

# STREET DUST AND POLLEN

By Hervey Allen

**F**IVE books, three of them anthologies, containing a little poetry, and much verse and words arranged in patterns, lie mutely before me despite the disparate efforts of a bevy of young ladies and gentlemen to be acceptably audible. There is also to be considered the work of editors to the same end and the vociferous blurbs of publishers who fondly risked labor, paper, and capital in furtherance of the conspiracy. Putting my good ear close to the covers of the anthologies, I hear a confused babel with here and there a stray musical note. Sniffing the atmosphere engendered by these tomes, I find my critical proboscis tickled almost to the point of sneezing by much dust from the common street and just enough pollen from old gardens to induce a faint twinge of rose fever. Why are these books? For some I can find no answer, although the psychology of the anthologies is fairly clear — everyone in them, and his or her friend or friends, will buy a copy, possibly two at Christmas, when Santa Claus so often plays the good friend to publishers by leaving sundry literary jokes in the stockings of the dear public.

“Indian Summer” by Antoinette Scudder heads the list, because Miss Scudder is sometimes a fair craftsman, and in one poem, “Yet Once”, attains the rank of poet. Pasted over the line, “But as with the thickly growing” (“harebells” being understood), I find the typed in line, “Purple harebells breezeward blowing.” Now, if “breezeward” means anything at all, it means toward the breeze, just as windward means into the wind. We respectfully submit that even harebells in poems should not move against the wind. It gives us an eerie, creepy feeling and

shakes our confidence in Mother Nature and Miss Scudder. I have had to put adhesive plaster on this book to keep the covers and the harebells from moving, well — into the wind.

Vincent Starrett now appears before the curtain with "Flame and Dust", unfortunately with more of the last than the first. The publisher of this really well printed and bound volume tells us on the cover, among other things, that Mr. Starrett is "smiling at the puerility of man". I am afraid that some of Mr. Starrett's audience will be moved to quote scripture and say, "Thou art the man."

Henry T. Schnittkind, Ph.D., has gathered together, for the seventh time — we hope there is something final in the theory of the fatality of holy numbers — what he calls "The Poets of the Future". On examination this turns out to be an anthology of college verse. Nearly everybody agrees that the chief merit of college verse lies in its tendency to die without mourners or the need of a funeral. I am not so sure that Professor Schnittkind's attempt to prolong the agony is not merely another way of working on the sympathy of the public to provide a printed coffin. There is one poem, however, in this book that stands out like a bolt of lightning photographed on an otherwise dull negative. It is "Vale" by Charles T. Lanham of the United States Military Academy. The cadet who wrote this poem to West Point deserves to be moved up several files on the army list.

Professor Glenn Hughes of the Uni-

versity of Washington has published an anthology of verse written by the students in his classes. The book is well made and the verse well made, but it is made. I am glad to say that these verses show a laudable attempt not to be palely lyrical, and occasionally some good figures and a real sense of epigram and free rhythms. None of these young poets seems to realize that his own native northwest has some of the finest Indian legends on the continent. Why not something about Leshi, a little Chinook flavor, or the magnificent legend of the Bridge of the Gods? Instead we get bumble bees, bronze fish, and the inevitable villanelle.

"Column Poets" is an anthology of verse from newspaper columns. Keith Preston has furnished an introduction in which he takes the now fashionable and easy fling at free verse. We are then let in for 113 pages of more or less metrical journalese. One signing herself "Rose Mary" asks not without reason,

O, Lighthouse, kissed by the roguish waves,  
Why do you wink at me?

Good old lighthouse! Why not?

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Indian Summer. By Antoinette Scudder.  
Harold Vinal.

Flame and Dust. By Vincent Starrett.  
Pascal Covici.

The Poets of the Future, A College Anthology. Edited by Henry T. Schnittkind, Ph.D. Stratford Company.

University of Washington Poems, First Series. Selected and edited by Glenn Hughes. University of Washington Press.

Column Poets. Edited by Keith Preston. Pascal Covici.