

## "The Open Door"

by Harriet Monroe

Fears have been expressed by a number of friendly critics that Poetry may become a house of refuge for minor poets.

The phrase is somewhat worn. Paragraphers have done their worst for the minor poet, while they have allowed the minor painter, sculptor, actor—worst of all, architect—to go scot-free. The world which laughs at the experimenter in verse, walks negligently through our streets, and goes seriously, even reverently, to the annual exhibitions in our cities, examining hundreds of pictures and statues without expecting even the prize-winners to be masterpieces.

During the past year a score of more of cash prizes, ranging from one hundred to fifteen hundred dollars, were awarded in Pittsburgh, Chicago, Washington, New York and Boston for minor works of modern art. No word of superlative praise has been uttered for one of them: the first prize-winner in Pittsburgh was a delicately pretty picture by a second-rate Englishman; in Chicago it was a clever landscape by a promising young American. If a single prize-winner in the entire list, many of which were bought at high prices by public museums, was a masterpiece, no critic has yet dared to say so.

In fact, such a word would be presumptuous, since no contemporary can utter the final verdict. Our solicitous critics should remember that Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Burns, were minor poets to the subjects of King George the Fourth, Poe and Whitman to the subjects of King Longfellow. Moreover, we might remind them that Drayton, Lovelace, Herrick, and many another delicate lyrist of the anthologies, whose perfect songs show singular tenacity of life, remain minor poets through the slightness of their motive; they created little master-pieces, not great ones.

The Open Door will be the policy of this magazine—may the great poet we are looking for never find it shut, or half-shut, against his ample genius! To this end the editors hope to keep free of entangling alliances with any single class or school. They desire to print the best English verse which is being written today, regardless of where, by whom, or under what theory of art it is written. Nor will the magazine promise to limit its editorial comments to one. set of opinions. Without muzzles and braces this is manifestly impossible unless all the critical articles are written by one person.