining his apotheosis on a colourless screen would lose all joyousness of bright apparel in the small diversity of black and white... Therefore, in order to comply with such difficult conditions, I chose for my chief characters Pierrot and Columbine, forasmuch as their dresses were least likely to suffer in the translation from 'down centre' to the bleached ghostliness of a cinema film.²

1 The Home, 1 March 1924, p.2.

2 Ibid.

There is a possibility also that McCrae's choice of Pierrot was influenced by this figure's popularity with Aubrey Beardsley, whose work was commonly discussed in the periodicals at the beginning of the century, and whose art both McCrae and Lindsay very much admired.¹

McCrae planned his drama so that the action would unite the two spheres of stage and screen, as when the sailors come from the ship (screen) to the front of the stage, to be followed back by Pierrot and Columbine, there to mock the inability of the two main characters to follow them aboard.

The second scene, with no words at all to it, was meant "almost wholly for the film... Not a word is spoken.... The figures flow on and off the stage at top speed, and are never still for a moment. The music, with dumb action, carries everything."²

McCrae had hoped to stage this play in 1924, including in his comments about its origin:

It is not proposed to go any further in this description of the play lest we should anticipate the public performance, which is to be given during the present year.³

It was not performed, however, until 1933, and was not

1 A.G. Stephens had written a critique and given examples of Beardsley's work (including his 'Death of Pierrot' in The Bookfellow, December 1899. Lindsay had done a painting by this name also.

2 The Home, 1 March 1924, p.4.

3 Ibid.

published until 1951. Its performance was received with a luke warm response from both public and critics, and when the published version of the play is examined, it is not really difficult to see why this should have been so.

Probably the most appealing feature of the book, The Ship of Heaven, apart from the lyrics, is the quality of the illustrations, drawn in ink by McCrae and exhibiting a spontaneity and flow, yet with an admirable economy of line. There is also a Preface which sets the tone of the drama, placing the reader upon his guard:

Oyez!

The Ship of Heaven: a plotless fairy tale written for authentic children...young or otherwise. Sunshine, salted with sham thunder and lightning; pretty girls and boys; the Devil, joining horns, amorously, with the Moon; Pierrot and Columbine. Obscurantists find no rebus here: play-field only, for butterfly nonsense dreamed by Jeremy Jessamy, below a haycock en Espagne, 'all on a sommers dae'.

Underneath this preface is a line drawing of the devil "joining horns, amorously" with the moon, and the face of the devil bears a remarkable resemblance to the way in which McCrae draws himself in his letters to his friends. There is also a Dedication to Alfred Hill ("Orpheus Redivivus" as McCrae calls him) who composed the music for the play..."music sweeter than songs the young birds sing; hearing it, fairies grow fairier; while Pierrot, wakened, seeks Columbine at the same

same time Columbine seeks him;" and also a recognition of Doris Fitton^mwho, with intuitive genius, brought this fantasy upon the stage."

In some respects, especially characterisation, the play is well thought out. McCrae knew exactly what he wanted, saying so in a detailed description of one of the principal characters:

Cupid. Neither the German-English nor the Greek Cupid; but a gold-brown creole boy with the French colours in his hair. He is lithe and muscular, not fat and flubby-dubby; quick in all his movements except when bandaged; very impetuous, mischievous and merry-hearted. He has a fair tincture of malice in his disposition.

The necessity which McCrae feels to give a detailed account of a character's personality reveals a basic weakness in dramatic characterisation. Surely the play itself should reveal this kind of information. Surely the actions and the words of the characters should show what kinds of persons they are and what they are about. The malice which McCrae wants in Cupid should be displayed through this character's speech and actions, and perhaps in the reactions of others in the play toward him. The same applies to Columbine, Pierrot and Sir Gorgeous; that they should be developed, not categorically stated in a way not available to members of the audience unless they buy a programme. Taking this attitude, the playwright severely curtails the dramatic function of the play.

'The Ship of Heaven' is a fantasy. A reviewer of its performance applied to it the dictum which Francis Thompson applied to Shelley's work when he referred to it as "a child's faculty of make-believe raised to the nth power".¹ A correspondent in the following number of the same magazine, however, took issue with this and stated "To sum up, then, in a few words: Theme charming, but so loosely constructed that continuity is lost."²

The charming nature of the theme was appreciated by another critic - C.J.H. O'Brien.³ Seeing McCrae indifferent to realism, sober morality and sound common-sense, he nevertheless praised the "dream-like inconsequence" and the "air of mischievous improvisation". O'Brien saw the play as more than a confection for the young but as a subtle and sophisticated work of art. In a limited way, when considered as a verse-drama to be read than as a stage-drama, this is true. There is a beguiling slyness and whimsicality about it. One has only to read the Interlude between Acts 1 and 11 where a coffin is very pointedly taken into a doctor's waiting-room which is crammed with patients, and where mock-operations

1 The Australian Outline, December 1933, p.15.

2 The Australian Outline, February 1934, 'The Ship of Heaven' - A Rejoinder by E.M. Kenyon.

3 C.J.H. O'Brien, 'Playfield En Espagne' - A Review of The Ship of Heaven, Southerly, X11 (1951), p.216.

are performed, all in dumb show and 'vivace' throughout. Here Pierrot goes to have Cupid's arrow removed. The doctor saws off both protruding ends, and while he is reading his medical texts to see what to do next, Pierrot crawls into the coffin and pulls the lid shut after him. Here is a fantasy but also a gentle satire on the medical profession.

There is a certain delicacy and charm about the play. O'Brien gives as his example the play upon the name of the cobra in Act 11. In a dialogue between Pierrot and the Devil, a hideous face appears and says:

Alas, for me,
 He cannot see
 Beneath his cruel spell-o
 Apparently
 More charm he'd see
 In a cobra-di-capello!

The three repeat in chorus:

A cobra B
 A cobra C
 A cobra D--capello.¹

There are better examples of this delicacy in some of the play's lyrics. In fact the strength of the fantasy is in the few flashes of brilliance in songs of Pierrot and Columbine. We can agree with O'Brien in praising the manner in which the verses respond to the subtlest manifestations of nature and its moods. There is something aerial and sensuously elusive about some of the

1 A cobra-de-capello is a hooded venomous snake found in India. This example is from O'Brien, p.217.

A more jolly song, more in keeping with the lightness and mock-seriousness of the play is the long one from Act 1 sung by Sir Gorgeous Gobble and included in the Penguin Anthology of Australian Verse¹ under the title of 'Rake's Song'. It was these lyrics, especially Pierrot's Song to the Moon and the Moon's Recitative which Ethel Anderson praised to McCrae.² She described the whole play as an interesting attempt, and the lyrics as "particularly delicious."

But if there are some good lyrics in the play, this is still not enough to make it good theatre. And even if we assess it as verse, rather than drama, there are still many deficiencies. There is a disjointedness, a lack of continuity about the work which militates against its success. There is a heavy-handedness which belies the delicacy of some sections. For instance, some of the humour is schoolboy farce. Sir Gorgeous in Act 1 examines an enormous wrist watch he is wearing and exclaims "Time hangs heavy on my hands."

While much of the language is in keeping with the fantastic nature of the drama, i.e. light, gentle and satiric, there are many places where this lightness sinks to slang and neologism, sometimes with rhymes so

1 Edited by R.G. Howarth et alii. (1961), p. 44.

2 A letter to McCrae, 27 April 1951, in National Library of Australia.

As in much of McCrae's poetry, violence and melancholy are never far below the surface, no matter how light and jolly that surface might be, so in 'The Ship of Heaven' there is a melancholy, even a macabre mood, at times, with considerable underlying currents. This does serve to give some depth to the fantasy, but again, does not save it from mediocrity. The transience of human pleasure, and even of human life itself is made apparent in the Interlude and also in many of the speeches. In answer to Pierrot's song, the Moon replies:

Peace, tragic fool, do not allow
 The sting of Cupid's thrust
 For fear the tyrant circle now
 In triumph o'er the dust...
 Men have a solace for their pain
 Earth gives them all her breast again.

Then pampered manikin, whose care
 Surrenders with thy breath,
 Oh, pity one who in despair,
 Without release of Death,
 Must wander through the boundless sky
 Unfriended, for eternity.

Man's fate is not all "butterfly nonsense" nor is it all "sommers dae." And if this is so, neither is man the easy-going being who frolics endlessly. There is a vicious streak in man, and the play brings this out on several occasions. The jailer represents this aspect of man, with his recitative delivered as he strokes his cat-o'-nine-tails:

In dungeon born - a hangman's brat-
 When I was young I kept a cat.
 Mee-ow! Mee-oo! You should have heard
 How every little prison-bird
 Began to flutter when he purred.
 In vain they cried 'Alas! Alack!'
 He clawed them shrewdly down the back!

Nor is the Bellman much more sympathetic in the
 same Act when Siamese twins appear, saying:

All freaks is barred; so take your ends
 Et cetera away, my friends.

Henry VIII is shown in his worst light, having lopped
 off the head of one of his queens. Lest we forget that
 these things exist, we are warned by McCrae to make sure
 we know what is involved, to make sure we know the real
 nature of things. As Beauty and the Beast come in, the
 Beast says:

To save confusion: learn at least
 That I'm not Beauty....I'm the Beast!

Douglas Stewart, himself an accomplished verse-
 dramatist, wrote that the audience found it difficult to
 laugh at some of the jokes in 'The Ship of Heaven.'
 The puns, especially, failed to provoke laughter, as
 when Pierrot, eating out, calls for the bill with the
 result that a billy-goat comes in. Perhaps, suggests
 Stewart, the drama was too rarified and elaborate for the
 stage (as of course it was, being written for a differ-
 ent, combined stage-screen medium). He calls it a kind
 of surrealism, compares it to Fry's Venus Observed in

some of its underlying currents. He comments upon the weird example when the flowers present bills to the men who have enjoyed their perfume. "Ultimately, then, it is a set of divertissements that one must accept", and "an enchanted and irresponsible garden where fountains in the moonlight, fed by genius, flow intermittently with light laughter or a melody as deep and beautiful as anything in English lyric poetry."¹

The surrealism, indeed, smacks of Animal Farm with its humanizing of animals. It presents interesting possibilities if nature and its beauties are to be charged for, but although the audience could no doubt consider the implications of this and extend its scope indefinitely, this is still not a major part of the drama, but rather an incidental aspect which might have been featured with more prominence and effect than the fantastic scenery of the drama as it is.

To the charge made by the Sydney Morning Herald reviewer that too many mechanical effects were required, McCrae wrote "Actually, I didn't want mechanical effects, because the play depends almost wholly on the imagination, whereas mechanical effect are always associated with attempts at hard-boiled realism."² Even if we decide

1 'McCrae in Heaven', The Bulletin, 6 June 1951.

2 In a letter to Rupert Atkinson, - undated - in Fisher Library, McCrae quotes the review and answers the charge.

that 'The Ship of Heaven' is sheer fantasy, even nonsense, it might still be argued that it is not inconsequential nonsense. R.D.FitzGerald takes this view.

He writes:

If after investigation one comes to the conclusion that 'The Ship of Heaven' is neither a satire nor symbolism but simply delight, one may deny that it is properly nonsense at all. Its language can then be joyously understood as lyrical creation, certainly to be taken seriously, not for the substance of it but as art.¹

In a sense, FitzGerald argues, the play might be regarded as a link between the early poetry, where "the forces of the imagination were shown as the validity behind the world of appearances" and the later poems, which were "closer to solid earth and found more virtue in the common substance of earth itself, though still with some doubts as to its authenticity." And, what is quite relevant here, "Beauty and laughter are seen as the realities; and the world of appearances, though it is allowed to exist, is excused as a trifle eccentric."²

There is a lot of truth in this. Pure delight is certainly a prime aim in McCrae's work. Nietzschean joy is always close to McCrae's heart when he writes. There are elements of the Platonic belief in the superiority of the world of ideas, too. But one must disagree with

1 Meanjin, X (1951), p.307.

2 Ibid, p.311.

FitzGerald's assessment of the play as a dramatic entity, except in a very loose sense. FitzGerald writes:

With all its seeming lack of plot and theme it is a soundly constructed whole, written not only with an ear for the silences within the words which Alfred Hill was to fill with music, but with a canny eye to stage effects and the movements and mechanics of production.¹

After all, McCrae should have been able to ensure the stage-craftsmanship of the drama, having had reasonably wide experience, both in America and Australia, on the stage.

It causes a wry smile, however, to hear the anecdote which FitzGerald recounts about the play's performance in 1933 at the Independent. A poet-friend of McCrae's arrived late, missing some of the earlier parts of the play. Seeing McCrae in the foyer at interval, he greeted him with: "It's good, Hugh, but what's it all about?" The harassed author waved his hands in the air: "Why ask me? How the hell should I know?" FitzGerald comments: "A model answer - one that should be kept on hand. It will come in useful over and over again."² Perhaps McCrae was being facetious. Perhaps he was just answering a silly question with a silly answer, but one still has the uncomfortable feeling that there is here a similarity to a remark made by Rupert Atkinson. In criticising

1 Meanjin, X (1951), p.309.

2 Ibid, p.311.

Vance Palmer's poetry to McCrae, Atkinson compared it with some of the existing products of the English and Irish schools of poetry:

(It is) as when an artist complacently leaves it to his admirers to discern whatever they like in the peregrinations of his brush..He is quite satisfied as long as his friends are, leaving the interpretations to be decided by individual or collective prejudice.¹

I think it unfair to attempt to judge this drama away from its experimental setting. As a piece of experimental fantasy, employing the characteristics of both the stage and silent screen, it can give great delight. Any lack of directness, and deficiencies in playability are in the drama because of its design, not because McCrae had tried to write a conventional drama and failed to do so effectively because of ignorance. He must not be judged for failing to do well what he has not attempted to do at all.

As well as his acting experience, which should have helped him considerably in any experiment with drama, McCrae had some short time as a dramatic critic. When co-editor on The New Triad McCrae, together with Louis Esson, ran a weekly feature entitled 'The Theatre', in which current plays and other theatrical performances were reviewed by the two men. Some of these reviews.

1 Letter from Rupert Atkinson to McCrae, 2 September 1924, in Mitchell Library.

bearing the obvious stamp of McCrae's irrepressibility, are interesting, but perhaps not very illuminating in regard to McCrae's talents as a theatre critic. For instance, a visit to the current performance at the Tivoli produced a gem of a review which began:

Saturday Night at the Tivoli.

We arrived at the Tivoli in time to see a man in baggy trousers dodging dozens of tin trays which fell deafeningly about him. When the storm (and the music) had stopped, the man plucked up a bit, and, returning with a broom, began to sweep the trays into a heap; noticing one of them flutter, he snatched a hammer and killed it on the spot. At that moment the orchestra let itself loose; drums and brasses sent waves of scarlet across the brain, and the Saturday night audience got up on its hind-legs and howled for more - a circumstance which proves that Sydney dearly loves its murder, even if only the murder of a little tin tray.

.....

Achilles is a man who plays with three cannon-balls, making them run swiftly about his body, and so silently as to be a lesson to the Sydney tramway authorities.¹

Fortunately, most of the reviews of the serious plays were written by Louis Esson!

Although 'The Ship of Heaven' depended heavily upon the fancy of the listener or observer, McCrae went a step further than this, in intention, at least. He told Mackaness ² how he had attempted a work which left

¹ The New Triad, 1 November 1927, p.60.

² Letter to Mackaness 24 October 1949, in National Library of Australia.

a great deal more of the telling to the reader. He submitted a wordless fairy-tale to Angus and Robertson for publication. The scheme was that the book contained a series of drawings on a related topic, drawn in sequence. One "read" what the artist had drawn, and wrote his own version of the tale in the blank pages provided. This novel idea was rejected by the publishers, somewhat to the author's (artist's) chagrin.

While it is indisputable, then, that McCrae had sufficient experience and knowledge of stagecraft and plays in general to be able to write an effective drama, 'The Ship of Heaven' was not to be the product which would enhance his reputation. It has some merit as a fantasy of delight when viewed in the light of its experimental nature; it has considerable merit from the point of view of having within it some delightfully delicate lyrics and droll verses. However, it is not of sufficient importance to be considered as a serious dramatic presentation.

Its importance rests mainly in displaying McCrae's versatility. As FitzGerald has it:

Much of McCrae's recent work has been considered trivial, and may indeed be so, though McCrae's trivialities are more estimable than many other poets' solemnities; but without that recent work there would have been a gap in his statement, and his stature would have been less.

'The Ship of Heaven' fills yet another, and older gap, and is moreover a poem of his superb middle period. It is a poem working within the conventions and strict limits of pantomime; so that with all its beauty of language and skilful verse its originality lies in its invention of occasions and scene-arrangements rather than in striking images or phrases.¹

We appreciate 'The Ship of Heaven' then, if we do not take it too seriously. It is all fun, and as fun, provides a framework for some charming lyrics. For this we can be thankful.

It is not necessary for the appreciation of the drama to read into it rather doubtful undertones of biographical statement, as R.G. Howarth does. Howarth saw Pierrot as McCrae the poet, first neglecting the real for an unattainable ideal, and when the real flies beyond his reach, the poet suffers discomfort, doubt, debt before he has a second chance.² This may be so; but we are particular warned against this dubious probing by the Town Crier's announcement. Even if this is true, however, it adds nothing to the drama.

Neither 'The Ship of Heaven' or 'Joan of Arc' have the power of supporting the view that McCrae's talents included the writing of verse-drama or 'straight' drama. The faults of weakness in construction, of lack of persistence, of inability to think through a consistent position or argument, which appeared to the detriment of

1 R.D. FitzGerald in Meanjin, X (1951), p. 309.

2 R.G. Howarth in Southerly, XVllll (1957), p. 216.

his poetry, made the production by McCrae, of effective drama, almost impossible. He did make other attempts, one of which was "a Dumb Show" entitled "The Cat Comes Back" with music by Horace Keats, but as far as is known, there was no public performance of this, even though approval for it was expressed by Antal Dorati and Kenneth Mackenzie.¹

Many of his verses were set to music by Frank Hutchens, Mirrie Hill, Alfred Hill, Horace Keats, Dorian le Gallienne and others, showing again that the lyrical qualities of McCrae's poetry won the most recognition.

Although McCrae had very limited success with his verse-drama, suffice it to say that his talents were strongest in the fields of poetry and in the prose of the letters, short stories and essays. Further attention can now be given to the qualities of his fine prose writings.

1 Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany p. 75.

Chapter V.

"The Other Harmony"

- i Critical views.
- ii Story-Book Only.

i Critical views.

Many of McCrae's views on poetry may be gleaned from his criticisms of other writers and poets, as well as from his own prose works. Although he had no pretensions of being a literary critic, he analysed the writings of his contemporaries, with varying degrees of insight, as well as commenting upon earlier literary figures when asked to do so by those with whom he corresponded regularly. Rarely were these criticisms published, although there is little doubt that McCrae had reasonable access to several periodicals, especially The Bulletin. Even when co-editor of The New Triad, he made little use of the opportunity to express his critical views on poetry.

However, in his private correspondence, especially with Mackaness and the Palmers, insights into his critical credo appear. Although at times given to an extravagance of praise, McCrae turned a poet's rather than a critic's eye upon quite a wide range of contemporary writing. It should be borne in mind that these criticisms were not generally written for public consumption, were not perhaps as studied as if they had been meant for publication in the periodicals, but for this reason are more direct and frank. They usually agree with McCrae's publicly expressed views when these exist.

McCrae agreed with the assessment of A.G. Stephens made by Vance Palmer in his biography of that early critic.¹ In complimenting Palmer, McCrae wrote:

The introduction was exactly the right length and cut. I couldn't find a wrinkle or notice loss of colour anywhere. The whole effect was admirable. A.G.'s own writing opened as strongly as ever. In fact I enjoyed it upstairs (in the balcony room of the mind) more than I did when I was young. His clarity does not lie only in language, but in meaning. He educates while he entertains, and I hand him trays full of cake for his humour. Therefore I forgive him his sins, which all rose from a rage in the heart, over which he had no control: a lunatic's rage which swept up to his brain and took the sight out of his eyes; so that sometimes he exampled Justice really blind. He had a trained critical excellence: yet, at least in one summary of Norman Lindsay's work, he belied himself and the standards he stood for. It was on this account that we parted.²

McCrae went on to describe in detail the incident over which he broke with Stephens - an incident which did Stephens little credit yet revealed the essential humanity of McCrae.³ Even though he felt his friend

- 1 Vance Palmer, A.G. Stephens: His Life and Work (Robertson and Mullens, 1941).
- 2 Undated letter to Vance Palmer in National Library of Australia.
3. In 'The Rise and Fall of Norman Lindsay', The Pacific, 1 (18 January 1924), Stephens attacked Lindsay, comparing his early work, specifically his illustration of 'Oblation' with later examples. However, the later examples Stephens used were quickly drawn sketches or cartoons (from 1912). This treatment offended McCrae's sense of fair play. He sprang to his friend's defence (1 February 1924). He wrote: "He proves, through words, not only a faint friend, but an unjust critic. He cuts no fair furrow. His method is so transparently unequitable as to almost insist upon mischievous intention."

Lindsay had been grossly wronged, he could still make excuses for Stephens. On the back of this same letter is written in McCrae's neat handwriting "A.G. Stephens: master mirror reflecting clearly though subject to temperatures - and with a decided crack or flaw, not to be remedied."

It can be seen that McCrae regarded the function of the critic as being to reflect the original quality, perhaps to double the attraction of the creative work in its capacity of mirroring life, while at the same time maintaining a high degree of excellence, represented by intellectual integrity and classical scholarship. He praised the creative writer's humour, expected him to educate while entertaining, and to be consistent.

He expected superior qualities of character, including sincerity. He criticised A.G. Stephens on another occasion for lack of this quality, at the same time acknowledging the critic's role of assisting in the development of the creative talents the writer may have. In a letter which illustrates again the humility and lack of pretension in McCrae, and his demands upon the critic, we read:

I remember your story of his (Stephens) crying over Neilson's poems. I can't imagine a higher tribute. Myself, lower down the staircase than Shaw. He tried his damndest

to coax me up, as may be seen by going through his letters and inscriptions in books. He gave books on his own birthday - August 28th. 'With all my wishes, for all my hopes'. You see 'hopes' only - achievement not there. An adaptation from Carlyle's 'With wishes, which will produce hopes, which will produce attempts'. A.G., understanding my nature, let it go at hope. His dedication of 'Oblation' again, was the paraphrase of a speech taken from Beaumont and Fletcher.

And once he told me he had invented an expression - 'the toilet of the soul'. 'There you are. I give it to you. You can use it as your own'. And so help me God, he had prigged it from Jeremy Taylor!¹

McCrae went on to praise Stephens' scholarship, and especially his versatility. "He was so full of good reading. He became a chamelion of fine literature, and could change at a pinch from Latin to modern Italian."

This desired versatility should prevent one from getting into a literary rut. Here, however, Stephens was not faultless. McCrae deprecated Stephens' tendency of recognising only the established artists on the current scene:

A.G. is like a baker's hack. He has become so used to going up Quinn St. and down Dalley Road, through Lawson Crescent, round Patterson (sic) Ponds into Brunton Stephens Square, thence past the dilapidated Lindsay Gordon statue all the long way to Kendall Green that it would only irk the 'galled jade' to travel up a new Palmer Avenue leading into clear skies and tall trees. All he needs is someone to tactfully direct him

1 An undated letter from McCrae to Vance Palmer in National Library of Australia.

and he will soon be perambulating its full length quite as comfortably as he has perambulated these others this last 18 or 20 years.

But eluding the heels of the equine half of this bread-cart centaur, let us run round the traces to his anthropical front.

I had to catch the Bookfellow by the beard once myself in order to bring his star-pointing skull to a level with my own. I assured him that I did not hold any patent rights for obscurity but that it was his stomach that prevented him from seeing me, which was the truth and is the truth as far as A.G.'s perception goes for finding new writers (of course you can imagine the centaur to be on his hind legs in order to get the full value of the illustration).

An impudent thistle will as soon get him if it strikes high enough up, but intending trees must have emergency voices to call out their own merits before he will extend his trellis towards them. HE CAN'T SEE. HE'S GOT TO BE TOLD. Sometimes a gigantic fellow (Vance is a very good instance) will tower suddenly past and wave so high above him that A.G. becomes conscious of myopia, but he will only rub his eyes in private. He'd be the last to admit any weakness.¹

Obviously, perceptiveness and an open mind are requisite in criticism! And even if the critic has these, criticism itself may have a damaging effect upon those who follow it. McCrae was afraid that the artist would attempt to curb the creative spirit to fit in with the critic's creed. In an interview, Kenneth Slessor gave his opinion that McCrae would "lean over backwards" to please a critic and to acquiesce with his theory. But, in theory at any rate, McCrae was aware of this danger:

1 An undated letter to Nettie Palmer in National Library of Australia.

I often think criticism has a spoiling result on the work that comes immediately after it, and that it would be far better if there was none. Imagine God altering a sunset to humour McKee Wright's predilection for green effects, or even Smee smudging a beautiful Botticelli with the contents of an eighteen-penny box of water-colours because Honey had said it looked nicer that way. Swift saw the extreme value of critics when he remarked that the Nanplians learned the art of pruning from watching billygoats browse and that's all Vance or anyone else will ever get out of them...¹

As is perhaps natural in personal correspondence as opposed to publicly expressed opinion, there was an extravagance of praise in some of McCrae's criticisms, particularly those in letters to Vance Palmer. McCrae placed this poet and writer above Louis Esson and Dowell O'Reilly, but wrote "I hesitate to run you past Furnley Maurice because he has all kinds of peculiar merits, but you are equal with him."²

McCrae had a very high opinion of the poetry of Vance Palmer. He admired his joy, his sincerity, his love of nature. In a review of 'The Camp' he wrote:

Here is no sharp, staccato-talking parrot, but a shepherd of Theocritus, his cheeks darkened with sun and rain - a man who finds happiness in country roads and pastures, living innocently, and extolling the world about him in songs of natural joy. He is perhaps of all our poets the one most free of lettered artificiality: when we read in his book we seem to move among trees, to smell the blossoming grass, to watch the clouds

1 Undated letter to Nettie Palmer in National Library of Australia.

2 Ibid.

mingle with the hills, and to hear the smooth and musical humming of the moon hundreds of thousands of miles above us in the sky.¹

There is no doubt that McCrae was praising in Palmer the qualities which he strove to express in his own poetry:

Most of Vance Palmer's poetry is written from the heart: that is to say, although an intellectual, he holds the balance between passion and percipience so that the scale inclines a little always in favour of natural life.²

The attention given to the recreation of a mood by the poet was worthy of a high degree of skill. The words should be able to reproduce exactly the scene they described. This transference of the senses' contents into the medium of words, thence through them into the emotions and the intellect of the reader, refined and concentrated to heighten their effect, this transmutation was seen as the real function of poetry. McCrae quoted from Palmer's 'The Dandenongs':

Blue hills that tower against the sky!
 What dayspring life to you belongs?
 Here where the bush lark weaves its songs
 Amid the grass I lie
 And dream that youth can never die.

And all is magic clear to-day.
 The ring-barked trees are white as bone;
 Surely a man could throw a stone
 To peaks ten miles away,
 Or touch a tree-top bird at play!

1 Article on the Red Page of The Bulletin, 10 July 1924.
 2 The Bulletin, 10 July 1924.

and then comments:

The Sunday stillness of the Australian bush has never been more perfectly, more completely, translated into words. The scene lies reflected in the crystalline surface of the verse, and it is so fine and delicate in reproduction that the smallest ruffle of air would destroy the picture. ¹

A subsequent stanza of the same poem finds McCrae "lost in admiration" and in sheer ecstasy:

What airy life a bird-note brings!
How lightly runs the bouyant breeze!
It seems as if the shining trees
Might move like wakened things,
And soar away on spreading wings.

McCrae stated that no laureate anywhere in the world ever thought more finely than this, and noted:

The feelings are the feelings of a child, full of belief and beauty, and they are such that we sigh for our own cynicism and mourn for the foolishness of guile through fault of whom young innocence was slain.²

Obviously McCrae has been carried away by his friendship with Vance and his eagerness to please one who had been a great support to him for many years. McCrae's cavalier attitude to artistic unity is revealed when he concludes:

The final stanza of this poem I have deleted on my own authority, because it adds nothing to what has gone before, and also, because I wish to remain breathless - a boy upon the hill-side seeing trees "move like wakened things / And soar away on spreading wings".³

1 The Bulletin, 10 July 1924.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

McCrae was childlike in his tendency to be swayed by an emotional appeal from a friend. He congratulated Vance Palmer on 'The Camp' in another letter, concluding: "I will say that 'The Camp' is the finest Australian book of poetry ever yet published. I doubt whether a better can be shown within recent years of that which comes from England."¹ That this extravagant praise was unwarranted there is little doubt. Although H.M.Green speaks of this book as containing "one of Australia's finest war poems" ('The Farmer Remembers the Somme'), the book itself is dismissed without praise in five and a half lines.²

If McCrae was on doubtful grounds in his assessment of Palmer's talents, he was on more sure critical foundations with his admiration of Shaw Neilson's poetry. Although they were contemporaries, there is no record of their meeting. McCrae did try to arrange this. He told Stephens, "I wrote to Shaw Neilson asking him to lunch with me BUT the silence has been dreadful".³ McCrae's approval of the tears Stephens shed over Neilson's poems speaks of his attitude, for he regarded this emotion as a great tribute. Indeed, in a reply to a request from Mackness for an assessment of Neilson's talents, McCrae wrote:

- 1 Letter to Vance Palmer, dated only 1920, in National Library of Australia.
- 2 H.M.Green, A History of Australian Literature, p.408.
- 3 Letter to A.G.Stephens, 4 March 1920, in Mitchell Library.

Paradoxically, I could cut Neilson into two halves; and then at the loss of one half raise him taller than he was previously. Some of his poems are beyond criticism; but he can be lugubrious; and is often cloying.¹

Perhaps part of the reason for the fondness of Neilson's work was the lyrical quality present in the poetry of both men. Partly, too, there was a similarity of technique. Chisholm points out how close Neilson came to the idea of "correspondence" in European poetry - a quality,

Notably in French symbolism, but also in Blake and in some German and Austrian poets. According to the doctrine of poetic correspondences, all things experienced through the senses are ultimately interchangeable: sound can be colour, perfume can be sounds, shy, inner emotion can be music...²

As an example of this technique in Neilson, Chisholm points out the way in which perfume is translated into sound and personal emotion into melody in 'Love's Coming'. As has already been pointed out, this is precisely what McCrae was trying to accomplish, with some success. With McCrae's subscription to the Nietzschean apophthegm so beloved of Lindsay, "I would only believe in a God that knew how to dance", it is to be expected also that he would prefer the more joyful poems of Neilson.

It was for this reason, too, that McCrae admired

Moll:

1 Undated letter from McCrae to Mackaness in National Library of Australia.

2 A.R. Chisholm, The Poems of Shaw Neilson (Angus and Robertson, 1965), p.10.

Moll is superior and keeps his pitch. I admire his love for hard-boiled humanity, and his philosophical reaction to cruelty and death. Styling him 'poet' I use the synonym 'man'.¹

McCrae decried Howarth's poor estimate of Moll, and "immediately saw he hadn't been able to find Moll's pulse".² He went on to compare Moll with Hardy, both having the "same sap" and there being a "temperamental affinity" between the two. But as with Palmer, so with Moll, there is an extravagance of praise amid the critical approval. "My favourite poet forever - Australian or no Australian; loving not only his poetry, but the man himself."³ After reading 'The Critics', McCrae praised the intellectual vigour of Moll:

A man with enuff guts to do a man's work,
and to help his brother. Unusually frank.
So much in love with life that he gets a
kick even out of necessary cruelty. Says
so ecstatically.
Becomes one of us.
And joy was mine though I knew
The roots must die that I bared
And beetle and grub were few
The crow and starling spared.
For the birds with tug and nod.
Dealt death for the need of their lives
And my coulter in the sod
Were shining and sharp as knives.⁴

In the margin alongside the italicised line McCrae had written, "as vital as Scotch balladry".

McCrae responded to Moll's affinity with trees and

- 1 Letter to George Mackaness, 11 November 1940, in National Library of Australia.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Undated letter to Mackaness in National Library of Australia.
- 4 Ibid.

adored his feeling for natural phenomena. He called 'The Chase' a "palpitating poem",¹ quoting freely from it, pointing out the exact balance of the verses, and praising the realism of the poet's portrayal of the chase - "not verses at all, but fox and dog." McCrae found a kindred spirit in Moll with his transparency and love of humour. He quoted to Mackaness from 'The Hide-Buyer' and spoke of it as having:

The humour and humanity of Chaucer; the same aliveness. And, as in all Moll's poems, throwing a last stanza as good as the first to tie the knot. A special feature of Moll's work is that, despite his evident culture, learning never obtrudes. He is never literary.²

The love of life manifested in Moll's poetry also appealed to McCrae. He was especially fond of this characteristic in 'Kookaburras' and went into raptures about "the most brightly imagined comparison - 'among the ghosts at play'. The lusty laugh of Rabelais!!! Ghosts at play! Ghosts at play! Ghosts at play! etc."³ McCrae advised Mackaness to make Moll, "the figure-head and bow-spirit of your book.... the others will be proud to tail the wake behind."⁴

McCrae was also very impressed with the poetry of Peter Hopegood, but he felt that Hopegood, unlike Moll, was over-intellectual. McCrae felt he had "educated

1 Undated letter to Mackaness in National Library of Australia.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid. This was a reference to an anthology of Australian verse Mackaness was compiling. It places this letter 1942 or 1943.

himself beyond my intellect - even, perhaps, beyond his own." McCrae confessed, "In my own stuff I'm superficial, only recording outside animal reactions: whereas Peter keeps the diary of his soul."¹ He particularly liked Hopegood's first book, Austral Pan.

McCrae enthused also over the poetry of Mary Gilmore. "She is the voice of our country, authentic and fallible"(sic) he wrote of her, praising her patriotism and her timelessness:

Our greatest national poet - the one who incites us most to love, and to live for; or - if need be- to die for Australia. Before her time, the Commonwealth had produced many poetical writers; but with the exception of three, perhaps, no poets: scarcely any who had been aware of life as Mary Gilmore is aware of it. And what I am going to say now must have gained the suffrages of such men as John Le Gay Brereton, Christopher Brennan, and our mighty master-critic, A.G. Stephens....

Mary Gilmore belongs to all time. When she has gone, her songs shall still exist. See the third and fourth lines of the second stanza of 'The Flight of the Swans'.

A call that floated out as if it could not die
Which, as the bird made on, hung lone in its
high place. 2

McCrae also greatly admired Mary Gilmore as a person:

You may look into her heart; into her intellect; finding courage, truth and wisdom, tempered with kindness and grace. 3

1 Letter to Nettie Palmer, 12 June 1947, in National Library of Australia.

2 Letter to Mackaness, dated only August, but from internal evidence, in mid-1940's, in National Library of Australia.

3 McCrae, 'Mary Gilmore - Our Great National Poet', The Australian Quarterly, 14 September 1933, p.95.

She reciprocated his admiration, on one occasion doing her best to persuade him to concentrate his talents on producing a children's book:

Why in the name of God and Australia don't
you write a book of children's verse...
Would knock the world sky-high. There isn't
a living soul could do it like you... 1

She also wrote several poems in tribute to McCrae (See Appendix 111).

In spite of his great enthusiasm, however, there must have been some reservations in McCrae's mind about Mary Gilmore's poetry. When nominating her as the outstanding literary figure of the 1940's, he added: "It would have been a harder choice in A.G.S's, Chris Brennan's, Henry Lawson's, Victor Daley's and Randolph Bedford's time." 2

In a further reference to Mary Gilmore, McCrae brought out another element which he desired to see in poetry - that the form of the poem should not intrude upon the content:

Heard Mary Gilmore mention John Curtin over
the wireless, and, afterwards, read a poem
PERFECTLY - read it as a poem has never yet
been read - something spiritual: I seemed
to hear it only in the mind. 3

It is this power of the poet to convey the reader to his world of ideas which which McCrae admired in

- 1 Mary Gilmore to McCrae, 23 April 1947, in Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany, p.51.
- 2 Undated letter to Mackaness in National Library of Australia.
- 3 Letter to Mackaness, 14 July 1945, in National Library of Australia.

Nettie Palmer, also. He said of Nettie's poem, 'Illusion':

'Illusion' held me spell-bound, especially the 'deep tranquility of moonlight restores to every tree and bush its own essence' - so that we seem to move in Plato's world of ideas, instead of in our usual restless world of broken light and glimpses.¹

The reader is to be given a unified and coherent view of creation and is to be led to see beyond the piecemeal and the ephemeral. He is to be enlightened, that is, as well as entertained; to be made more sensitive to the beauties of nature and the real world of ideals and ideas.

But McCrae found it difficult to separate in his mind the author from his work. He allowed his impressions of a person's character to influence the assessment of the merit of his work. This form of judgement he expressed with strength and even malevolence on occasion:

The mere mention of Arthur Adams makes me sick. Adams sold himself to the devil long ago and he has got the devil's reward. His horrible mind has remodelled the boy's face which was his when he was younger, and pleasanter. Money tempted him first. He mucks in an office all day and then jazes till breakfast and office again the whole week through. Even Lofting declares himself in print a 'strumpet for the butcher' so that I begin to think 'who among the whole number of us has honour unblemished?' I fix upon you, and practically you alone, (let me add Norman Lindsay). The result is shown in your work and your work is, of course, the reflection of your character. I pray 'God bless you' for the example....²

- 1 Undated letter to Nettie and Vance Palmer in National Library of Australia.
- 2 Undated letter to Vance Palmer in National Library of Australia.

One of the poets about whom McCrae felt very strongly and positively, and whom he regarded as extremely talented, was R.D. FitzGerald. When FitzGerald won the competition for the best poem submitted in connection with the Sesquicentenary Celebrations, McCrae described his entry as "one of the finest poems I've read in my life." In fact he regretted that he himself had not submitted an entry:

It is so good I wish I had been sporting enough to send something along just for the honour of being beaten by it. Green, Slessor and Howarth were the judges, and now they have so many feathers in their hats they look like 'arriet at 'ampstead' eath'.¹

He was fully aware of the debt FitzGerald owed to his predecessors, taking H.M. Green to task for his failure to recognize this:

By the way, FitzGerald isn't so much an original thinker as H.M.G. seems to believe he is. A kind of masculine Venus, Fitz, rising out of a sea of books - knows Montaigne, Sir Thomas Browne, perhaps Jeremy Taylor; and certainly Browning.

McCrae pointed out to Mackaness how Green had remarked that FitzGerald had the faculty of image-making, exemplifying the description of mountains as a "conflict of shaggy rams of stone", but McCrae showed how this very image had been used by Browning in 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came'. He also showed how several other images used by FitzGerald were derived from Browning

1 Letter to George Mackaness, 15 August 1933, in National Library of Australia.

and from a Scottish ballad.

But these were small criticisms, and McCrae concluded them with "Excuse these jealousies, dear George."¹ Although well aware of FitzGerald's talents, McCrae criticised the rather laboured verse, but granted the necessity to reread much of the poetry to gain its full flavour:

FitzGerald is an individual writer, and a strong thinker; but at present, he is working too hard at poetry to be, naturally, a poet.....FitzGerald opens like an old book rather than like a flower: The acrid flavour goes to the head, with little immediate effect upon the heart; but his emotional approach is camouflaged and gradual, and, once it has been made, is never forgotten.²

This comment shows an insight into FitzGerald's poetry which is still valid for the poetry he has written since this time.

Another of those whose work McCrae appreciated was also included, along with McCrae and FitzGerald, in the Vision magazine.³ This was, of course, Kenneth Slessor:

This man, the most alive of us, whose aching songs create sharp joy, forces acknowledgement. Not too late, but in his primal strength: and, light as Ladas, springing on his way. Instead of time dulling him, he has brightened Time, and held it sunwards, glittering and keen. Poet of beauty and cruelty: he has no compeer to-day.⁴

- 1 Letter to George Mackaness, 15 August, in National Library of Australia.
- 2 The Bulletin, 5 May 1927.
- 3 Vision - A Literary Quarterly, Edited by Frank C. Johnson, J. Lindsay, K. Slessor (The Vision Press, 1923, 24).
- 4 'Kenneth Slessor' in Story-Book Only, p.118.

McCrae recognized Slessor's use of "the bizarre, the odd, the artificial" but granted that after using them a little, he had "thrown them away."

Later, in 1948, McCrae acknowledged the vast change which Slessor had undergone:

Now he tastes the world with well-trained senses; inner eye and ear helping the pen, like Aaronic rod, blossom to poetry. Sometimes there is blood upon the blossom. The pen becomes a horn of his brain....bull-strength behind it - a Taurine poet.¹

Was this the horn, the creative spirit, whose temporary loss in his own case McCrae lamented in 'My unicorn... my unicorn is dead'?² Certainly, Slessor's creativity was not at that time waning, and McCrae examines several examples of his work to verify the fact. He remarked Slessor's ability to superimpose one picture upon another in 'Last Trams' - "the solidity of life...fading under incubi." He admired the effects in this poem:

.....terraces
 Filled with dumb presences,
 Lobbed over mattresses,
 Lusts and repentances,
 Ardours and solaces,
 Passions and hatreds
 And love in brass bedsteads.....
 Lost now in emptiness,
 Deep now in darkness,
 Nothing but nakedness,
 Rails like a ribbon
 And sickness of carbon,
 Dying in distances.³

1 Story-Book Only, p.118.

2 'Lament', Best Poems of Hugh McCrae, p.11.

3 Story-Book Only, p.119.

McCrae also admired Slessor's depiction of character - especially that of Joe in 'Five Bells', and the descriptive power of "a walk on a lunatic night":

in slab-dark,
So dark you bore no body, had no face,
But a sheer voice that rattled out of air.

He praised the terrible finale of 'Five Bells' but found the:

Best of this best book is 'Sleep', which might be bound up with poems by Donne, and not sink. It has affinity with Donne's work; but, if the poets' birth dates could be exchanged, the affinity would remain - suspicionless.¹

Again, this is an extravagant statement, but does, one can agree, contain a good deal of truth. This poem is like Donne - but most critics would not have expressed their opinion in such a way. McCrae is the poet speaking, rather than the critic. But this is the same quality in Slessor which A.D. Hope wrote of as the:

gift for the expression of the essential texture, shape, character and sensual impact of objects which allowed him to transform the merely ornamental imagist effects of the school into something different, a revelation of the metaphysical essence of the sensual.²

McCrae had great hopes for a long creative period for Slessor, and must have been disappointed in his later years by the lack of poetry from his pen. He told Mackaness in 1938:

1 Ibid, p.120.

2 A.D. Hope, 'Slessor 20 Years After', The Bulletin, 1 June 1963.

Kenneth Slessor is my present hope. Outsiders have so little to go by, are unable to judge; but I know, and Ken knows. He's young yet, and has enough sense not to imagine he'll go to bed on Monday and wake up celebrated on Tuesday. There are poems of his, a whole volume full, yet unprinted, ready to establish him, one of, if not our very greatest.¹

He expressed the same opinion of Slessor's worth when answering a request for an estimate of Australian poets from an American visitor in 1954.²

But if McCrae liked the poetry of FitzGerald and Slessor, when he disliked some verse, as he did that of Baylebridge, he did so vehemently. Of Baylebridge he wrote:

There's not one whit of nature (as nature is) in the stuff he writes. Chaucer wouldn't choose to wander in any field of his; or to kiss any woman printed in his book. Some curly bits of rhymed and ill-digested learning. Poetry(?) by the lump. The high priest of syntheticism; he has no claim on Parnassus - and his diffidence becomes farcical.³

He followed up this savage assessment by advising Mackaness, a little later, to leave Baylebridge out of his anthology.⁴

With his own love of pastoral themes, it is no wonder McCrae leapt to the defence of Robert Herrick when a luckless editor referred to him as a "garden-poet". It seems that McCrae, greatly admiring Herrick, had placed

- 1 Letter to Mackaness, 1 July 1954, in National Library of Australia. The query was from Dr. Porter of Oregon.
- 2 Letter to Mackaness, 31 March 1938, in National Library of Australia.
- 3 Letter to Mackaness, 23 August 1940, in National Library of Australia.
- 4 Letter to Mackaness, 11 November 1940, in National Library of Australia.

three stanzas of Herrick's poetry among his own, on three different pages. The editor accused, "You got that out of a quotation book!" and upon McCrae's confession of its source (from Herrick's poetry, not from a quotation book), Herrick was labelled as a "garden poet". In making a public confession of his sin, McCrae made crime pay by making a spirited defence of Herrick:

People who have read Herrick as thoroughly as I have cannot fail to have enjoyed him - his simplicity, his kindness of heart, his mirth, his wonderful command of language, and, above all, his vitality, that would need a whole battery of opposite qualities to keep them in anything like subjection.¹

McCrae deplored the fact that the power to create a vivid depiction of events, moods, qualities, now rests with music rather than with poetry. In Herrick's day, however, poets had this power, and to prove it McCrae quoted Herrick's word-picture of the impatient bridegroom:

See where she comes: and smell how all the
street
 Breathes vineyards and pomegranates;
 O how sweet!
 As a fir'd altar is each stone,
 Perspiring pounded cynamon;
 The Phoenix nest,
 Built up of odours, burneth in her breast

Hymen, O Hymen! tread the sacred ground;
 Shew thy white feet and head with Marjoram
crown'd;
 Mount up thy Flames, and let thy Torch
 Display the Bridegroom in the porch, in his
desires

¹ Red Page, The Bulletin, 14 September 1905.

These examples of McCraean criticism serve to provide some of the criteria which he had applied to his own writing. A lack of confidence in his own ability led him to denigrate much of his own work. He freely admitted that a poet could judge his own poetry. He explained it to Vance Palmer this way:

It is quite possible, and also quite justifiable to have an honest estimate of one's own worth and so I think a poet may, without any loss of lustre, accept a praise from a proper source and at the same time admit that there is reason for the praise, just as he should be ready to admit the reality of the sunlight on the flowers on a hillside.¹

When Vance Palmer congratulated him on the publication of Satyrs and Sunlight, McCrae thanked him, describing the book itself as "a book of words, essentially words, with perhaps in two places a mark above anything I could touch so long as my mind was its own instrument. I think there might be deftness in it."² On this same book, McCrae expressed forthright opinions to A.G. Stephens that he would make a more stringent selection if he were to have a second chance:

Verses I would now exclude are 'Earth Unto Earth', 'The Ragged Book' and most of 'The Bridegroom' though of this last I still like the 1st, 8th and 9th verses, and, in a slighter degree, the wind-up stanza. 'Evening' is (without being the best) perhaps the most poetical. In fact the whole book is more one

1 Letter to Vance Palmer, 3 March 1920, in National Library of Australia.

2 Undated letter to Vance Palmer in National Library of Australia.

of exalted prose than of verse at all.
 'The Prisoner' is, I think, the most complete, the simplest and least faulty. 'Lament' is good.... 'Voices of the World' not bad. I can do much better next time. ¹

But when "next time" came, McCrae regarded Colombine as less satisfactory from a poetic viewpoint. He described it as a "handkerchiefless book" and "a horrible drop-down from Satyrs and Sunlight".² When Nettie Palmer congratulated him upon it, McCrae replied:

I'm glad you think the new book is not a step down, although my own feelings still tell me that it is. For one thing, it was much harder for me to produce and so it loses spontaneity. Again, I have been conscious all along of the unevenness which Nettie and Vance Palmer have mentioned. The difficulty was to supply enough material to justify Angus and Robertson in publishing the book. If I had been sufficiently rich to print Colombine at my own expense, a good many verses must have been jettisoned. The volume is worth 12 out of 28. ³

McCrae was happier with the 1939 Poems and bridled when this volume was criticised. He wrote to 'Kim' Mackenzie: "Adam Mackay must have been drunk when he implied that this book lacked some of the fire of the first." As was usually the case, however, he passed off the hurt with

1 Letter to A.G. Stephens, 27 December 1909, in Mitchell Library.

2 Letter to Vance Palmer, October 1920, in National Library of Australia.

3 Letter to Nettie and Vance Palmer, 10 December 1920, in National Library of Australia. The "Chosen Tribes" are 'Columbine', 'Enigma', 'Sorceress', 'The Music of the Moon', 'Fairy Story', 'Earth', 'June Morning', 'Song of the Rain', 'Down the Dim Years', 'Homecoming', 'The Mouse' and 'Winds'.

humour. "Actually the last book is the first - according to Biblical tradition. So, it becomes a complete insult, becos this remark placed Poems lower down the scale than another I hadn't written." ¹

This doubt about the standard of his work reached a low point with the publication of Forests of Pan. This book contained some of the original poems from the Fanfrolico Satyrs and Sunlight which had been omitted in Poems. Howarth stated in the Foreword that critics had been at a loss to understand why so much that was worthy of inclusion had been omitted, and so this new book was intended to fill the gap. McGrae's reaction to this proceeding is worth quoting at length:

Dear Jarge: I'm in a spot of trouble. Certain verses of mine, un-poetical and hardly fit for general publication, written during a callow period, long ago (and, since that time, cast out by me and forgotten) have been collected by friend Guy under the title Forests of Pan. This collection will shortly be on sale. No blame attached to Howarth, who told me his intention, and sent me proofs: but I had been so perturbed this year that I let him go free and lost interest in the matter.

Yesterday I received an advance copy; and, now, after reading it, I don't think I shall have the spirit ever to write again. At 68, my sins are beginning to find me out; and, although I shan't care what the papers might say, I do care, very much, for the opinion of people I like.

All I ask of you is not to buy the book, not

¹ Letter to Kenneth Mackenzie, 25 August 1939, in Fisher Library.

to borrow it, not to read it..not to recommend it....The verses appear, most of 'em, a poor lot... and a few towards the end are far enough under the tail to be disgusting. ¹

As far as McCrae was concerned, then, he was not very proud of this volume. Nor had his opinion changed the following year, when he stated:

I still turn away from (though tell it not in Gath) R.G's selection of my verses
Forests of Pan. I call it 'Excreto Librorum!?'²

All in all, McCrae's strengths did not include a wide knowledge of the poetry of his contemporaries, and perhaps his critical ideas on poetry, as with his creativeness, were not fully thought through. Not only were his views often obscured by his impressions and reactions to the poet's personality, but also part of the reason for his critical shortcomings was simply that he preferred to read prose. Once, when asked for his opinion of Louis Lavater, he replied, "I haven't seen the Lavater book: but, then, I seldom read poetry. I prefer the old prose of Ascham beyond the best metrical stuff of the last two centuries."³ Neither did his interests range widely into fiction. Mackaness once asked him to list the twenty-five greatest works of fiction. He replied:

- 1 Letter to Mackaness, 1944, in National Library of Australia.
- 2 Letter to Mackaness, 17 January 1945, in National Library of Australia.
- 3 Letter to Rupert Atkinson, undated, in Fisher Library.

As for the 25 greatest writers of fiction, Australian or otherwise, since I became 18 I batten on essays and biographies; and the very, very best biography (barring Boswell's Johnson) I've ever read is one of Admiral Bligh by George Mackaness; for this he deserves to be knighted four times every year. ¹

Yet, when a subject in literature did come within his field of interest he could be remarkably knowledgeable about it. This was verified by Kenneth Slessor, who knew McCrae very well, in an interview with the present writer. He remembered quite vividly the extraordinary detail McCrae knew about some of the lesser-known writers, especially of the Elizabethan period.² McCrae was extremely fond of Aubrey's Lives and followed up the biographical details of some of Aubrey's subjects meticulously. As an example of his keenness for this type of detail, McCrae once wrote to Rupert Atkinson in great excitement. "I have discovered, through my own researches, (and I don't think its ever been printed), that Polidore, Byron's scatter-brained doctor was Uncle to Dante Gabriel Rossetti." ³ He repeated with glee snippets of gossip about the literary famous. Concerning Edward Gibbon he wrote:

- 1 Letter to Mackaness, 11 January 1952, in National Library of Australia.
- 2 Chaplin (A McCrae Miscellany, p.71) has in his possession seven exercise books which McCrae called his Commonplace Books, wherein McCrae copied extracts from authors he had read. He regarded it as a "banking system" to initiate his own inspiration during lean periods.
- 3 Letter to Atkinson, August 1921, in Fisher Library.

Edward Gibbon, one of my famous milch-cows, also, is represented, with a face like bags of fat - by the way, in another work (by a contemporary) I am told he stank! - yet he remains the wittiest, learnedest, and altogether fascinatingest antiquary of his time.¹

When considering McCrae's critical views, however, it is just as well to keep some mental reservations, for he was not sure that the critic's task included the ranking of writers according to merit, although on occasion he succumbed to the temptation. It is well known that Hartley Grattan regarded McCrae as a very minor poet, mainly because of his lack of social content. Commenting on this, McCrae wrote to Mary Gilmore, affirming that if this was true, then local critics had erred:

I can't see how H.G.'s conclusions can alter the horizon... We have already the dicta of our native born critics... A.G. Stephens, Nettie Palmer, H.M. Green and so forth. To accept what Grattan says would mean jettisoning everything they have written, their estimates obliterated, and their whole work disvalued.... The idea of elevating one poet above another is like putting a tulip before a rose, or vice versa; when both might be equally good per se. Chacun son goût.²

Yet in avoiding this offence, McCrae often fell into a vice equally bad - that of over-generalising. With his great love of spontaneity and his dislike of mechanical effects in verse-making which deprived poetry of its

- 1 Undated letter to Mackaness in National Library of Australia.
- 2 Letter to Mary Gilmore reproduced in Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany, p.58.

inspiration and spontaneity, he often used this as the sole criterion of his criticism. This is noticeable in an early comparison made between writers in New South Wales (Northern) and those in Victoria. With his many changes between the states, McCrae had ample opportunity to make comparisons. He wrote to Stephens:

Split a Northern poet and you are at least rewarded with the wonder of a human vivisection. Open an O'Dowd, a Strong (they snap like watch cases) you will find nothing but wheels inside, wheels and springs. Keeping time, time, time, perfect rhythmic rhyme, but never hastening or pausing. They are entirely without emotion; the coming of death or of winter, of life or of summer has no effect upon them. Joy will not make one steely click less steely - - - sorrow cannot disorganise their perfect mechanisms. Out of the mouth of the Northern poet we hear nature suddenly vocal, the interwhispering flowers, the steady chant of the river to warm stones,.....and if the syllables do not beat equal measure, it is consolation to know that the sagas of nature are loveable largely on account of this very ruggedness.¹

It is to McCrae's credit that he applied these dicta to his own poetry.

ii Story-Book Only.

It is true to say that McCrae's prose is an worthy of examination as his poetry, although obviously one could take the view that the success or otherwise of the

1 Letter to A.G. Stephens, 23 July 1910, in Mitchell Library.

prose could not affect the status of the man as a poet.

As a contributor to The Bulletin put it:

A poet is under no obligation to write prose at all; and McCrae has written much more than this book (Story-Book Only) would indicate; for, like Byron and like Keats, he has expressed the full richness of his personality in his letters. Every letter he has written is in style, wit, flash of imagination and even in calligraphy a little work of art and it is impossible to imagine anybody who has ever received a letter from McCrae destroying it - these will undoubtedly be published one day to provide, along with Story-Book Only and the legend of his personality, bulk and reinforcement for his poetry; a stone for the flame to dance on.¹

While it is not the purpose of this study to examine the letters except where they throw light on McCrae's personality or literary creation, it is germane to examine briefly the main body of prose assembled by R.G. Howarth in Story-Book Only. This collection contains four fairly well defined classes of prose. Firstly there is the personal prose (biographical and autobiographical) contained mainly in My Father, and My Father's Friends and My Friends, and I. Then there is the imaginary-personal, comprising The Du Poissesey Anecdotes; thirdly the imaginative, mainly stories from Imaginings; and lastly a descriptive and discursive section, containing some critical material upon contemporary writers, particularly Australian literary artists. The whole is

1 'Hugh McCrae's Prose', signed only 'S', The Bulletin, 6 April 1949. R.D. FitzGerald is at present, 1967, engaged on such a collection.

illustrated with sketches done with ink so skilfully that they alone would justify the price of the volume for any reasonably perceptive purchaser. The vast literary background of McCrae can be seen in perspective by a reading of this prose. In reminiscences of these men, McCrae gives us a living glimpse into the literary life of the end of the last century and the beginning of this, which makes these characters more real to those who know them only through their work.

There are also some critical insights among these biographical sketches which are worth recording. A poem of Richard Hengist Horne is quoted, and it is recounted how Edgar Allan Poe praised Horne's poetry in the 1840's. Horne's literary relationships with Kendall and with Elizabeth Barrett Browning (with whom he collaborated in a work of literary criticism The New Spirit of the Age) are given, as well as biographical details, such as the origin of the "Orion" nickname which later became part of the poet's name (as much as the "Hengist", which was also a later acquisition). The whole essay is presented in a diverting fashion and with an amused sympathy which makes us admire the man, in spite of an arrogance, satirized by George Gordon McCrae's quoting Charles Wells, "God is in heaven, Master - with your leave!"

We read of the boyhood of Kendall and of Adam

Lindsay Gordon, of James Hingston, author of The Australian Abroad, who, McCrae demonstrates, "prigged" some of his work from Sir Thomas Browne's The Garden of Cyrus or the Quincunx. George Lambert, Sir John Longstaff, Dan Green, Victor Daley, Bernard O'Dowd and many other Australians are brought to life before our eyes as people, as well as artists.

Autobiographical accounts prove that even at a mature age (McCrae was in his seventies when the book was published, although much of the material was written earlier), McCrae had an insight, perceptive beyond the ordinary, into the child-mind. The reader feels the terror of the young child being taught to swim by being forced to hold on to his schoolmaster's neck while he dived into the water and swam out to the deep section of the pool:

But Mr Swish - miserable swine - taking advantage of my proud happiness, slid his head and shoulders out of my embrace, and swam several yards away.
 'Swim, Toppet!' he cried. 'Swim!' Almost as if an octopus had seized me I went to the bottom. Pain glittered through my body, agonizing every nerve, every fibre. No earthly signal could reach me. I suppose I woke up in the bathing-shed; woke up, and was dried and clothed. But I haven't any recollection of it. All I remember is finding myself, numb, in a railway carriage, going - somewhere.....
 That is why I have never learned to swim; that is why, at the age of 66, I stop, high up, on the grass at Seven Shilling Beach, watching the airman's wife sluice her

raw baby, while the thermometer registers 109 degrees.¹

Other autobiographical material helps to add a new dimension to our knowledge of the mature poet. Punishment for childish mistakes during a music lesson; recollections of ancient relatives (especially his grandmother, who gave him his first book); fights with boyhood neighbours, and reactions to early literary experiences unfold before us vividly and grippingly. And as the poet grows old, we have reminiscences of Camden, of his experience with the Granville Barker Company, of literary favourites, especially of Blake and of Sterne - the immortal Sterne whom McCrae admired so much that there are little bits of Sterne right throughout the collection - the inset word (129 and 138), the mock-censorious (the baker wiped the loaf of bread across the seat of his tr----rs), the fable of Breloque, favourite mare of His Majesty, the odd figure (a square) standing out in the middle of the text, and the "Tippetty-Toodilly" mood of Harcourt's friend, Du Puisse.

All these varied subjects are treated in a style which owes something to the essays of Steele and Addison but which is still peculiarly McCrae's. As Norman Lindsay put it:

1 'The Boy Who Never Learned to Swim', Story-Book Only, p. 82.

That freakish and exuberant fancy which is the peculiar charm of his prose was really an intrinsic quality of Hugh himself, expressed by an irrepressible surge of humour within him at the insensately funny side of life's ponderosities.¹

There is a succinctness, a staccato effect, about some of the essays, yet others achieve the vividness and sweep of the poetry. Notice the thumbnail sketches of some of his father's friends - the genuine humanity in 'John Shillinglaw', for instance.

McCrae has the art of using unusual similes. A boy of eight, he walks into a library, being "overawed by gigantic furniture suggestive of palaeolithic pieces transported from Stonehenge." A friend, Quodling, is seen with a perambulator, and "unconscious of my approach, he moved like a fly with its nose against a pane; as if some transparent medium stood between himself and the things which he would never be able to reach." And a postmaster "looks maliciously at the customer while he scratches his stamp book like some Governmental pelican searching for blood in its breast."

Throughout there is an effervescent humour, poking gentle fun at human frailty, as in the picture of Doctor Wylie, a friend of Kendall and of Marcus Clarke, who drank tea through the spout of the McCrae tea-pot, much to the disgust of McCrae's mother. There is the bushman,

1 Bohemians of the Bulletin (Angus and Robertson, 1965), p. 118.

on short rations, who cuts off and eats his dog's tail. Because the dog makes off, his master whistles him:

While he did so he grew aware of a curious motion about his interior; a motion which coincided with the notes of his call. From the first 'pew-pew!' to the last, this mysterious something vacillated inside him.

When he stopped, it stopped.
When he began; it began also.

Then it dawned upon him that this must be Shag's tail, signalling affectionate answers. Because the result was uncomfortable he never whistled any more; or if, by accident, he did, a gruff 'Lie down, Sir!' brought him effectual peace.¹

There is pathos in Shillinglaw's sudden summoning of George Gordon because he felt he was dying ("Come at once. Going out with the ebb-tide") and poignancy in the note Kendall wrote about Adam Lindsay Gordon's funeral ("At 4 p.m. this afternoon. I haven't the money to spare, or I would attend. Indeed I am penniless. Yours truly, Henry Kendall").²

At times in the essays there is the same ghoulish touch found in some of the poetry. 'Johnson Frustrated' begins:

He disappeared down the hollow of the tree. His neck broken in two places.
No noise. No blood.

And now, Dawson, having shovelled about eight pounds of dirt on top of his head, banged the spade (erstwhile toolbox, empty), and returned to the car.

1 From 'Adventure', Story-Book Only, p. 134.

2 Ibid, p. 27.

The cumulative effect of this machine-gun-like writing is surrealistic, noticeable in this essay and in the mock-poetry of 'The European Bud-Bird School' in which "Nine utterly unrepresentative poets of the older world: their lives and their works are briefly summarized". The first of these is Sergei Maikaimessovitch, and the name sets the tone of a most unusual piece of fun, satirizing literary criticism. There is a mock-imitation of Lewis Carroll in:

Fair schneider-duk, I see you swim
 Five fathoms from the shore,
 Yet grief so doth my vision dim
 It seems a hundred more. etc.

Or one might refer to the poem written by "Oghao Oghao, although not yet born", and entitled 'Highbrowsia':

Bring out Boon's parasol that flames
 Brighter than Peshawar, when James
 The Soldan's thirty thousand sons
 Emptied their just as many guns
 Into the Bang-tsee-yang! God wot
 What gods gave aid; yet, in the swing,
 Merlin to Maskeline threw King,
 Queen, Bishop, Knight, and humble Pawn!
 Wit in a cap of bells, clean shorn,
 Shingled and shaven, pricked his ass,
 Over the ears, in July grass!

This is "learned rubbish"; but, as with the other examples of various styles, McCrae shows a rare skill and wit.

The lyricism so characteristic of the poetry is visible in the prose also. 'Music in the Heart' is a case in point:

I went up, on a magpie's trill, high
 into heaven; and saw Camden under me....
 There was the river nibbling its way through
 a convoluted country: and there were the
 roads stretched out in every direction -
 roads to Cobbity, Werombi, Appin and Picton.
 Bells cast in England chimed from the Church
 of St. Johns; and their sound drew my eyes
 towards the spire, with its related cypresses
 standing in the sun.

Returning to earth, I chanced upon a garden
 where the fruit trees were completely under
 blossom; so that if I touched a bough with
 my finger, millions of bees growled at me -
 even as 'Africa Speaks'.

How beautiful the butterfly, or fairy hand-
 kerchief, faintly undulating above the leaves
 and flowers of a peach!

But, when the lemons presented their breasts
 to me, in imitation of Chinese brides coming
 between lattices of chlorophyll green, I ex-
 claimed to them: 'Ky-ahng Fo-mee-shi-ko
 Ming-sha-lee Lee-sha-chang.'

With it all, there is a gossipy character about the
 prose, but the vividness belies this. The effect is too
 abrupt and pointed to be due to chance. And through it
 all shines McCrae's breezy personality, his love of words,
 his sympathy for mankind in all his strengths and weak-
 nesses, his poking fun at those who take themselves too
 seriously (see the delightful take-off on Footnotes¹),
 his occasional grinding of a personal axe², but with
 every essay, informative, witty and remarkably entertain-
 ing writing.

1 See pages 279, 282-3, 375 amongst others.

2 See 'Bugles in the Bush' and 'Grave Epigrams'.

In Story-Book Only McCrae reveals a surprisingly deep knowledge of mythological history, although occasionally he gets caught out. Kenneth Slessor is portrayed "as light as Ladas, springing on his way"¹, another character is as meritorious as Apollo Belvedere; a lover is as desirable as Venus and as chaste as Diana. We meet "the great Pelasgic Dodonean Jove",² Charons ("members of the well-known transport family") and the Delphic Oracle, but when this fascinating volume of McCrae's is considered closely, it is found that there are as many Biblical as mythological references (and no one, to my knowledge, has accused McCrae of being a religious writer), and above all, by way of design and subject, it contains far more literary allusions and references than these two combined.³

The accuracy of several of the mythological references has been questioned on occasion. Rupert Atkinson took McCrae to task for referring to Mars instead of Vulcan as possessing an anvil, and decries the mention of Apollo as the god of Love. And Atkinson adds, "In these days the use of mythology is academic rather than spontaneous."⁴

1 P. 118.

2 P. 278.

3 See Appendix IV for a chronological list of these.

4 Letter from Rupert Atkinson to McCrae, 2 September 1924, in Mitchell Library.

This remark of Atkinson's sums up the position fairly well. Along with the real, spontaneous, effervescent McCrae there is a bookish, pseudo-academic McCrae. It is the operation of this last characteristic which "dates" him and which has led to a decline in the reading of his work. This decline has unfortunately meant that the quintessential McCrae, the poet and prose writer who has the talent for work of quality, has been overlooked, and of course, the small volume of the good quality militates against his popularity also.

The Du Poissey Anecdotes¹ have been seen as largely personal memoirs "tricked out in the 17th century (or 18th century)manner" but they can be enjoyed immensely irrespective of their personal,biographical content, and without any worry about their genuineness. Their spirit is pure McCrae, with all his enchantment. As an early critic saw this prose,"McCrae builds himself a ridge of anachronisms and sits astride it shaking with laughter and prodding every pretentiousness that he sees or remembers."² Through all the anecdotes shine the radiance and vitality of an irrepressible spirit of youthfulness and joy. In fact the whole of Story-Book Only represents

- 1 The manuscript exists of a 'new' series of Du Poissey, compiled by McCrae in the early 1950's but unpublished. See Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany, p.43.
- 2 Hilary Lofting, 'The Diversity of Hugh McCrae', The Triad, 10 November 1924, p.28.

McCrae in his lighter and more fanciful aspects. Green described it as:

A bubbling over of high spirits and fantastic inconsequent humour; a compound of witty absurdities, beaten up into whimsical and airy froth and varying between prose that is wholly fantastic and prose in which real life is given a colouring of fantasy.¹

It is true that in the reminiscences and imaginings of Story-Book Only McCrae entertains; but he reveals himself in the process of drawing attention to the universal elements of the human personality. The contradictoriness and vanity of Du Poissey; his pseudo-involvement in countless exploits and social happenings; his satiric wit and humour are worthy of record by Pepys or Boswell. This universality was approved of wholeheartedly by Lindsay's Creative Effort:

Revelation must consist in being able to reveal an element of universal passion and emotion. It must touch the master impulses of humanity; the genuine passions and desires which constitute mind itself as we understand that defective organ on earth. It will be apparent that Pepys and Boswell do succeed in this effort of consciousness; Pepys by exposing himself and Boswell by exposing Johnson. It is quite as a gratuitous and noble generosity that in the act of exposing Johnson, Boswell also reveals himself.²

But as well as Pepys and Boswell, there are other antecedents to Story-Book Only. Howarth saw it roughly on the model of Spence's Anecdotes with likenesses in style to Aubrey's Lives. The influence of Sterne's

1 H.M. Green, 'Australian Literature, 1948', in Southerly, X p. 136.

2 Creative Effort, p. 259.

'Remarkable Story of Landindinius' can be discerned, as well as overtones of Baron Munchausen (by 'Jumping John') and Pickwick at Bath.¹

In spite of these similarities, there is no denying that McCrae has added to Story-Book Only elements expressive of his particular personality. He turns with equal facility to deft, humorous touches or to poetic images and cadences; to curious historical references and to grim tales. These effects are achieved by a compression or concentration in sentences and phrases. Sometimes a single word serves as a sentence. Always there is a greater use of punctuation than is usual. There is a sparseness of words to express the ideas to be conveyed so that the full effect of much of the writing cannot be gained in one reading. One must read some pieces over and over again to savour their full essence. Howarth compares this process of distillation and compression to Rossetti's "condensed or hinted order" of the imaginative mind.²

And along with the forceful word-pictures are the delightful pen and pencil sketches, vibrant with power and fun. For the illustration on page 156 McCrae, "embezzled the top of a gentleman's head from a hair-wash advt. and captured all his bunglement and mixed

1 R.G. Howarth, 'The Du Poisse Anecdotes', Southerly, X (1949) p. 17.

2 R.G. Howarth, 'The Prose of Hugh McCrae', Southerly, XV (1954) p. 213.

ideas." Its strange origin can be seen by turning the drawing upside down.¹ The total effect is one of the most homogeneous books ever produced in Australia.

Lionel Lindsay, remarking on this unity, stated:

It is a pleasure to see an artist, who is primarily a great poet, extemporize with grace and gaiety and link the antics of his creatures with his text in such a way that is harmonious and indivisible.²

While it is true that McCrae's poetry produces few characters who have life beyond the reading of the poem (Red John is one of the few exceptions), the characters in the prose are very much alive. The ridiculous yet lovable Du Poissey and his foil, Harcourt, are personalities in their own right; so is the sinister Mr Maggendorf and the unforgettable victim of 'Execution: Sydney, 18--'.

McCrae's work would be memorable if it rested on the prose alone, for the facile control he exercised over his prose writing showed his mastery of the English language. It is rather a pity that this control was not exercised to the same extent in the poetry.

1 See Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany, p.63.

2 Lionel Lindsay, 'The Artist in Hugh McCrae' in Southerly, XI (1950), p.34.

Chapter VI.

Conclusion.

McCrae received a rather belated recognition of his real contribution to Australian literature when in 1953 he was awarded the Order of the British Empire. As well as accepting it proudly as a personal tribute, he regarded it as an honour which added lustre to Australian letters.

From about this time McCrae ended his solitary existence at his beloved "Shackeau" at Camden and stayed with his daughters in turn, spending considerable time with Huntley at Wahroonga. Great was the sense of loss when he passed away 17 February 1958.

It is possible to regard McCrae's achievement from several points of view. This "wittiest, most companionable, most unexpected of men" had an imaginative bent to his personality, which, influenced by his literary background and environment, spiced with a reading within a considerable field of interest, resulted in a wide variety of achievement in art, prose and poetry. As Howarth wrote:

He (McCrae) is able to range in spirit from Ancient Egypt to modern Japan, from medieval France to 18th Century England, from fairyland to Camden, from the company of Pan the universal God of old Greece, to the Bower of Bliss; or to dwell in all simultaneously.¹

But range of interest is not enough if quality of

1 R.G. Howarth, 'Hugh McCrae as Lyrist' Southerly, XVII (1956), p. 143.

achievement is not also present in good measure. As one who agreed with the Lindsayan dogma as expounded in Creative Effort, McCrae might well be judged by the canons of this doctrine, as well as by more universally accepted criteria.

As for Alexander Pope, so for Lindsay, the first moral obligation of the artist, musician or poet, is 'Know Thyself'.

Self-revelation is the basic profundity of all great art, for it is the only basis on which Life may become a governed process in self-knowledge.¹

It may be the Individual Revelation, as in Boswell, or the Universal Revelation, as in Shakespeare, but in either form, it serves as the prime function and purpose of all creative art. The artist who struggles to achieve this revelation, according to his highest vision, and to the fullest possible extend of his powers, Lindsay regarded as wearing or portraying his True Mask (using Yeats' terminology, which Lindsay freely acknowledged). However, he who failed to do this, who lacked sincerity, who neglected to make full use of his talents according to the highest aesthetic ideals, wore a False Mask.² How did McCrae measure up to these requirements?

1 Norman Lindsay in The Australian Outline, December 1933, p. 3.

2 Norman Lindsay, The Scribblings of an idle Mind, (Lansdowne, 1966)p. 31.

It is clear that Norman Lindsay thought very highly of McCrae's work, especially his poetry:

To the few for whom poetry is a living element in the mind's development, Hugh McCrae's work takes its irrefutable place with the great lyric utterances this world possesses.¹

He saw McCrae evidencing the revival of creativity in the Australian scene, symptomatic of the pendulum's swinging towards the vital end of the continuum of Inertia and Energy which Lindsay regarded as an infallible sign of man's progress towards creative self-knowledge. This conclusion he reached on account of McCrae's lyrical joy, his view of women, and his zestful impulse manifest in a full-blooded vitality and gusto for life's adventure. The Inertia of the European art and literary scene reflected by the degradation of the feminine image and the continued abstraction and artificiality in art, poetry, prose and music, was almost universal, in Lindsay's view:

America and Australia are the only two countries which did not submit to Inertia. By the novels of J. Gould Cozzens alone, exalting the desirability of woman in perfect prose, and by the love lyrics of Hugh McCrae, and by Douglas Stewart's verse play 'The Golden Lover' in perfect poetry, we know that the tide of Energy is rising in America and Australia.²

1 Norman Lindsay in The Bulletin, 20 September 1923.

2 Norman Lindsay, The Scribblings of an Idle Mind, (Lansdowne, 1966) p. 141.

McCrae was important for Lindsay, then, both on account of his concrete achievement and because he was a harbinger of the playing out of Lindsay's theoretical forecasts about the aesthetic tide. This achievement can be further understood, when it is considered that poetry, at its best, was:

The highest expression of human consciousness, and therefore poets are endowed with an ultramundane knowledge of the direction of man's soul. They do not put it in metaphysical terminologies, but into the imagery of their poetry, and those who can read poetry are always aware of that sudden flash of illumination which an image may evoke; and which carries with it a conviction of profound knowledge that refuses to formulate itself into the pedantic confirmation of speech.¹

There is little doubt that some of McCrae's poetry, especially the early poems, provides such insights. So, too, does the prose of Story-Book Only, both in its revelation of real character and in the cleverly stylized idiosyncrasies of Du Poisse and his friends.

But there is doubt about McCrae's use of the Yeatsian True Mask. The jollity in McCrae's poetry, indeed the very lyricism, was as highly contrived as was the face McCrae showed to the world. The muscularity in his poetry is achieved only when the more thoughtful, more serious McCrae comes through, usually in spite of the poet's control, as in 'Morning' but

1 Ibid, p. 60.

sometimes because of it, as in 'Ambuscade' or 'The Murder Night'. This is why McCrae always posed such a problem for Lindsay. McCrae seemed to be open, sincere, wearing the True Mask, but all the time, especially in the later poetry, there was a brittleness and a skilfully concealed contrivance about the poetic expression - the Perfect Mask. This is not to say that McCrae set out to confuse deliberately, to be insincere or to sing with a voice not his own. Rather, it is true, I think, that McCrae deliberately subordinated his shyness, his sense of man's mortality, the dark aspects of his personality, and sang with the soul of the McCrae who was evident and accessible to the world. This is why, too, the disintegrative elements in McCrae's personality, and in his poetry, becoming more difficult to control as time passed, led to the later poetry's loss of spontaneity, to its epigrammatic terseness and fragmentariness. Lindsay assessed McCrae on the performance of Satyrs and Sunlight, undoubtedly his best, and at this stage McCrae did seem to fit Lindsay's theories and the dicta of the Vision school. As Judith Wright pointed out:

It was to Hugh McCrae that Vision tacitly owed most of its notions of what poetry ought to be, and it published or republished several of McCrae's poems, both in the journal and in the anthology of Australian contemporary verse which the Vision group collected.¹

1 In Preoccupation in Australian Poetry, (Oxford, 1966), p.131.

And again it is true as Wright perceived:

But in fact, examining the 'domineering' ideas of the journal, it is clear enough that the poetry that Vision imagined itself to be seeking to encourage in the present and the future had already been written by McCrae, and that the Lindsays were, in fact, theorizing after the event.¹

Poems like 'Ambuscade' and 'The Deathless Gods' had contained both the affirmation and the implicit criticism of Lindsay's theories. Having followed this approach, the younger Vision poets found themselves in a "kind of repetitive impasse where no advance in any direction was possible".² This happened, although to a lesser extent, to McCrae himself. Jack Lindsay quotes a letter to R.D.FitzGerald from Hugh McCrae, commenting on a remark FitzGerald made comparing McCrae's centaurs to rocking-horses. McCrae wrote:

My rocking-horses too, which you imply stop in one place while flesh-an'-blud nags flash like Hell to the post.... The worst is, the bastards keep on rocking. They keep on rocking millions of hours after the race has been won. How would you, loathing them, like to see them tippetty-upping and downing all thro' your life, in sunshine and rain?³

It was the theories of Vision, however, which led nowhere, especially its attitude to women, and this attitude McCrae himself had, manifesting the view, as in

1 Ibid, p.132.

2 Ibid, p.133.

3. Ibid, p.133.

'The Phantom Mistress', 'The End of Desire' and most other poems in which women appear, that woman is merely the object of man's desires. The emphasis is always on the external attributes of women, beautifully and sensuously described it is true, but included among them is no life in their own right. McCrae's women are symbols and means of creation and nothing more, and are often destroyed violently.

Certainly, then, it is true to say that nothing McCrae did after the publication of Vision or of Creative Effort showed that he had changed his course to accommodate to Lindsay's ideas - his direction had been already determined. He did reveal certain aspects of man's character to him (his mortality, his sources of happiness and so on), but again not in the detail which would warrant the conclusion that the Lindsay ethos was his guiding light. It was Lindsay, rather than McCrae who drew the fire of the wowsers, preaching the gospel of freedom of expression in all its forms.

McCrae, then, exemplified Lindsay's theories mainly because he was writing that way before these theories were formulated. In only a very limited way is it true to say that he deserved recognition as the poet who successfully applied them through the poetic medium.

When McCrae's achievement is examined in the wider context of Australian poetry, it is important to remember

that before World War 1, his poetry showed promise of giving new direction and impetus to the whole body of poetic expression, and with Neilson, of adding joy to what had been fairly serious, solemn and self-conscious. But it was to be Christopher Brennan with his Poems 1913, rather than McCrae, who put Australia on the world poetic map. After the first fine flush of Satyr and Sunlight, the promise they contained faded, to be recalled only through flashes of brilliance and poetic inspiration from isolated poems in later volumes. We must fully agree with this summary of McCrae's achievement by a fellow poet:

In McCrae we have a poet, sometimes of extraordinary beauty and joy, sometimes of incorrigible carelessness and airiness, sometimes of brilliantly decorative imagery, sometimes of almost domestic whimsy and tender self-mockery. We have a poet to love and admire and be proud of, but not a great man.¹

It is difficult to say whether innate flaws in McCrae's personality caused this lack of development and achievement or whether the anti-creative elements in the Australian society of the time were responsible. When one considers that McCrae's early work, when the creative environment seemed most barren, is best, and that since McCrae, Slessor, FitzGerald and Douglas Stewart, to mention a few, have produced lyric poetry of great

1 Judith Wright, Preoccupation in Australian Poetry (Oxford, 1965) p.100.

beauty and force, it is most likely that the fault was due to the particular type of person McCrae was.

What remains? Lyricism - pure and unalloyed; sensuous, vivid imagery; a use of language tremendously wide in scope but with a control not always exercised in an aesthetically desirable way; an all too rare muscularity, a strength yet with delicacy of fine poetry; but above all a singing, a joy of life not before present in Australian poetry. In the prose, a commendable humour, scope and control.

There must be, however, in any study of McCrae, a deep regret that the depths of his talent had not been plumbed, that fragmentation and desultoriness impaired all but a handful of what could have been, what should have been, a major force in Australian poetry.

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 - ii Published Work.
 - iii Books Edited.

- 11 Secondary Material.
 - i Books.
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Appendix 1.

- i Unpublished poems by McCrae.
- ii Poems by McCrae published in periodicals
but not previously collected.

i Unpublished poems by McCrae.

Encouragement

As a full rose
Having a petal, or it may be four....
Or five, too many, from her treasure-store
Casts them in secret; (where no eye can see,
Save, from his window in the poplar-tree,
The finch unfolding). Casts them in secret
To mock the zephyr, and as if she let
Herself be vanquished by him. Truth to tell
His breath scarce curled the water in the well-
Or blew one bubble, jewelling the eaves,
To Death upon the pointed orange-leaves.

So your fair words;
Told in that private book-filled atmosphere
Where the World speaks, and you, into its ear
Reply: And yet no sound. . . The eye and the pen
Converse in silence. . . Sure, no mortal then
So glad as I. . . O what sweet cozenage
To reap the merits you allow my page !
But greater prize I hold, and ever will,
The way, you shew, by which Parnassus' Hill
Were best essayed. . . and by what faults made good
I, yet, may win the Muses' Sisterhood.

From the manuscript, 28 June 1906 among A.G. Stephens' Papers in Mitchell Library

The Tryst

Above mine head the caravan of stars,
Beneath my feet the covered pit of death,
With cypress-trees to hold the cold sea-cloud
The circling winds blew eastward on their breath.

Athwart the dark I send a timebound eye
To search the fearful thickets of this camp -
I call for all the souls invisible
Thy spirit-moth unto mine own heart's lamp.

Too soon the morning Venus comes to shine,
When I along the mountain height must seek,
By shaded aisles and woodland tapestry
The hidden path that climbs the soaring peak.

O come before the night hath passed away,
And let me feast my hungry eyes on thee:
Through ages I have waited for this time
That God might yield thee back to me.

McCrae sent the manuscript of this poem to A.G. Stephens in 1909 with a note to say that Stephens had paid for it (when editing The Bookfellow), but had never used it. It is included in A.G. Stephens' Papers in Mitchell Library.

Continuation of 'The Satyr's Lass'

When the music stops
At some gay country dance, and many girls
Droop red with wishing to the blissful grass,
Look, while you may, if that false signature
Be hid beneath the dainty galliard gown
Of her you paired with. Not the King's gold-crown,
His orb and sceptre, purple vestiture,
Can mend the evil of a satyr's lass.

.
An' she be clean, wind clover through her curls.

In a 1909 edition of Satyrs and Sunlight sent by McCrae to Harry Chaplin was the autographed manuscript of the final stanza of this poem, with an annotation: "Continuation of 'The Satyr's Lass' not ever printed... Hugh McCrae, for his friend and benefactor Harry Chaplin, 22 May 1953."

Harry F. Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany (ed. Walter Stone, 1967) p.29.

...Untitled....

My day is done
Music and love are gone
While sins of iron heaviness are weighing me
Deeper than death into the waiting earth.

Hope that I had is fled,
The rose of my heart is dead.
No dawn - only the interminable sea
Eternally hemming me . . .
I, who was once like a prince in my pride,
But damned from my birth !

Manuscript, 20 January 1913, among A.G. Stephens'
Papers in Mitchell Library

Questioning

Who am I to sing of you,
How can I be worthy?
Wild birds of the beechen wood,
All his songs are for thee.
Who am I to kiss your lips,
Least of all your lovers -?
The forest-wind with beating heart
High above you hovers.
Who am I to give you rest,
Hold you in your sleeping -?
A spirit on a cloud will ride
To take you in his keeping.

Manuscript, 1 January 1916, among A.G. Stephens'
Papers in Mitchell Library

Supplication

Closer.....O closer yet
The moon will tell no tales . . .
O eyes divinely wet,
The grieving nightingale
Pleads with thy soul for mine:
Cold, in the tears of a flower,
The hearts of the white stars shine:
Yield me, O love, but this hour. . .
To mingle my being with thine.

Manuscript, 23 January 1916, among A.G. Stephens'
Papers in Mitchell Library. It had been marked,
in Stephens' hand, 'Returned to author'.

To Nancy

O, Take this rose -
This rose, that in thy hand
Shall change into a bird;
Whence, swiftly to thy heart
-flying - 'twill change agen
Into hot flame: a part
Of that same fire which burns
Me to delicious pain -
Now must you feel, and bear;
Not die, not ever die;
Not die, yet be in heaven.

We two. eternally.

20 September 1947 In the library of Harry
F. Chaplin. Reproduced from A McCrae Miscellany
(ed Walter Stone, 1967) p. 78.

Her Ancestor

Alone, and in the silence of the room,
'mid shadows hung like tapestries of gloom
Patterned with Goblin ghouls of leaping flame,
She stands to read the fierce ancestral name.

How strange it is to see them thus array'd
This painted devil and the fresh young maid;
The lordling in his gewgawed insolence,
And she, the living bud of innocence.

The quaint square letters draw her to the face
Peaked to a passion o'er its wealthy lace,
The eyes the mouth of lust, the beard D'Espagne,
The tendril fingers on the walking cane.
- - - - -

Time is a liar, fostering Romance
Thro' centuries, along the giddy dance
Of years with years, until clear vision faints
And sinners blurr by procession into saints.
- - - - -

She speaks to him; "Great Heart, I only pray
That I may prove upon my trial day
A worthy daughter of so tall a man - -
The pride and lodestar of his rebel clan! "

Alas, how little does she guess the truth
Of all his deeds, the harbingers of ruth. . .
And she may thank her God and Seraphim
That she is what she is . . . Despite of him.

From A.G.Stephens' Papers in the Mitchell Library.
Signed by McCrae but undated.

...Untitled....

Once, in forgotten days of old,
From the large land of Vallandri,
Three angels stole a little child
And hid him in the summer sky.

The King from his brown tower
Saw him passing thro' the air,
But the angels with their sword-beams
Planted madness in his hair.

A silly grass-brained shepherd
Called loud to where they hung
But the angels with their sword-beams
Cut out his wagging tongue.

Old Rheumy Jane of Cantry Hill
Beheld them slowly rise -
But the angels with their sword beams
Flashed blindness in her eyes,

So none might know which way he went
(All mad and dumb and blind).
The mother ran from town to town
But ne'er a trace could find.

At last, by night, a star came down
And took her by the hand
Into the presence of the babe
A moon's length from the land.

A moon's length from the land she found
Her darling softly laid
And little downy clouds all round
Most innocently played.

Then Rupert Atkinson appeared;
"Oh God!" the mother screamed
And took him by the scarlet beard
To ask him if she dreamed.

"In vain," he said, "in vain, in vain,
In vain, in vain, in vain,
In vain, in vain, in vain, in vain,
In vain, in vain, in vain.

Manuscript, undated, signed and illustrated by
McCrae, in A.G. Stephens' Papers in Mitchell
Library.

The Alibi

Last Tuesda' week there came to Hell
A bagman wight with sauls to sell,
Langwhiles he called, syne pu'd the bell...
"Fresh sauls today ! "
Why nane replied he couldna' well
Suppose or say.

Aiblins, he thoct, it juist micht be,
Auld Hornie at his a.m. tea
Keepit himsel', like you an' me,
Frae idle folk:
The De-il hates bad kumpany -
(It is na' joke!)

But naethin' fashed, he risked a blink,
This bagman chiel, thro' keyhole chink....
An' nearly died ! Sic smut an' stink
It made him sneesh
Twal' months !! He wat the moon, I think,
Up to her kneesh!

The keeper's mither, bakin' bread,
Cam rinnin' to the gett an' said
"Hoot-toots !" Then wagged her awesome heid,
Whiles, web an' waft,
Her hair bleezed unco' blue an' reid
Across the draught.

"Gae tak' your lousy sauls frae here
Auld-garron sinners, deid a year,
Wad gie na sport; too cauld to rair
Tho' Nick should set
A chimla-cinder in each ear
To gar them sweat."

"Hell has been changed, baith site an' name:
An',O waesucks ! it irks ma name
When Berchtesgarden's 'bitter flame'
Spouts up the sky -
For Schickelgruber's juist a shame-
Less alibi! "

Undated manuscript in the Australian National
Library.

To Vance, From Hugh.

Behold, this strangest he !
Content, awhile, to be
A parsnip, or a pea;
And never once aspire
To stem a rose on fire;
Or, gloriously, spread
---Of hawthorn---round his bed,
A Palmer Paradise;
Where doves, 'mid butterflies,
(His kin), on busy wings,
Make all-day harvestings.

Cool eglantine; white stuff
Of dimpled candytuf(t);
Quick-springing clover-tops
Bacchus, himself, envined,
Too hiccuppy, too blind
To thump - or black, or blue,-
His unbegodded crew
Of twisted sylvans, who,
To scorn him, lick their chops,
Horns up, as if they knew
Some master-path; and plann'd
Petards 'gainst Fairyland.

All this they do, to woo
Dear V. . . and keep him, to:
Yet have no skill, since he
Prefers to gang a-gait
In vegetable state
Of parsnipship - or pea !
Whatever that might be.

From an undated manuscript signed 'Thine always H.M.C.'
in the Australian National Library.

To Jan Cowper (Anticipating her
threeth birthday)

Look, Harry, look! - - Look, Dick and Tom !
'Tis worth your eyes to see. . .
Where comes a nymphlet straying from
Forgotten Arcady.

Child of that dearest dryad's child
The gods bestowed on me;
What time I heard the first sweet wild
Pan-pipes shrill joyously.

So, while she lives, my heart shall dance,
Though lame my body be,
Betwixt the toils and feints of Chance;
Mine ancient enemy.

From an undated manuscript in the Australian
National Library.

The Jolly Johns and Janes of June.

Why should the sun be out
And you be in?
The starry climb-about,
Rose, marigold, and silverpin
Rise coronalled with rain.

Like castle-crested Spain
The far blue town
Twinks through the shining skein
Of seaward cloud drawn flutt'ring down;
Upon the wheel-road way.

In merry holiday
Hooves beat a tune,
And loving hearts and gay
(The jolly Johns and Janes of June)
Sing canticles of mirth.

The round drunk shimmering earth
Turns like a cup
Of strong, brown, heady wine! . . .
O kiss goodbye to sleep, then sup
Of this glad day divine.

From a manuscript, signed by McCrae, in the
Australian National Library...Undated...

....Untitled.....

I watched the evening, from my lawn,
Steal, like a cloud of moving smoke,
Out of the furnace, where the west
Waved into flame, and merged, and broke.

The stars came open, every one;
The wildwood children closed their eyes,
Fearing to see their dreams outdone
A thousand times across the skies.

And then the tall midsummer moon,
One moment balanced on the strong
Green shoulder of a lightwood-tree,
Winged upward with the thrush's song.

And all the world was white, save where
The shadow of the house kept cool
The soft sweet grasses and the hare
Passing between them and the pool.

Then did I think of you; and then
The roses in the garden-bed
Pillowed their faces o'er the bank
Pale with the dew the clouds had shed.

Then did I wish for you;and then,
Out of the window's golden tent,
Came the deep chords which you had played
That last far Sunday ere you went.

Ah, it was bitter, and I mused
How could the notes return the same
Full answer that they one time gave
Only, I thought, to your soul's flame?

Love, be not angry if I say
You are still mine by ev'ry right -
And still I kiss, (doubt tho' you may),
You, when I kissher in the night.

The manuscript of this poem, untitled and undated,
was found among some manuscripts in The Bulletin
collection in the Mitchell Library. It is signed by
McCrae.

Parody on Arthur Adams

Above the midwife's rotten gate
Where glows the dim suggestive plate
The boiling poplars flounce and roar
Like grim triumphant blasts of Fate!

And nigher still, in orange clad,
The bosom-bursting Oread
Of Hassall's Poster Genius burns
Athwart the splendid Cocoa-Ad!

Sometimes a go-cart hurries by
With two fresh blossoms from the sky
To taste the circumambient air
While Nursie winks her dexter eye!

But not today. The wind's too cold.
The World has suddenly grown old;
The clo'es on yonder line shake out
x Like spooks on Styx's seventh fold!

Ah me! It pains my pampered blud
To see the washerwoman scud
Back from her lives...Implacable,
Grim Aphrodite of the sud!

But look....the dial's hands are on
The mystic signs of ha'past wan - -
For punctual gastronomy
My wife's th'attested paragon!

By 'Jim Goop'

x Amended on the manuscript to:
Like barmaid-spooks on Lethe shoaled.

This, and the parody on the next page, were written by McCrae and sent to A.G.Stephens for consideration. Both manuscripts are among the Stephens papers in Mitchell Library.

Parody on O'Dowd

All fallacies of Faith I keep
In tabulated scorn
(The quick incessant Rubbish Heap
Of newer eras born)

It matters not if carnal loam
Retards mechanic growth
The Intellect's depleted dome
Bears evidence of both.

One volant hebdomad of sins
Evokes adult remorse
Till Penitence awake begins
To jog his sleeping horse.

So in the embryonic brain
As Agassiz relates
The blood-contending apple train
Of Science formulates

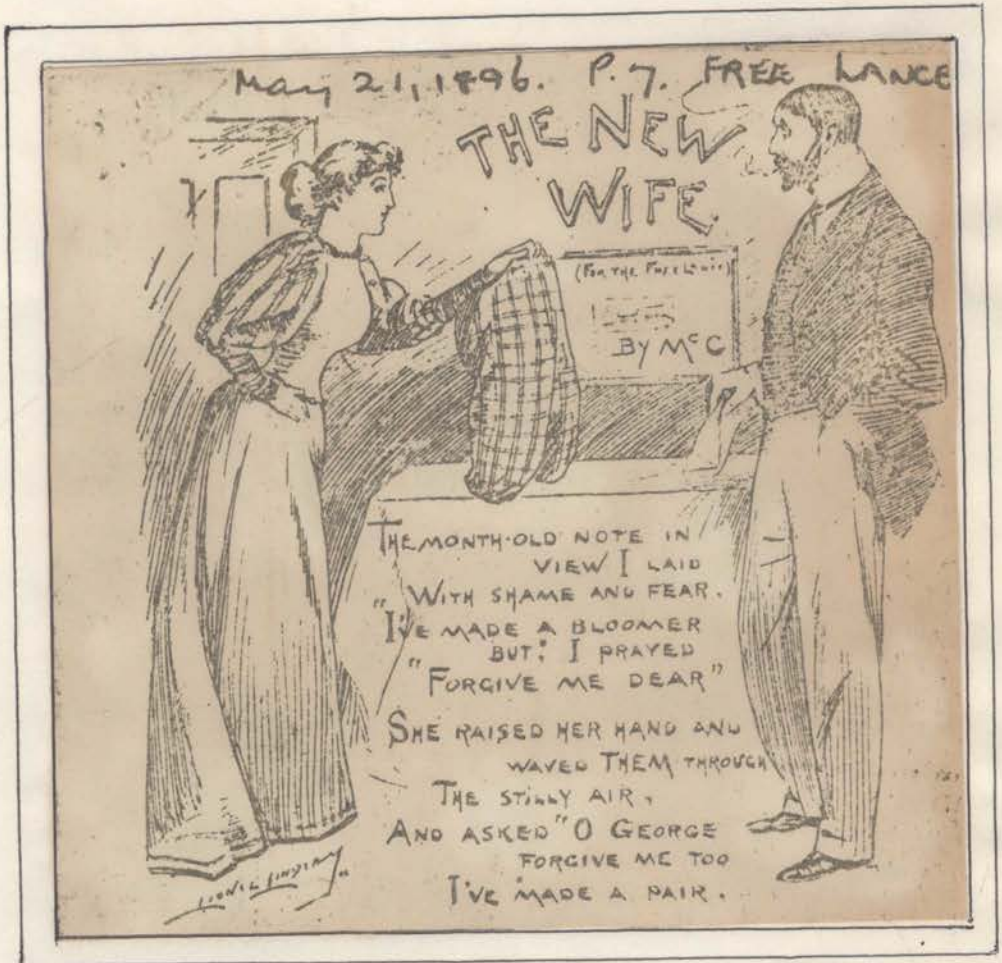
A catalogue of hybrid facts
To garner Knowledge in
Articulated to the tracts
Of Moral Culverin

Yet Hystrionic Pachyderms
By strange affinity
Uphold despite denying worms
Their daft Divinity.

'Banana O'Dowd'

Parody by 'Jim Goop' - written by McCrae. The manuscript
is with A.G.Stephens' papers in Mitchell Library.

ii Poems by McCrae published in periodicals
but not previously collected.



An early McCrae contribution to the Melbourne Free-Lance (21 May 1896), illustrated by Lionel Lindsay.

Owner Going West

FARM FOR SALE; a bargain; owner going west. Apply in person to John Muckle, Coffee Palace.

" Twenty miles this side of Hay-
Rich in pasture, fat with sheep-
S'lection that will always pay,
S'lection mortgageless and cheap;
Rooted cleared and fenced around,
Sheds and stables all complete;
Better squattin' can't be found
Than the farm at Gurrundeete.

Bestest soil for growing crops,
Rippin' clover for the cows;
Juicy grass and thistle-tops,
Easy earth for decent ploughs;
Not a rabbit you can trace,
Not a fox within a mile,
And I'll throw in with the place
Splendid Ghost of Reuben Pyle.

'Tween the blankets (ain't no sheet),
After graft in soakin' grass
Icy cold about the feet,
Moon a-lookin' through the glass.
Twelve! the door creaks open wide:
Somethin' white comes stalkin' in,
White hands gropin' at its side,
Hollow face, Hell's eyes, sunk chin.

Blood is on its face of woe,
Bloody stains are on its gown;
Blood is on its breast below,
Blood from fingers drippin' down.
Plucky bloke wot doubts 'is eyes,
Thinks 'e dreams and tries to smile-
Better mind! there ain't no flies
On the Ghost of Reuben Pyle.

Want ter sell out soon as poss.,
Clear out for the Golden West;
Here's a chance, so buy up, boss,
Say it's done an' let it rest."
"Thank yer, yes, I likes yer place;
But, excuse me, I should smile;
Don't care for that thrown-in case
Of the Ghost of Reuben Pyle."

The Gabo Light

Have you been round the Gabo Light
On a night
That's bright,
With a sky full of stars?
On a coasting-boat with a boiler so thin
You could let out the steam with the prick of a pin;
And a screw that goes with a whirr,
With a stir,
A gurr,
And a series of jars
That jolt out the bolts that are holding her frame
From the bellowing waves and Newspaper Fame.

Have you been round the Gabo Light
When the white
Seas fight
On the circlet of rocks?
When the coals roll round in the hold of the boat;
When the Demon of Fear has his clutch on your throat;
When the engine that's put dead slow
'Gainst the flow
And blow
First jams, struggles, then locks;
When women turn pale to their tightly-latched lips
At perils which compass colonial ships.

Have you been round the Gabo Light
When its sight
Is quite
A horror to your eyes?
When the thud of the waves and the vessel's kick
Combined, make you most indisputably sick?
When the screw turns with a wheezy,
Dumpetty
Dee-dee,
From moon-set to moon-rise;
When you think of the horrors which you have endured,
Of the wife and - the money for which you're insured.

The Last Waltz

('Waltzing with Matilda' is the bush slang for carrying a swag)

We'll set out this nex' dance, Matilda;
I'm tired and gawn in the knees,
That last waltz 'as jest about cooked me,
So, come, roost under the trees.
You an' me've had many a hop, lass,
'n the moosic ain't often bin good;
The floor's bin a bit rough an' loose, lass,
But the invite was jest as it stood.

The tucker was skimpy an' cheap stuff,
The cham. worn't the best of its sort;
The programme was chock up with extras,
And longer than ever we thought;
But you've bin the right kind of partner,
An' danced wi' me fair through the ball;
You're 'eavy, but awfully faithful,
An', lass - you're the pick of 'em all.

But now I am shaky an' done up,
The spring has gawn out o' me feet;
Supposin' we toddle off 'ome lass;
You're lookin', yerself, dead beat.
The horchestra's merrily playin',
The others are skipping it still;
The night-time is steadily wanin',
The sun is nigh over the hill.

We're bound for the homestead, Matilda,
Ole partner, 'n' Billy 'n' me,
Where the sound of the moosic is sweeter,
An' the floor as best as could be.
There we'll waltz in the toffiest circles,
An' sip of the royallest cham.,
'Ave a pitch with the blokes in the purple
An' stick on Haustral -i - an jam.

The Tocsin, 17 March 1898.

The Honeymoon Trip

Oh, this 'ere little ship is a tough, taut ship,
An' she creams the billows around
With snow from her prow and the froth of her lip
As she leaps to the outward bound.
The wind is a-singing in the low, grey sky
(an' the Cap's as drunk as a lord).
There's a star in the west like a tomcat's eye
Or a jewel in a rajah's sword.

Oh, she's sweet as a bride with a long train
A-trailed on a carpet of blue;
The wind an' the waves make the organ's refrain
As she hastens the aisle-way thro';
An' the six little stars that glimmer astern
Are the bridesmaids decked in their best;
An' the lights of the 'Gross' right royally burn,
And the moon is a lonesome guest.

Ah, you're off, my ship, on your honeymoon trip,
And the waves fall sobbing behind;
The lights of the Home-land sorrowf'ully slip,
And the sails swell out to the wind.
Good-bye! Au revoir! For ye'll come back a-day,
Your breast to the lolloping sea,
Till you swim the warm wave of the green wide bay
In the peace of the 'long shore lee.

The Bulletin, 31 December 1898.

Pipes O' Three

Oh, well I remember the
Pipes o' Three,
Pipes o' Three;

Blasphemous, devilling Pipes o' Three.
Sweet nights soft-clouded of burning weed,
When we brimmed-up the goblets with steaming rum,
And read the best of a Scotchman's screed
Who is scooping his parritch in Kingdom Come.
Nights when three glasses sang to three men
In the clink of their meeting. When fleshly joke
From lips wet with liquor gave an Amen,
And the voice of the banjo laughed thro' the smoke:
God save ye, Pipes o' Three!
O God, in His goodness, save ye,
Save ye!

Oh, well I remember the
Pipes o' Two,
Pipes o' Two;

Sorrowful, thoughtful Pipes o' Two.
Pictures and candles, an empty chair,
A paper of dottle, a half written verse,
A stolen ribbon from Maisie's hair,
A bangle, a garter, a book, and a purse;
And twain with wet eyes, and glass to lip,
Ere drinking their measure most rev'rently spoke:
"To the pipe that is broke - here's a nip!"
Then the voice of the banjo sobbed through the smoke:
O Pipes o' Two, I pity you;
God can't save three,
So who'll save two?

Oh, cheer me, oh, cheer me, oh,
Pipe o' One,
Pipe o' One!

Solitary, peaceful Pipe o' One.
Lone in the shadowy picture-room
I sit with my banjo asleep on my knee;
A pipe-star floats on the edge of gloom
And I fancy I'm seeing the stars of three.
It's only the fume of steaming rum
That is swirling my brain. And I soak and soak,
And beatings of hammers in both ears hum,
And the voice of the banjo fights thro' the smoke:
Oh, Pipe o' One,
You're done:
You're done; you're done -
Done! Done!

Lines

Like a gleaming storm of Lilies
That blow above a stream,
In the rain that falls at even
Come these faces in a dream,
In a gleaming blowing dream,
To me, like bending lilies on a windy
sunlit stream.

In the moaning of a river
As it wears away the stone,
In the rustling of the rushes
Comes the soft and gentle tone,
Comes the murmurous singing tone
Of the hearts a-gone before me, o'er
the river's stepping-stone.

When the falling leaves of Autumn
Spread the field and crown the wall,
Brush my forehead in their falling,
Then their touching seems to call,
By their lightness seems to call,
Other touching of soft fingers gone
beyond the mystic wall.

So, God giving me for ever,
While I have breath to live,
Gentle meadowland and river,
With the music that they give,
While the quickening that they give,
I shall die content that in them,
love, for you I still must
live.

The Bulletin, 27 October 1900.

Impossible

The parson tall, and lank, and thin;
The parson with his saving grin,
Stood fearless in his white pith hat;
A green havana -olived dove,
The picture of capacious love,
The Rev'rend John Jehoshaphat.

The Bulletin, 29 June 1901.

(Unsigned, but included among A.G. Stephens' collected papers as Hugh McCrae's work)

Joseph Jones

"I sometimes think," said Joseph Jones,
"That each day's sky, - or blue or red, -
Takes shape and colour, technique, tones,
From some great artist, gone and dead.

It may be Joseph Jones is right,
But if he is, - O, when he dies,
God spare me from the awful sight
Of one of Joseph Jones's skies !

'Ticket-Taker' The Bulletin, 14 September
1901.

When Vera Fries the Tripe

When Vera fries the tripe
Such savour fills the air,
The kitling climbs the stair; -
And in the yard below,
The tyke sniffs to and fro
When Vera fries the tripe.

When I must eat that tripe
Such splutters fill the air ;
The kitling flies the stair
As quick as lightning stroke -
It's quite beyond a joke
When I must eat that tripe.

'Ticket- Taker' The Bulletin, 20 December
1902.

Prayers and Threats

Towers of daisies will I build,
Pine will I burn and frankincense,
And snowy flour all newly milled,
If thou wilt be my prop and fence,
If thou wilt red her face for me
With shining love's temerity
As onyx cups with wine do be.

I will pile altars up with fruit,
And spill white oil across the ground,
And stroke the singing gold-haired lute
Into a sweeter tide of sound,
If me, uncompassed, without chart,
Thou, in supremely gracious part
Lead to the latchet of her heart.

But I will break and mutilate
Thy frost-white image into sand,
And strew the atoms, nor abate
Till nothing of thee stop to stand,
And I will devastate thy shrine,
If thou dost put but cold incline
Into her heart for heart of mine.

The Bulletin, 14 February, 1903.

Clitter Clatter

Clitter clatter, clitter clatter,
See she patters down the street,
Making quite a little matter
Of the lace about her feet -
How the johnnies chatter at her
As they hear the high-heeled beat.

Clitter clatter, clitter clatter,
Be it bright, or wet with sleet;
I grow mad as any hatter,
On my heart have mercy, sweet.
Ev'ry time you clitter clatter,
It is shattered 'neath your feet.

Clitter clatter, clitter clatter,
(What a petticoated treat).
"Sir," she says, "I pray you flatter
Not yourself more than is meet.
Other hearts there are, and fatter,
That I flatten 'neath my feet."

The Bulletin, 11 May 1903.

Sweet Anne

Thy doves are dead in the cote, Sweet Anne,
I have twisted their little white necks;
The star is sunk that thou sangest, Sweet Anne,
Thy roses are rain-riven wrecks.

A cloud hath covered the moon, Sweet Anne,
And the golden show in the sky;
Thy love is drowned i' the stream, Sweet Anne,
It was time that thy love should die.

No one and nothing save I, Sweet Anne,
May remain to brighten thy way;
Thy roses and doves are dead, Sweet Anne,
Will the dawn be desolate grey?

No one and nothing save I, Sweet Anne,
Can live for thy heart's delight;
O sing as you sang to the star, Sweet Anne -
Be a thrush in my breast all night.

The Bulletin, 16 July 1903.

Bianca

Come down, come down, Bianca sweet,
My heart knocks at the gate;
O, swift as swallows be your feet
To me, importunate.

The sun is sunken in the wood,
The busy, thrumming bees
Across the river's shining flood
Are sleeping in the trees.

The bat flits o'er the stony brook,
The white moth on the wall
Seeks for his mate. A drowsy rook
Gives out a frightened call.

Deep, deep, the night grows ever deep,
Her purple folds fall down;
They lap about the yarded sheep
And hide the twinkling town.

Come down, come down, Bianca sweet,
My heart knocks at the gate;
O swift as swallows be your feet
To me, importunate.

Hark! from the moon's high minaret
There rings the silver bell
(Faint in the starry Infinite)
Of sweet Saint Philomel.

The Bulletin, 8 October 1903.

Once a Rose Flourishing

Into the sweep o' town,
Into the flood o' feet,
A rose fell down and down.
Ah me! the bitter street
Dressed it in drab and brown,
Pilfered its honey sweet.

Only this very morn,
Blushing with life, it came
Out of the sceptre thorn,
Flashing like fire and flame.
Poor little early born,
This is thy early shame.

So the poor woman-thing,
Lifting you back to light,
Guiltless of love or ring
Sank and sank out of sight -
Once a rose flourishing;
Now in Eternal Light

The Bulletin, 15 October 1903.

The Dagger

Dear Hilda, once, for love of me,
Fresh from her flashing throat
Did pin - O precious jewellery ! -
This dagger in my coat.

Nor wot I of the cruel part
The wicked girl had played
Until I felt within my heart
Its biting little blade.

The Bulletin, 5 November 1903.

The Clock

That blamed old clock kep' me awake mos' all lars' night
Waggin' its long-tail penjulum an' talkin' to itself.
I'll git up when I'm warmed again - an' sich a sight
Ez that ol' clock won't ever be ez sets upon that shelf.
I'll pull its inside out, an' all its shiny springs
An' things; I'll give it "one-two" on its soley-plexus fair
I'll make it healthy for that conserved bell that tings
At every show it gits to send me h'istin' up my hair.
I ain't so easy fussed ez some more smiley folk
I don' mind Jessie snorin', an' I'm used ter Towser's yelp;
I ain't so very slow in seein' wot's a joke,
But I'll git up in the mornin' ef that clock wants any help

Jessie's gone ter Sydney ter stop Good-Fridee week,
An' here, it's very lonesome, an' I dunno how I'd stay
Ef it wuzn't fer the clock with its "teek, teek, teek";
It's kump'ny, I can tell you, when Jessie is away.

The Bulletin, 10 December 1903.

The Fallen Statue

O SAD, O sad white thing!
O Miracle of Art!
What windy hireling
Hath flung thee here apart?

O uttermost despair,
O mystery of Fate;
No night, nor skill, nor care
Can thee reintegrate.

Is it for rage, or shame,
The night-dews in thine eye,
With cabalistic flame
Flash tears that will not dry?

See, how the heavens glow! -
And Night enfolds the spheres;
And fiery thunders throw
Their sparkling battle-spears.

The ivory and the grass,
That once, about thy feet,
Did cling and hold - alas,
Now weave thy winding-sheet.

God wot the time is now
Arrived the world may see
The mould upon thy brow,
For all Eternity.

The moss within thy lips,
A web about thine eyes,
The rose's thorny strips
Across thy naked thighs.

And time will never cease,
Nor will thy fetters fall,
But climb and blind thy name,
From off thy pedestal.

O uttermost despair,
O cruelty of Fate,
No night, nor skill, nor care
Can thee reintegrate.

The Plain

The long, flat sand went everywhere,
From star to star it raced across my sight;
In every span and space was sand,
A world of sand beneath a waste of Night.

The little moon shone overloft,
To magnify the sad monotony,
Most like a lanthorn on a ship,
Whose silver light can only find the sea.

No wind was there to stir the air,
To pile a hillock or to plough a line
Athwart the acres of that plain;
No sound arose, no single sight or sign.

But only sand, and sand, and sand -
My heart tapped like a trav'ler in a coach,
Who, timid, waits his man to tell
An end to danger and the town's approach.

When suddenly from 'neath my feet
There sprang the shadow of a skeleton -
And then I knew 'twas past retreat,
Past hope, past life - this plain I travelled on.

The Bulletin, 28 July 1904.

The Tree

I saw a tree so straight and tall,
It seemed a pillar to the skies,
Whose high white stem up-kept the wall
Precluding Earth from Paradise.

The singing birds flew round and round,
Or, like a fountain laughing, ran
Sheer to the stars, until their sound
Escaped the ear of mortal man.

And, shining bright, the bonny blue
Stretched sweet and cloudless all the day,
Awak'ning every lamp of dew
The woodland violets hid away.

Forthwith I raised my childish eyes
To where the trunk of that tall tree
Outspread its arches for the skies
And propped their broad immensity.

And, lo, I longed it might be proved
My lot to one day reach and ride
The topmost boughs, what'er behoved,
And even stem the starry tide.

But, looking down once more, I saw,
All heaped about its broad white base,
The bones of men, who, long before,
Had dared to climb for pride of place.

And thus, to-day, I'd be content
Should I but halfway scale the tree
And miss the sparkling firmament
In so heroic company.

The Bulletin, 18 August 1904.

The Mayor of Faery Land

The other day, as round the hill
I wandered bright and early,
Amid a clover sea, I found
A laughing little girly.

And she was leaning on her arm,
As if some childish story
Were whispered to her by the buds,
There gathered in their glory.

I asked her what it was they said;
Her eyes began to glisten,
"O Sir," she laughed; "just bend your head,
It costs a kiss to listen."

I kissed her, and I listened, too,
Our hair together tumbling,
When suddenly I heard a bee
With great importance bumbling.

And this is what he said (I'll swear
'Fore King and Queen an' Pope an, - -)
"Bees and butterflies, I declare
This buttercup now open.

The Bulletin, 15 October 1904.

A Silhouette

Some frosty frivoller on his last exploit,
Some aged Winterling,
Stumbling along where once with feet adroit
He danced a ring-a-ring.

The feeble beat still shaking in his lamp
At every palsied stride,
As tho' the river mist and windy damp
Had caught it in their tide.

The last ripe nip of wine, the last white pipe,
The last autumnal sin -
The tingling sweetness of the final stripe
Ere Death may hurry in.

The final quaver of the clattering verse
He sings to Rose-Marie
Doth whistle shrilly for his dismal hearse -
And then Eternity.

The Bulletin, 8 December 1904.

Wood Music

Trees that were sown by the wind,
And trees that the birds have sown -
Hark to the songs that they sing,
Now that the sowers have flown!

Breath of the East and the West;
Breath of the South and the North -
Come to our pillows for rest -
Slumber and smother your Wrath.

Birds that are weary of wing,
Scarce with the power to fly,
Build ye a home in our arms
Close to the Wonderful Sky.

All that we ask you again,
All that we ask....nothing more,
Is, gather our seed and our grain..
Sow, as ye sowed it of yore.

Thus ye, with joy and with peace,
Laughing, your children may bring
To sleep in the boughs and the leaves
Of trees that ye sowed in the Spring.

The Bulletin, 29 December 1904.

A Bush Complexion Wash

Las' time the suckus come up here
The leopard get away;
An' not a soul durst move, fer fear
From break ter set of day;
'Cept Joe, the fat young Smithson kid,
Who said he'd sooner be
Wiv all the leopards in the world
Than learnin' A.B.C.

An' so it 'pears that Joe went off
A-fishin' in the creek
An' took enough provisionin'
To last 'im fer a week,
When suddenly the leopard comes
An' sets down by his side
An' puts his paw aroun' Joe's waist
Ez easy ez a bride.

But Joe, 'e laffed out loud an' hitched
His trousers at the knee,
" 'ere, git away," 'e said, "Yous might
Be givin' spots ter me ! -
Why doncher take some remedy
Fer spots?" - The leopard drew
A little closer and remarked
"I think that I'll take YOU ! "

He took him in a single dose
(An' praps that wuz ter blame,)
Cos, when his keeper captured him
The spots wuz just the same.

'Ticket-Taker,' The Bulletin, 5 January 1905.

The Bangle

I gave a bangle to my love
Wherein two hearts were twined -
Fond tokens, which some am'rous smith
Had cunningly designed.

She took it, and she plighted troth
To love no man but me;
And I walked, smiling, by her side
As happy as could be.

The clock went round, the seasons fled,
They fled and came again;
The sun shone bright, the breezes blew,
The clouds poured down their rain.

But now, alas! - some scurvy trick
Of Eros, little doubt -
We never met but she would turn
A rapid round-about.

She married some old merchant man,
Grown fat on roguery;
While I, a humble clerk, retained
My bachelor degree.

A little while, and yet I saw
My bangle once again.
'Twas used to cut the milk-teeth of
A second Mary-Jane.

The Bulletin, 2 February 1905.

Children of Rahab

She stands at the mouth of the lane
In a garment of weather-worn woof,
And the wind rides high past the pane
To the spouts of the tottering roof.

Her eyes are as pale and as white
As the eyes of a shad that is dead,
Exposed on a stall to the light
Of a kerosene -torch overhead.

Her hair is the colour of straw
That has rotted for years and for years,
And, twirling, unfolds at her jaw,
Like a rope, round her criminal ears.

And there, as she mumbles and grins
In the glittering torrents of rain,
'Twould seem that the Mother o' Sins
Has ascended from Hell-Gate again.

The daughters of lust and of pride,
With their flesh and their powder and paint,
Go suddenly hush'd by her side
In a feverish horror of taint.

For they know that out of their eyes
(Belladonna'd and nervously bright)
The very same skeleton pries
That is grinning beside them tonight.

That grins at the mouth of the lane
In a garment of weather-worn woof,
While the wind rides high past the pane
To the spouts of the tottering roof.

The Bulletin, 6 February 1905.

The Alternative

She crouched beside her husband's bed,
And watched the long night thro' ;
"He cannot live," the doctors said -
"There's nothing we can do."

.

But they were wrong. The man grew strong,
Much to his wife's remorse -
So, what she was by Death denied,
She had at least perforce
To higgie from the Scales and Sword
Of Justice and Divorce.

The Bulletin, 9 February 1905.

Love Divided

Each worldly passion that possess'd my soul,
All ties of flesh and scented silken sin,
Lie covered deep beneath this shady knoll
Which holds my poor dead lady lover in.

Ah, me, the toll we pay for idle whiles
Of naughtiness is greater than we care;
What wasted times are spent with happy smiles,
Despite the sword dependent on a hair.

And so, I say, all sensual delight
Of mine is with her body buried;
But, unsubdued and winged for endless flight,
My purer love, to her in Heaven, has fled.

The Bulletin, 9 March 1905.

... Untitled.....

God of Red and God of White,
Lips like East at swoon o' Night;
Little teeth like drops of snow
In a heart-faint rose's glow.

One sweet finger, looped with gold,
Flashes yellow through the fold
Of the cambric in her hand,
As a star of upper land.

Pair a-twinkle, shadow'd eyes,
Voice of swelling fall and rise
Floated on her quiet breath;
She's my Life and she's my Death.

The Bulletin, 6 April 1905.



[FOR THE BULLETIN.]

THE poet from his Pegasus dismounted at the door Of the BOYANG BUGLE office in Punkin-street, one four. He marched into the Editor, a poor old worn-out man, Who sat all day a-skimming verse from off a cranium pan.

"Ah!" quoth the bard, "I trow you owe a little cash to me, For thirteen columns that I wrote for you of poetry"—
 "What was it called?" "Why, let me see; you printed it last week—
 'The Blushing Rose that Only Grows on Celia's Lovely Cheek!'"



"And I am Aubrey Allingdale, whose signature appears Beneath the ninety-second verse in purple ink and tears. So hie thee to thy cash-box, sir, and pay me what you owe, For Pegasus is champing hard, and stamping down below."

The Editor put down his spoon, and left the cranium pan. "O have no fear, no fear," he said, "I'll pay you well, young man— The author of the 'Blushing Rose'—I have it marked, for sure— Just write here, please, 'Received Threepence for use of signature.'"

"God bless my soul!" young Aubrey cried, "but what about the 'pome'?"
 The Editor looked up and smiled, and pointed at the dome—
 "Aloft," he said, "great Shakspeare sits with Milton at his side,
 And Donne and Jonson—Herrick, too, in all his laurel pride.

"And Chatterton and"—
 "Hold your peace," screamed Aubrey Allingdale.
 "You're trifling with a desperate Australian Nightingale,
 For what have these forgotten men of whom you dully prose
 To do with the sweet verses of my precious 'Blushing Rose'?"



"All—everything—each word, each line, each phrase, each single thought,"
 Replied the cunning editor, "by one of them was wrought.
 Each had his share, his special bit, but still the World, I'm sure,
 Is grateful, Mr. Allingdale, for your fine signature.
 "And I have paid you well, my boy; indeed, it's double rates—
 But that compared is nothing to—my heart quite palpitates—
 The sum I'll owe to Shakspeare, or what Jonson's bill will be
 When he reads the BOYANG BUGLE in the Upstairs Library!"



He ceased. But Aubrey Allingdale, afar from human ken,
 Like Saul, the King of Israel, had fallen on his pen!
 HUGH M'CRAE.
 N.S.W.

A Common Form of Presentation of The Light Verse

His Bust

Admiral Togo has been presented by the British and Foreign Sailors' Society with a bust of Admiral Nelson, carved in the 'Victory's timbers.

Shadow of Nelson, O forsake
Thy body at St. Paul's;
To-day thy kith a mock'ry make
Of England's wooden walls;
And, lo! to magnify the crime
They add thy hero-shape,
To be (base spirit of the time)
The play-thing of an ape.

Let now no English grocer boast
That Nelson of the Nile
Doth lend his loyal sailor ghost
To watch o'er Britain's Isle;
For all that's left is - and enough -
Beneath the chapel stones,
The poor remains of mortal stuff;
A few forsaken bones.

The Bulletin, 2 November 1905.

V.J.D.

Dead - Art thou dead? And yet I wonder not -
The marvel is that for so long a space
You lingered here within this little plot
Of little men to spend your sovran grace.

The stars are richer, and the widowed earth
Is glad in sorrow to have added well
Another giant to the world of worth
That went before with black-browed Azrael.

The birds will sing unrivall'd once again,
Except when memories, denying death,
Awake that half Celtic, Southern strain
Which poured its music in thy ev'ry breath.

Farewell! There is not one among us here
Enough the man to solemnly intone
Thy dirge across the cypress-covered bier -
Unless it were --- thy shadow's self alone.

The Bulletin, 4 January 1906.

Good-Bye For Ever

O had you but a fierce, relentless father.
I might have loved you longer than I did;
But he, with smiles and sweet composure, rather
Dismayed the passion I would fain have hid.
Too easily he granted me permission
To woo and win you, free as meadow air;
Love waxes fonder when there's opposition -
And danger makes a woman doubly fair.
I'd sooner climb a little hempen ladder,
And scrape my knees to reach your window sill,
Than be a dead-head parlor-singing gadder
With Pop prepared to foot the breakfast-bill.
And this I say (because you are not ugly):
'Twere better if your Daddy greeted me
With half a broken brick, instead of smugly
Inviting me to buttered scones and tea.

.
I cannot, and I will not, ever love you;
Nay, never call me fickle - fie, for shame! -
I swear, by all the stars that glow above you,
YOUR FATHER is the villain you must blame !

The Bulletin, 1 February 1906.

To a Barmaid

You scorn me, and you think that I
Will straightway wither up and die
Disconsolate - - - -
Nay, I dare swear it in your teeth
That you have even bought the wreath
Commemorate.

You deem, because a taller man
Commanding thrice the cash I can
Has jumped my place,
That, henceforth, I must disappear
Like one of your own pots of beer
And leave no trace.

You prophesy without a sob
How some cheap undertaking job
Is hov'ring round;
And how Old Nick awaits my ghost
Upon a slice of phosph'rus toast
Superbly brown'd.

All idle dreams ! - - -
I'm going strong,
And still intend to live so long
As honor bids;
Know then that YOU are not ALL my life -
For I have got a twelve stone wife
And thirteen kids.

The Bulletin, 15 February 1906.

Reverie

Here the road swerves,
Its slow unwinding length now finds the sea;
The broken harbour with its glassy curves
Dreams like a woman, breathing silently.

And faint, beyond the three trenched points of land
That juts between us and the further side,
The square grey towers and the tall chimneys stand
(Against the sun) of Sydney's civic pride.

O breathless walls of stone, less kind than hate,
How often in my hot and quick-spent days
Have I, exhausted, beaten at thy gate
With hope of walking in thy highest ways.

And often from the wooded Northern hills
I've watched the broad pulsating beam of light
That binds your lofty forehead there and thrills
The bay of Heaven at the stroke of night.

And, as I gazed, I grew more comforted
To think, that looking down again from Mars,
That flame, complete unto its widest spread,
Was not enough to make two tiny stars.

The Bulletin, 15 March 1906.

... Untitled

Written for a competition, using two and a half lines
from Sir Thomas Browne.

The silent note which Cupid strikes
Reverberates in hidden strains
Of harmony that Venus likes
When heralding her singing swains.

The eager touch of hand on hand
Conveys a dumb sweet serenade
Between two hearts who understand
The reason why the world was made.

Who has not heard the thin white song
Of some fair virgin at her lute,
Aware of one amid the throng
Whose eyes could make her music mute?

The silent note which Cupid strikes
Reverberates in hidden strains
Of harmony that Venus likes
When heralding her singing swains.

The Bulletin, 7 June 1906.

A Tale of Tragedy

Alphonso Brown was foolish when,
For better or for worse,
He picked old Perkins eldest gal
To share his heart and purse.

For Miss Matilda Perkins was
A poetess by birth,
And took more pride in writing odes
Than anything on earth.

And if her husband begged her fix
A button on his coat,
She'd fix, instead, her eyes on him
And ask a rhyme for 'goat'.

She never cooked his breakfast, and
She seldom thought of tea;
She once remembered dinner, but
Forgot immediately.

And so Alphonso soon began
To fade away and pine,
Altho' to friends he always vowed
That he was "doin' fine".

Indeed, 'tis true he did so fine
You couldn't see poor 'Phon'
Without a telescope, unless
You got him sideways on!

And yet his wife Matilda sat,
At dusk and dewey dawn,
Composing strophes by the yard,
Upon the garden lawn.

But see how opportunity
And endless suff'ring can
Create a very devil of
The mildest-mannered man.

It happ'd one gracious summer eve
('Twas 6 p.m. I think)
Alphonso staggered wildly home,
A bit the worse for drink.

He saw his spouse upon the grass
With frenzy in her eye,
Muse-bitten, in the shadow of
The roller standing by.

A Tale of Tragedy (continued)

"Why, bless my heart," Alphonso said,
"Such chances but occur
Too seldom," and he straightway rolled
The roller over her.

He rolled the roller over her,
He rolled her smooth and flat -
And now Alphonso's NEW WIFE has
THE OLD WIFE FOR A MAT!

The Bulletin, 26 July 1906.

Sad Memories

I can remember still, and still without one drop
Of weakness in mine eye,
The brown bark farm-house on the hill, the windmill
top
Slow girding at the sky.

The six-foot water dam, its sides thick packed with
hoofs
Of many thirsty sheep,
The clover and the pink-lipp'd brides, the strutted
roofs
Of other farms asleep.

The stack of rain-stained hay, the stack of hay yet
sweet,
The double milking shed,
Its arch sunk inwards, pierced and black with all the
heat
Of fifty summers fled.

And I remember, plainly too, the she-oak tall,
Whose fingers in the night,
Whenever sudden zephyrs blew, took hold the wall,
And shook my heart with fright;

For I was but an infant then, and full of fear
And wierd imaginings,
Long routed since, past human ken, to leave me clear
For manhood's greater things.

And there it was my father died (as good a soul
As ever trod life's path);
Death took him, in his chair, beside the burning bole
Of wood upon the hearth.

And there my mother heard him speak, one ev'ning end -
Long after he was dead -
Whereat she kissed me on the cheek; then reverend,
Lay silent in her bed.

I hate the farm-house on the hill, its windmill top
Slow girding at the sky;
I think, and think upon it still, without one drop
Of weakness in mine eye.

No Danger

"And where were you all yesterday?
What right had you to stay away?
How dare you play the truant, eh?"
The teacher fiercely cried.

"Have mercy, Miss. On bended knees
I supplicate you, if you please.
My Ma - a-tish-oo! (that's a sneeze)-
Is ill. She nearly died."

"O horror! What is this I hear?
It's something ketching! Don't come near!
Your breath pollutes the atmosphere,
Your eyes protrude; your skin's

As red as poppies when they're ripe! "
But here the pupil ceased to wipe
The dewdrop from his nose. "By cripes!"
He said, "You're safe.....IT'S TWINS! "

The Bulletin, 11 October 1906.

Little Joan

So all the day
Waxed bright and gay
From apple-red to jade.
And thro' the trees
The thrumming bees
Like sparks of fire they played.

And baby Joan
Walked quite alone
Amid the noonday heat,
Her golden hair,
More bright and fair
Than the fair golden wheat.

While o'er the hills
The running rills
Of chapel bells rang clear,
For sober folk
With hat and cloak
To gather far and near.

I saw them ride
Each side by side,
In grave and decent row;
The dainty miss
None dared to kiss -
Her gown and furbelow.

The aged wight
Whose hair was white,
The springalls tall and straight,
The parson too
Beside his Prue
And Gossip Addlepate.

To chapel they
With fine array
Rode in religious mind,
Till I alone
And little Joan
Were all who stayed behind.

Aye, there alone
With little Joan
In peaceful, quiet rest;
Out of her eyes
I saw arise
God's love made manifest.

Little Joan (continued)

And thro' the trees
Upon the breeze
We heard the organ sing,
Like to a stream
Where roses dream,
Hush'd as it rolls along.

So let them go
In sober row,
To chapel those who may;
Here will I keep
My watch, nor sleep,
Where God is every day.

The Bulletin, 25 October 1906.

At Even

When lamps above are lit, and lamps below,
When Night and Slumber, hand in hand,
Foot the long path that Nature's finger draws
Across the sea, and thro' the land,
I, wearied by the maze and whirr of life,
Its ceaseless clang, eternal grind,
With buzzing brain and heavy-lidded eyes,
Stretch forth my hand and draw the blind.

In some sad time, when Night will come to lodge
For ever in this fleshly frame,
When the dim light my soul has burnt is dead,
And all of me that's left - my name;
When Death hath claimed me for a bedded spouse,
When tolling bells are married to the wind,
And, in the nuptial room, the candles burn -
Some other hand will draw the blind.

The Bulletin, 14 March 1907.

The Gold Town Girl

She's browner than the English maids
This gold-brown girl of New South Wales;
Brown-skinned, with eyes more golden brown
Than sundown through brown fisher-sails.

She beats the girls from London town;
She's fierce and fine- no prutting dove;
She beats 'em black, she beats 'em brown,
This gold- brown maid, in hate and love.

The Bulletin, 18 May 1907.

Morning

The grand red sun has glistened in,
And, thro' the curtain, I can see
His disc upon the steeple-pin
(Just touching) of St. Anthony.

The night-mist on the window flows
In long wet channels down the pane,
And from the distance slowly grows
The rattle of the country train.

But, here, in this disordered room
The dusty motes stand motionless
Above the glasses in the gloom
That rang last night with merriness.

A spotted spider walks between
The long white fingers of her glove,
Like feathers opened out, to preen
By some proud thoughtless lady-dove.

Her little sober 'churchy' hat,
Her month-old summer muslin gown,
The short half-stays I marvelled at -
A Frenchman's symphony in brown -

(These, set within a chair, half-hid;
A mountain heaped up carelessly -
Sweets hiding other sweets amid
A cataract of lingerie).

And she, herself, still breathing sound,
Her passive eyes fast closed in sleep,
Waits weary, in her bed, the round
Black Fortune means that she must keep.

Ah, frail, and sadly beautiful -
Above us in the blue-breast sky
Those stars, at dusk most visible,
Are now lost treasures to the eye.

And you, a mortal star on earth,
Perhaps, like that bright sisterhood
So fair by night, may, at the birth
Of Day, be no more where you stood.

Morning (continued)

And so, (that I may see you yet
As when, across the lighted Place,
Your beauty caught me in its net
And held me by its sov'reign grace)

I'll leave you softly to yourself,
Before a second quarter chime,
With this memento on the shelf
Until the purple ev'ning time.

Sleep on! Your glossy hair unrolled
Burns in my fingers, and I see
A ghostly lover in its gold
Look back mockingly at me.

The Bulletin, 30 May 1907.

The Vision

Night comes to me remorsefully,
The draughty stars subside and smur,
Or blaze with horror where the sea
Licks on the edge of Hell's hot spur.

The tramping millions of the dead
With wailing songs and loamy rags
Push, thumb-tied, past my truckle bed
Twelve-thick, like devil-driven stags.

There have I seen the mitred beast,
(His crozier-staff, crepusculine,
Supported by a recreant priest
With books and candles, bread and wine);

His smoke-white lips hooked up beneath
The shadow of his plough-share nose;
His eyes turned, fainting, where the wreath
Of Satan's umber furnace glows.

And all his scented raiment flares
With sparks and spouts of dropping flame,
Despite his gabbled Latin prayers
And cries on God's neglected name.

Too late....too late. His greasy flesh
Makes fat and fuel for the stake
Set i' the thickest toss and thresh
Of Tophet's red avenging lake.

Perdie! The dirty lazar-thief,
The cut-purse harlot and her man
Have twice the earnest of relief
Than this high pontiff of his ban.

A curse on all hypocrisy!
A curse on ev'ry covered crime!
The eyes of God but magnify
The sin laid up till Judgment time.....

Lo! Slowly thro' the haggart night
The floating winds with dust festoon
And dim and blot the shining white
Curved beauty of the half-sword moon.

Oblation

All day the rain had teemed upon the earth,
Had poured in runnels down the glassy gums,
Or spouted arrows at the black cascades,
That beat defiance on their stormy drums.

But now the sun, post-hasting to the west,
Let loose a sudden gleam of wat'ry light,
As if that he relented to have borne
The world, so long, his grudge of jealous spite.

The broken track grew visible; its pools
Flamed ochre, like the wide-set hooded eyes
The mopoke turns upon a traveller
Whom Night, descending, captures by surprise.

Then great Orion gave his massy belt
To girdle back the curtains of the Moon;
And hidden angels, of their own accord,
Spread budding stars to glow around her shoon.

At last she came; the proud, white-horned gem
Upon her forehead to the zenith raised,
As though to find the shy Endymion
For whom, on earth, her barren passion blazed.

The sun sank flaring like a treasure-ship
Which some fierce brood of Adriatic slaves,
First having plundered of its wine and gold,
Lets loose in long red smoke upon the waves.

Anon there was no single sign to show
That it had ever been - unless it were
The giddy vortex in the ether made
By the displacement of so grand a sphere.

And Venus, with her sad autumnal smile,
Gazed thro' the twisted windows of the trees,
Where leafy ladies chanted silver songs
In chorus to the thrush's melodies.

But mighty Mars, aloof and obdurate,
Pluckt at his harness and his sword undrawn,
While underneath his scarlet morion
His eyes absorbed such peacefulness with scorn.

And so, with all the great Hellenic gods
Arrayed on high, I lit a glowing jet
Of Eucalyptus boughs to give them word
That on this earth the gods are worshipped yet.

Evelyn

The clocks chimed softly as we slipped
In silence thro' the bubbling tide,
And tavern-windows gaily tipped
The round-cropped trees with yellow pride.

The odour of camellias came
In faint, sweet fragrance o'er the stream,
Like the pale perfume of the flame
Far stars surrender in a dream.

And all the beauty of the night,
The heavens and the orbs therein,
Leaned down and clothed with radiant light
The loveliness of Evelyn.

Beneath the bridge's lofty span
We heard the river-voices call,
While Syrinx at the mouth of Pan
Made mournful Echo musical.

They sang in praise of Evelyn,
Of Evelyn, of Evelyn;
The choir of nightingales joined in
And glorified Child Evelyn.

And as I gazed I saw descend
An arch of angels from the sky;
"Arise," quoth one, "or ill forefend:
Our King hath need of her on high."

And Evelyn looked down on me:
"Believe," she said, "whate'er betide,
I am your love eternally,
I am your spiritual bride."

Then slowly, slowly, she uprose
Like mist upon the lifeless air,
Or like the plumed smoke that flows
From temples in the hour of prayer.

She passed. . . O higher than the lark
Intent to catch his highest note. . .
Then all the Universe grew dark,
And clouds oe'rwhelmed my little boat.

In fantasy, in fantasy,
I hear her voice upon the tide;
She is my love eternally,
She is my spiritual bride.

Cui Bono?

Call me the paltry soul God threw away!
The cast-off leaving of some master-scheme -
The poor odd lump of desecrated clay,
Unmalleable, abortive to the theme.

What then? And is there not some counter good
To balance all the evil people say?
Mayhap God's motives, seldom understood,
But hold me hostage for a better day.

Australia, 15 August 1907.

Good Cookery

This is the rhyme of Joseph Boz,
Admiral, Cook, and K.C.B.,
Who served his time on the good ship Goz,
Year One Hundred and Fiddle-De-Dee.

King Polyglot
Looked in the pot;
"This meat smells sweet," said he.
The cook (Joe Boz)
Growled, "Sir, this woz
Your bitter henem-ee! "
Quoth Polyglot:
"Well, that is wot
I call good cooker-ee."
"No cook," swore Boz,
"As hever woz,
Could cook one 'arf like me."
"On that," said 'Glot,
"I'll lay my bot-
Tom dollar cheerfull-ee! "
"Hi sez," cried Boz,
"And always soz,
You was 'is Henem-ee."
"Then, tell 'ee wot...
Just turn," said 'Glot,
His other cheek to me! "

The Bulletin, 7 May 1908.

My Heart is Glad

My heart is glad; I would not have my love alive again
She died in all the vernal spring of freshest maiden-
hood.

To save her from the blasts of Time, Old Death was
more than good,
And in his full brown lap of earth to cover her from
pain....

Her looks can never more be spoiled...The engines Age
has laid
To better beauty into dust are harmlessly array'd;
Her splendid soul will lift unsoiled from new temp-
tation free,
Her love, not stained of any lust, will always be
for me.

The Lone Hand, 1 July 1908.

Arches and Rabbits

The daily papers state that, if a rabbit has died of phosphorus poisoning, it will shine with a bright radiance in the dark, and thus warn a prospective eater. Re the reception of the United States fleet, Mr James Graham, chairman of the decoration committee, has announced that the prospect was that the money forthcoming would not nearly meet the expenses to be incurred.
Sydney Telegraph.

If you ask us we'll concede it,
But we do not think you need it,
'Tis a shame to squander money on a temporary show;
Such a lot of 'beans' on powder,
Just to make the guns go louder,
Should at once upraise the question, "Shall we spend
our quids pro quo?"

Take the flags that once gyrated
(When our soldiers emigrated)
From the darkness and the spider and the devastating
moth;

Resurrect the dear old arches,
Reminiscent of the marches,
Of the 'noble,lads,God bless 'em', and like patriotic
froth.

Get the carpenters and gluers,
There are lots of amachooers,
Who will do it 'all for glory' and despise the thought
of cash,
Though the work should turn out rotten,
It must never be forgotten
That we did not blow our dollars on such lamentable
trash.

Now the topic turns on lighting,
And it really seems exciting,
Until someone gravely mentions (in the paper,vide files),
The Illuminative habits
Of our ordinary rabbits,
Hung,aesthetically, in hundreds they would blaze the
sky for miles.

The Bulletin, 30 July 1908.

Dust of Gold

All heavy-burgeon'd -o'er with vair
Death black, with trellis'd gown athwart;
The woven arras of her hair
Crowning her slender body swart,
She stands, 'mid shoals all amorous-blacked,
And stifled echoes bellowing
Strange words that sound like "Malt Extract!"
- Amid the apples mellowing.

'Hxgh McCrxe' The Bulletin, 30 July 1908.

He Stood Upon Zambesi's Bank

A trip up the Zambesi River, where we saw hippopotami
and other strange creatures, was also part of our
South African experiences.. Mark Hambourg
(To be set to music)

He stood upon Zambesi's bank,
The wind uncombed his greasy lank
Coal-coloured hair;
And there he thunk, and thunk and thank,
While many a hippo, rank on rank,
Came up to stare.

"How very, very strange they are,"
He said; "and how pe - cu - li - ar -
They frighten me !"
Then every hippo cried "Hurroar !"
He thinks US strange, but he's not more
Surprised than we !"

The Bulletin, 30 July 1908.

Weemin

Detective-Sergeant Macmanany stated the only explanation accused gave was that he had got entangled with other women- Daily Paper.

O my !
'E 'ad an eye
For other weemin;
Conduck (we don't deny)
Reverse of seemin'.
Upon
The wine wot shone
With evil beamin'
'E'd glance, and say "Begone! "-
But not to weemin.

Weemin,
Weemin, weemin,
Nuffin' but weemin,
'E ran abart screamin',
'E lay abart dreamin',
Schemin'
(Teeth set, gleamin')
Thinkin' of weemin,
Puffin' and steamin'
A regular demin
(Seemin'
Delirium tremin),
Hair all streamin',
Beamin'
On
B'yootiful weemin,
Weemin . . .
Weemin . . .
Naughty young weemin !
Weemin
An'
Weemin
An'
Weemin
An'
Weemin
All sorts of weemin.
Stout weemin, lean weemin,
Gen'rous and mean weemin,
Shy weemin, bold weemin,
Young weemin, old weemin,
But WEEMIN- - - -
All of 'em, Weemin.

The Tragedy of Mary Jones

And did you once know Mary Jones....?

But, nay, that cannot be -
For you are scarce thirteen to-day,
While she'd be....forty-three!

My little lad, long, long ago
(Ere first you saw the sun),
Miss Jones and I agreed to try
The matrimonial "One".

Our lives became a tide of joy,
Devoid of grief or pain;
The flying hours appeared and went
Each like an aeroplane.

And often we would walk at night
Along the river shore,
And mark the moon grow frail and pale
To hear the dog-star roar.

Then she, with pride ineffable,
Would say (my hands in hers),
"There is no love in all the world
Compared to Christopher's."

The Lord forgive her for the lie
And free her of the blame;
She loved another more than me...
Bill Smithers was his name.

She did not know I knew her sin -
I kept within my breast
That secret, like the Spartan fox,
Beneath my flowered vest.

And, as of yore, whene'er we met,
I wore the same old smile;
I even named the day and bought
A silk, two-storeyed tile.

The wedding-gown we too bespoke -
But hark, boy, while I tell
How down the very cogs of fate
My false fiancée fell!

The Tragedy of Mary Jones (continued)

October 4 (a Saturday),
We roamed the river side,
When, with a shout, I suddenly
Upset her in the tide.

"Lie there," I cried, "wet Mary Jones,
Till Mister Smithers comes! "
Then sat me down, to watch her drown,
A-twiddling of my thumbs.

The Bulletin, 10 December 1908.

Faithlessness

All.....Ev'rything was black...

The stars, like wasted lamps, had filled the sky with
smoke;

The roaring sea, where rocked my hidden schooner, spoke,
Threat'ning immediate wrack !

A few quick drops of rain -

And you, frail girl, beside the cypress-shaded gate,
Gave me that kiss which turns hot love to hotter hate
And flame-devouring pain.

Heaven curse your inmost soul,

And take, and keep from you, all peace and happiness,
And may your days be burthened with long weariness
Until your death-bed's toll !

I would that I had drowned

That night.....That some foul Triton with his webby hand
Had drawn me, gasping, from my shallop in a strand
Of kelp, to Neptune, bound.

For then my corse might ride

Upon the folding waves, unfolding each on each;
And slip, and slip, stiff-bodied, to the dark brown beach,
Drawn - flotsam by the tide.

Which seen; pale girl, I wis,

Mayhap, with broad-winged pity in your saddened breast,
You'd stoop to me; and, with your full lips closely presst,
Kiss me an honest kiss.

The Lone Hand, 1 June 1909.

Night Thoughts

From yon high carven balustrade
That fronts the mighty mountain hoar,
At dusk, mine eye hath oft survey'd
The star to which the eagles soar.

And when the night draws, link by link,
Her mantling dark o'er steep and stone,
'Tis my ecstatic joy to think
That star must shine for me alone.

So, Shakespeare must have often shone
With private splendour in his room...
A present life were well worth gone
Had I those moments for my gloom.

The Lone Hand, 1 September 1909.

Romance

Follow the blue-bird over the river,
Over the river and over the trees;
There, in a tower, a princess for ever
Sways like a lily alone on the breeze.

Mingled, the music of pipes and of tabor
Wakes the wild woodland that girds her with green,
And roses, nid-nodding, each one to her neighbor,
Rise in their glory to claim her their Queen.

Pennons of kingdoms uplifted on lances
Ring her around like a circle of flame,
Paynims and Christians 'mid fiery glances,
Chant with loud ardor the praise of her name.

Over her turret a summer-white moonmaid
Weaves through the wheel of the glimmering sun
A star-petalled garland, with violets inlaid,
Veiled with a web that the fairies have spun.

Follow the blue-bird, follow him ever,
Follow him, follow him over the trees -
Ogres and angels live over the river
Guarding the lily alone on the breeze.

The Lone Hand, 1 March 1910.

The Dreamer

Ever he murmured on his pillowed bed,
Below a broad-sewn canopy of silk,
And dreamed he saw his derring-deeds run red
Within the narghile's smoke as white as milk.

He heard his valor in his idol's house
Proclaimed with rolling drum and trumpet blare,
But woke in terror of a ranny-mouse
Between the apples on his carven chair.

His powdered fingers, with their weight of rings,
Clashed on the flagons in the dark'ning room
For wine to mend his heart's nigh broken strings,
While girls with candles scared away the gloom.

So did he seed his puny stalk of life
In vapid visioning and strengthless ease,
Too fat to sweat on flashing fields of strife
Where crowns and graves are fruits of victories.

To lift the scabrous rock of ruttid sloth,
To stand with steel to steel across the van
Of factions mighty rank, to do as doth
The heart's proud dictate say....to be a man!

Too fat for these, he murmured on his bed,
Below a broad-sewn canopy of silk,
And dreamed he saw his derring-deeds run red
Within the narghile's smoke as white as milk.

The Lone Hand, 1December 1910.

Brown Ferrigot

Brown Ferrigot, that nice old man,
At work 'mid his cabbage rows
Whistles a tune, and, out of a pan,
Spills salt each way as he goes -

Then stops, and cocks one eye at the sky,
While he feels with his paws for rain:
"Nor', nor' east," he says, with a sigh,
"An' blowin' great guns again."

The wind pipes shrill, like a death-struck pig,
And the clothes on the next-door line
Dance an indelicate, legless jig,
Which the old boy thinks "just fine".

Then the clouds spit fast the sharp cold hail,
And Ferrigot turns to flee
Into the apple-house out of the gale
As fast as his legs can gee.

And there, on a bucket against the ground,
He sits, still holding his pan,
With pullets and cockerels hemming him round,
A shivering, silly old man,

With small, red eyes and stiff, blunt bones -
There be few who ever would guess
That once on a time he was Bloodscupper Joes
Of the pirate ship Black Bess !

The Bulletin, 5 September 1912.

Simpatico, Simpatica

If you ask me why
I am gay and free,
This is all my cry
What I likes likes me.

Though there are such lots
Of nice girls I see,
Watching bigger pots,
What I likes likes me.

Bright stars light top lines,
Great fish swim the sea -
Bless their swims and shines !
What I likes likes me.

My star may be low,
My fish may be small,
Yet they are not so
Dusty after all.

For your mind it strikes
Instantaneously;
"Dost like me?" I likes
Dusty starfish, thee ! "

One philosopher
I have met like me,
Watching over her
Fish-shop by the Quay.

Says I, "You serve Greece
On a humble dish,
Maid of Athens! Peace
Be with all your fish."

Says she, "Fry de piece,
Very good, you see?
I am good for grease,
Grease is good for me."

Says I, "But you glow
For your land afar?
You have visions?" "No;
Only bream and gar."

Simpatico, Simpatica (continued)

"But," says I, " a seer
Bade you chase your dae-
mon." "No, I sit her:
De mon' he chase me..

"Me, I like de mon';
De mon' he like me."
"Well," says I "here's fun!
You and I agree."

For, though surly tikes
Sneer at sympathy,
What likes me I likes,
What I likes likes me.

The Bookfellow, 15 June 1914.

The Deathless Soul

That day at last has come for me
When I no more need suffer pain
Nor see the useless misery
On friendly faces fall again.

And through the broken crest of Death
There comes the curving tide of Spring,
The swift sweet Southern clover breath
Of Love and Life unperishing.

The doves are on the warm red roofs,
The sky is like a deep blue well
With trees reflected; hark, what hoofs
Are those? And whose that tolling bell?

I see the nodding plumes below,
And o'er the muffled sound of feet
I hear the whispering screws that go
To hold one in his winding-sheet.

Not mine, not mine that stony face,
Those knotted thumbs above the breast.
And yet, God wot, there is no place
Other on earth where I may rest.

They take him down the creaking stairs,
Three stalwart men on either hand;
Adown into the crystal airs
Of sunshine where the horses stand.

They thrust him in the dismal coach,
Heap lilies on his wooden shell;
The graveyard gates give wide approach,
The withered sexton rings his knell.

They sink him in a crumbling pit
And draw the turf across his head,
The parson croaks from Holy Writ
A benediction on the dead.

And at the setting of the sun,
When small red stars inflame the sky,
The mother and her little one
Come wending homeward wearily.

The Deathless Soul (continued)

I meet them at the half-shut door,
And, though I lead them 'mid the gloom,
They hear no steps upon the floor,
Nor guess my presence in the room.

I kiss the child who only feels
The wind go ruffling through her hair
Up the blind passage till it reels
Back with a sigh of sick despair.

They cannot look with love on me
A thing alive with breath of God. . .
Would that my soul might die and be
Bride o' my flesh beneath the sod !

The Bulletin, 1 November 1917.

A Song With a Moral

In Spring Love only lives:
His little life doth pace
The round one season gives,
Then, weary, hides his face,

Between his handies twain,
As one too loath to see
How his true servants strain
Their strength and wit to be

Securely his, through pelf:
Yet is it right that they,
E'en more than Hate himself,
Should sweat and swink, to pay.....

To pay, should swink and sweat,
For bread, for meat, for wine....
Kisses alone beget
Nothing whereon to dine.

The Bulletin, 8 November 1923.

The Clerk at the Gardens

A patient slave to brutish wealth, he stood,
Freed of his tyrant desk, and, shaking, gazed
Downward across the cruel pit where moved
A lioness. . . . remembering, amazed,

How he had slain her sire in the snow,
And from the great bones rolled the smoking skin
While yet his death-roar echoed round the hills
That walled with ice their white arena in.

His Dream

The vulture screamed upon his iron peak;
Across the frozen flood the red dog laught;
The were-wolf crawled, lean-bellied, from his sleep,
Ghostly and gaunt, above a glacier shaft.

He fed the vulture on the gold blind eyes;
He took the pelt to make his love a coat. . . .
And. . . threaded with her hair . . . she gave quick cries
To feel the teeth close harmless round her throat.

And Reality

Just then, in sober cloth and shining hat,
He saw, Nathaniel Brannigan . . . his boss !
The lioness threw up her tail, and spat,
Seeing her daddy's murd'rer fly his joss.

The Home, 1 November 1924.

Always at "Home"

Behold my lady fair !
Search everywhere. . .
All China and Peru,
England and Ghulistan,
Spain, Italy, Japan. . .
No lady lives so true
The whole world thro',
I dare, and do, engage,
In our (or any) age
As she
Who keeps her tryst with me,
Religiously
Upon this page.

The Home, 1 December 1924.

The Deserted Lover

I have not died, nor withered yet:
And, if thou shouldst return,
There's fire enough to still beget
Young giants, when we burn
Tall flames together, fiercely thrown,
Until the final gust
Wafts us immortal from our own
Too perishable dust.

The Bulletin, 23 September 1926.

The Kind-Hearted Gentleman

I kiss my finger to the sun,
I hail the rose upon her twig,
Then say, "Good morning, everyone,"
To all the daisies, small and big.

I love the sparrow in the trees,
I love the cloudlet in the sky,
But most I love - three helpings please -
Rabbit, with onions, in a pie.

The New Triad, December 1927.

Appendix 11.

Poems attributed to McCrae.

While McCrae was co-editor of The New Triad from August 1927 until the cessation of its publication in July 1928 there appeared some, but not many, poems under his name in this periodical. But there were many poems which were unsigned and others signed by 'unknown' poets. Some of these signatures were obvious pseudonyms, as 'Thelma Slingo', 'Lola Gornall' and 'Biddy O'Dare'. Others were given only initials. There is good reason to think that many of these poems were written by McCrae. This Appendix contains 79 poems attributed to McCrae for the following reasons:

Before August 1927 very little poetry appeared in The New Triad, and those poems which were published were usually from established poets - R.D. Fitzgerald, Kenneth Slessor, L.H. Allen, Zora Cross and J. Le Gay Brereton. Suddenly, upon McCrae's taking over, there is an influx of poetry from 'unknowns', continuing up till the periodical's demise. There was no editorial appeal for poetic contributions to account for this.

Many of these contributions were of quite high standard. Reference to poems such as 'Wisdom Prevailleth', 'The White Gods' and 'Tapestry' will confirm this. 'Unknowns' who could write like this were too rare for the conclusion to be reached that these were random contributions. If the creative urge, or sheer necessity to fill space, led McCrae to write these poems, it is logical that he would not wish his name to appear on all of them. What would his friends think? McCrae's innate modesty, well-documented, and his puckish sense of humour support the view that he could have used pseudonyms for these poems.

The subject matter of these poems reveal attitudes and interests quite in accord with McCrae's and used elsewhere by him. Love between man and woman, themes of mortality and the transience of life, joy in nature and its changing facets, humour in unexpected incidents - all these were his themes, as they are in these poems. In addition, these poems bear the unmistakable imprint of McCrae's poetic style. The lyricism, the vivid sensory impressions, the climactic and epigrammatic conclusions, the fine control of rhythm, the use of unusual and archaic words, grammatical tricks, such as inversion of word order, as well as characteristics of punctuation (the use of the - and the ! and the ;) as well as the flawed line betray his hand. The underlying 'bite' or hardness is evident also.

Illustrations by McCrae himself (as in the humorous bestiary written under the name of Hugh E. Wright and reproduced here) and by his daughter Mahdi, support the argument for McCrae's authorship.

On occasion, too, the poems were omitted from the List of Contents at the front of the magazine. Some are obvious 'fillers'; some were written for a specific purpose, such as the Children's Page McCrae conducted.

Finally, it is true to say that the frequency of this type of contribution fell off rather sharply in the final months of The New Triad's publication, suggesting that the burden of supplying what amounted to a considerable number of poems on demand was exhausting the creative resources of a single individual.

If it is granted that these poems were written by an established poet, it might still be argued that they could have been contributed by a poet other than McCrae. This is possible, but extremely unlikely. As well as the characteristics of McCrae's poetic style in these contributions, it should be remembered that no one else (except Ernest Watt, whose poetic contribution to The New Triad was one poem) had the motive to remain anonymous. There is very strong reason, then, to think that these poems were written by McCrae during this period. It should be stated also that there are poems, additional to these, which could possibly have been McCrae's, but as there was more doubt about these, they have not been included in this Appendix.

The poems in this Appendix have been listed according to the date of their publication in The New Triad.

THE CHOUSE

By HUGH E. WRIGHT

I.

*I've lots of pets about the house,
An Armadillo, birds that sing,
Yet I would never choose the Chouse,
Because the Chouse chews everything.
It gnaws your mother's furs—the Goth—
Then throws the blame upon the moth.*

II.

*But to the Chouse let us revert—
It bites the holes in Gruyere cheese,
It champs the cuffs upon your shirt,
And never thinks of saying "Please."
When evening comes it dons its socks,
And lurks behind the pillow box.*

III.

*And when it notes there's no one nigh,
It pops its head inside the slot,
And worries parcels on the sly—
No matter whose, no matter what—
The paper it will swiftly tear
From beef or baby's underwear.*

IV.

*It has no shame, or would it grin
With gaping mouth from ear to ear?
Its head is flat, its neck is thin,
Its snarl is horrible to hear.
But what makes me dislike it most
Is tampering with the parcel post.*



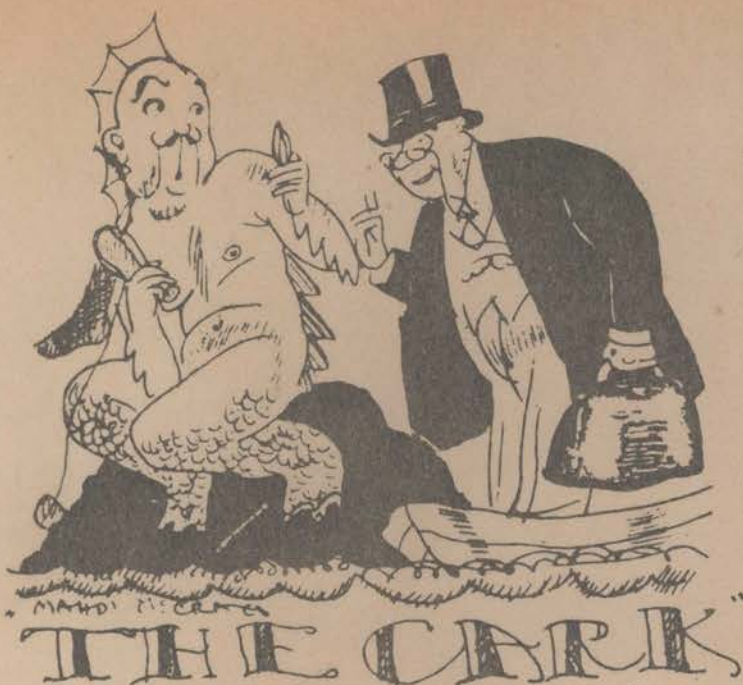
V.

*A present to my Aunt in Town
I sent—I first removed the price—
I did it up, I stuck it down,
I tied it tight, I tied it twice;
But, oh, it reached my aunt at last
A battered relic of the past!*

VI.

*That was the Chouse. The loathly Chouse.
My aunt has changed her will, I'm told.
I would not have one in the house,
For gutta-percha, glue or gold,
I hate the Chouse, whose neck is slim,
I won't write any more of him.*

The New Triad,
1 April 1927.



The Cark—you know—has adenoids,
So every cautious child avoids
An animal, as you'll suppose
That talks entirely through its nose.

For thus its mouth has grown so small
It can't eat any food at all,
But spends its life, with laboured breath,
In starving carefully to death.

I fancy this annoys the Cark—
It's got a most staccato bark,
And that's another reason why
To tease the Cark you should not try.



It sits upon the Random Rocks,
Its occupation—tatting socks,
And ever finds when life is done
It's never tatted more than one.

It's always longing for an heir,
To end its work, and tat the pair.
I think this makes the Cark morose,
Combined with talking through its nose.

Kind-hearted Doctor Lloyd of Sark,
A visit paid once on the Cark;
And said: "My friend, I can't avoid
Observing you've an adenoid,

Or even two, I may remark,
They can't be good for any Cark.
These forceps dipped in disinfect-
-ant first, as you'd expect

Would seize these morbid growths quite tight,
A small incision left and right,
A slight withdrawing movement—so—
Your adenoids would swiftly go

The Cark said nothing through its nose,
Yet it was angry I suppose.
Because—they saw its nostrils twitch,
They say it also dropped a stitch,



And laid its semi-tatted sock,
With care upon a neighbouring rock.
The Doctor blenched—it sprang at him,
And tore him slowly limb from limb.

And all because poor Doctor Lloyd
Had chatted of its adenoid;
This is a fact you can't avoid,
The Cark the Doctor had annoyed

For it must be annoying quite
To find your limbs strewn left and right;
In fact, the Doctor, folks explain,
Was never quite the same again.

And so I say it twice,
In point of fact I say it thrice—
The Cark—the cautious child avoids
Because—the Cark has adenoids.



Exit Harlequin

See, Harlequin tears off his mask -
Tramples his ruffle on the floor
Ere Columbine has time to ask,
His slim white feet have reached the door.

And down the spiral stair he goes -
Capless, into the moonlit street,
He's tired - tired of tinsel shows,
And sick to death of spangled feet !

Into the world has gone her dear;
He's seeking what he will not find !
Her long eyes from the lattice peer -
Then weeping, she draws down the blind.

'Lucien Levy Coeur' The New Triad, August 1927.

Why

Pink blossoms fall
From the peach tree,
By the wall
Where the grape vines cling -
Why do you come again
With your almond blossom -
And reawakening? -
O sad sweet Spring !

'Lucien Levy Coeur' The New Triad, August 1927.

Names

Long ago, when I was young,
I had trolled upon my tongue
Words like white and golden wine,
Names of ladies fair and fine;
That my loved one might be glad
To be called so by her lad.

All through Monday she would be
Darling Helena to me;
Tuesday found her Christabel;
Every day that we could tell
Brought another silver sound
To ring her pretty presence round.

Unaware, came surly Time,
Dried our blood and spoiled our prime,
Drew the gallant sunlight down
Shoved it in his ugly gown;
Stole our bread and cheese and kisses -
'Christabel's ' now - just 'The Missus'.

The New Triad, September 1927.

Winter

Darkness has wrapped us round -
All life is still,
Old roots die in the ground,
Frozen, the rill.
Frozen the restless heart -
Shrunken the hand -
Joys - pains - alike depart
As dwindling sand.

'Lucien Levy Coeur' The New Triad,
September 1927.

"Spindrift"

I crave for change, and share the hateful fate
Of the Moon's minnions; those who ever seek,
And seeking, never find the sought-for dream:
The one beloved face, the laureate's crown,
The victor's sword, the splendid sight of God.
Always, the unimaginable bliss
Lies far beyond the waters of the sea,
Seen through the moonlight of our misty dreams.
The moonlight draws me - draws the sea and me,
Forever, from the shores of flowered life:
From rose-red hearth, and clinging arms and lips,
Out, to the vision of the under-world
There, where the sly Moon seems to kiss the sea,
Where romance lives, and all lost days are fair
Clad in the April of their Spring-time dress;
Where flower-time and fruit-time are as one,
Red poppies of the Autumn, 'mid the buds of Spring.
Yet, we reach nothing, nor the waves, nor I,
But sand, and pebbles, and the shifting dust,
With all our dreams vanisht upon the earth:
Dreams, and blown spindrift, held of nothing worth.

'Alys Hungerford' The New Triad, September 1927.

How Shall I Love You

Shall I love you like a devotee
With lowly worship at your shrine?
Content if happily I may see
Your rare smile on me shine?

Shall I love you hot with passion's fire,
With burning lips and arms that cling?
Forget in sating my wild desire
The future regrets may bring?

Shall I love you like a helpmate true,
One with you in mind and heart?
That mystic link between us two
Not Death himself can part.

'Mariel Lee' The New Triad, September 1927.

Lament of a Literary Hack

Oh Glorious Gift,
Debased lower than slavery,
Promise was - my pen should rule this globe
Mightier than sword or ponderous armament.
But now - to parrot forth the thoughts of others
For gold - red gold !
But yes, it has its uses.
It buys me bread and meat, a roof, a home -
And though I prostitute a glorious talent -
Why should I not? - for Gold !
And yet I live in fear and hateful trembling
That soon my very shame will find me out,
And harry me -
A beaten, broken man,
From post to pillar,
Until I die - for Gold.

'J.A.J.' The New Triad, September 1927.

Berry Brown

A foot as light as thistledown,
Dancing up and dancing down,
All the road to Wendel Town !
Hither come and thither go;
Tush ! What make you, dancing so,
In your woollen gown?

Brown as berries of the sun,
Bright as ever stars that shone,
Light as leaves the wind blows on !
Dancing up and dancing down,
By the road to Wendel Town;
Hither come and thither gone.

Daisies white and poppies red,
Dance with just so light a tread
-Dancing never gave you bread !
Tush ! The little merchant's gone ! -
Like a leaf the wind blows on,
Hither tossed and thither sped.

Up and down by Wendell Town,
In a heavy woollen gown;
Feet as light as thistledown,
Berry brown.

'D.P.McGuire' The New Triad, September 1927.

Monotone

I would not be beguiled,
Thine eyes are deeper than the night,
Softer than morning roses is thy mouth,
Softer than down of fairy's wing is thy mouth,
Mad creature of the night,
Go, lest I be beguiled.

I would not be beguiled,
By songs more soft than falling leaves,
Purer than virgin snowflake are thine arms,
Dearer than liberty thy prisoning arms,
Soft voice like falling leaves,
Cease, lest I be beguiled.

I would not be beguiled
Come sleep or sigh to stay thy weeping;
Sadder than midnight seashore are thy tears,
Sadder than sighing breath of night thy tears,
I would not be beguiled.

'Robert Muir' The New Triad, September 1927.

Once More We Part

I'd be simple, should I cry,
So one kiss, and then - good-bye!
One poor wraith-like weary kiss -
One no lips could ever miss.
Almost casual - almost cold!
Dearest ! Are you growing old ?

Do the things you once held dear,
Fade like moonlight with each year?
Do I now, my poor friend, seem
Other than a phantom dream?

Still I cherish what you are -
Year by year no change can mar.
Should your eyes become less bright,
And your dear dark hair turn white.
Then my phantom soul would cling
Round your body glimmering,
Round a cloak of sweet caress,
Ever in my faithfulness.

'Lucien Levy Coeur' The New Triad, September
1927.

THE BLURB

By HUGH E. WRIGHT



I.

Here our artist has drawn you a Blurb ;
And I do wish our artist would curb
His desire for a beast
That won't rhyme in the least
With anything else except " herb,"
Or some very occasional verb.

II.

Still the Blurb—if you wish to enquire—
Has a tail made of whipcord and wire ;
And it bobs up and down
On the same, with a frown
At the folly of every desire
Except to bob higher and higher.

III.

It sits by the road, at the edge,
Somewhere near to a huxtable hedge ;
And it's happy enough,
If the road's rather rough,
With a slice of macadam, two " veg,"
Petrol sauce, and some salt and two " veg."

IV.

Rude remarks at the passers it flings,
And it does annoy Fords when it sings,
" You may think my chassis
" A little bit 'passe,
" But lumme! just look at my springs,
" I can bob up and down on my springs."

V.

I've seen a Ford—catching its eye—
Tuck its head in its bonnet and fly!
Shedding numerous nuts
In the roadway and ruts
Every inch of the way it goes by ;
And the Blurb picks them up on the sly.

VI.

For it loves cracking nuts in the sun,
And its notion of ultimate fun,
Is to bob up and down,
With a cynical frown
At the folly of people who run.
" Which in our set," it says, " isn't done!"

VII.

Still I think that the Blurb on the whole
Is a harmless, eccentric old soul,
Bowing low, and then high
To each side. By the by,
That is rather like royalty's role
When royalty goes for a stroll.

VIII.

(By the way, if you don't like the Blurb,
You might ask our artist to curb
His desire for a beast
That won't rhyme in the least
With anything else except " herb,"
Or some very occasional verb).

HUGH E. WRIGHT.

Where Are the Strong Men?

Say, where are the strong men,
The broad men the long men,
Who lived beyond the blue hills across
the shining plain?
Say, where are the strong men,
Will they ne'er return again?

Say, where are the keen men,
The straight men the clean men,
Who let their fields be fallow when England
bid them come?
Dead shells that once have been men
Lie buried far from home.

There, wrapped in their sleeping
Still, soft, till the reaping.
They rest from all their labours in Death's
embracing trance,
With the wistful poppies weeping
O'er the tired hills of France.

But, ah, souls of the great men,
The true men the straight men,
They're back beyond the blue hills upon
the smiling plain,
And the spirit of the great men
Lives in their sons again.

'J.F.F.' The New Triad, October 1927.

Big Business

"All he does nowadays is to play golf."- Any
Captain of Industry.

When it is you to interview
A magnate of renown,
Unless it's wet you will not get
That business man in town.
A fine week-day drags him away,
No matter the expense.
His typiste says, "On these fine days
He is in conference."

His business calls; it never palls;
He's full of business cares.
When in a rut his work goes phut,
And proud plus-fours he wears.
And thus arrayed he talks of trade;
His many cares still call;
You'll find that he is on the tee
Conferring with a ball.

His telephone rings all alone;
His typiste lets it rip;
"He's gone away for all the day -
Important business trip ! "
It isn't fun, for there is done
Big business on the links;
And deals are made and fortunes paid -
They only play for drinks.

'A.H.A.' The New Triad, October 1927
(illustrated by Mahdi McCrae)

Twilight

When softly bloom the stars
To gem the twilit steep,
Dusk soothes earth's throbbing scars.
When softly bloom the stars,
Through Heaven's far golden bars,
Faint scents celestial creep,
When softly bloom the stars
To gem the twilit steep.

'Mariel Lee' The New Triad, October 1927

Spring Song

(Inspired by sight of a municipal tar cart in our street.)

Though the breezes blossom laden
Drifting lazily from the sea
Stir the blood of youth and maiden
There's a surer sign for me.
Some may find her sweet suggestion
Where the gums and wattles are,
But in town beyond all question
Spring is ushered in with tar.

Green and gold are on the beaches,
Color spreads a subtle lure,
While Spring flutters in the shadows
Nature leads the overture.
But progressive urban mayors,
On the highways near and far,
Lay with reverence and prayers
Offerings of precious tar.

North and South the wave is flowing,
Thick and sticky tide of pitch,
Driving careful mothers frantic
Making road contractors rich;
But the Mayors must do their duty,
They have seen the calendar,
So arrayed in grace and beauty
Spring comes dancing in with tar.

'Eustace Inkwell'

The New Triad, October 1927.

I Love You, Sweet

More than the shadows that the willows make,
More than the patterns when the lilies shake,
More than the little clouds above,
More than all other folk I meet,
More than my wild desire for love -
I love you, Sweet!

'Lucien Levy Coeur' The New Triad, October 1927

Microcosm

Some need a flight of aeroplanes
Across a vault of sky
For marveling - a mighty fleet -
A million men - not I.

Tufts of alyssum, dainty white,
In my garden border lie:
And where the sun strikes one of these
Is poised a hover-fly.

The sun-shaft on a shimmering wing -
The dark, slim body's sheen -
These, and the bright alyssum's face
Hold all a world between.

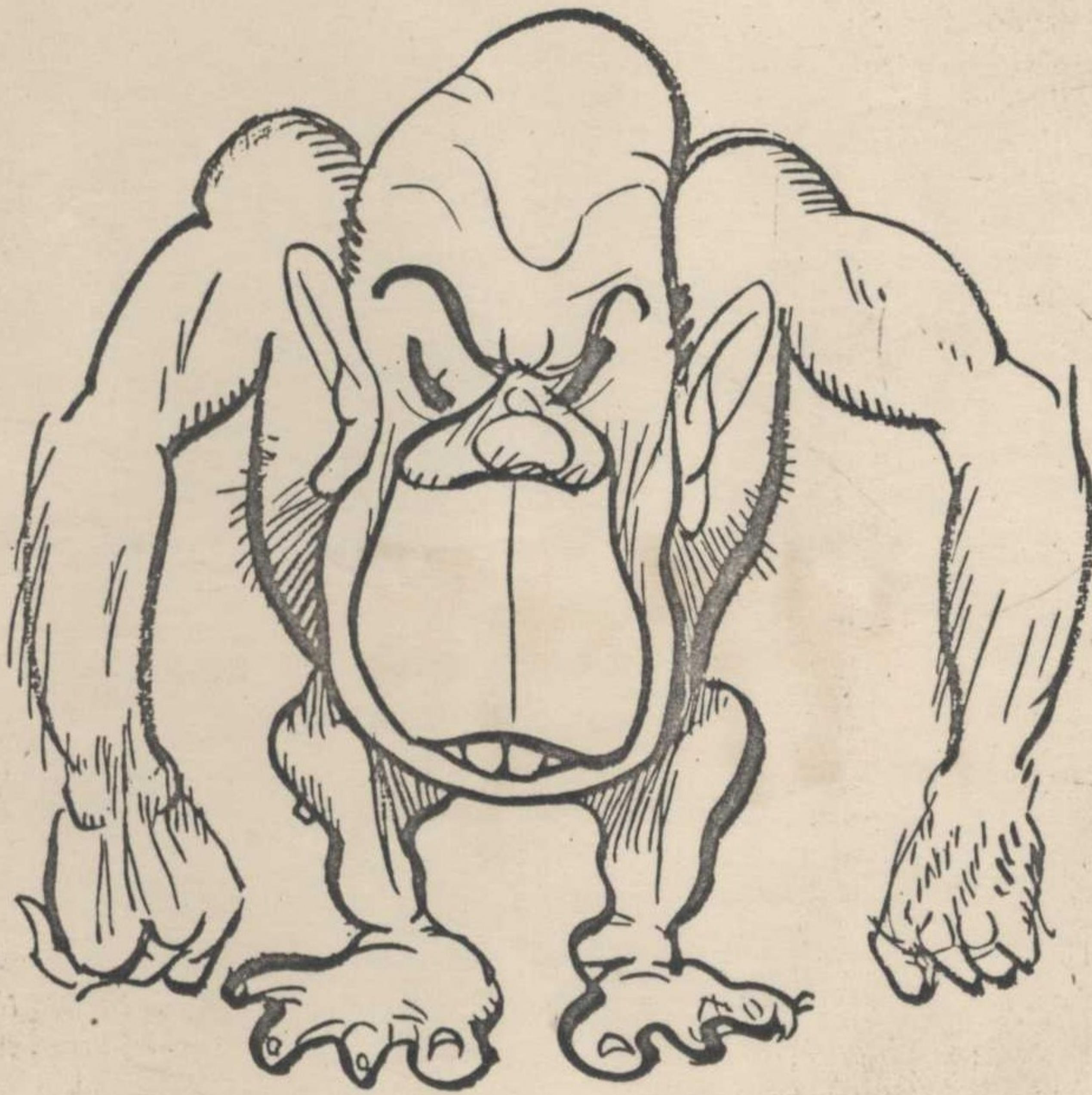
'A.E.M.' The New Triad, October 1927

THE GRUNCH

By HUGH E. WRIGHT

Illustrated by HUGH McCRAE

*Do you know the Grunch?
You should hear him scrunch
Pieces out of motor busses,
And if the conductor fusses—
Just some semi-strangled cusses
End inside the Grunch.*



I.

*No, do not mention his name,
send a prayer up to Mizpah;
No, if it's quite all the same
to you, don't even whisper;
Dinner time's just about nine
when his appetite's normal,
You are invited to dine,
though it's strictly informal.*

II.

*He's on the prowl for a feed,
and if he even scents us,
Very "facilis" indeed
is the "descensus";
Only a little bit left
in a tooth that is hollow,
All the rest just the digest
of a gulp and a swallow.*

III.

*Since it would give me much pain
to be probed by a tooth-pick,
Harried from molar to can-
ine, come on Anne and Ruth quick;
Tuck yourselves well into bed,
you'll be safe in the nursery;
Try some light reading instead
of this animal versery.*

*Do you know the Grunch
Had three boys for lunch?
Mind you, he is not a glutton,
Wouldn't eat a waistcoat button,
Spits 'em out I'm almost "sutten".
Let's ignore the Grunch!*

Among the Artists

"Artistic temperament is what they lack,"
The Poet paused, and sipped his glass of beer;
"The joy that comes of weaving golden words
Is lost upon the crowd, they laugh and jeer."

With studied carelessness the artist said,
"Creative effort is unknown to those
Who spend their lives in unremitting toil,
To them a work of art is just a pose."

A thing mysterious, hidden by a veil
Of ignorance; their eyes can never see
The transcendental beauty of the world
That makes itself so plain to you and me."

The company agreed that art was high
Above the class with whom all toil reposes;
I turned aside, and through an open door
I watched an old man gently tending roses.

'W.J.Thomas' The New Triad, November 1927.

The Last Day Together

Remembering that bright last day,
It seems that Spring had come too soon!
It is with trembling now I pray
Of Fate to grant a simple boon,
That memories at least shall stay,
Though winter sunshine in the noon
Glazes steel-white and the streets be grey.

'Colette Stevens' The New Triad, November 1927.

St Helens

Pale-gleaming, as an amulet of jade
Upon a dusky lap laid listlessly,
This quiet land, of deep and frequent shade,
Marged by the blade-blue of an inland sea.

Her peace hath passed into the soul of man -
Peace born of age-long brooding - unto her
Years are but sighs; the century's a span;
The cycle as some drifting gossamer.

Old, ere the granite heaved beneath her piers,
Or yet the glacier cleaved a path to sea;
Hoar, when the sky-line of yon western tiers
Was buffeted by Permian tides, whilst she

Dreamed in deep waters. Long as time shall last
She shall gaze steadfast o'er the eastern sea;
'Waiting what dawn? Woven of the buried past,
Yet scornful of that interlude, the grave.

'H. Grant' The New Triad, November 1927.

A Man With His Pipe

When a man is in love
With a girl who is nice,
He sets her above -
Her graces suffice;
But contentment may fade,
And her pretty lip curl -
She may turn out a jade,
A man with his girl.

When a man takes a mate
He is happy at last;
But often his fate
In the discard is cast;
For marriage, I ween,
May end up in strife -
No longer serene
Is a man with his wife.

When a man has his smoke
He has paradise won;
The past is a joke
With a new life begun.
The girl and the wife
From the slate he will wipe;
He has done with all strife,
A man with his pipe !

'Smada' The New Triad, November 1927.

Regret

When looking on the years
Of wasted love, and woe,
And all my futile tears,
Ah, this I'd have, you know -
T'was needless ! All because
(Like some things that appal)
The pity of it was,
The You I worshipped so,
Had never lived at all !

'Colette Stevens' The New Triad, November 1927.

In Her Absence

The shining boughs are nodding in the sun,
The paths are wet with yester-evening's rain,
The white gums stand, unscarred, without a stain,
Like slender virgins. All their leaves now gone,
Bare and bereaved the tall trees are, and fain
For spring; as I who walk apart, alone.

Spring will not come with opening of flowers,
Or glad young leaves uncurling on the spray,
Or tinted sunbeams laughing through the showers.
But at some hour when down the woodland way,
All the bright birds upon the wavering gums
Shall sing from tree to tree, "She comes, she
comes."

'D.P.McGuire' The New Triad, November 1927.

Melody

Since last time we met, my heart is a song
That is cold as the sad first bright days of
Spring,
With parts shrilly gay - a mischievous thing !
The first I remember - the ending seems wrong !

'Lucien Levy Coeur' The New Triad, November
1927.

Eheu Fugacse (From Marot)

No more am I the man I erst have been
Nor, what I was, may e'er again behold !
My fair Springtime and Summertime I ween
Have run away and left me in the cold.
O, Love, my lord, thee have I served of old,
Nor cared what all the other gods had bid;
Ah ! might my life again its course unfold -
I'd serve thee even better than I did.

Unsigned The New Triad, November 1927.

THE DROOL

By HUGH E. WRIGHT



The Drool is such an utter fool,
It cannot grasp the simple rule
That two and two make four, but he
Argues the point continually.
"I have two legs in front, I know!"
He says. "I've seen them, watched them grow.
"You tell me I have two behind,
"That may be so, because I find
"The spot on which I sometimes sit
"Has got some slight support for it;
"Though up to now no glimpse I've caught
"Of legs behind—my neck's too short.
"But when you say—as oft before
"You've told me—two and two make four;
"I do not know! I cannot see
"Why two and two should not make three.
"My legs in front are plain to view—
"I fancy two and two make two!"
It cannot even quite contrive
To learn how many beans make five!
When asked by several learned men
It answered, vaguely, "Nine or ten—
"Or is it eight?" In fact the Drool
Is just a monumental fool.
Chewing the cud of ignorance
In dull, dejected indolence.

Let's pay a visit, if we can,
Upon that very worthy man,
Professor Birchall V. Ducesne.
This learned man, with grief and pain
Heard of the doltish Drool by chance,
And its miasmatic ignorance.
"This may not be!" he said—and thence
Changing from the subjunctive tense
To the imperative—said he:
"This must not be! This SHALL not be!
"My duty lies before me, plain—
"To stimulate this creature's brain
"Until some ray of knowledge glints
"Into its torpid depths and hints
"At the stark joy there lies for all
"In problems bi-dimensional."

He took his desk, his blackboard, too,
Two tons of chalk, a pot of glue,
For "We must stick to facts!" said he—
And found the Drool beside a tree.
"Now come my friend and let us strive
"To prove how many beans make five."

He argued this, he argued that,
He argued thus, he argued so,
He argued round, he argued flat.
The Drool replied, "I do not know!"
He threw a theorem on high,
And pierced it with a parallel,
He forced a fallacy to fly—
The Drool remarked, "I am not well!"
He drew a diagram in sand,
And dished it up in printer's ink,
He argued "on the other hand,"—
The Drool said, "Yes. I do not think!"



HEARD OF THE DOLTISH DROOL BY CHANCE...

After twelve weeks of argument—
His energy was slightly spent—
Professor Birchall V. Ducesne
Murmured: "I shall not try again!
"For ignorance is bliss, we know,
"You must be happy! Is it so?"
The dullard Drool responded: "No!"
"Oh, nonsense!" said the scholar then.
"You must be happy! Learned men
"Have proved that ignorance is bliss!
"You can't refute a thing like this.
"So dance, and kick your heels up high,
"Point your appendage to the sky!
"Laugh; cachinate; or better still
"Chuckle; or giggle, which you will.
"Smile; grin; and let the whole world see
"Redundant risibility!
"Chortle; or sing a jocund lay,
"And let the welkin ring, I pray!
"For ignorance IS bliss!" he cried.
The Drool just grunted, and replied,
"What's bliss?"
And the Professor died!



AND THE PROFESSOR DIED

Priscilla's Prayer

Oh, father ! - I want a winter's hat,
Shoes and stockings, and knee length gown,
Trimmed with the fur of an Asian cat,
Meet for the loveliest girl in town.

Oh, father ! - I want a ten-valve set
That'll pick up the snarl of a polar bear
When the ice gives way and his feet get wet,
And the shriek of a flea in the tiger's lair.

Oh, father ! - I want a gramophone,
With a super-sensitive tonal arm
That'll trick the ear with a beetle's groan
When the boot of the butler has done him harm.

Oh, father ! - I want a dinky car,
A Rolls will do if it's painted grey,
And I'll steer my bus by a pale fixed star,
At seventy five on the King's Highway.

Oh, father ! - I want . . . Upon my word,
The selfish fellow ! And felo de se
With a child's pea rifle ! It's too absurd !
But when did anyone think of me ?

'W.J.Digger' The New Triad, November 1927.

Blue Summer Twilight

The summer garden swoons with scent and shade,
A mad moon hangs half falling from the sky,
And ghostly moths from some enchanted glade
Of honey-laden flowers flit by.

Pale roses spill their petals all around,
Ripe plums fall from an over-burdened tree,
And from his humble cell within the ground
A cricket sings his shrill-toned litany.

Lucien Levy Coeur The New Triad, November 1927.

Vigil

The dew hangs heavy on the twinkling stars
Of wistful jasmine round my window-bars;
Wan pictures on the drowning panels grow
More vague; and, by the darkened trees, I know
The Night hath drawn the Moon into her breast -
As when some saddened Virgin, and opprest,
Seeks in the shadow of her garden- close
The consolation of a lovely rose.

H.M. The New Triad, 1 December 1927.

The Butterfly

Asleep on my marigold bed,
Away from the eye of the sun,
Young Rosalie found me and said,
"Here'th a black-an'-white blue-thpeckled one."

And I longed to drowse in the cup
Of Rosalie's innocent hand;
But the fairies whistled me up -
Because Rosalie can't understand.

H.McC. The New Triad, 1 December 1927.

Loving is a Natural Thing

But loving is a natural thing -
The loves of moron, seer and king
Are sung throughout the ages.
Then why wax prudish and look dark
When I meet Rudolph in the park
And do, as did the sages?

Unsigned The New Triad, 1 December 1927.

The Orchard

The comrades meet
Little brother,
By the orchard wall,
Hasten hither,
Little brother,
I hear them call.

The apples are ripe,
Little brother,
Red, gold and brown,
Take thy great axe,
Little brother,
Cut the trees down.

The simplest way,
Little brother,
As we well know,
Baskets fill quick,
Little brother,
When boughs are low.

Take thy sharp axe,
Little brother,
The comrades wait,
And cut down first,
Little brother,
The orchard gate.

Hack it in bits,
Little brother,
So white and tall,
The orchard then,
Little brother,
Is free for all;
For one and all,
Little brother,
To share and share.

What though next year,
Little brother,
Nought ripens there.
'Mid the rank grass,
Little brother,
Who'll care who sees,
The mouldering trunks,
Little brother,
Of those dead trees?

'Flinders Barr' The New Triad,

December 1927.

The Worm

I like the way a worm goes
(Wiggle woggle all the way).

I wonder,
If a worm knows
Which way
A worm goes . . .
(Wiggle woggle all the way)?

If some
Worms didn't know
How
A worm ought to go
(Wiggle woggle all the way)?

Would a kind worm
Who did know,
Show a worm,
Who didn't know
Which way it had to go
(Wiggle woggle all the way)?

Unsigned The New Triad, December 1927.

Greeting

So still the poplar looked
Ere I was nigh,
It seemed a green spire stretched
Towards the sky;
Yet every leaf was tossed with life
As I went by.

So still I saw you stand
Beside the gate;
So quaintly, carefully composed,
Codly sedate -
Yet eager elves called from your eyes
And bade me wait !

'Una Currie' The New Triad, December 1927.

The Camel

The Camel has a lump
On his back
Called a hump;
When he is
A drom-a-dery
He always has two.
But I am wondering
What would he be,
If he had no hump
Or if he had three?

The Elephant

I like the way
An elephant goes.
He wobbles so
From side to side,
And so
You get a lovely ride.

The Swallow

I saw a swallow to-day
He swept through the air
Like wind; from the bay
He came
Then he flew away,
So I ran to the sands
And called to the sea,
"Oh, send back the swallows,
Send them to me.
Give, give, oh, give them,
Hungry old sea !"

Children's Cocktail

Squeeze the bags of two fair-sized honey-bees,
Add four dewdrops and a half from flower-bells
of the Christmas Bush.
Hold three minutes over a lion's breath,
Stir briskly with six whiskers from a tortoise-
shell cat plucked by moon-rise.

Unsigned from The Children's Page edited
by McCrae

The New Triad, December 1927.

Ballade of Little Pubs

When days are dark and nights are long,
And all the world is mud and sleet;
When not a bird has heart for song
And cold winds blow along the street;
When houses seem devoid of heat,
And hands are numb, howe'er one rubs,
There yet remains one solace sweet -
We go to drink in little pubs.

The gods of old were glad and strong
(They always drank their nectar neat),
But now the godly say its wrong
To have a drink or stand a treat.
(Parsons who storm, old maids who bleat,
And fat old fools who sit in clubs),
We give them silent scorn that's meet,
And go to drink in little pubs.

For pubs to all men do belong,
The honest man, the fool, the cheat,
The loud voiced, brazen as a gong,
The timid, silent and discreet.
Yea, none is there refused a seat,
Nor are there fees, or calls, or subs.,
So, to make happiness complete,
We go to drink in little pubs.

Envoi

Princess, must we, on tired feet,
Tread the rough road with many stubs?
Then in this race we'll not compete,
We go to drink in little pubs.

'Rex' The New Triad, December, 1927.

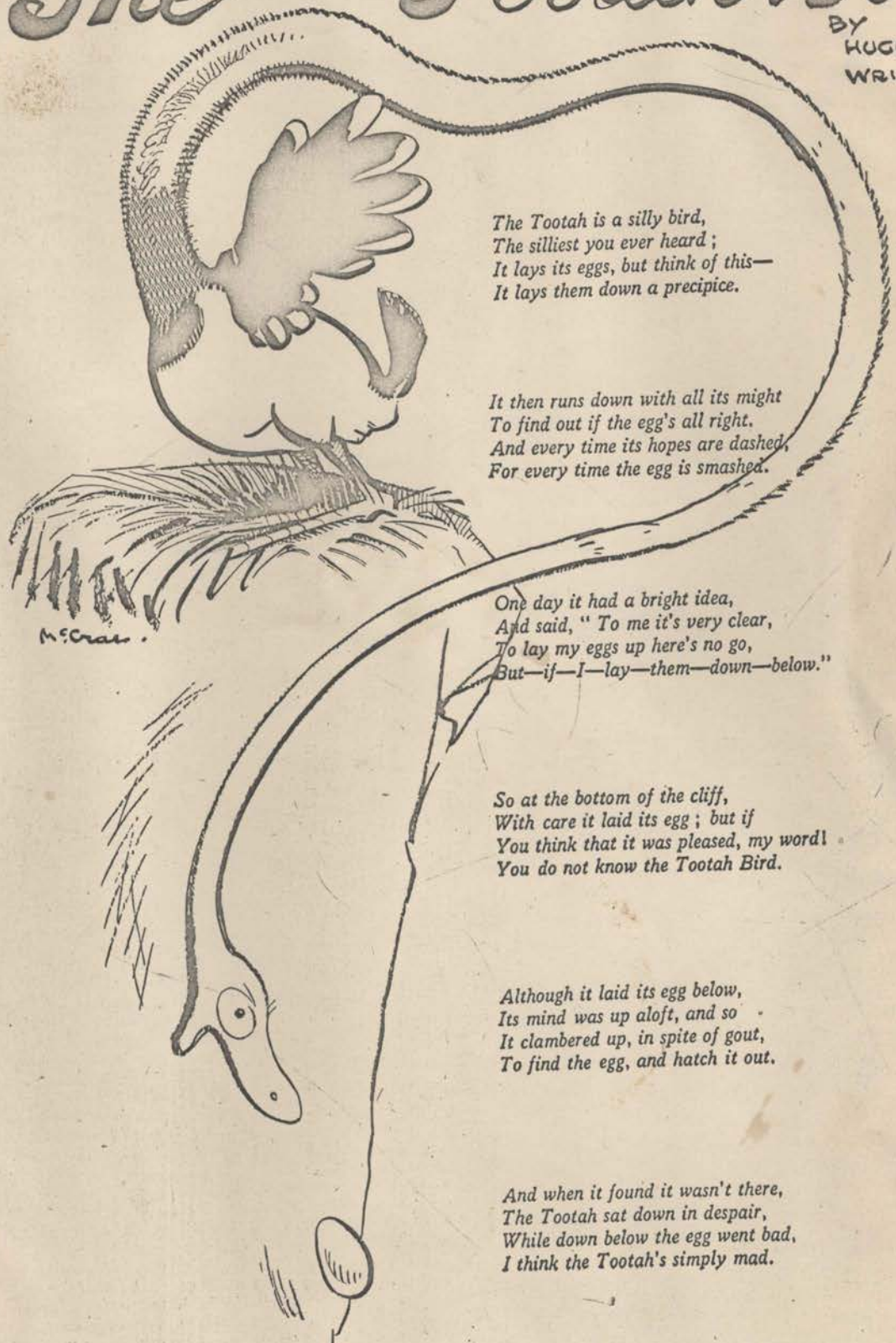
A Glimpse

It was only a glimpse that I caught that day
Of coral-red lips and eyes of grey:
But a glimpse that remained in my heart to stay.
And I somehow knew - time has proved it, too -
That God for some purpose had shown me you.

'A.M.' The New Triad, December 1927.

The Tootah Bird.

BY
HUGH E.
WRIGHT.



The Tootah is a silly bird,
The silliest you ever heard ;
It lays its eggs, but think of this—
It lays them down a precipice.

It then runs down with all its might
To find out if the egg's all right.
And every time its hopes are dashed,
For every time the egg is smashed.

One day it had a bright idea,
And said, " To me it's very clear,
To lay my eggs up here's no go,
But—if—I—lay—them—down—below."

So at the bottom of the cliff,
With care it laid its egg ; but if
You think that it was pleased, my word!
You do not know the Tootah Bird.

Although it laid its egg below,
Its mind was up aloft, and so
It clambered up, in spite of gout,
To find the egg, and hatch it out.

And when it found it wasn't there,
The Tootah sat down in despair,
While down below the egg went bad,
I think the Tootah's simply mad.

Villanelle

Upon a day - a day of Spring,
Beneath a golden wattle tree,
I made for you this little ring;
When tawny-tinted birds did sing,
As though with Love they would agree
Upon a day - a day of Spring;
My heart was glad as anything,
For fairies fled their dells to see,
I made for you this little ring.
The fragrant flowers there did cling
To your gold hair upon the lea
Upon a day - a day of Spring;
As you and I our thoughts did wing
Of happy hours that were to be,
I made for you this little ring.
We had no fear what Time would bring;
The birds in key take up the glee
Upon a day - a day of Spring
I made for you this little ring.

'Cecil St Cyr Butler' The New Triad, January
1928.

In Spirit

My beloved !
Out of the cold dark night
Your spirit came
Close beside me, caressing my lips.
We loved.

Into the warm-lit room
You hovered.
Even though impregnable barriers
Parted us to all Eternity,
We loved.

In spirit we communed.
With joy I awaited you
Ever thus
My beloved.

'Claire E.' The New Triad, January 1928.

Pristine Proverbs for Pedantic Persons

I

Teach not a parent's mother to extract
The embryo juices of an egg by suction.
The good old lady can this feat enact
Quite irrespective of your kind instruction.

II

Upon the crested battlements reclining
And disregarding gravity's just due,
He fell, a wreck past recombining
By all the Royal Stud and Retinue.

III

Observe yon plumed biped fine
To obtain its captivation,
Deposit particles saline.

IV

Cryptogamous accretions seldom accumulate
Mineral fragments that decline repose.

Unsigned The New Triad, January 1928.

Pearling Boats

Like fairy argosies they seemed,
When drifting out in sunrise glow;
Their sails with rose and opal gleamed,
When seeking where the white pearls grow.
Now, laden deep, the pearlers come
Like white-winged sea-birds, fleeting home.

Long weeks they drifted o'er the deep,
Afloat upon the restless tide;
The treasures of the deep to seek,
That in those sunless caverns hide.
And now, their weary toiling o'er,
They bring their treasure-trove ashore.

Great plates of pearl, that hold in pawn
The gleaming splendor of the seas,
Like tender tints of early dawn
Lie heaped upon the blackened quays.
While, still as birds upon their nest,
With white sails furled, the pearl-boats rest.

'J.S.Litchfield' The New Triad, January 1928.

I Wonder Why

I wonder why
The very day you want the sun to shine
It rains, although you've prayed it would be fine -
I wonder why?

I wonder why
Just when you want to stay up late at night
You've got to go to bed, it's hardly right -
I wonder why?

I wonder why
You mustn't paddle in the little pool
Along the road when going off to school -
I wonder why?

I wonder why
Grown-ups do as they like, it's hardly fair,
They have much more fun than is their share -
I wonder why?

'A.K.' The New Triad, January 1928 .

Sonnet

Divided by a sea of doubts to-day,
Whilst Life holds out its joys for us to plumb,
And ere the span is scarcely half-way swum,
We two are drifting down the nether way;
All unaware how Time advances aye,
As when we never dreamt of his dread drum -
So joyously our hearts were overcome -
Ah ! who can fathom Fate's relentless play?

Yet I believe that, somewhere in the skies,
Tomorrow, God will guide our souls to see
That Star of hope and peace for ever shine;
And ever there will be great paeans rise -
Immortal music when our souls are free -
And all things into one sweet song combine.

'Cecil St Cyr Butler' The New Triad,
January 1928.

His Epitaph

He lies here. See the bush,
All grey through grief for him;
Hoar scrub - like ashes cast -
Sprinkles the valley grim.

The salt-bush is his shroud,
Wide skies his only pall,
And in memoriam
A thousand stamp-heads fall.

Gold- lured to death - and yet
He would have had it so.
Say mass, sing requiem
With the grey bush - and go.

Quietly he was found
Here in the Golden West,
The long - sought - for at last,
An El Dorado blest.

Unsigned The New Triad, January 1928.

Words

Words !

As soft as petal-showers that fall
On silken grasses !
Like the morning songs of birds
That stay like once-heard music.
Tender words I know,
Like "Heart's Desire", and "Best Beloved",
And "Sweet o' Mine",
And "Little Wing" ! - - -

But you !

You never spoke such words -
No single one that I could keep,
And treasure in my heart, and croon above !
No single word of love you said
To stay the aching need I had for tenderness.
You were too busy -
Careless -
Inarticulate - - -

And now -

And now that you are gone and I am left,
I feel that I
Am like a childless widow-thing
Who weeps that she has no small sons
To comfort her.
For I -
I have not in my meagre memory,
One single word !
And words are lovely, fragrant things !

'Deidre O'Shea' The New Triad, January 1928.

Alone

My heart beneath your hand,
Then all my soul leaped up to meet your own,
Tears brimmed my eyes. All lesser thought had flown
And left the thought of love. And I alone
With you upon the sand.

Unscarred by tear or rue,
I gave, you took - I willed it should be so,
That for your comfort man-made laws should blow
As fragments in your path. The moon sunk low
And I belonged to you.

Cold darkness in the land.
My only song is one of pain and dearth.
I breathed in Arcady, returned to earth
Alone. Now all my love and all my mirth
Lie buried in the sand.

'B.O'Dare' The New Triad, February 1928.

Summer Love

Six curling waves
Creaming to break upon
The yellow sand.

Five swift white gulls
Screaming at the joyousness
Of life.

Four brown rocks
Spray-flung - shelled,
And old as time itself.

Three hours of happiness
With only just
Two people who knew
Life good
And happy, and their visions true.
One day - one beach - and just one - You !

'Yvonne Stevens' The New Triad, February 1928.

The Whang

The woeful, and woebegone Whang,
Says, "Life's simply not worth a hang."
 It was stung in the leg,
 By a dynamite keg,
On the banks of the Bubbly Berang,

And it sits with its tail, so they say,
In a bucket of water all day,
 And its caught such a cold,
 That it uses, I'm told
Seventeen pocket-hankies a day.

For the woeful and woebegone Whang,
Is afraid of the boys of Penang;
 If they once set alight
 To his tail - well, good-night !
For the Whang would go off with a bang.

'Hugh E.Wright' The New Triad, February 1928.

Near a Growing Town

Oh, I shall pluck the wildrose sweet,
 That blooms here in the grass,
And tramp this way my wandering feet
 Must some day cease to pass.

For stars and wind and grass will fade
 Like wreaths that Helen wore,
And soon I'll crumble, and be laid
 Where beauty cries no more.

And some far day this magic gloom
 Will gild a city street,
And the rose of steel, black-petalled, bloom
 Where now the night is sweet.

'A.R.D.Fairburn' The New Triad, February 1928.

Inarticulate

Oh, that I had the gift of tongues to tell
her how I love her,
Oh, that I had the gift of song to sing
the praises of her,
But I can only worship her, and look
into her face,
And mutely feel within my heart, the wonder
of her grace.

'A.B.' The New Triad, February 1928.

The Soozletoo.

Do you know the Soozletoo,
Sitting on the sands?
Did you know the Soozletoo
Hasn't any hands?
Hasn't any hands, my child,
For when it was wee,
It was in a shipwreck
And it lost all hands at sea.

Happy little Soozletoo,
Do you ask me why?
Well, when Satan comes that way,
Satan passes by.
Hasn't got no mischief there
For idle hands to do,
Couldn't find no idle hands
On a Soozletoo.

Wish I were a Soozletoo,
Happy as its fate;
When it dies, the Soozletoo
Goes to Heaven straight.
Doesn't have to learn the harp,
Couldn't if it tried;
Simply sits on golden sands,
By the silvery tide.

Simply sits and soozles there,
On the golden sands;
Happy up in Heaven, 'cos
It hasn't any hands.
Only one thing worries me,
Has it found a way,
How to keep its halo straight
On a windy day?

'Hugh E. Wright' The New Triad, March 1928.

Wisdom Prevaileth

Came a great knocking at the palace gates,
And young King Solomon did pale and look
To Nathan by his side; then Nathan took
His master's hand within his own and cried
"Oh, King, there comes one who with honeyed
tongue
Will cloy the soul. Have not thy minstrels sung
Of Beauty's snares and how her lemen died?"

Lo, now the court is filled with fighting-men
And strange beasts burdened high with precious gifts,
Gems flash on gems and scent of spices drifts
Across the hall to Solomon in his might,
Whose troubled eyes are suddenly aware
Of a small figure standing sweet and fair
With rarest jewels and costly robes bedight.

Her sweet voice rose across the space between,
"I, Balkis, Queen of Sheba, bow my head
Before a King, of whom 'tis truly said
That Wisdom crowned with a wreath of flowers.
Look now, dear Solomon, upon the gifts I bring,
Gems for your glory, nightingales to sing
Sweet melodies to please thy tranquil hours."

Shyly bent Solomon from his ivory throne,
And gazing deep within her sweet dark eyes,
Found but great kindness where he'd looked for lies,
And round the lips which Nathan sought to spot
Knew generous lines which promised to give birth. .
To youth's sweet echoes of delight and mirth.
He kissed her brow and then was Love begot.

Long was Love feted in the cool sweet groves
Of Solomon, whose soul was set afire
'Tixt Nathan's anger and his own desire.
Until one night he, anguished, cried her name,
Then fled from her into the pitchy gloom
Leaving a tortured silence in that room
And small brown hands that twined themselves in pain.

Night died, and once again through that great hall
Moved Balkis, with her proud unhurried tread
And bore with dignity her royal head,
Then on the threshold turned with cold disdain,
A smile was flung, a mocking curtsy swept -
Her great heart broke, and down her cheek there crept
The shining tears which veiled her eyes in rain.

Wisdom Prevailleth (continued)

For quick within her stirred the unborn son,
The blossom sprung from joys akin to pain.
The King's eyes were dropped then, raised again,
Perceived the small sad figure lifted high,
And saw her train set forth in proud array.
Bearing her southward till it wheeled away
Into that space which is not land or sky.

'Biddy O'Dare' The New Triad, March 1928.

The Unfinished Temple Segesta

A tale half told; a riddle with no key;
A dream half imaged in the drowsy brain
Of Time; a propylaeon planned in vain
Betwixt our transience and eternity;

This temple seems, wherein no deity
Was ever shrined, nor any victim slain.
Only the winds offering, and the rain
Scatters its votive flowers carelessly.

And better so ! The gods return no more,
And those who should have worshipped here have passed
For ever to the sad Lethean shore.
Another great Presence, and the last,
Claimed this long since, and made therein his throne,
Whom all men fear, yet of all men unknown.

'F.S.Burnell' The New Triad, April 1928.

Easter

Come to the Show with Mother and Dad,
Where can such elegant pleasure be had?
Looking at ploughs
And cows
And sows
Cars and machinery
Flowers and greenery.
Horses with ribbons as blue as the sky,
Harvesters, harrows,
Potatoes and marrows,
Windmills with water that never runs dry.
Little pigs all in a row.
Bill's in a puddle and Dad's in the bar,
Mother's way down where the new fashions are.
Everything's better than last year - by far
So come to the - come to the Show.

'J.F.F.' The New Triad, April 1928.

In the Twilight

Deep in reverie,
An old woman, sadly sweet,
Comes down the street -
Dumb with misery
Is her lonely, groping heart -
Yet twilight heals the bitter smart.

And the revelry
Of the children in the park
Breaks through the dark
With a witchery
That rekindles youth's pure flame
In breasts long chilled by age and shame.

And where subtlety
Of the violet's scent, and musk,
Enchant the dusk,
Under greenery
By the river's lispig edge,
New lovers whisper love's dear pledge.

Oh, so peacefully
The soft twilight nightward steals,
My being feels
Some vast sympathy,
As a balm for all life's ills;
And quiet faith my heart-ache stills.

A swift certainty,
Like a strange unreasoned love,
Lifts me above
The blind frailty
That still binds us to the sod -
I know that life, somehow, is God !

'Thelma Slingo' The New Triad, April 1928.

The Bathers

Along the beach, a group of men
Come joyously and shout and run,
They seem like happy boys again,
And revel in the simplest fun.

But one is absent from them all,
He who was lithe - not over tall,
With dreaming dark blue eyes, a head
And face for memory !
He's dead !

'Lucien Levy Coeur' The New Triad, April 1928.

The Porcelain Pavilion

In the artificial lake, where the lilies lie,
A porcelain pavilion stands, inlaid
With green and white, and one may reach it by
An arching bridge which, seen against the sky,
Curves like a tiger's back - a bridge of jade.

In the pavilion, robed in colours bright,
Sit friends, with cups of cool wine to drink.
The chatter, scribble verses, pause to think,
Their hats pushed back, their sleeves tucked
up to write.

And in the water, where
The bridge, with its reflected curve has made
A crescent-moon of jade;
The friends in brightly-coloured robes are there
Head-downward while they drink their wine again
In a pavilion wrought in porcelain.

(From the Chinese)

'Nancy Hunn' The New Triad, April 1928.

An Old Melody

Maude is in the garden,
So no need is there to say,
"Come, dear, into the garden,"
And she is not built that way !

Maude is in the garden
With a face as sharp as nails;
You should see her thin lips harden
When she's busy killing snails !

'Colette Stevens' The New Triad, April 1928.

A Plea for Help

Cupid - thou rose-leaf larrikin -
Carry thy shaft this way to win
A war for me; else shall my face
Hide in a cloud of such disgrace.
All men must cry, "How may we name
Him friend again, who, without shame,
Doth show himself a coward churl
Before a naked swordless girl?"

'Simon Donovan' The New Triad, April 1928.

Fantasy

Coming down from Springwood
In the misty mountain rain,
I met an Eastern merchant
With camels in his train.
"Here are elephants from India!
Here are horses fit for kings! "
"But," I said, "I want a Pegasus
To hold me on its wings."

Going down near Silverdale,
Beside the darkened track,
I saw a little pedlar
With a bundle on his back.
"Here are jewels from the Orient,
Here are pearls to deck a maid,
Here are ivory and ambergris,
Here are topazes and jade,
Here are silks as rich as Samarkand,
Here are silks as soft as song."
"But," I said, "I want a carpet -
A little magic carpet,
To carry me along."

So I went down to Sydney town
And met a sailorman.
"Here are ships that go to London!
Here are ships to old Japan!
Here are merchantmen and liners,
Here are colliers and tramps,
Here are brigs and barques and clippers,
A-lighting of their lamps!
Here are cargoes out of Persia,
Here are spices from Ceylon,
Here's treasure out of all the earth
To build new Babylon !
And here's a Mogul's ransom
On a little silver spoon ! "
"But," I said, "I want a passage
To the Mountains of the Moon ! "

In a Garden

Soft slopes of living green;
A friendly, leaf-strewn avenue
Cloistered with elms
High overhead the lacing branches share
The patterned sky's serenity.
Sunlight sifts down in splashes here and there,
Spilled through a myriad tender, laughing leaves.

These trees in ordered line are grown so wise
That when the bright cicada quits his shell
He seeks mysterious counsel from their boles;
Then shrills his salutation to the world.

Close by one, winding paths, soft-shadowed, too,
With poplars, plane and satin-coated gum;
And here the purple plum-tree grows
Whose elders shaded roads of Samarkand.

Beside yon bridge that spans the lazy stream -
Close-fringed with willow-trees -
Thrushes and blackbirds sing
To see the massed hydrangea or the clustering rose,
Or breathe the fragrance of the honeyed pink.

This garden knows no ill and sees no wrong;
And, when I wander idly in,
I seem to pass an angel at the gate
Who blesses with a prayer
And heals me with a sign.

It is a place of dreams,
Whose beauty calls a rarer beauty still
Back from the past, out of the mists of pain,
Across the sad and silent steppes of death;
And, in this blossomed loveliness you live again,
While my unsoled heart forgets its grief.

'W.A.M.' The New Triad, April 1928.

Chateau Gaillard

Alone, aloof,
The empty castle stands,
Staring with blinded eyes
O'er the warm lands
Outspread below, where still
Men live and die,
And the broad river glides
Unheeding by.

Stilled is the clank of mail,
The stamp of steeds;
Dust are the men-at-arms,
Forgot their deeds.
No more the watchman's horn
Blows from the keep.
Only the wandering wind
Murmurs of sleep.

Named for a kingly jest
To taunt a king,
The Mocking Castle waits
For Fate's last fling;
Mocking the pride that planned,
The thews that built;
Hugging its memories
Of blood and guilt.

Under the sky,
Desolate and alone,
Weeds for its banners droop
From the crumbling stone. . .
Bleached like a giant's skull,
Fleshless and bare -
Only a fleshless grin,
And an eyeless stare.

'F.S.Burrell' The New Triad, May 1928.

Renaissance

They have come back again with youth renewed,
The dear, the passing dear old-fashioned things,
The ghosts of things that reigned long years ago,
They have come back with quaint rememberings.
Behold them rescued from their lumber-rooms,
From cob-webbed attics, shuttered, dim, and drear -
Past household gods, forgotten and unused,
Heavy with quiet dreams of many a year.

Behold again the polished spindle legs
Of straight-backed chairs so delicate and fine;
Oak black with age, and brown mahogany
Gleaming with tints of reddish Muscat wine;
Cabinets carven out of deep rosewood
With clear, prismatic knobs of cut-glass rare;
Tables with gargoyles standing on claw-feet,
And tall blue candlesticks of Willow ware.

Frail egg-shell china has been rescued, too,
Wide shallow cups with handles of pale gold -
How strange to think they are the very same
That hostess Grandmama dispensed of old
From this quaint tea-pot whose traced silver bears
Tales of the dignity of days long passed
To us whose modern vogue for old-time things
Has set a value on their charms at last !

With their return comes Fashion, headstrong dame,
Determined that she will not be outdone,
And, gathering together hasty skirts,
Back to her family chests she, too, has run
And brought to light tight bodices and flounce,
Small silken frills and bouffant furbelow
Which charmed the brave and handsome cavaliers
That loved such fashions those long years ago.

Heigh-ho! Ah, well-a-day! These treasures rare
Are priceless tributes from Time's mouldy chest;
Honored are we to give them hearth and home,
Receiving each as though a royal guest,
And Nature now, in arts most skilled of all,
Follows the trend of Time's revolving whirl,
Turning the flapper to that quaintest gem -
The modern version of an old-time girl !

'Lola Gornall' The New Triad, June 1928.

The Sea

Then suddenly I came upon the sea,
Sweeping in slow forgetful lines of blue.
Bright shone the golden air, and languorously
Grey mists stood in the sunlit distance. Through
The long sea-grass, the wind flew on and on.
As far as I could look, the gleaming sand
Stretched out, while sea-weed that the waves had won,
In sinuous lines, streamed down on either hand.
Drummed in my ears the old familiar roar,
As each curved head swept up the billowed bay,
And sea-birds, crying for dead days of yore,
Sped where the wind threw high the stinging spray.
And so I stood, where men whose hearts are cold,
Dreamed of the sunset, red with Spanish gold.

'John M. Moyle' The New Triad, 1 June 1928.

As it Ever Was

Down jumps old Giant Grim-and-Gruff
With arrows all a-row;
And to a bull's gut - huff and puff -
He bends his blackguard bow.

Against him leaps strong Lively-Heart,
(Corinna in his train),
Who cuts with elfin sword each dart
That runs to prick his brain.

Now groan on wheels black castle-bells:
The young rain, whispering,
Rides inland from the barren fells,
To see such good blows swing.

Old Grim-and-Gruff, to mock his man,
An open breast doth spread:
When, swifter than the levin can,
The brown sword lays him dead.

Earth drinks his blood, and, in return,
Dark-petalled flowers rise,
Between the stones with hearts that burn
Like desert-lion's eyes.

But Victory, the fruit of war,
Turns ashes at the end -
Corinna leaves her hero for
An out-of-gunshot friend.

The New Triad, 1 June 1928.

Dead

I cannot speak just now. How soon
That cloud has travelled through the moon.
How soon the sky has lost its red
And died, where my dear love lies dead.

And yet we two have loved them well,
From russet dawn to shepherd's bell,
And whispered of the things we'd do
In years together, just we two !

All this is done. How can the earth
Move onward to a new day's birth !
How can my windows call me home,
And she not there to bid me come ?

Oh stars that she will never see,
Oh sun that never more will be
A glory to her as you set,
Make me forget - make me forget !

'John M.Moyle' The New Triad, June 1928.

Tapestry

Could I but steal the silver misty rain,
And gem with trembling stars a tapestry
Of rippling grey and lapis lazuli,
In its frail tissue I would weave the pain
Of a crushed bloom that 'neath your feet has lain-
The purple passion of a midnight sky,
When faint stars throb and flicker - and then die,
And the singing freedom of a wind-swept plain.
Into your dear hands I would press my gift,
And laugh to see you clasp the shining mesh,
Its opal filigree against the flesh
Like cobweb on a fallen petal drift.
I wonder could you read its splendid pain -
A tapestry of tears and silver rain.

'Madeline McGuire' The New Triad, July 1928.

The Poet and Beauty

He swept the gamut ere he reached his prime:
His spirit filled with beauty to the brim,
In moody indolence would weave a grim
Weird fancy through the colour-tones of rhyme;
Or roam in dream that kingdom beyond time
Where rank on glittering rank the Seraphim
With sounding trump and ever-soaring hymn
Superbly march to harmony sublime.
He craved a spirit in attune with his
And lust with tempting eyes and lips of guile
Came murmuring of Love and honey-bliss:
He stained his manhood for her painted smile
And bartered every birthright for a kiss
Save passioned beauty Lust could not defile.

'A.B.' The New Triad, July 1928.

Appendix 111.

Poems written in tribute to McCrae.

All Ashore.

The rattling "donkey" ceases,
The bell says we must part,
Yon long slab of good-nature,
And poetry and art.

We'll miss your smile in Sydney,
We'll miss your care-free air;
Where care-free airs are needed
And grins are growing rare.

Good health! Good pay! Good liquor!
And good pals night and day,
Good morning and good evening -
God bless you, Hugh McCrae!

Henry Lawson.
The Bulletin, 1914.

Hugh McCrae
(Awarded the F.A.W. Medal for Verse, 1932)

1.

Hark! The pipes of Pan are still
Echoing from the orchard hill
Of mellow Elderslie,
Where yet from one true heart is poured
Libation to the goat-foot lord
Of earth-glad minstrelsy.

The poet weaves his singing spell,
And straight the river, hill and dell
Leap to immortal life;
Evoked by magic of his hymns,
The sunlight gleams on godly limbs
And fauns in happy strife.

Beneath antipodean skies
Again the ancient gods arise,
Reborn in beauty's birth,
And, golden bright as flames of fire,
Walk, at the bidding of his lyre,
The new resplendent earth.

For he with Adonais on
The cloudless slopes of Helicon
Apollo's Nine has known;
Upon Olympus Hebe kisst
And dared to loose - brave amorist!
Fair Aphrodite's zone.

11.

Memnonian his music falls
Upon our dawn; the 'cello calls
Low unto Columbine;
And Pan with silver fluting moves
Fierce thundering of centaur hooves
Down from the mountain pine.

Once more the satyrs, unafraid,
Lie with white nymphs in the green shade
Of interarching trees,
Chequered with gold the sun-god spills
What time his warmth with ardour fills
Their naked ecstasies.

Hugh McCrae (continued)

Again the royal trumpets sound
To make his spirit, courage-crowned,
The rebel death destroy.
Care's ranks and the dark lords of woe
Fly routed from the fields where blow
His gonfalons of joy.

111.

Shy as the lyre-bird, remote
From clangour of the world's harsh throat,
Under the sky he sings,
Companioned by the birds and trees,
Sun, wind, and such dear friends as these
No mortal envy stings.

Thence wide-eyed wonder comes to wake
Grey hearts to gloried youth, and make
Warm blossoms of delight
Spring up, as from its swordblades green
The crocus bursts in yellow sheen
When morns of March are bright.

The flambeaux of his quenchless phrase
White breasts of beauty set ablaze
Upon the blue-veined mesh,
While gallant song and laughter bold
Against gloom's bitter onslaught hold
Love's fortalice of flesh.

1V.

Here in the land the great sun steeps
With golden shine, where young blood leaps
Eager, superb, aglow,
He finds fit home; its spirit sings
In such fine, lusty pleasurings
As none but pagans know.

What though he speaks in olden guise,
Tanged with the terms of knight's emprise,
Dryad and unicorn?
Beauty of no one land or age
He shapes from time's rich heritage,
Art's yet enduring morn.

Hugh McCrae (continued)

Full-fledged, with certain flight, as birds
Fly sunward in the spring, his words
 Wing to perfected rhyme;
Within his rounded melodies
Strange moon-pale spells and mysteries
Of men together chime.

From dark Golgothas, deathly fears,
Corroding sloth of cynic years,
 And life's tyrannic rush,
He clarions to visions blithe,
Fresh as young grass on dew-wet scythe,
 And merry as a thrush.

T. Inglis Moore.
Australian Writers' Annual.
1936.

For Hugh McCrae

He has the joyous heart,
This Hugh McCrae,
Who, as the swallows dart,
Pierces the heavens -
Or from the arctic to the torrid speeds,
Or backward turns,
And like the dragon-fly above the reeds,
Poises an instant station-still,
Then flits. 1

Mary Gilmore.

1 This poem, from Chaplin, A McCrae Miscellany, p.58,
was written for Hugh McCrae, 18 February 1939.

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF

ONE THING AND ANOTHER

Since every magpie evermore,
flitting from fence to sky,
is copyright, and captive for
the brush of Hokusai;
and lemon-groves are Chinese brides
who keep their secret still-
their music-in-the-heart that bides
the wand of Alfred Hill;

or other musics lure, and then
elude us; and sweet sound
one room away pine Mawdor's men
amazed to fairy ground;
we, like Red John, inherit earth,
but so much is McCrae
that we have luck and means of worth
if there's a debt to pay.

Here's all Pierrette's moonsilver left
which yet she drank; and, bright,
here's half the golden apple cleft
by such an uncouth knight;
while-well for us! - Domremy's chime
of crazy tens and fives
makes Mimshi fool of tiger Time
who snarls upon our lives.

Robert D. FitzGerald

Southerly, XVII(1956).

THE SINGING SWAGGIE

(To Hugh McCrae)

Whaling up the Lachlans
In the watersheds of time,
You shoulder Matildas of music,
Rolled into rhyme.

With a hey! for a Mimshi tiger,
And ho! for a Harlequin's cries
To a Colombine bright as a mouse's
Twinkling eyes.

Your business lay with the magpie
On a Camden Kurrajong,
About the way the sunrise
Should bubble in song.

You make, in our world's winter,
New saps of the springtime run;
Baring the blue forgotten,
You hand us the sun.

T. Inglis Moore

Southerly, XV11 (1956).

Appendix 1V.

Literary References in Story-Book Only.

Literary References in Story-Book Only.

<u>Classical</u>	<u>18th Cent. (cont.)</u>	<u>19th Cent. (cont.)</u>
Aesop	Cowper	Hugo
Aristophanes	Crabbe	Lamb
Catullus	Defoe	Lucas
Euclid	Edwards	Maine
Homer	Fielding	Martin
Petronius	Garrick	Scott
Plato	Gay	Spencer
Plutarch	Gibbon	Southey
Theocritus	Goldsmith	Stevenson
Virgil	Gray	Tennyson
	Herschel	Thackeray
<u>14th Century</u>	Hume	Trevelyan
Boccaccio	Johnson	Wolfe
Chaucer	Kneller	Wordsworth
	Macpherson	
	Morton	<u>20th Century</u>
<u>16th Century</u>	Pope	Kipling
Ascham	Paoli	Shaw
Lidgate	Reynolds	
Montaigne	Smollett	<u>Australian</u>
Nash	Steele	Adams
Rabelais	Sterne	Archibald
Spenser	Swift	Bedford
	Voltaire	Brennan
<u>17th Century</u>	<u>19th Century</u>	Clark
Browne	Barham	Daley
Bunyan	Barrow	Davison
Burton	Baudelaire	Dyson
Cervantes	Beeton	Fox
Chapman	Bronte	Green
Donne	Browning	Horne
Dryden	Byron	Kendall
Milton	Carroll (Dodgson)	Lawson
Pepys	Carlyle	Lindsay
Shadwell	Chesterton	Le Gay Brereton
Shakespeare	Coleridge	Mackaness
Taylor	Dana	O'Dowd
	Darwin	Quinn
<u>18th Century</u>	De Quincy	Shillinglaw
Blake	Dickens	Slessor
Boswell	Disraeli	Stephens
Bowles	Field	Stewart
Burney	Galsworthy	
Chatterton	Grimm	
Gibber	Hazlitt	
Cobbett	Heine	
	Hemans	