

# NEW HOUSES

*Twelve Poems by*  
AMY SPINGARN



TROUTBECK LEAFLETS  
*Number Seven*

# NEW HOUSES

*Twelve Poems by*  
AMY SPINGARN



TROUTBECK LEAFLETS  
*Number Seven*

AMENIA—NEW YORK  
*Privately Printed at the TROUTBECK PRESS*  
M DCCCC XXV

*Of this seventh number of Troutbeck Leaflets (a series devoted to a single spot of American earth and to those who have touched its life) eighty copies have been printed for private distribution.*

## NEW HOUSES

*New houses always wear for me  
A special air of mystery,  
Like a young girl whose candid face  
Reveals her dream of love and grace.*

*The floors of oak are cool and bare,  
Unsoiled, unstained are hall and stair;  
No useless clutter fills their room,  
No goblin'd memories stab their gloom,  
And everywhere one feels a space  
As fine and clear as thin-spun lace.*

*And hope in every chamber dwells  
Singing and swinging her silver bells,  
While sunshine, like a much loved master,  
Sweeps over walls of fair, fresh plaster.*



## I ONCE LIVED IN A TALL CAMPANILE

*I once lived in a tall campanilë  
Without any sunshine or light;  
The blank walls of my black prison  
Were as cold as a winter's night.*

*But now I live in a palace  
With windows on every floor,  
A vine at every window,  
And flowers at every door;  
And trees grow all around me  
With branches full of dreams,  
And hidden springs surround me,  
From which flow singing streams.*

## AMOR FEMINAE TRIPLEX

### FIRST WOMAN

*Old as the world and older,  
Bold as the sea and bolder,  
Since life first began  
I have loved and kissed man,  
But now to each kiss that I capture,  
I bring a fresh love and new rapture.*

### SECOND WOMAN

*I too am old, old as the stars,  
Tho' I seem young and slim and fair;  
On mountain summits I have dwelt,  
And stars of ice glint in my hair:  
And all my love I gave to stars,  
And lovely things like trees and songs;  
My eyes I shut to all the scars,  
My ears to all the wrongs.  
The band of sisters that I loved  
Were maids on mountain tops like me;  
Burnished by pain I've learned to love  
All women that I see.*

### THIRD WOMAN

*They lay ribbed in rocky darkness  
And in chiming clouds of despair;  
My children I have cradled and nursed,  
And my love has made them fair.  
On my breasts I upgathered my nurslings,  
Like seedlings one by one,  
I fed and I warmed and I loved them,  
And I opened their eyes to the sun;  
I am older than the oldest,  
But with young and hopeful hands,  
I can break the chains of my binding love,  
And sunder my children's bands.*

## L'HARMONIE

*La paix, où est-elle la paix,  
Que je cherche en vain et toujours?  
Je l'ai cherché en vain dans la vie,  
J'ai pensé la trouver dans l'amour.*

*Dans ma jeunesse rebelle  
J'ai couru après elle,  
A travers l'Europe j'ai poursuivi  
Les arts qui me soufflaient  
Un espoir d'harmonie,  
Mais la fière Angleterre  
Et la souple Italie  
N'étaient que des tombeaux  
D'anciennes harmonies.  
Ensuite j'ai cherché la paix  
Dans mon propre pays,  
Dans mon propre foyer.  
Mais la paix de l'amour n'est qu'un feu farfadet,  
Et la vie est un fleuve  
Qu'on ne peut pas pétrifier.*

*Et maintenant dans mon âge mûr,  
Je deviens de plus en plus sûre  
Que c'est une reine belle et calme qui demeure  
Dans les vastes espaces solitaires du cœur.  
Sur l'horizon de mes rêves  
Je la sens poindre souvent,  
Autour d'elle flotte la paix  
D'une chapelle du couvent;  
Elle se glisse vers moi  
Comme une grave symphonie,  
Et mon âme se remplit  
De suavité infinie.*

*Partout et toujours  
En chaque coin de la vie,  
J'appelle la paix  
Et je cherche l'harmonie.*

## PAIN

*Upon my bed I lie  
By pain annealed,  
And covered by  
Its raucous convex shield.*

*The world without  
Recedes and fades,  
And living forms become mere shades,  
And nothing seems reality  
Except the poison searing me.*

*I do not know the flagrant host,  
Which snares me in its quivering mesh;  
But, oh, I know which suffers most,  
The spirit, not the flesh.*



## PUDOR

*O tell me what is shame?  
Burning lava running into particles of ice.  
Eve knew no shame when she rose out of Adam's side,  
Or Pallas when she sprang from Zeus's forehead;  
Shame is a foolish virgin's worship of false gods.*

## NOLI ME TANGERE

*O slowly, very slowly,  
My bird of autumn flies;  
And slowly, still more slowly,  
I look at cloudy skies.  
O you who in my bosom,  
Dream of astonished days,  
When your bright songs of laughter  
Filled me with songs of praise,—  
Come rest upon my bosom,  
And fill me with your mirth;  
Help me to scan, forgetting pain,  
The jewel-weeds of earth.*



## PRIMO AMORE

*What fanned my youth with loveliness  
Was thought, not life:  
Did I transgress  
If seeking other paths than thine  
I followed ways that were not mine?  
How could I learn what books can teach  
Until I knew where life can reach?  
Now voices call from Northern Seas:  
Come, read and dream beneath green trees.*



## DER WIND

*In allen seinen Gestalten ist der Wind mir lieb,  
Wenn er ein Sturmwind ist und durch die Bäume tobt und toset  
Und die Wolken wie Pferde durch den Himmel peitschend hin und  
herjagt,*

*Auch wenn er nur die Fahnen flattert  
Und die Blumen umbauchet und liebkoset  
Und die Wellen im Bächlein kräuselt.*

*Ich liebe den schwarzen Sturmwind, der den Regen bringt im  
Sommer*

*Und zwischen Donnergeschläge  
So mächtig hin und her bläst,  
Dass die Äste der Bäume im Walde herunterkrachen.*

*Aber gerade so viel liebe ich den Winterwind,  
Der mit seinem scharfen Messer mich durchschneidet,  
Und die weichen Schneeflocken tanzen macht.*

*Ich verehere dich, O Wind,  
Weil du ein grosser König bist,  
Den niemand je gefangen und verkettet hat;  
Du bist der einzige Zauberer, der mich immer verzaubert;  
Wenn du in Wolken umschlungen über mich rollst,  
Bin ich überwältigt,  
Und wenn du mit Blütenduft gemischt leise zu mir schleichst,  
Bin ich hingerafft.*

## BLUE WATER

*Blue water,  
Blue hills  
And blue fjords,  
Blueness of my descent and my desire,  
The distant hills beckon,  
The sweet blue hills on the horizon,  
O swelling range of slowly rounded hills.  
And the deep water that I see below me  
Is blue too,  
Like a Norwegian fjord,  
Where as the day wears on,  
The blueness deepens,  
And all the engendering hills  
Become more gently blue.*



## ROUND LAKE

*Wind-filled clouds  
And wind-washed water,  
Mountains firm and resolute,  
Bending trees with wind-lashed leaves,  
I sit dumb and mute,  
Low upon the ground,  
Red bunch-berries all around.  
I am wind lashed like the leaves,  
I am wind washed like the waves,  
I am wind tossed like the clouds,  
But I dream of rounded mountains  
Gently peering through the mists.*

## CHANGE

*Each day I wake and step  
Into a place I've not yet seen,  
Where even my own trees  
And my own grass  
Wear unfamiliar green,  
Where even the warm walls of my own house  
Are not the same,  
And all the things I know  
Wear a new name.*

*O do you wonder  
That I pause,  
Before these spaces?  
It is as though  
Each day I had to look  
At strange new faces.*