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Kentucky Literary Magazines Since 1900

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Miles,
Virginia
1935

KENTUCKY LITERARY MAGAZINES SINCE 1900

BY

VIRGINIA MILES

A THESIS

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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PREFACE

Since this study is concerned with the magazines of Kentucky since 1900, the material used is primarily original, that is, the magazines themselves. Practically every number of the following publications was available for minute study: The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, Letters, The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, The Filson Club Quarterly, The Kentucky Magazine, and Kentucky Progress. Textbooks were not available for works so recent.

I wish to thank Dr. Gordon Wilson for his help both in locating material and in the writing itself. I also wish to thank Mrs. M. A. Leiper for her aid in locating material. The Kentucky Library of Western Kentucky State Teachers College is a source of invaluable material on Kentucky subjects, past and present.

This study is a continuation of that of Mr. Robert Ferry, who treated the magazines of Kentucky prior to 1900. Mr. Ferry made an excellent study of The Medley, The Western Messenger, The Western Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal, The Louisville Literary News-Letter, and The Western Minerva. These magazines were followed by the six publications named above, three of which are living magazines.

INTRODUCTION

That a state as rich in native material as is Kentucky should care as little as she does about harvesting that material is to be deplored. When it does happen that a group of cultured people see her possibilities and attempt to publish her best, the venture fails because Kentuckians fail to support their own best. Kentucky Progress, with its open advertising, lives, but Letters, representing the cultured and the collegiate, or, perhaps, the academic, cannot live more than five years. It is to be hoped that the futile, or almost futile, efforts of literary men to establish a Kentucky literary magazine will one day be successful in that they have paved the way for a lasting Kentucky literary journal.

It is the purpose of this study to evaluate from a literary standpoint the magazines published in our state since 1900, with a view to paving the way for a publication which shall please enough people to insure its life without losing its quality.

CHAPTER I

THE KENTUCKY FOLK-LORE AND POETRY MAGAZINE

"There is somethin' in Kentucky
That gits mighty close to me,
Something in the bluegrass country
That is almost heavenly,
Jest a kind of nameless somethin'
That is native to the sod
And that keeps a feller feelin'
That he's livin' close to God.

Bury me in old Kentucky
'Neath some weepin' willer tree,
Where the mockin' bird is singin'
His sweet lullabies for me;
Let me sleep beneath the bluegrass
In the land where I was born;
'I will be mighty close to heaven
On the resurrection morn."¹

"If, old and feeble, sittin' by my door,
I watch and see the spring come back once more,
Acrost my heart will steal a heavenly thrill,
Spring in Kentucky an' I'm livin' still."²

These two quotations capture the spirit of The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, a quarterly published by The Kentucky Folk-Lore Society. Previous to 1926 the society published The Bulletin of the Kentucky Folk-Lore Society, but in 1926 it decided that the state needed and wanted a literary magazine devoted to two great Kentucky interests, folk-lore and poetry. That the state did want the magazine is evident. It

¹ Riley Scott, "Bury Me in Old Kentucky," The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, I, 6 (January, 1927).

² Birdena Cooper Gilman, "Spring in Kentucky," The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, II, 14 (July, 1927).

ran from 1926 to 1931, through the great depression year, and in competition with Letters,³ the purely literary publication of the University of Kentucky. It never lost in quality, the 1931 issues being quite as interesting and quite as well-written as those of 1926.

The little quarterly possesses a characteristic which is seldom found in anything as impersonal as the usual magazine. It seems to love as a person might love all material which is native to Kentucky. The fact that this is true cannot be overlooked. It runs through the pages of each issue and endears the magazine to its friend, the reader. Poetry and prose may lack merit on the basis of stylistic qualities, as do the quotations just noted, but if the accepted spirit of "old Kentucky" is there, the article or the poem is entirely in accord with the magazine's policy and stands every chance of being printed.

In the opening issue Dr. Gordon Wilson and Professor John F. Smith, joint editors, clearly stated the magazine's reason for existence:

"We of the editorial staff hope to attract contributors of ability and to make of the magazine a real contribution to the study and preservation of both folk-lore and poetry. The interrelation of the two subjects is evident to all who have studied literature closely. While we solicit material from people within Kentucky, we do not mean to confine our attention to folk-lore or poetry

which may be peculiarly of our own state. We hope that our first issue will be promising enough to secure your sympathy and support."⁴

Thus we see that, while the magazine claims an interest in all folk-lore and poetry, since it is published by The Kentucky Folk-Lore Society, emphasis is bound to be placed on that folk-lore and poetry which is most intimately connected with our own state. And it was predestined, also, that much of the work published should be used for one reason only--it honored the state which the editorial staff loved. No adverse criticism is intended; such a work was the aim of the magazine.

From the standpoint of literary style the poetry department suffered more than the folk-lore, that is, when the two were not identical. The reason is obvious. It is harder to express thought according to a rhythmical pattern, of course. The prose never reached the literary level of this childish stanza:

"When one approaches Frankfort
The first thing to be seen
Is the great Kentucky Capitol
And landscapes richly green."⁵

Nor can this piece of jingle be accepted as poetry unless one forgets definitions:

"If sun and orb could tell to me,
 Could tell to me,
If sun and orb could well to me,
 Could well to me
The magic of their moving world,

⁴ The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, I, 1 (April 1926).

⁵ Albert Stutzenberger, "Frankfort," The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, II, 5 (October, 1927).

I would then bring to earth unfurled
 To earth unfurled,
 The song of peace for all the world,
 For all the world."⁶

Somewhat nearer poetry, but still merely some pleasant lines by a Kentuckian on a subject near to the hearts of Kentuckians, is this spirited stanza:

"When yellow pumpkins lay out still
 A-grimmin' at the moon,
 And down among the fodder-shocks
 You hear an old raccoon;
 When ol' Dan most has a fit
 And cavorts in delight;
 When leaves lay gold beneath the trees,
 An' stars are shinin' clear,
 When nights are like a wild red fox,
 It's the witchin' time of year."⁷

However, it is not at all true that all the poetry relies upon the reader's patriotism. In some instances it is real and worthwhile in its own right, regardless of the author's state or the subject matter of the poem. The range is wide, from school-child "pieces", like "Frankfort" to lyrics which are beautiful and universal. Nor does the reader come across such lyrics unexpectedly. The mixture of poor, mediocre, and good poetry is so well stirred that the good is not a surprise, is certainly not an oasis in the desert, as the quotation from

⁶
 H. H. Fuson, "My Song," The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, II, 9 (July, 1927).

⁷
 William Herman Lowe, "The Witchin' Time of Year," The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, II, 12 (October, 1927).

⁸
Op. cit.

"My Song" might lead one to infer.

One of the most nearly perfect poems published by The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine was Esther Coogle's "Gold". I shall quote in full:

"Compare not love to gold, the monarch's crest,
The miser's dust-dimmed hoard, the prize of war
That slaves, by lashes driven, draw from far
Beneath earth's crest, filched from millennial vest--
Heavy or clinging arms, warm on the breast
That throbs with passion--Gold, the gleaming bar
That Spain's ill-fated barks were scuttled for;
Gold that endures in beauty, carved and pressed.
Compare not love to gold, whose gleaming face
Hides hate, and treachery, and hearts that bleed;
Gold that has been the price of woman's shame,
Whose weight is not so heavy as its trace
Left on a people by a tyrant's greed;
For Love is Love; it needs no other name."10

Despite some trite expressions "Gold" is distinctly literary and was worthy of its place in a college anthology.

That the people were greatly interested in their own folklore and poetry we know from the early reception of the magazine. In the second issue this announcement, also a decided hint, was made:

"Ninety-seven subscriptions have come in in little over a month. How's that for progress? The magazine is winning and winning fast. It has touched a tender spot in the heart of Kentucky, and Kentucky responds."11

The editors kept in mind the title of their magazine. There was to be a balance; poetry was not to be slighted for

9

Op. cit.

10

The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, II, 5 (April, 1927).

11

The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, I, 17 (July, 1926).

folk-lore, nor was folk-lore to be slighted for poetry. Where the two become so nearly one as to be inseparable, there is no question of a preference; otherwise, each comes in for its share of space. The following foreword explains this attitude more fully:

"The October issue is devoted entirely to poetry. The editors hope to make this an annual feature. Similarly, the January issue will be devoted to folk-lore. The two active editors have divided the work of the two issues; the present one has been prepared by Gordon Wilson; the January issue is to be edited by John F. Smith. In the regular issues up until this time Mr. Smith has usually edited the folk-lore portion of the magazine, Mr. Wilson the poetry. We trust our members will welcome the two special issues."¹²

The quarterly's readiness to honor the poetry and the folk-lore of its state was repaid by reviewers' readiness to honor it. Kentucky critics of Kentucky literature are not always impartial, but their praise is comparable to that of friends of long-standing, whose words bring more pleasure merely because they are friends. The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine must have felt happy because The Courier-Journal said

"The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine is a small quarterly. Its July issue is always made up of the papers read at the annual meeting of The Kentucky Folk-Lore Society in April, with the minutes of the meeting and a page or so of editorial.

¹²

The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, II, 1 (October, 1927).

"The July, 1929, issue of The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine will repay reading. Its editor notes, among other things, that over fifty poems from the magazine are included in The Braithwaite Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1928."¹³

Nothing but sincere praise is due the magazine's effort to encourage the writing of poetry and especially of that poetry having to do with Kentucky and Kentuckians.

Kentucky's great wealth of native folk-lore gave rise to the idea of The Kentucky Folk-Lore Society and to its magazine. So rich is the field that the writings on folk-lore could not suffer as did some of the poetry. The contributors were few, John F. Smith and Gordon Wilson being the chief writers on the subject; they were in sympathy with the work and were literary men. Furthermore, the articles are all on topics of some interest to all Kentuckians and of great interest to many. Due consideration is given the style of writing. For these reasons, the folk-lore contents can be praised, as a whole, more highly than the poetry.

As I have mentioned, each of the editors contributed interesting and sometimes instructive articles. Mr. Smith's greatest contribution was "The Play of the Countryside in the

¹³

The Courier-Journal, September 10, 1929. See article entitled "Kentucky Folk-Lore."

Southland,"¹⁴ and Mr. Wilson's, "Passing Institutions." The games of country children is a theme which interests Mr. Smith for two reasons: he is a social-science specialist, and he is a folk-lore enthusiast. His work is entertaining because he knows his work, he loves his topic, and he is handling a theme more or less familiar to every Southern reader.

"Passing Institutions" brings up memories one might believe he wanted to forget, yet which make him feel happy when he faces them. Mr. Wilson writes about horses and buggies, "ketch-alls," "jice," and Santa Claus. There is the appeal of home in "Passing Institutions."

The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine honors the splendid work of Josephine McGill, collector of mountain ballads. Ballads form a great part of the makeup of the quarterly. They are an index to the emotions of their people and as such range from the ridiculous ancestor of the modern "Frankie and Johnnie"¹⁶ to bits of real tragedy. Whether of English or Kentucky origin they are interesting because they so perfectly reflect the lives of those who sing them. No word of explanation is needed. Ballads read themselves into one's mind as they sang themselves into the hearts of the ballad-makers.

¹⁴

The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, I, 10-16 (April, 1926); 9-11 (July, 1926).

¹⁵

Ibid., II, 21-24 (July, 1927); 12-16 (October, 1928).

¹⁶

The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, II, 8-9 (April, 1927).

The magazine is consciously and delightfully informal. Its attitude toward its reader is that of a man toward a friend who he knows is a friend, an attitude of not bothering with too much explanation, because it simply is not needed. In the October, 1928, issue this friendly apology is offered:

"An apology is due our members for the lateness of this issue. We waited far past the usual time for a paper that was promised us, which still has not come. In addition, the editor is working on his Ph. D. degree and has had to snatch a few minutes between classes to get the copy for this issue into the hands of the printer."¹⁷

Such absolute informality is a part of the friendly atmosphere of The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine. One may criticize the poems on the ground that they are not in conformity with accepted poetical patterns, but he does not question the sincerity behind most of them; he may criticize the articles on the score of their conversational rambling along, but he cannot deny that folk-lore is presented as the editors declared they wished it presented; in short, he may question the magazine's claim to true literary merit, but he must credit its presentation of Kentucky folk-lore and poetry from 1926 to 1931.

The Kentucky Folk-Lore Society still carries on the Kentucky mission which its magazine left. Interest in the magazine's field is still alive. The work of the quarterly lives in the enthusiasm of the members of the society.

¹⁷

The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, III, 1 (October, 1928).

CHAPTER II

LETTERS

In 1928 Mr. H. H. Fuson, Louisville, Kentucky, member of the editorial board of The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, announced in the April issue of that magazine:

"The University of Kentucky comes out with a new magazine--Letters. The first number appeared in November. It is to be published quarterly at the low cost of one dollar (\$1.00) per year. E. F. Farguhar is editor. The first number has 48 pages (alone worth the dollar). It is too academic to make a wide appeal. It is to be hoped this will be less and less. But a few things wade thru the academic and make a strong appeal: 'Scarlet Gate' (a little masterpiece), 'Sheet Down' (very good), and 'Two' (superb). Some parts of the editorial page are good.

"'Exclusions' by Cale Young Rice should have been one of the 'exclusions'. It does not represent Mr. Rice at his best.

"On the whole, you'll find it worthwhile...."¹

While the scant praise of Mr. Fuson fails to do justice to Letters, yet, in its strong hint of the academic nature of the magazine, it leaves a correct impression of its general tone. In both content and style it takes its cue, not from what everybody likes to read, but from what the literary-minded few like to know. The short stories and poems are for

¹
H. H. Fuson, Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, III, 14 (April, 1928).

the discriminating reader; the articles are discussions, backed by information but seldom dogmatic. It is a quarterly of which its editor could confidently say, "Its one candle may make no great light....., but neither does it sputter and drip tallow as if it burned no fat."²

Certainly the material "burned" in Letters was of the fat of the literature being written between 1927 and 1932. And though the whole state may not have noticed that burning, a worthwhile literary step was definitely taken, the creation of Kentucky's best purely literary magazine of this generation.

Short stories form an important part of the makeup of Letters. It is unquestionably true that, for the most part, they are stories with little or no appeal for the person without a cultivated reading taste. And it is to be deplored that a magazine which was looking for the best in fiction should have been forced to cease publication because Kentucky was not, and is not, "academic." Letters actually preferred such exquisite, but not popular, work as Miss Elizabeth Ladox Roberts' "The Sacrifice of the Maidens."³

In this story a highly imaginative boy goes to the church to witness the vows of his sister Anne. Since he has known that Anne is to enter the convent, Felix's thoughts have been in a turmoil. He cannot associate the girl who chased the

² Editor's note, Letters, II, 20 (November, 1928).

³ Letters, III, 1-5 (May, 1930).

turkeys in the fields with the girl who is entering the convent. He watches as she and "the tall girl"⁴ march slowly down the aisle and does not understand why he should be both very happy and very sad. The thoughts about Anne (they are both old and new) do not affect him so strangely as do those about her companion, whom he has never known. In the brief time he watches Felix experiences a lifetime of exultation and poignant sorrow.

The story is exquisite in every particular, and the climax must be called perfect. The priest speaks to Anne, using a tone of absolute finality,

"In the world you were known as Anne Barbour...."

"Henceforth your name will be Sister Magdalen."⁵

Letters received its reward for publishing Miss Roberts' unusual story. Mr. Farquhar announced in the opening issue for 1930:

"With this issue Letters begins its fourth year. The youngster has turned out to be quite a prodigy for with Miss Elizabeth Madox Roberts' "The Sacrifice of the Maidens", he has found a place for himself in a volume of the O Henry Memorial Award Stories. And with this issue he surprises you with a long poem by Kentucky's greatest poet, almost known better abroad than at home, Cale Young Rice."⁶

The poetry section of Letters is a regular feature of

⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵ Roberts, loc. cit.

⁶ Editor's note, Letters, IV, 19 (November, 1930).

each issue, Cale Young Rice being a generous contributor. The poetry is of no set type. If the reader of Letters likes his poetry very modern, and rather humorous, he will find Miss Elizabeth Utterback's "Songs of a Sub-Deb" to his liking. Much of the magazine's poetry is in a light vein. If the reader is interested in rural poetry, and particularly in the Kentucky rural poem, he will find such home-made pastorals as Cotton Hoe's "Wagoner Joe" very entertaining. If he has always been an admirer of Theocritus, Letters offers him an excellent appraisal, with a very few quotations, of a new translation called The Greek Idyls. The editor contributed the delicate "We Two," which Mr. Fuson called "superb."

"We two have been to Spain;
And on a seaside there,
A castle in the air,
Spires loftily in vain."

As a rule, the prose articles are the work of Kentucky authors, though not always concerned with Kentucky material. "Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Brook Farm," by William Smith

⁷ Who's Who in America, 1930-31 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis and Company).

⁸ Letters, V. 44 (May, 1932).

⁹ Letters, I, 30 (August, 1923).

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 31-33.

¹¹ Letters, I, 25 (November, 1927).

¹² Fuson, loc. cit.

¹³ Letters, IV, 6-14 (August, 1931).

Ward, is a piece of scholarly work attempting to show the relationship between Hawthorne's The Blithedale Romance and the Brock Farm experiment. However, such articles are rather exceptional. More in keeping with the true purpose of the magazine is such a criticism as that of Farquhar in his continued articles entitled "The Poetry of Cale Young Rice."¹⁴

The work is highly technical, very scholarly, and quite consistent with the avowed purpose of Letters, which stated in its first issue,

"Letters takes this occasion to introduce itself as a literary magazine which belongs to all the people of the State. It wants to express the thought and feeling, not of one person or group of persons, but of all the people. A literary magazine cannot succeed as the product of one mind and one heart. No experience of any one mind is wide enough for all to find in it the full measure and authority of their own, nor is one pen cunning enough in style to have that variety which custom will not stale...."

"Letters will be, we hope, a stimulus to some literary activity but the people must respond. Whether the test is wanted or not it is now being applied and the people of the State are to prove whether or not life is for them barren and sterile of all literary values that become interest."¹⁵

That unmistakable note of challenge in the editor's announcement is an explanation in itself of the strictly literary nature of the magazine. The repetition of the word "literary" is significant. The reader must expect the subjects treated and the style used to be those appealing to

¹⁴

Ibid., IV, 30-42; 24-41 (November, 1930; February, 1931).

¹⁵

Editor's Note, Letters, loc. cit.

the taste of the more cultured and the more widely read. Letters never lowers itself to secure variety, but secures it consistently.

E. F. Farguhar's editorials are better than well-written and are successful in their obvious purpose--the arousing of interest in things literary.

¹⁶
 "What Is Literature?" is such an old, such an unanswered question that one instantly commends the courage and the worth of any one who attempts to answer it and does so in a way which gives a working basis for ideas that may develop into opinions.

Any literary magazine worthy the name must, of course, concern itself with the work of authors, both old and new. The quarterly section of Letters called "Book Reviews" is excellent. Usually books by Kentucky authors are reviewed by Kentucky authors, and no greater compliment can be paid the department than to say that they are accurately appraised. Such judgment is the result of this policy:

"Letters takes this occasion to announce its policy of supporting all literary venture that shines in its own effulgence."
¹⁷

In several issues this quarterly ran a special and somewhat unique review department. To the student of languages this announcement must have been very interesting:

¹⁶
Letters, I, 24-25 (May, 1928).

¹⁷
 Editor's Note, Letters, 31.

contributed to the current issue. The comment on each consists of a bare mention of his place of residence, his present position, and perhaps a word concerning his former literary achievement. Glancing over this department for the years 1927-32, (the life of Letters), one finds the names of the literary men and women of Kentucky. The magazine sought the best the time and the place had to offer. I shall list only a few of those who contributed during those years: Gale Young Rice, Alice Hegan Rice, E. F. Farquhar, Cotton Noe, Esther Sheridan, W. D. Funkhouser, Marion Mills Miller, Jessica H. Bell, Frances Jewell McVey, Anna Louise Rice, Joe Lee Davis, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Sarah Litsey, and Joe H. Palmer.

In general, then, Letters carried short stories, poems, articles, book reviews, and contemporary biography. However, other types of literature sometimes find their way into the table of contents. When one is tired of such learned articles²¹ as Joe Lee Davis's "A Survey of the Humanist Controversy", he welcomes a one-act play like "Oil,"²² by Kimberlin.

Occasionally pencil sketches²³ are shown. I have mentioned an estimate of "Scarlet Gate." Others are of less worth artistically, but are of interest to Kentuckians, since they so often know the place sketched.

²¹ Letters, IV, 6-15 (November, 1930).

²² Letters, III, 27-30 (November, 1929).

²³ Letters, loc. cit.

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"The Letter Box," with its quaint spelling and more quaint vocabulary, ran in two issues. It is highly entertaining, but sometimes almost like translating a foreign language, so non-literary is its style.

A bit of old and well-established literature tucked in some inconspicuous spot, perhaps at the very bottom of a page, comes as a joyous surprise. It is like happening upon a Kentuckian in China. Just imagine coming across Ecclesiasticus in a magazine concerned primarily with Kentucky, and the Kentucky of 1928, too!

Notice Mr. Farquhar's introduction of his "child" to its fifth and last year:

"Letters, with this issue, begins its fifth year. Quite a lad now, he gives promise of good health and a bigger appetite for what the family can give him in the way of literary diet. He serves notice on all his relatives that he expects them to make this fifth year memorable for their contributions....In fact, he is old enough to suspect that good boys should be paid to be good. And so all Kentuckians are asked to contribute and share in his idealism."²⁴

The editor's humor is somewhat broad, but his prophecy was quite true. He was foreseeing the fast-approaching death of Letters. Without adequate financial support on the part of its

²⁴ Letters, II, 28-31; 31-35 (November, 1928; February, 1929).

²⁵ Letters, I, 40 (August, 1928).

²⁶ Editor's Note, Letters, V, 17 (November, 1931).

"relatives," the quarterly could not continue in its mission, which was not to make Kentucky literary so much as to interpret the Kentucky which is literary. We have just cause to mourn his death, present-day Kentucky's best literary magazine. And he left no heir.

CHAPTER III

THE REGISTER AND THE WILSON CLUB QUARTERLY

The State Historical Society has its headquarters in the old capitol at Frankfort, Kentucky. The official organ of this society is a bulletin-magazine known as The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, a magazine the nature of whose contents one may readily surmise from the title. It is a "register" of historical facts, names, and dates, dealing almost exclusively with our own state, of course. It does not purport to be literary in either language or content. As a concise and contemporary record of historical data The Register is an extremely valuable publication, and to the student of Kentucky facts it is an extremely interesting one.

Although Governor Daffoon has no part in the publishing of the quarterly magazine of the State Historical Society, he is president ex-officio of the organization. At the present time Mr. H. V. McChesney is its first vice-president, editor, and business manager. Were The Register a literary magazine, it is obvious that Mr. McChesney's three-fold position would be much more difficult to fill successfully. As it is, the quarterly is what it aims to be, a workable record of historical information.

The Register is rather expensive; the copies are

not large and are one dollar per copy. Nor is the yearly subscription rate low. Three dollars is not a low subscription fee unless the magazine prints exceptionally good material. Judged by its expressed aim, The Register does print useful material, and so justifies its existence. It is issued in January, April, July, and October. That the people of the state consider four issues worth three dollars is evidenced by the fact that the magazine continues circulation and has continued it since 1902. Of course, it is in no sense a popular magazine, but it has no intention of being that type of publication.

When one studies The Register from a strictly literary standpoint, he finds it almost void of interest. The only literary figure of prominence in recent years is that of Dr. Willard House Jillson, a generous contributor. While this great geologist's contributions are necessarily historical and scientific, his style of writing does possess some literary merit, the greatest being clearness, it is true.

Pauline Morris, in an article entitled "Collected¹ Writings of Willard House Jillson," had this to say of Dr. Jillson and his work:

"During recent years a revival of interest in Kentucky and its literary productions has been evidenced by many individuals and organizations. This growing movement has led to the collection and preservation of a great deal of rare and valuable Kentucky material of an historical,

¹ The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society,
XXII, 133-145 (April, 1933).

scientific and literary character.

"Although Dr. Jillson's outstanding contribution is in geology, his incursions into the field of general writing in this commonwealth have been so broad and varied as to have left an indelible mark. All future students of Kentucky literature will be indebted to him for his foresight in preserving and disseminating much choice early Kentuckiana."²

Nothing could set forth more clearly The Register's aim in life than the following none-too-contrite apology, an apology occasioned by the delayed publication of Mrs. Eleanor Duncan Wood's "In Memoriam":³

"Our delay in publishing this beautiful and touching tribute to our Kentucky heroes has been occasioned by the fact that the three regular issues of 1923 and the supplement to the September number were taken up with the publication of 'The Old Certificate Book,' the record of the Virginia Land Commission, in the adjustment of early Kentucky land titles."⁴

One sentence selected almost at random from "Sketch of Mrs. Eleanor Duncan Wood,"⁵ by Miss Lucy C. Lee, will suffice to show that The Register concerns itself but little with the literary manner in which its facts are stated: "Mrs. Wood as a child was very precocious, and began composing poetry at the age of five, and as she grew to womanhood her talent for writing grew with her."⁶

² Ibid., p. 133.

³ The Register, XXII, 99 (January, 1924).

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 99-100.

⁶ Ibid., p. 99.

The editor was not disturbed by such repetition of "and"; he was hardly within his field when he printed such material at all. The type of contents upon which The Register places special emphasis is almost entirely without the pale of literature. Its province is facts stated in brief and concise form, a form which presents the greatest amount of historical information with the least possibility of confusion. Such titles as "History in Circuit Court Records of Fayette County, Kentucky," and "State Archives--General Expenditures--1792-1798" are indicative of the general trend of the magazine. Except in rare instances The Register has no place among literary publications.

The Filson Club, like the State Historical Society, is interested primarily in the historical aspects of its state. Both deal with state history, past and present, but The Filson Club History Quarterly not only assembles but prints data in some semblance of literary form. The Register is more informational, but the Filson Club quarterly is far more readable. Otto A. Rothert is managing editor of the Filson Club's magazine and a regular contributor to its pages. Not only is the Quarterly much younger than The Register, being only nine years of age; it is much less expensive. The subscription rate is two dollars per year or seventy-five cents the copy.

The following table of contents is typical:

"Dr. Daniel Drake, 1785-1852----J. Christian Bay

The Building of Middlesborough----Charles Blanton
Roberts

Bond and Power of Attorney Book No. 1, Jefferson
County, 1783-1798 Part I----Ludie J. Kinhead
and Katharine C. Healy

News and Comment."

"News and Comment" is a regular feature of the magazine. Sometimes one finds here a short piece of material which might be termed literary, but for the most part this section is an informal, more or less chatty, method of keeping in touch with Filson Club members.

The club shows that it is not without interest in literature, but it is quite obvious that its business is with the people connected rather than with the material itself. In the October, 1933, issue appeared the following revealing notice:

"The Filson Club is striving to have all Kentucky authors--whether well-known or not--represented in its library by all their publications, regardless of the subject of their books or pamphlets or when or where they were printed. Many of them--of our own times and of earlier years--are already represented by one or more of their works. Some of the writers before our times are represented by copies of all their works."

⁷
The Filson Club History Quarterly, "Table of Contents," VII (January, 1933).

⁸
The Filson Club History Quarterly, VII, 214 (October, 1933).

The Filson Club and the State Historical Society are keeping Kentucky history before Kentucky's people. The literary work of each is purely incidental.

CHAPTER IV

THE KENTUCKY MAGAZINE

The very short life of The Kentucky Magazine is to be regretted. While the publication was not literary in any strict sense of the word, its aim was the interpretation and the education of Kentuckians, and thus in its wide field of service it became in a very broad sense literary. Its greatest handicap was brevity of life, since it was published only from November, 1916, to December, 1917. One cannot possibly gauge the influence the magazine might have had if the people of the state had been sufficiently interested to respond with their subscriptions.

Webster F. Huntington was the editor of the monthly, which had offices in both Louisville and Lexington. The price was not at all prohibitive, being two dollars per year or twenty-five cents the copy. The Kentucky Magazine gave its readers good printing on an excellent grade of paper and carefully saw to it that each copy presented an attractive appearance. The numerous pictures are interesting now for two reasons: They are in keeping with the material printed, and to today's reader the clothes worn look like costumes.

In his opening issue Mr. Huntington gave his idea of what he meant his magazine to be:

"In the scope of its contributed articles, in its editorial policy, in the aims and details of its management and in typographical excellence, The Kentucky Magazine will strive to rank with the best magazines of general circulation. It will not have a partisan mission, but in its discussion of history and events, men and measures, in the pages devoted both to contributors and to editorial opinion, it will offer a free and open medium of expression to all having a message of merit for public consideration. It will have no ulterior alliances, no side issues, no axes to grind. Its appeal will be to the highest interests of a constituency peculiarly its own. It will represent what is best in Kentucky."¹

From the foregoing quotation it is quite obvious that The Kentucky Magazine purposes to be a vehicle for Kentucky expression, and that whatever claim to literary distinction it may possess lies largely in the excellence of the writing of its feature articles; for, while the magazine is in no sense political, its emphasis is upon historical values and the general trend of events which are of special importance to the people of its state.

In the first issue of the magazine a section called "With Our Correspondents" gave ample evidence of the joy with which The Kentucky Magazine was received. Among many glowing tributes to its work and many offers to furnish aid for its maintenance there appeared the following representative letter:

Miss Susan Starling Towles,
 Librarian, Public Library,
 Henderson: "I want to congratulate
 you and ourselves on the proposed
Kentucky Magazine. It is one of those

¹
The Kentucky Magazine, I, 20 (November, 1916).

long-felt wants. I have long been struck with the richness of our undeveloped historical material. It is of course our fault for not writing ourselves, and it is because you are probably about to repair that fault that I am so glad to welcome The Kentucky Magazine on our tables."²

Again we notice that the magazine does not purport to be literary, but a hint is given that it will attempt to maintain a high standard of writing.

The unbiased, non-partisan attitude of the staff is evidenced in the department entitled "The Trend of Opinion." The editor announced emphatically:

"The reproduction of newspaper and other comment in these columns does not indicate that the editorial views expressed are approved by The Kentucky Magazine. It is intended merely to reflect the thought of the times, in Kentucky and elsewhere, touching men and events, from sources fairly representative of the point of view."³

The Kentucky Magazine intended to reach wider than the purely literary magazine could possibly reach, and in its unlimited field of "men and events" to interest all the state. However, that the new magazine had no intention of slighting Kentucky's rich literary mines, that is, altogether, was shown by the following notice:

"The Kentucky Magazine is in the literary market for Illustrated Feature Articles, Short Stories and Good Poetry, preferably written by Kentucky authors."⁴

² Ibid., p. 107.

³ Ibid., pp. 108-111.

⁴ The Kentucky Magazine, II, 123 (December, 1916).

It must be admitted that the "Good Poetry" became "good" largely because it dealt with Kentucky, not because of any merit it possessed in itself. An excellent example of this attitude on the part of the magazine is furnished by the long-drawn-out "Chingo-wassee"⁵ signed by Mr. James Thomas Cottonroe.

The short stories, too, are Kentucky short stories, one of the best as well as one of the most representative being "Milestones and Stumbling Blocks,"⁶ a part of Clover and Blue Grass, by Eliza Calvert Hall.

A brief synopsis of "Milestones and Stumbling Blocks" will show why The Kentucky Magazine so often published stories from Clover and Blue Grass.⁷

Mrs. Williams and her daughter Anna Belle live next door to Mrs. Martin and her son Henry. For a year and a month Henry has courted Anna Belle, and still the anxious mothers see little prospect of a wedding. Mrs. Williams, desperate because of the unaccountable delay, decides to stoop to a bit of eavesdropping. She is overwhelmed at the result. She hears each of the young people say that marriage for them is impossible because neither of the mothers must be left alone.

⁵ The Kentucky Magazine, II, 533-539 (November, 1917).

⁶ The Kentucky Magazine, II, 303-315 (August, 1917).

⁷ Eliza Calvert Hall, Clover and Blue Grass (Boston, Little, Brown, and Co., 1916).

Mrs. Williams proves to be the stuff of which real mothers are made. She proposes to Mrs. Martin that they live together in Mrs. Martin's home and leave Mrs. Williams' cottage to Anna Belle and Henry. Of course, the two young people are thus made happy, but on her first night in the new home homesickness almost conquers Mrs. Williams. Only the knowledge that she has made her daughter happy enables her to face the night ahead and to pray. Her prayer is one of thankfulness that she has not been a stumbling block in Anna Belle's way.⁸

The Blue Grass Philosopher is a reminder of Josh Billings at his worst. His sayings are seldom clever, never really humorous. I shall give three quite typical "philosophizings":

"'More food and less waste' is to prevent less food and less waist."

"The honeymoon is over when the bridegroom imitates the full moon."

"The fishing season for compliments never ends."⁹

One of the best of The Kentucky Magazine's articles on literary topics is "Madison Cawein and Kindred Souls"¹⁰ by Bert Finck. Mr. Finck writes of the beautiful character of his personal friend Mr. Cawein and then turns to those whom Cawein knew and loved in Louisville. The friends are numerous,

⁸ Hall, p. 315.

⁹ The Kentucky Magazine, II, 214 (December, 1913).

¹⁰ The Kentucky Magazine, I, 293-302 (August, 1917).

but Mr. Finck takes a special interest in Will S. Hays, whose¹¹ "homely philosophy of river incidents and life" he cordially admires; Charles J. O'Malley, constant friend of struggling writers; Octavia Hensel, charming hostess and critic of music; Anna Chase Deppen, lyric poet; Isaac T. Woodson, poet of rest; William F. Woods, poet and philosopher; Hewett Green and John Duncan, brilliant newspaper men; and Marie Thixton, a martyr to newspaper work.

The final paragraph of the article is filled with the quality which it praises:

"And so I think of them always--of Madison Cawein and these kindred souls--kneeling together at the feet of Poetry and Art; some in the midst of sunlight, some in the midst of shadows; some in one world, some in another; some offering tributes more brilliant than others, but all of pure gold--the only gold that is of value in all the realm of eternity--the priceless gold of sincerity!"¹²

We find questions of public interest, questions of historical interest, bits of humor, and articles relative to Kentucky in general characteristic of the magazine. All purely literary work is merely incidental.

Without having given previous warning The Kentucky Magazine died with the Christmas, 1917, issue. It had served as an open forum for public opinion, as a source of historical material, and as a symbol of Kentucky's progress. Its literary achievement was negligible.

¹¹

Ibid., p. 295.

¹²

Finck. loc. cit., p. 202

CHAPTER V
KENTUCKY PROGRESS

Kentucky Progress is the official publication of the Kentucky Progress Commission, a commission "created by the 1928 Legislature to Advertize Kentucky to the World."¹

In perfect accord with the purpose of the Commission is the avowed purpose of the magazine itself. The editor, Mr. C. Frank Dunn, stated in the first issue, "The purpose of this publication, frankly, is the better advertisement of Kentucky--her resources and her attractions."²

Through the services of Kentucky Progress the state is made a very heaven for tourists. Such attractions as Mammoth Cave are praised almost to the point of falsifying, and such resources as our fishing streams are a bit exaggerated. In fact, it often seems, when reading the magazine, that truth is sacrificed to advertisement. The idealization of Kentucky scenes is only too apparent to a Kentuckian familiar with his state. However, let us not be harsh. Kentucky Progress began life as a means of local advertisement, and it is only living up to its original promise. And it is certainly true that the magazine does its commercial work beautifully. The writing is good, and the

¹ Kentucky Progress, Title Page, I, i (September, 1928).

² Ibid., I, ii (September, 1928).

pictures better than good.

The purpose of the publication is stated more fully in this announcement from the first issue:

"Kentucky had to 'tell the world' what she has and what she hopes to be, and to the Progress Commission was delegated the job.

"The Commission had to adopt a medium to get the message across and a new magazine came into being--Kentucky Progress. Like it or not--it's named---."

"Kentucky Progress is to be issued monthly beginning with this number. The first four issues will be rotogravure throughout and well illustrated with Kentucky scenes."³

Attractive covers add to the beauty of the magazine, one of whose main features, as has been pointed out, is the depicting of a beautiful state. Even the advertising which fills the regular advertising columns is selected with an eye to the scenic effect. Truly the magazine's advertisement is beautifully done, even though there are many instances of deliberate exaggeration for commercial purposes. Mammoth Cave is beautiful, and it is strikingly large, but the homes around the cave and throughout the cave region are poor and dilapidated. It is characteristic of Kentucky Progress that it features Mammoth Cave many times in the course of a year, but it looks for its homes in our famous blue grass region. This is a clear case not only of putting the best foot foremost, but of keeping the other foot well out of sight.

³ Kentucky Progress, I, ii (September, 1926).

Kentucky Progress is not a modest publication. It derives great satisfaction from printing the satisfactory notices it receives. This idea appears in the second issue and has continued, with more or less space devoted to the purpose, until the present time. I shall give only one example, a typical one, of this indirect praise of itself:

"Destined to do all that is intended for it to do in advertising Kentucky and her splendid natural resources---."--
⁴
Madisonville Messenger

The magazine has practically no value as literature, but occasionally articles are published which have some bearing on our state literature. Whatever may be the true literary worth of Irvin S. Cobb, it is a source of pride to Kentuckians to know that his work is recognized. John Wilson Townsend's series of articles on the life of Mr. Cobb is not interesting from the standpoint of style but is of value because of Kentuckians' love for their own humorist.

Kentucky Progress does not solicit short stories at all, and so it is quite unusual to run across a piece of what⁵ may be termed literature. "At the Feet of the Enemy," by Irvin S. Cobb, was reprinted by permission of Harper's Bazaar and is not in strict accord with the magazine's reason for existence.

Occasionally a poem finds some inconspicuous spot along

⁴
Kentucky Progress, I, 24 (October, 1923).

⁵
Kentucky Progress, I, 13 (February, 1929).

the contents. But it is invariably a bit of rhyme glorifying the people and the natural scenery of Kentucky. Still, even in poetry, advertising is uppermost; pattern and style are of minor importance. The following is quite typical of the poetic contributions:

My heart is ever longing for the
 State that gave me birth--
 The State whose native blue grass is
 the glory of the earth.
 Fact is--I think the garden
 that we've read of through the years
 was located in Kentucky, though unknown
 to ancient seers."

- - -

"I can see the cloud-kissed shadow
 slowly moving o'er the hill
 and the swaying of the grass-blades
 bowing to the zephyr's will;
 And I hope when I am summoned
 to my home beneath the sod
 that the gently waving blue grass
 wafts my spirit on to God."

Kentucky Progress is exactly what it purports to be-- a well-written, beautifully illustrated, carefully pruned scheme for complimenting Kentucky so highly that Kentuckians will study their own state and tourists will feel that to have missed Kentucky will be to have slighted the garden spot of the world. Because the commercialism is artistically presented and not painfully obvious Kentucky Progress has been assigned last place among Kentucky's literary magazines.

Kentucky Progress, I, 48 (June, 1929).

APPENDIX

KENTUCKY LITERARY MAGAZINES SINCE 1900

1. The Kentucky Magazine. Published November, 1916, to December, 1917. Intended to discuss history and events, men and measures, relative to Kentucky. Literary aspect quite secondary....Louisville and Lexington, Kentucky, Webster F. Huntington, 1916-17.
A monthly publication.
2. The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society. Frankfort, Kentucky, 1902-1935. President ex-officio the governor of the state. Devoted to the preservation of Kentucky history. Not literary. More valuable than interesting.
3. The Filson Club Quarterly. Published by the Filson Club, Louisville, Kentucky. Present managing editor, Otto A. Rothert; 1926-1935. Primarily a history quarterly. Style good; contents factual.
4. The Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine. Published by the Kentucky Folk-Lore Society, 1926-1931--Editors: Dr. Gordon Wilson and Professor John F. Smith. Maintained two departments: folk-lore and poetry. Interest almost purely state.
5. Letters. University of Kentucky quarterly. Edited by E. F. Farguhar, English Department. Purely literary. Very academic. Excellent publication. 1927-32.
Leading contributors: E. F. Farguhar, Cale Young

Rice, Marion Mills Miller, Elizabeth Ladox Roberts,
Cotton Mee, William Smith Ward, Sarah and Edwin Litsey.

6. Kentucky Progress. Instrument of The Kentucky Progress
Commission. Present editor, Mrs. Barbara Anderson.
1928-1935. Purpose: the advertisement of Kentucky,
its resources and its attractions. All literary
material merely incidental.

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2. Who's Who in America (1900-1933), edited by John W. Leonard (Chicago, A. N. Marquis and Company, 1902).

II

NEWSPAPERS

1. Ayer's Newspaper Annual (1916-28-33), compiled by H. W. Ayer and Son, Philadelphia.
2. The Courier-Journal (critical references to contemporary magazines), Louisville, Kentucky.

III

MAGAZINES

1. Filson Club History Quarterly, Vols. I-IX.
2. Kentucky Folk-Lore and Poetry Magazine, Vols. I-V.
3. Kentucky Magazine, Vol. I, 1916-17, 13 copies.
4. Kentucky Progress, Vols. I-VII.
5. Letters, Vols. I-V.
6. Register (Kentucky State Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky), Vols. I-XXIII.