

Two Poems

Marianne Moore

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PICKING AND CHOOSING

Literature is a phase of life: if one is afraid of it, the situation is irremediable; if one approaches it familiarly, what one says of it is worthless. Words are constructive when they are true; the opaque allusion the simulated flight

upward accomplishes nothing. Why cloud the fact that Shaw is self-conscious in the field of science otherwise re-warding? that James is all that has been said of him but is not profound? It is not Hardy the distinguished novelist and Hardy the poet, but one man

"interpreting life through the medium of the emotions." If he must give an opinion, it is permissible; the critic should know what he likes. Gordon Craig with his "this is I" and "this is mine," with his wise men, his "sad French greens" and his Chinese cherries Gordon Craig, so

inclination and unashamed has carried the precept of being a good critic, to the last extremity. Burke is a psychologist of acute, raccoon-like curiosity. Summa diligentia; to the humbug whose name is so amusing very young and very rushed, Caesar crossed the Alps on the "top of a diligence." We are not daft about the meaning of familiarity with wrong meaning puzzles one. Humming-bug, the candles are not wired for electricity. Small dog, going over the lawn, nipping the linen and saying

that you have a badger remember Xenophon; only the most rudimentary sort of behaviour is necessary to put us on the scent; a "right good salvo of barks," a few "strong wrinkles" puckering the skin between the ears, are all we ask.

ENGLAND

with its baby rivers and little towns, each with its abbey or its cathedral; with voices one voice perhaps, echoing through the transept the criterion of suitability and convenience; and Italy with its equal shores contriving an epicurean the grossness has been

extracted: and Greece with its goats and its gourds, the nest of modified illusions: and France, the "chrysalis of the nocturnal butterfly" in whose products, mystery of construction diverts one from what was originally one's object the core: and the East with its snails, its emotional

shorthand and jade cockroaches, its rock crystal and its imperturbability,

Two Poems

all of museum quality: and America where there
is the little old ramshackle victoria in the south, where cigars are
there are no proof-readers, no silk- worms, no digressions;
the wild man's land; grass-less, links-less, language-less country
not in Spanish, not in Greek, not in Latin, not in shorthand
but in plain American which cats and dogs can read! The letter "a"
with the sound of "a" in candle, is very noticeable but

smoked on the stre
in which letters are wr
in psalm and calm when

why should continents of misapprehension have to be accounted for
fact? Does it follow that because there are poisonous toadstools
which resemble mushrooms, both are dangerous? In the case of
for appetite, of heat which may appear to be haste, no con-

by the
mettlesomeness which may be

clusions may be drawn. To have misapprehended the matter, is to
that one has not looked far enough. The sublimated wisdom
of China, Egyptian discernment, the cataclysmic torrent of emotion
language, the books of the man who is able

have confessed
compressed in the ve

to say, "'I envy nobody but him and him only, who catches more
I do,'" the flower and fruit of all that noted superi-
ority should one not have stumbled upon it in America, must one
been confined to one locality.

fish than
imagine that it is no