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## Documents Online

**Title:** "Rain After a Vaudeville Show," by Stephen Vincent Benet

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## Rain After a Vaudeville Show

The last pose flickered, failed. The screen's dead white  
 Glared in a sudden flooding of harsh light  
 Stabbing the eyes; and as I stumbled out  
 The curtains rose. A fat girl with a pout  
 And legs like hams, began to sing "His Mother."  
 Gusts of bad air rose in a choking smother;  
 Smoke, the wet steam of clothes, the stench of plush,  
 Powder, cheap perfume, mingled in a rush.  
 I stepped into the lobby--and stood still,  
 Struck dumb by sudden beauty, body and will.  
 Cleanness and rapture--excellence made plain--  
 The storming, thrashing arrows of the rain!  
 Pouring and dripping on the roofs and rods,  
 Smelling of woods and hills and fresh-turned sods,  
 Black on the sidewalks, gray in the far sky,  
 Crashing on thirsty panes, on gutters dry,  
 Hurrying the crowd to shelter, making fair  
 The streets, the houses, and the heat-soaked air,--  
 Merciful, holy, charging, sweeping, flashing,  
 It smote the soul with a most iron clashing!  
 Like dragons' eyes the street-lamps suddenly gleamed,  
 Yellow and round and dim-low globes of flame.  
 And, scarce-perceived, the clouds' tall banners streamed.  
 Out of the petty wars, the daily shame,  
 Beauty strove suddenly, and rose, and flowered...  
 I gripped my coat and plunged where awnings lowered.  
 Made one with hissing blackness, caught, embraced,  
 By splendor and by striving and swift haste--  
 Spring coming in with thunderings and strife--  
 I stamped the ground in the strong joy of life!

Stephen Vincent Benet