

THE ALUMNÆ NEWS

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HELEN GRAY CONE, POET

From 1885 to 1919, Helen Gray Cone published five volumes of verse which, though establishing her among minor poets of America and giving her a measure of international fame, are but the overflow of her vitality, mere marginalia on the closely written pages of her devotion to Hunter College. *Oberon and Puck*, *Verses Grave and Gay* (1885), *The Ride to the Lady* (1891), *Soldiers of the Light* (1911), *A Chant of Love for England* (1915), *The Coat without a Seam* (1919) were increased, 1930, by a volume of selections, *Harvest Home*, "Summer's green all girded up in sheaves." In this last are found, presumably, auctorial preferences, those poems on which in the estimation of Helen Gray Cone rested her modest claim to immortality, typified by the vanished meteor: "Brief memory of a moment touched with light."

Throughout these miscellaneous poems are the firm and fine fashioning noticed by the *New York Times*, and the delicacy of imagination praised by the *Outlook*, on the appearance of *A Chant of Love*. From the beginning they reveal not only tenderness, sympathy, love of nature,

"Peace of roses in a rain-sweet garden,

Peace of moonlit silver-heaving waters";

reflect not only the influence of music, mythology, and the masters, celebrated in proud humility; they embody noble themes, whether the romantic morning aspiration of the brave heart, the constant ideal of duty, "steadily facing today," or the recognition that

"Life is battle even to the sunset."

Here are poems of a fanciful mind which sees, for example, in evening primroses candles lighted by a fairy, or in the hepatica a shy beggar maid under a mantle of russet leaf; poems of humorous turn, well-exemplified by "Narcissus in Camden," a puckish satire on Walt Whitman; poems that respond for the artist's soul to a nocturne of Rubinstein, the medieval color of Chaucer and Dante, the beauty of Keats, the melody of Tennyson, the Greek perfection of Lander; poems that echo with deepening appreciation the voice of Shakespeare. In their highest flights these poems are inspired by patriotism, by hope of freedom for all men, emancipation from shackles of the spirit, by a vision of the brotherhood of man.

Standing before LePage's "Joan of Arc," in the Metropolitan Museum, Helen Gray Cone heard the message that let the girl of Domrémy know no peace, "Till that the king be crowned, and France be free!"

The same ideal ends her justly renowned

"Ode to Lincoln":

"Ah, never, till every spirit shall stand up free,

Comes the great Liberator's jubilee!"

Hers was never license or false freedom, but freedom hand in hand with duty. Her longest poem, "The Third Day at Gettysburg," reports rain of bullets, flash of sabre, and boom of cannon not less vividly than it proclaims "the larger Hope and the limitless future of Manhood," not less faithfully than it urges

"All a man hath will he give for his life
—but his life for his Duty."

Common duty, the task of every day, she raised to the plane of poetry in her perhaps best-loved sonnet, "The Common Street," or modern Jacob's dream.

Her poems declare no hate but that of hate. Among those who read, on its first publication in the *Atlantic Monthly*, her magnificent reply to Lissauer, I throbbed to her ringing words. Next morning, early, I rushed to her office. At my knock she opened the door and, after I burst forth with what admiration I do not now recall, she flashed, "The top of my head would have flown off had I not written that out of my system!" Characteristically, she turned to routine duties, and I walked down the hall to my classroom, still vibrating to her scorn,

"Where is the giant shot that kills

Wordsworth walking the old green hills?"

She was a master of metrics, and though she loved well the sonnet form, expressing in its neat compactness many of her weightiest thoughts, she moved with unfettered skill through varied rhythm and length of line. In her tribute to Joyce Kilmer, for example, "The Way of the White Souls," she preferred a generously flowing measure, which evokes tramping columns of soldiers,

"And there the swinging soul of him goes
on with the marching stars."

Beyond the sacrifice of these soldiers of the light—dear to her the word "light"—always she saw the flag of all souls triumphing in goodwill; always she dreamed of the day when men should wear the coat without a seam, the coat woven of the blue that is the sky of God, the red that is the blood of man.

Gone from us, our laureate poet yet lives for Hunter College and all the children of Hunter College in the heritage she has left, heritage of her gallant spirit, sense of honor, sense of duty, power of sympathy, and challenge to courage. And she will live for others so long as America remembers Lincoln, so long as England cherishes the glory that inspired "A Chant of Love."

BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS.

THE COLLEGE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

St. Valentine's Day, the birthday of the College, was enthusiastically celebrated in chapel. The program for the occasion was in charge of the Traditions Committee. It has been for some time the wish of both President Colligan and the Student Council that the student body of Hunter College should become familiar with the history and traditions of the College, and in furtherance of these plans the Traditions Committee was appointed by the Student Council.

Two birthday gifts were presented at the celebration. Miss Anna M. Hunter, of the Class of '74, presented the Alumnae gift, a large framed reproduction of the newspaper description of the first College Commencement, containing pictures of seven of the graduates and an artist's drawing of the chapel itself, as it appeared in those days, with President Hunter distributing the diplomas. In presenting this gift, Miss Hunter recalled the first days of the existence of the college, and expressed her pride and pleasure in its progress. Miss Soia Mentchikoff, of the graduating class, presented the gift of the Student Association, of which she is president,—a check to be used for the help of needy students. President Colligan accepted these gifts for the College, and spoke eloquently on the theme suggested by "the lovely leaf of loyalty."

A part of the program was devoted to the memory of Professor Emeritus Helen Gray

Cone, '76, whose death during the preceding fortnight had saddened the faculty and alumnae. Four of her poems were recited by four students, alumnae and undergraduates. Chief among these was her *Valentine to the Alma Mater*, written for the College Birthday.

Traditional college songs formed another part of the exercises. Here again Professor Cone was represented, with *The Ivy Leaf*, in which all joined at the beginning of the program, and *The Good Ship Alma Mater*, rendered by Lillian Busch Milyko, '15, who urged that the tradition of singing this at Commencement be renewed. Mrs. Milyko then proceeded to teach the assembled students the song *Hunter*, of which she wrote the music. Dr. Colligan, in introducing Mrs. Milyko, referred to the author of the words of *Hunter*, Professor E. Adelaide Hahn, '15, as an alumna "who vied with her mother, also an alumna, in a friendly and unconscious rivalry in service to the college." Mrs. Milyko related the literary and musical exploits of the class of 1915, and worked up enthusiasm to a high pitch, so that *Hunter* was sung in a resounding chorus, in which the voices of the assembled faculty members were also discernible.

Birthday telegrams of felicitation had been sent to the President from the Classes of 1878, June 1914, and June 1915, by their respective Presidents, Mrs. Carrie Gibson, Professor Marie K. Gallagher, and Professor E. Adelaide Hahn; also a letter had come from the California Chapter. These were read by President Colligan.

Among the Alumnae present, in addition to Miss Hunter, were Mrs. Alice I. Popper and Dr. Estelle Forchheimer.

The exercises closed with *Fame*, cordially sung.

ELIZABETH LYNSKEY,

Member of the Traditions Committee.

R. R. R. FOR 1904

The Class of 1904 is planning a "Gala Event" for Saturday, May 5th, 12:30, at the Hotel Commodore, Lexington Avenue and 42nd Street. Our Committees are working night and day to make this the best and most enjoyable reunion we have ever had. Those who have joined us each year, may wonder how we can promise anything more enjoyable than we have had in former years; but our Committee is constantly striving, like Coué, to say:—"Day by day, in every way, we are growing *better and better*."

Last year's reunion was a "Depression Party." This year's party will be a Repeal Recovery Rally—R. R. R. The cost, including everything—balloons, confetti, souvenir programs, and "What Have You"—will be \$2.00.

We have secured a *large* room at the Commodore. We must have a *large* crowd. Spread the news among all our classmates.

Mrs. Hattie Leinkram is Chairman of our Luncheon Committee. Mrs. A. Mittleman is Chairman of the Program Committee, with

Mrs. A. Ansbacher assisting. Mrs. Edith Lent and Mrs. Maude G. Moody are on the Decorations Committee.

Any ideas will be most welcome. Please send your suggestions to our President, Mrs. Samuel Bitterman, 38 Fort Washington Ave.

Come one, come all! Don't miss this—our Repeal Recovery Rally!

BELLE DAVIDSON, Publicity Committee.

THE ALUMNAE RALLY OF THE 30'S

On Monday, December 18, a tea was given to the outgoing class of '34 by Mrs. Graff, President of the Alumnae Association, and Mrs. Crotty, Chairman of the Membership Drive. Representative members of the January class responded enthusiastically; recent graduates were also present, among whom were Linda Allegri, Henriette Judels, Alice Bein, and others. There was a great deal of eager discussion among these younger members, who soon determined that not enough younger Alumnae were playing an active part in the fine work of the Association. Miss Judels attributed this to the fact that the more recent graduates were not familiar with the work being carried on through the efforts of the Hunter College Alumnae Association.

With the permission of Mrs. Graff, who appointed Miss Judels chairman of the group, plans were made for a large Rally of all graduates from the classes of January and June 1930 through the class of January 1934. Miss Judels announced that this Rally would be held on the twenty-eighth of January, and invited all those who possibly could come to attend. Through the combined efforts of Henriette Judels '32 and Alice Bein '31, over two thousand cards were mimeographed and sent out to graduates of the classes of January and June '30, '31, '32, '33, and of January '34. The reason that this group was determined upon was merely one of practicability, as it was deemed impossible to handle a larger group. However, it was not intended to exclude other graduates; on the contrary they are invited to attend and support any activity which the Group may hereafter have. The cards sent out read:—

YOUTH MOVEMENT STRIKES ALUMNAE!!!

There was an old woman of offspring prolific,
Said, "The state of Alumnae is simply
terrific!

My children stay with me until they are four,
After which tender age they won't darken
my door.

And further to add to the list of disgraces
They've even forgotten their own sisters'
faces.

So to learn of the Settlement, Camp, and
the rest,

Come to this—our great Rally. Let's make
it our best."

And come they did, in such great numbers
that the Hotel Woodward had no hall large
enough to accommodate them all at one time.

MARGARET GRENNAN, January '33.

(To be continued next month.)