

**ODES AND  
SONNETS**

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Odes and sonnets by Clark Ashton Smith & Florence Lundborg

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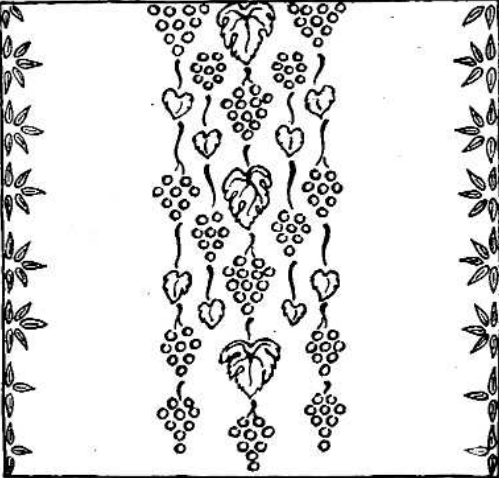
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CLARK · ASHTON · SMITH



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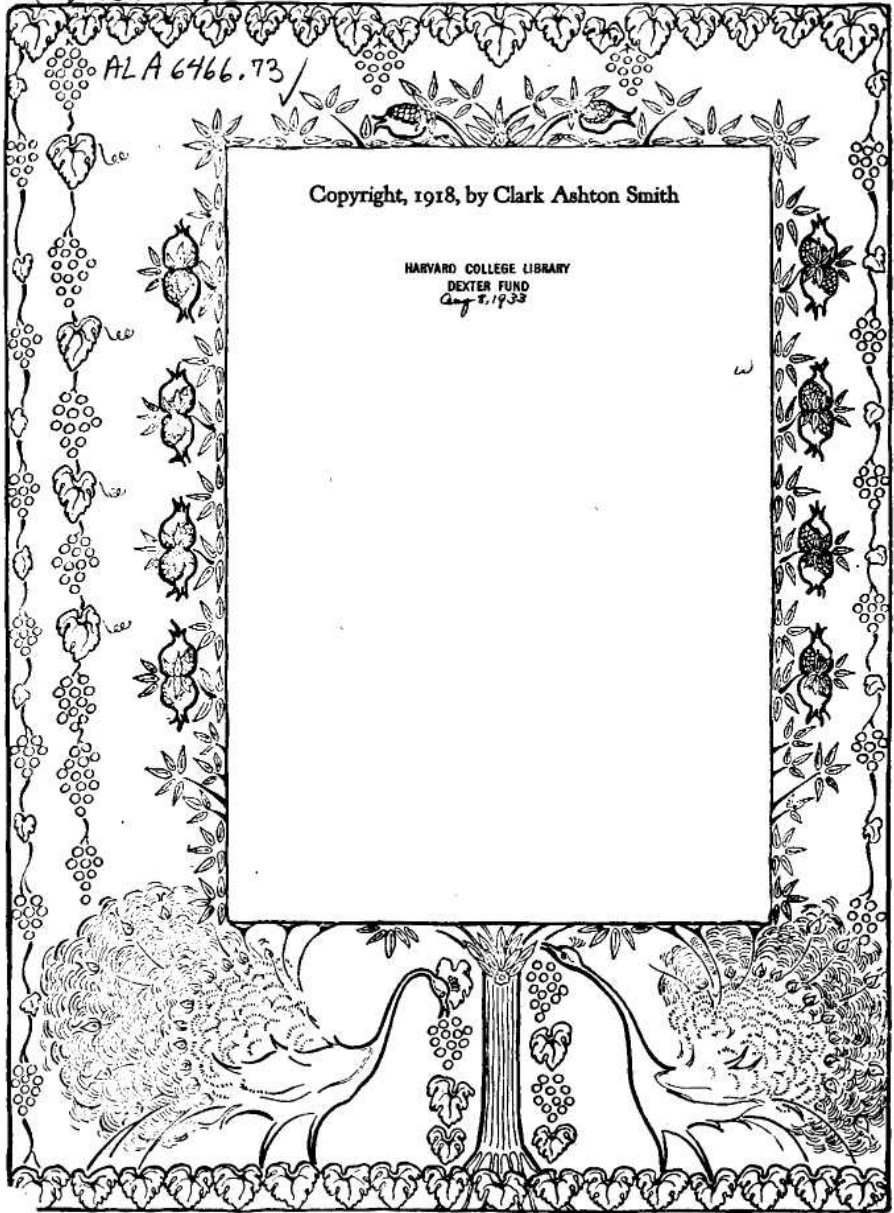


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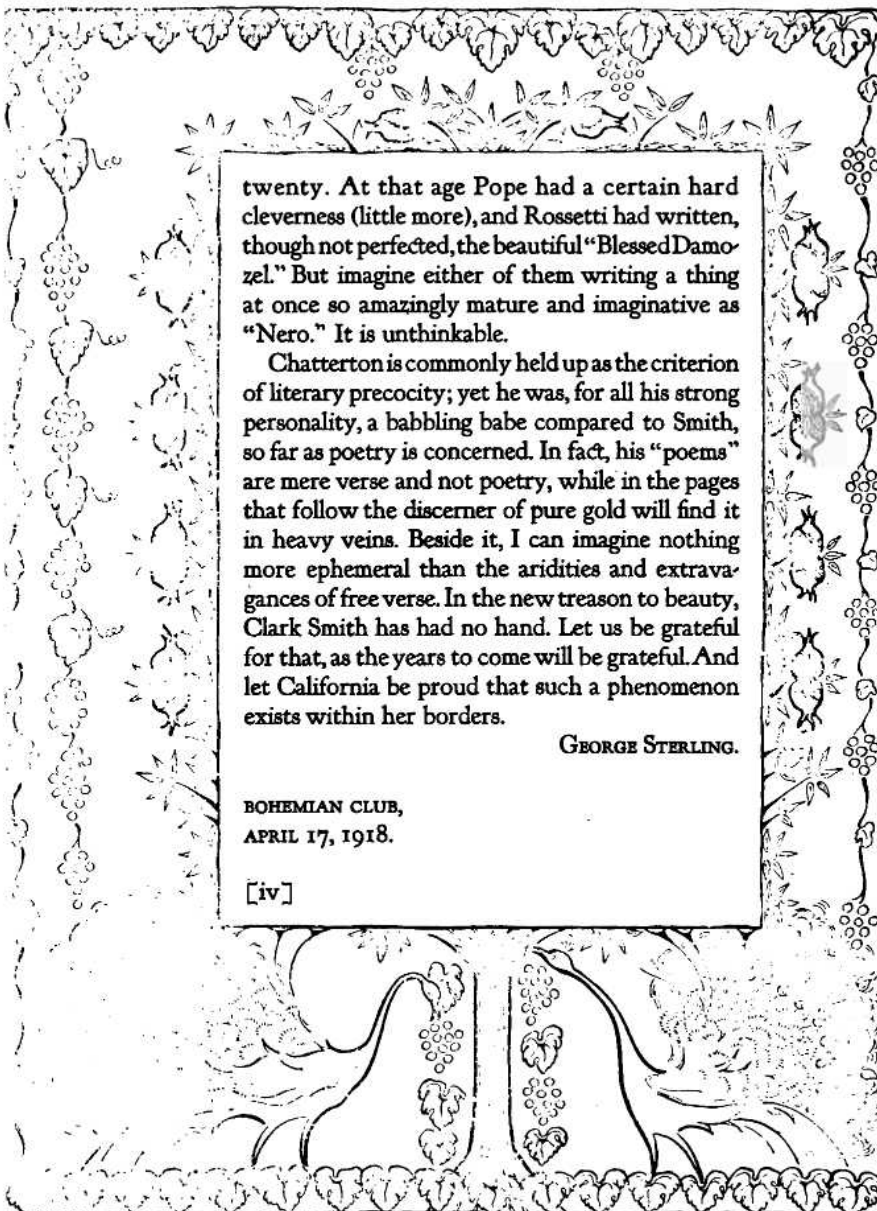


## PREFACE

"The tendency of modern poetry" is against it, and the gaunt Muse of these lonesome latter years stammers with a greater facility than marks her singing. So many, however, are congenitally opaque to "the soul and inner light of song," and hence able to view it from only an intellectual standpoint, that she does not lack followers of her shambling "progress."

Those devotees of austerity will find little to appeal to them in the rich and spacious poems here presented. In fact, an even partial use of the intelligence that is their one asset will cause them to shrink from the stern conclusions involved in some of the passages of this book—to turn from its terrible vistas. Clark Ashton Smith is unlikely to be afflicted with present-day popularity.

Nevertheless, one will find in the sheer imagination of the succeeding pages evidence and proof of a precocity vast and sublime in its range, and quite unequalled in English verse; for the greatest of these poems (most of them, indeed,) were written before their author had attained the age of  
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twenty. At that age Pope had a certain hard cleverness (little more), and Rossetti had written, though not perfected, the beautiful "Blessed Damozel." But imagine either of them writing a thing at once so amazingly mature and imaginative as "Nero." It is unthinkable.

Chatterton is commonly held up as the criterion of literary precocity; yet he was, for all his strong personality, a babbling babe compared to Smith, so far as poetry is concerned. In fact, his "poems" are mere verse and not poetry, while in the pages that follow the discerners of pure gold will find it in heavy veins. Beside it, I can imagine nothing more ephemeral than the aridities and extravagances of free verse. In the new treason to beauty, Clark Smith has had no hand. Let us be grateful for that, as the years to come will be grateful. And let California be proud that such a phenomenon exists within her borders.

GEORGE STERLING.

BOHEMIAN CLUB,  
APRIL 17, 1918.

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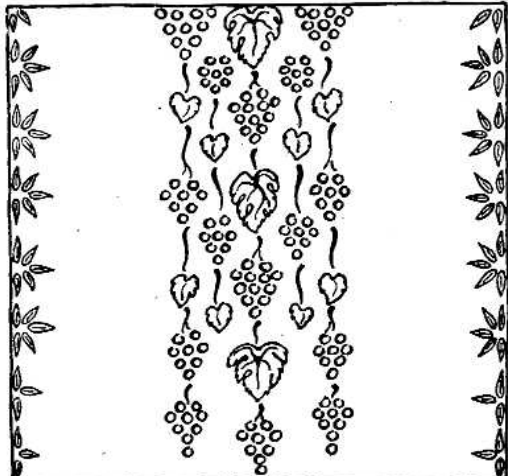
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