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Simon Simple

Louis Untermeyer

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For the Centennial
of
Edwin Arlington Robinson

Maine's most illustrious poet

Born: Head Tide, Maine, Dec. 22, 1869
Died: New York, N. Y., April 6, 1935

* * *

So climb high,
And having set your steps regard not much
The downward laughter clinging to your feet
Nor overmuch the warning; only know
As well as you know dawn from lantern-light
That far above you, for you, and within you,
There burns and shines, and lives unwavering
And always yours, the truth.

* * *
ROBINSON'S WORKS

1896  THE TORRENT AND THE NIGHT BEFORE
1897  THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT
1902  CAPTAIN CRAIG
1910  THE TOWN DOWN THE RIVER
1914  VAN ZORN
1915  THE PORCUPINE
1916  THE MAN AGAINST THE SKY
1917  MERLIN
1920  LANCELOT
1920  THE THREE TAVERNS
1921  AVON'S HARVEST
1921  COLLECTED POEMS
1923  ROMAN BARTHOLOW
1924  THE MAN WHO DIED TWICE
1925  DIONYSUS IN DOUBT
1927  TRISTRAM
1927  COLLECTED POEMS
1928  SONNETS 1889-1927
1929  CAVENDER'S HOUSE
1929  COLLECTED POEMS
1930  THE GLORY OF THE NIGHTINGALES
1931  SELECTED POEMS
1931  MATTHIAS AT THE DOOR
1932  NICODERMUS
1933  TALIFER
1934  AMARANTH
1935  KING JASPER
SIMON SIMPLE

By LOUIS UNTERMeyer

What does it matter, who are we to say
How much is clear and how much there must be
Behind that innocent simplicity?
He left us smiling and a bit astray.
Yet there were times when Simon would convey
A curious sharpness etched with something free;
For he was touched with fire and prophecy,
And, without pride or pennies, went his way.

I'll say this much for Simon. If his ghost
Has half the hungry life that's lived by most,
He will not rest in the dry, desolate night.
He will come back and storm the western gate,
Scorning such lesser things as death and fate . . .
Well, there is that side, too. You may be right.

[Mr. Untermeyer's note: Some years ago I wrote a series of parodies around a central idea. I conceived of a project which enlisted the modern poets in an effort to rewrite Mother Goose. Each poet was supposed to take a particular jingle and remodel it nearer to his heart's desire. This is the way I thought E. A. Robinson would revise what we know of Simple Simon in one of his sonnet portraiture.]