

February 6, 1925

## Baltimorean's Prize Poem That Won Nation's Contest

The New York Nation's prize poem for 1925 is reproduced below. The poem, "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana," was written by Eli Siegel, twenty-two, 711 Newington avenue, and won in competition with 3000 others.

Quiet and green was the grass of the field,  
 The sky was whole in brightness.  
 And, oh, a bird was flying high,  
 there in the sky,  
 So gently, so carelessly and fairly,  
 Here, once, Indians 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 Vir-  
 gil;  
 Monks were in Europe, a land hav-  
 ing an ocean, miles of water,  
 between  
 It and this land, America, possess-  
 ing Montana—  
 (New York, Vermont, New Mexico,  
 America has, too).  
 Indians, Indians, went through  
 Montana,  
 Thinking, feeling, trying pleasur-  
 ably 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 hundreds 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 bod-  
 ies 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;  
 Oh, 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 Mid-  
 dle 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 Lou-  
 isiana, 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.  
 Oh, mountains are in Montana!  
 The Rocky Mountains are in Calif-



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ornia, Utah, Colorado, Mon-  
 tana.  
 Indians were here, too, by rivers, in  
 these mountains, lived in moun-  
 tains.  
 Europe has its Paris, and men live  
 there; Stendhal, Rabelais, Gau-  
 tier, 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, tak-  
 ing 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 some-  
 where;  
 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 In-  
 dian ocean,  
 An ocean there is we call the In-  
 dian;  
 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.  
 Oh, 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.  
 Oh, 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 Moun-  
 tains;  
 Virginia, with the Alleghany Moun-  
 tains—  
 (Indians ambushed Braddock in the  
 Alleghany Mountains; the  
 woods, once quiet, once dark,  
 Sounded sharply and deeply, with  
 cries, moans and shots; Wash-  
 ington was there;  
 Washington Irving wrote of Wash-  
 ington; so did Frenchmen who  
 knew Voltaire;  
 In 1765 Braddock was ambushed  
 and died, and then, in Paris,  
 men and women wrote of philo-  
 sophy who were elegant,  
 witty and thought spirit was of  
 matter; say Diderot, Helvetius  
 and Madame du Deffand; Sam-  
 uel Johnson was in London  
 then; Pitt was in England;  
 men lived in Montana, Hono-  
 lulu, Argentina and near the  
 Cape of Good Hope; Oh, life of  
 man! Oh, Earth—Earth, again  
 and again!  
 And there have been hot after-  
 noons, all through time, his-  
 tory, as men say;  
 Hot afternoons have been in Mon-  
 tana.  
 There have been hot afternoons,  
 and quiet, soft, lovely twi-  
 lights; Gray, Collins, Milton,  
 wrote of these;  
 There have been hot afternoons in  
 quiet English churchyards, and  
 hot afternoons in America, in  
 Montana; and green every-  
 where 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.  
 Oh, the love of bodies! Oh, the  
 pains of bodies on hot, quiet  
 afternoons, everywhere in the  
 world!  
 Men work in factories on hot after-  
 noons, 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 Lon-  
 don and New York are in after-  
 noons;  
 Indians roamed here, in this green  
 field, on quiet, hot afternoons,  
 in years now followed by hun-  
 dreds 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 after-  
 noons, graceful birds, great  
 words, tearful music, mind-joy-  
 ing poetry, beautiful livings,  
 loved things, known things; a  
 to-be-used and known and  
 pleasure-to-be-giving world.