Play It Cool

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Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.
"Man is born a poet, yet everywhere he is in chains."

Cover Page Footnote
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PLAY IT COOL.

Man is born a poet, yet everywhere he is in chains.

There is a bit of poetry in us all, 'tis said. But we are generally content to leave that bit within us and never allow it to see life on a scrap of paper. The professional stage is one thing; yet there is a lot of fun in amateur productions, no matter in what field of activity. Sometime or other we owe ourselves the experience of working on a poem. The joy of tracking down the unknown criminal in a mystery is nothing compared to the joy of pouncing upon the elusive word or the right rhythm. The discovery that it was the little old landlady who wielded the hammer is not nearly so satisfying as the sudden realization that the prosaic adjective "white" is the key that makes a whole line come alive. There is a pleasurable sense of creativity in keeping a few lines percolating away in a desk drawer over a period of months, and working over them five or ten minutes every so often, refining them, searching for the right word, phrase, rhythm, and balance. There are many varieties of poetry one may try—the symbolical, for instance:

Its call awakens the strange land
Of child and man, where a trumpet rings,
A dragon sings, and colors dance upon command;
Where a serenity enfolds within its wings
The restless mind, the searching hand,
And the pearl sleeps upon the sand.

or the satirical, the narrative, the humorous; blank verse, free verse, or rhyme. The poem at the end of this article could be used as an example of what occurs in putting about in poetry. A good many poems owe their first inspiration to some line coming into the mind, refusing to leave, and loudly demanding that a whole poem be built upon it. (The poet always takes his revenge by going ahead and building the poem, but then striking out the original line as unworthy of the fine poem just constructed.) This particular poem began, out with some line, but with a thought that came with reading an inscription similar to the one at the end of The Poem. These lines in themselves were great poetry; some professional poets might write all their lives and never attain such depth with such simplicity. Then the idea came of writing a poem consisting of a highly formalistic stanza