

The Nation's Prize Poem for 1925.

Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana.

By Eli Siegel.

Quiet and green was the grass of the field,
The sky was whole in brightness,
And O, a bird was flying, high, there in the sky,
So gently, so carelessly and fairly.
Here, one, Indiana shouted in battle,
And moaned after it.
Here were cries, yells, night, and the moon over these men,
And the men making the cries and yells; it was
Hundreds of years ago, when monks were in Europe,
Monks in cool, black monasteries, thinking of God, studying
Virgil;
Monks were in Europe, a land having an ocean, miles of
water, between
It and this land, America, possessing Montana.
(New York, Vermont, New Mexico, America has too.)
Indiana, Indiana went through Montana,
Thinking, feeling, trying pleasurably to live.
This land, shone on by the sun now, green, quiet now
Was under their feet, this time; we live now and it is hun-
dreds of years after.
Montana, thou art, and I say thou art, as once monks said
of God,
And thought, too: Thou art.
Thou hast Kansas on thy side;
Kansas is in the newspapers, talked of by men;
Idaho thou hast, and far away, Singapore, Alabama, Brazil.
That bird over this green, under that sun, God, how sweet
and graceful it is!
Could we ever do that? Machines that fly are clumsy and
ugly;
Birds go into the air so softly, so fairly; see its curves;
Earth!
In Montana, men eat and have bodies paining them
Because they eat.
Kansas, with Montana, in America, has, too, men pained
by their eating,
So has England, with Westminster Abbey, where poets lie,
dead now;
O, what their poetry can do; what poetry can do.
There is the brain of man, a soft, puzzling, weak affair;
Lord, the perfect green of this meadow.
Look at the pure heat and light of that big sun,
And the cleanness of the sky.
Night comes, night has come.
Was not Montana here in the Middle Ages, when old Rome
was at its oldest, when
Aristotle wrote,
In Greece, Greece by the Aegean, with the Mediterranean near?
Indians killed each other here,
With the moon over them.

Indians killed each other near Cape Cod, near Boston, in
Louisiana too.

It was before white men came from England, to see them;
the white men were seen by them.

Snows have been here, in Montana, while the Indians have
been.

Girls are in Helena, mines are in Helena,

Men work in them painfully and long for the bodies of
girls;

And long for much more that is in the world, in thee, Earth,
Men, work, suffer, are little, ugly, too.

O, mountains are in Montana,

The Rocky Mountains are in California, Utah Colorado,
Montana.

Indiana were here, too, by rivers, in these mountains, lived
in mountains.

Europe has its Paris, and men live there; Stendhal, Rabelais,
Cautier, Hume were there.

God, what is it man can do?

There are millions of men in the world, and each is one man,
Each is one man by himself, taking care of himself all the
time, and changing other men and being changed by
them;

The quiet of this afternoon is strange, haunting, awful;

Hear that buzzing in the hot grass, coming from live things;
and those crows' cries from somewhere;

There is a sluggish, sad brook near here too.

The bird is gone now, so graceful, fair as it was,

And the sky has nothing but the brightness of air in it,
The clean color of air.

The sun makes it be afternoon here;

In Paris and Sumatra, it is night;

Dark Malays are in lands by the Indian Ocean,

And ocean there is we call the Indian;

Men went to these Malays near the Indian Ocean, in the
eighteenth century, in frigates and ships-of-the-line;

And men living here are Indians, too.

O, the cry of the Indian in battle, hundreds of years ago,
in woods, in plains, in mountains;

War might have been seen once in this meadow, now in green,
now hot;

Hundreds of years ago it might have been seen, and tens of
years, and a thousand.

There was love among Indians; there is love in Paris, Moscow,
London, and New York.

Men have been in war, ever,

And men have thought, and written books, about war, love,
and mind.

Mist comes in this earth,

And there have been sad, empty, pained, longing souls
going through mist.

O, the green in mist that is to be seen in the world.

And time goes on, the world is moving, all of it, so time
goes on in this world.

It is now a hot, quiet afternoon in Montana,
Montana with the Rocky Mountains;
Virginia with the Allegheny Mountains;
(Indiana ambushed Braddock in the Allegheny Mountains;
the woods, once quiet, once dark,
Sounded sharply and deeply with cries, moans, and shots;
Washington was there;
Washington Irving wrote of Washington, so did Frenchmen
who knew Voltaire;

In 1755, Braddock was ambushed and died, and then, in Paris
men and women, wrote of philosophy, who were elegant,
witty, and thought spirit was of matter; say Diderot,
Helvetius, and Madame du Deffand; Samuel Johnson was
in London then; Pitt was in England; men lived in
Montana, Honolulu, Argentina, and near the Cape of
Good Hope; O, Life of Man, O, Earth; Earth, again and
again!)

And there have been hot afternoons, all through time, history
as men say;

Hot afternoons have been in Montana.

There have been hot afternoons, and quiet, soft, lovely
twilights; Gray, Collins, Milton wrote of these;

There have been hot afternoons in quiet English churchyards,
and hot afternoons in America, in Montana; and green
everywhere and bright sky; there are deserts in Africa,
America, and Australia;

Clear air is healthful; men go to Colorado, near Wyoming,
near Montana in the mountains, sick men go to the
mountains where Indians once lived, fought and killed
each other.

O, the love of bodies, O, the pains of bodies on hot, quiet
afternoons, everywhere in the world.

Men work in factories on hot afternoons, now in Montana,
and now in New Hampshire; walk the streets of Boston
on hot afternoons;

Novels, stupid and forgot, have been written in afternoons;
Matinees of witty comedies in London and New York are in
afternoons;

Indians roamed here, in this green field, on quiet, hot
afternoons, in years now followed by hundreds of years.

Hot afternoons are real; afternoons are; places, things,
thoughts, feelings are; poetry is;

The world is waiting to be known; Earth, what it has in
it! The past is in it;

All words, feelings, movements, words, bodies, clothes,
girls, trees, stones, things of beauty, books, desires
are in it; and all are to be known;

Afternoons have to do with the whole world;

And the beauty of mind, feeling knowingly the world!

The world of girls' beautiful faces, bodies and clothes, quiet
afternoons, graceful birds, great words, tearful music,
mind-joying poetry, beautiful livings, loved things,
known things; a to-be-used and known and pleasure-to-be
giving world.

THERE WAS A HOT TIME IN MONTANA.
(By M. Ripman, 3735 East Lombard Street).

Quiet and green was the man who went,
Green to the ways of Montana,
Montana, Oh Montana!
With Woodberry so far from you!
Oh, Big Chief! Oh, Indiana!
Oh, for half a pint in Montana!
In 1922 Frigley sold a billion,
A billion sticks of chewing gum,
See the birdie, pretty birdie,
Watch the birdie while I snap you,
Snap you in Montana!
Monks were in Europe,
Monkeys in Africa,
Ku Klux in Montana
(New York, Vermont, Baltimore)
And I live in Highlandtown,
Oh Montana, Oh Highlandtown!
OH, APPLESAUCE!

In Montana men eat green apples,
And they wonder what pains them,
In 1924 La Follette was defeated,
Defeated in election,
And there's a hot time
Down in Montana,
The world is full of pretty girls,
Pretty girls and lipsticks,
Lipsticks and powder,
Cabbage and cornbeef.
And a poor grade of near beer,
Oh, near beer!
Oh, Montana!
Oh, cream cheese!
OH, HELL!