

## *For Sympathy, For Utterance, For Awakening: Reception of The Great Companions*

Brief notices of Henry Bryan Binns's *The Great Companions* (1908, 1911). None of these criticize its whispered gay-liberation message, but rather, the literary merits or lack thereof, in Binns's execution. Digitized by Google Books. Thanks, Google!

– Mitchell Santine Gould, curator, LeavesOfGrass.Org

---

////////////////////

### **“Recent Poetry,” *Current Literature*, Edward Jewitt Wheeler, editor, Volume 45, 1908, 341.**

From London comes a volume of Whitmanesque verse by Henry Bryan Binns, entitled “The Great Companions” (A. C. Fifield, publisher). The most effective things in the volume are the few poems which are not in the Whitmanesque form, tho they also show the Whitmanesque spirit. The same thing may be said of other imitators of “the good grey poet” — Ernest Crosby, for instance. The restraints of rhythm and rhyme seem to be unduly rigid and galling at times, but they force the poet into compression, and the painstaking which they exact is far better than the facile soaring on rhapsodic wings which renders so much of the work of Whitman as well as of his followers aimless and inchoate. We reproduce two of Mr. Binns's rhythmic productions:

[ reprints “The Coming of Man” and “Liberty.”]

### ***The Bookman*, Volume 34, September 1908, 233.**

THE GREAT COMPANIONS. By Henry Bryan Binns, 2S. net. (Fifield.)

Mr. Binns is the author of “A Life of Walt Whitman,” and his new book is conspicuously the result of his discipleship. His prose poems, or whatever we choose to call them, are divided into paragraphs invariably consisting of one sentence each. Thus their appearance corresponds with their real disjointedness, and this is the less justifiable because it is not easy to find proofs of any such universal inspiration as drove Whitman to the same form. The discipline of normal prose would be no bad thing for the writer, we should say. Here and there he submits to the discipline of verse, rhymed and unrhymed, and seldom without advantage. At the end of “The Coming of Man,” for example, there

are some stanzas of which these are specimens:

[ excerpt from "The Coming of Man"]

That is a great deal more brief and more clear than Mr. Binns's prose. Yet even so the time should now be ripe for an expression of Whitman's ideas in a much less vapourish form than this. The core of Mr. Binns's work is sound. It is genuine if it is not inevitable. It makes for sympathy, for utterance, for awakening; and we welcome it.

***The Bookseller, Newsdealer and Stationer, Volume 35 (1911), 230.***

The Great Companions By Henry Bryan Binns. Wide 16°, cl., \$1.00. (Out.)

A fragmentary poetic appreciation of "The Fellowship of the Earth," "The Voice of Humanity," "Tree Life," "The Coming of Man," "The City," "One of London's Lovers," "Pioneers," "Love's Body," "For Comrades and Lovers" and "Liberty." There are exquisite ideas here exquisitely expressed, in which nature, religion and love are the dominant themes. The poetic imagination of the author is expressed in blank verse.

***The Independent, Volume 71 (1911), 46.***

.... If any one cares to try once more to demonstrate that Walt Whitman was a giant, we recommend the story of Whitman's imitators and disciples. Beside them, at least, Walt was divine. Such is one's conclusion after conning the pages of The Great Companions — a little book of prose and verse by Henry Bryan Binns (New York: Huebsch).

***International Journal of Ethics, Volume 19 (1909), 140.***

THE GREAT COMPANIONS. By Henry Bryan Binns. London: A. C. Fifield. [Poems in the style of Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter.]