

Dear Friends,

I thought I did a commendable job in researching *Uncompromising Souls*, but I overlooked a superficial review of Helen's book, *Migratory Urge*, by Llewellyn Jones, at the time the Literary Editor of the *Chicago Evening Post*, and the man that wrote the Foreword for her book. I owe this discovery to Dr. Marty Cohen of New Hyde Park, NY, and following are the significant passages from that review, 7 December 1928.

"A Chinese poem is not only a poem but a calligraphic picture, and readers of 'Genji' will remember how in old Japan a poem sent to a friend was criticized not only as a poem but as a piece of calligraphy. This double interest characterizes the poems in Helen West Heller's beautifully printed book of woodcut poems. And here there is a third interest – that of the ordinary woodcut. For this is a book of woodcuts and also of woodcut poems. The woodcuts are imaginative pieces of work, done with unusual technical dexterity. Mrs. Heller possesses the rare art of being able to use a space of from two to four square inches to such good advantage that one forgets its limits and has a sense of wide spaciousness – witness her picture of a herd of buffaloes in which the eye is carried back and back. Or the same thing on even a deeper scale in her mountain picture opposite the poem that gives its title to the book:

[The poems included in the article are not reproduced, and the interested reader must either buy my companion volume, *The Complete Poetry of Helen West Heller ...*, or search the pages of past issues of the newspaper. In the review the poem 'Migratory Urge' was included at this point.] And this poem, it should be remembered, is not printed, but is cut on a wood block and surrounded with decorative motifs that re-enforce its mood and meaning.

The poems run a wide gamut, from spacious landscape studies down to observations on arose, and they correspond to as many different states of the soul. For here is an artist and a poet born in the Spoon river country and

brought up against a background of the immensities and trivialities of the middle west. A background which insures the artist a tempestuous time, for nature feeds him bountifully, while his social background has too often been inhospitable. And this is a sort of spiritual biography in such a matrix. As against the immensities, daily tribulations must be discounted. [Here, the poem, "Waif."]

And this situation has its grotesque side which appeals to a fine sense of humor which Mrs. Heller possesses. [At this point the poem, "Lodging-House Room" is included.]

And the poem is faced by a woodcut of a landlady – well, you can only say: 'She IS a landlady.'

The artist in the middle west, however, has not only a background of nature and one of daily living, but a background of art, and some of the most pointed poems in his book deal with that. Mrs. Heller makes some nice distinctions: [The poem 'Goal' was reprinted at this point.] while her 'notes' on Faggi's 'Pieta' and Redon's 'Mystere' exhibit her as a most sensitive interpretive critic.

The book has printed in a limited edition of 109 signed copies on Spanish handmade paper direct from the wood blocks. Both as a work of visual art and as a poet's 'reading of life' it is a work of unusual significance."