

1845
War I, when he was in London.
It was the result of an ab-
sinthe spree!

He had a studio in the Cum-
berland Market district, and
woke up this morning with a
big head. And he heard a tap,
tap, tap from the sidewalk be-
low, a sound he had heard on
other mornings, too. But this
morning he was so exasperated
with his headache he went to
the window and looked down to
see what it was.

"I saw a man, a blind man,
impeccably dressed, with a cane,
tapping his way along," Mr.
Kemp said.

It was then that he had an in-
spiration!

Was he not more blind than
the blind man, he asked himself,
going on these sprees?

And, forgetting his headache,
he sat down and composed the
poem, and here it is:

BLIND

The Spring blew trumpets
of color,

Her green song in my brain;
I heard a blind man groping,
Tap-tap, with his cane;

I pitied him his blindness,
But can I boast I "see?"

Perhaps there stands a spirit,
Nearby, who pities me;

A Spirit who sees me tapping
The five-sensed cane of mind
Amid such unguessed glory
That I am worse than blind!

Mr. Kemp mailed the poem
to the New York Independent,
a literary magazine, similar, he
said, to the Saturday Review
of Literature of today.

The magazine published it—
and it became his best-known
poem.

WHEN WE MET the poet the
next day, while he was get-
ting his mail from the post of-
fice, he showed us a letter from
the Board of Education of
the Methodist Church at Nash-
ville, Tenn., asking permission
to reprint the poem.

The letter, written by Anne
Orday, of the Editorial Division,
said:

"I am editing a monthly poet-
ry page, 'Poetry Belongs to All
of Us,' in 'Classmate,' a story-
paper for senior high students
distributed by the Methodist
Church through its church
schools.



IN THIS SHACK, fair weather and foul, lives Poet Kemp, a resident of Provincetown for 30 years. He takes dip in Atlantic year-'round.

"I have just discovered your
lovely poem, 'Blind,' in 'Chan-
teys and Ballads' and feel that
it would have a real appeal to
our readers. So I am asking your
permission to use it."

It must be quite wonderful,
we thought, to write a poem,
anything, and 40 years later
have someone ask permission to
reprint it.

MR. KEMP TOLD US of the
time he met Jack London in
New York, and how London in-
vited him to be his guest at his

ranch of many acres in the Val-
ley of the Moon in California.
And how he couldn't make the
trip because he didn't have the
railroad fare, and wouldn't tell
London about it.

London, he said, was a man
of largesse, who never turned a
friend down, and who conse-
quently was always in debt, and
who was always grinding away
at writing a thousand words a
day to try to get out of debt.

And Mr. Kemp told us of
meeting John Masfield, now

poet laureate of Great Britain,
when Masfield was tending bar
in Luke O'Connor's saloon in
Greenwich Village.

The shy Masfield, who would
"lean backwards from being
noticed," was a highly appre-
ciative man, he said. For when
he became famous he made a
point of staying at Luke O'Con-
nor's home on his trips to New
York, though he was much in
demand by socialites.

Mr. Kemp knew Sinclair
Lewis, "a magnificent guy,"
when the two lived in the same
apartment house at 10 Van
Ness place, Greenwich Village.

Lewis was a "brilliant con-
versationalist," he said, who

sometimes talked in loud, vi-
brant tones. And more than
once he remembers a restaurant
falling silent as the diners
turned rapt attention to Lewis'
table as he held sway.

Mr. Kemp, who knows Eu-

gene O'Neill well, said the
playwright had "a clairvoyant
eye that could see through
you," and wanted only to be
left alone.

ON THE DAY we met Harry
Kemp, April 13, he had a
bottle of red burgundy wine
under his arm, given to him by
a friend.

When we met him again the
next morning he said, "I used
the greatest restraint last night,
I didn't open that bottle of
wine."

And after he had given us
time for this to register he said:
"Do you know why? I'm
saving it for Shakespeare. His
official birthday is the 23d.
I'm saving it for him."

As Mr. Kemp was faithful to
Shakespeare, we hope Shakes-
peare was faithful to Mr. Kemp,
too.

We hope, on the night of the
23d, that the immortal bard, who
liked a glass himself, was smil-
ing down as Poet Kemp lifted
high his brimming glass to Poet
Shakespeare.