KINGSTON, MARION S. (Miss)

Poet and inspiration. (Jimoore Photo)
The Party Line

Long Years She Mused To Make Her Book

By FRANKLIN P. LINCOLN

Miss Marion Sherwood

Kingston of Camden has no

handtaking to make the best

seller list at the age of 65. Her

book of poetry simply fulfills

a modest ambition she's had

throughout a lifetime of liv¬

ing with books.

At 30 she took over a tiny

book stall in her native Phila¬

delphia. She bought "24 vol¬

umes of fiction, a card file

and the goodwill on which the

owners had realized $150 a year."

After a quarter century, Miss

Kingston's book stall had grown

into a Chestnut Hill book shop

that grossed $75,000 annually.

That success came, she feels,

from "matching the right books

to the right people. You don't

recommend Hemingway to

your Great Aunt Nellie."

For relaxation, every time

she could steal a minute for

herself, Miss Kingston dashed

off verse. When she retired to

Camden in 1948 with bookshop

partner Dorothy Kent, she had

several hundred in manuscript

for publication. "At the insist¬

ence of friends." The little volume, "Post Meri¬

dian," has just been published

by the Seth Low Press of Rock¬

land.

MISS KINGSTON'S PO¬

ETRY is based principally on

the "common experiences of

life. While modern in feel¬

ing, my poems are deliberately

un-obscure," she explains, "The

reader doesn't have to guess

what was going on in the poet's

mind."

Her verse expresses her phi¬

losophy of life. That developed

during the 25 years she ran her

book shop. There she learned to

understand and appreciate peo¬

ple, to form an affection for

every individual for his intrin¬

sic worth. People became her prime in¬

terest in life and she became

convinced there is a common

human denominator, "an in¬

bred kindness which everyone

wanted to share. In the broad¬
er sense this is called love."

NEIGHBORS IN AN APART¬

MENT in the house occupied

by Miss Kingston and Miss

Kent designed the dust jacket

for "Post Meridian." They are

artists Robert and Natalie

Hambleton.

The title of the volume re¬

fers to Miss Kingston's deci¬

sion in the afternoon of life

to put together a book of her

poems. It's also the title of this

sonnet in the volume:

"Now moves this vivid day to¬

wards its close
Westward dims the last
flamboyant light
As with noon tide glory so all
rose
The sky drops swiftly down
the cliff of night.
The quiet wonder now, the
muted glow,
Th re soft transitional light at
end of day
Illuminate all the entranced
mind need know
Forgiving debts the heart
once meant to pay.
Now must not courage falter
nor tears mar
Memories of hours too bright
to hold
So shone in other years the
Venus star
So beneath it now the west
turns cold.
Night fills the sky. Fear only
that the heart
Will lose the stars if love and
memory part."

MARION KINGSTON was

born in Philadelphia, daughter

of Henry Huston and Frances

Allan Kingston. Her father was

one of three generations of

Pennsylvania Railroad official¬

s.

When she was 10, her par¬

ents began taking her out of

private schools to spend part

of each year in Europe. Her

normal schooling ended when

she was stricken with polio at

17. After that she studied with

English tutors, with the em¬
phasis on English literature,

including its poetry. That pro¬
vided her with tastes which

she satisfied with her book shop

and with extension courses in

poetry from Columbia Univer¬
sity and the University of Chi¬

cago.

She first saw Camden about

1906. She and her parents were

guests aboard the big steam

yacht Waturus, owned by Ran¬
dolph Morgan of Philadelphia.

On a cruise down to Nova

Scotia, she dropped anchor in

Camden harbor over night.

The Kingston's were en¬

tranced with the town, got bet¬

ter acquainted with it through

the years, as lots of other

Philadelphia's did. When time

came for retirement, it was

only natural that Miss King¬

ston thought of the beautiful

New England town on Penob¬
scot Bay.

She and Miss Kent took over

an old sea captain's home at

Pleasant and Wood streets. In

the front hall they appropri¬
ately placed a hooked welcome

rug of the packet Massachu¬
setts. They filled the old house

with personal treasures they

brought from Philadelphia.

Among them was a two-foot

bronze Narcissus. At Camden

he spends his summers in the

Kingston-Kent garden admir¬
ing himself in a little pool.

Because some of the natives

slivered every time they saw

him out there all naked to the

winter winds, he now spends

the cold weather among the

plants of the Kingston solar¬

ium.

He is the inspiration for this

bit of blank verse in "Post Meri¬
dian":

Once, young Narcissus, in

young innocence
You stood with scented herbs

beneath your feet

On an Art Hillside, listening

to brooks.

Here in our boreal garden

pungent leaves
Of ancient herbs swirl fra¬

grance where you stand

Captive in bronze, lovely as

a god,

Homesick perhaps for almond

centic winds

Your finger still alerts a

sculptured ear

Your head bends to the wa¬

ter's pictured head.

Dittany from Crete and

matted thyme

Cover your sandaled feet, ex¬

patriates

In this stern latitude of blaz¬
ing lights

In this shrill land of least an¬

tiquity.

Those closing two lines, we

submit, are in the best tra¬

dition of poetic expression.

In retirement, Miss Kingston

has learned to hook rugs. She

serves as consultant for the

Camden Public Library, studies

Greek philosophy and history.

Her hobby is bird-watching,

which costs "around 500 pounds

of birdseed a year."
November 18, 1960

Miss Marion S. Kingston
2 Pleasant Street
Camden, Maine

Dear Miss Kingston:

Thank you very much for your friendly response and the delightful promise of a copy of POST MERIDIAN for the Maine Author Collection as a New Year's gift.

We anticipate its addition to the Maine books with pleasure, and we'll be sure to acknowledge its safe arrival.

Meanwhile, accept our best wishes for its enthusiastic welcome.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection
Dear Mr. Jacobs -

Here is the copy of my Post-Breandan which I promised to send to you, in reply to your nice letter of Nov. 14th. The Maine Authors Collection is a fine idea, I think, and I am very flattered indeed to be represented!

Biographical data is enclosed, and is quite accurate. You will see that I am not a newcomer, for besides yearly cruises on The Morgan Yacht, I visited the Ballards on Chebeague Island many times. Then, when it was time to sell the workshop I quite logically settled down in Camden, in 1949, as there were many Philadelphia friends here ahead of me.

I found happily Supply Critiee Material if I had any, but diabetes landed in addition to the pole, and building a gold fishing, plus the relaxation of literary verse took every ounce of strength. So I made no effort at all to market any of the writing until this late date. To be truthful,
Shuffling poems back and forth from magazine to magazine was too great a chore, and as a matter of fact awfully time consuming. I was not lazy in this matter, but the business had to come first. Maybe at 65 I should not try to do it, but the love of poetry is such a driving interest that I’m just going to roll up the sleeves and surprise myself.

Thank you for welcoming me to the fold but please think of me as a true Yankee!

Sincerely,

Maria Sherwood Kingston

Jan 7
1961
Miss Marion Sherwood Kingston  
Camden  
Maine

Dear Miss Kingston:

Congratulations on the publication of your book POST MERIDIAN, of which we learned this week end. We hope to see it soon, and trust that its success will be most satisfying to you.

Learning that you are a resident of Camden, we write to you about the Maine Author Collection. This is a permanent exhibit of books written about Maine, by Maine people and those living here. It is remarkably varied, and the inscriptions (most of the books are presentation copies) lend a distinctive touch to a constantly growing and completely fascinating collection.

We also gather biographical and critical material about our authors, wanting as complete information as possible about them.

Our regular orders are handled through a book dealer, but we write directly to you about the collection. We understand that you were not born in Maine, but it seems likely that we can claim you as an "adopted" author. POST MERIDIAN would be a delightful and valued addition to this collection, and we hope that you may want to inscribe and present a copy for this purpose.

Our very good wishes to you and the book.

Sincerely yours

hmj  
In Charge of  
Maine Author Collection
Nov. 10 —

2 PLEASANT STREET
CAMDEN, MAINE

Dear Mr. Jacobs

Thank you for your letter about my "Post Meridiem." I shall be delighted to send you a copy after January first, with such biographical data as you may wish. At this moment, the copies are in the bookstores for Christmas sales, and the quota of review copies has been exhausted, so I hope you will not mind this delay.

Sincerely,

Marion S. Huntington

(re Maine Author Collection)
I began coming to Maine at the age of six and there after intermittently until 1949 when I came to Camden to live. So I'm well identified here and consider myself an old-timer!
January 11, 1961

Miss Marion S. Kingston
2 Pleasant Street
Camden, Maine

Dear Miss Kingston:

Such a warm and friendly letter! Thank you for it, and even more for the copy of POST MERIDIAN which arrived for the Maine Author Collection.

This is a lovely collection, and we are grateful to you for bringing it to publication. It is full of quotable phrases that cling to a reader's memory: "hope lies dormant in the shell of fear," "the spent spindrift of a stormy shame," "the wintry land serrated by gaunt trees and brittle reeds," "marble garments last durably," "the silent, night-drowned sea," "when winds in seasonal sequence blow," and many others. It's a book to which one would enjoy turning again, as to an old friend.

We appreciate your interest, and your generous response to our letters. POST MERIDIAN is going into the Maine Author Collection with affection and respect, and we earnestly hope that this is only the first of your volumes of poetry. It is encouraging to know those sleeves are rolled up!

Thank you, and good luck to POST MERIDIAN.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection
July 8, 1963

Miss Marion Sherwood Kingston
2 Pleasant Street
Camden, Maine

Dear Miss Kingston:

Mrs. Cates has brought to us the authographed copy of your lovely new book of poem, THE BREATH OF BIRDS. We are grateful for your interest and for the opportunity of adding this book to the Maine Author Collection.

It is not often these days that we are fortunate enough to come upon poems which speak of emotion and intellect in the same thought. We are beguiled by the shafts of humor, and moved by your compassion and understanding. It's a beautiful book, and we thank you.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection