

THE OXFORD BOOK
OF ENGLISH VERSE

*Shakespeare to
the Restoration*

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OF ENGLISH VERSE

Part 2

*Shakespeare to
the Restoration*

Chosen and Edited

by

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TO
THE PRESIDENT
FELLOWS AND SCHOLARS
OF
TRINITY COLLEGE OXFORD
A HOUSE OF LEARNING
ANCIENT LIBERAL HUMANE
AND MY MOST KINDLY NURSE

PREFACE

FOR this Anthology I have tried to range over the whole field of English Verse from the beginning, or from the Thirteenth Century to this closing year of the Nineteenth, and to choose the best. Nor have I sought in these Islands only, but wheresoever the Muse has followed the tongue which among living tongues she most delights to honour. To bring home and render so great a spoil compendiously has been my capital difficulty. It is for the reader to judge if I have so managed it as to serve those who already love poetry and to implant that love in some young minds not yet initiated.

My scheme is simple. I have arranged the poets as nearly as possible in order of birth, with such groupings of anonymous pieces as seemed convenient. For convenience, too, as well as to avoid a dispute-royal, I have gathered the most of the Ballads into the middle of the Seventeenth Century; where they fill a languid interval between two winds of inspiration—the Italian dying down with Milton and the French following at the heels of the restored Royalists. For convenience, again, I have set myself certain rules of spelling. In the very earliest poems inflection and spelling are structural, and to modernize is to destroy. But as old inflections fade into modern the old spelling becomes less and less vital, and has been brought (not, I hope, too abruptly) into line with that sanctioned by use and familiar. To do this seemed wiser than to discourage many readers

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for the sake of diverting others by a scent of antiquity which—to be essential—should breathe of something rarer than an odd arrangement of type. But there are scholars whom I cannot expect to agree with me; and to conciliate them I have excepted Spenser and Milton from the rule.

Glosses of archaic and otherwise difficult words are given at the foot of the page: but the text has not been disfigured with reference-marks. And rather than make the book unwieldy I have eschewed notes—reluctantly when some obscure passage or allusion seemed to ask for a timely word; with more equanimity when the temptation was to criticize or ‘appreciate.’ For the function of the anthologist includes criticizing in silence.

Care has been taken with the texts. But I have sometimes thought it consistent with the aim of the book to prefer the more beautiful to the better attested reading. I have often excised weak or superfluous stanzas when sure that excision would improve; and have not hesitated to extract a few stanzas from a long poem when persuaded that they could stand alone as a lyric. The apology for such experiments can only lie in their success: but the risk is one which, in my judgement, the anthologist ought to take. A few small corrections have been made, but only when they were quite obvious.

The numbers chosen are either lyrical or epigrammatic. Indeed I am mistaken if a single epigram included

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fails to preserve at least some faint thrill of the emotion through which it had to pass before the Muse's lips let it fall, with however exquisite deliberation. But the lyrical spirit is volatile and notoriously hard to bind with definitions; and seems to grow wilder with the years. With the anthologist—as with the fisherman who knows the fish at the end of his sea-line—the gift, if he have it, comes by sense, improved by practice. The definition, if he be clever enough to frame one, comes by after-thought. I don't know that it helps, and am sure that it may easily mislead.

Having set my heart on choosing the best, I resolved not to be dissuaded by common objections against anthologies—that they repeat one another until the proverb *δὶς ἢ τρὶς τὰ καλὰ* loses all application—or perturbed if my judgement should often agree with that of good critics. The best is the best, though a hundred judges have declared it so; nor had it been any feat to search out and insert the second-rate merely because it happened to be recondite. To be sure, a man must come to such a task as mine haunted by his youth and the favourites he loved in days when he had much enthusiasm but little reading.

A deeper import
Lurks in the legend told my infant years
Than lies upon that truth we live to learn.

Few of my contemporaries can erase—or would wish to erase—the dye their minds took from the late Mr. Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*: and he who has returned to it again and again with an affection born

PREFACE

of companionship on many journeys must remember not only what the *Golden Treasury* includes, but the moment when this or that poem appealed to him, and even how it lies on the page. To Mr. Bullen's *Lyrics from the Elizabethan Song Books* and his other treasuries I own a more advised debt. Nor am I free of obligation to anthologies even more recent—to Archbishop Trench's *Household Book of Poetry*, Mr. Locker-Lampson's *Lyra Elegantiarum*, Mr. Miles' *Poets and Poetry of the Century*, Mr. Beeching's *Paradise of English Poetry*, Mr. Henley's *English Lyrics*, Mrs. Sharp's *Lyra Celtica*, Mr. Yeats' *Book of Irish Verse*, and Mr. Churton Collins' *Treasury of Minor British Poetry*: though my rule has been to consult these after making my own choice. Yet I can claim that the help derived from them—though gratefully owned—bears but a trifling proportion to the labour, special and desultory, which has gone to the making of my book.

For the anthologist's is not quite the *dilettante* business for which it is too often and ignorantly derided. I say this, and immediately repent; since my wish is that the reader should in his own pleasure quite forget the editor's labour, which too has been pleasant: that, standing aside, I may believe this book has made the Muses' access easier when, in the right hour, they come to him to uplift or to console—

ἄκλητος μὲν ἔγωγε μένοιμί κεν· ἐς δὲ καλεόντων
θαρήσας Μοῖσαισι σὺν ἀμετέραισιν ἰκοίμαν.

October 1900

A.T.Q.C.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564-1616

123.

Silvia

WHO is Silvia? What is she?
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair, and wise is she;
The heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admirèd be.

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness:
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness;
And, being help'd, inhabits there.

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling:
To her let us garlands bring.

124.

The Blossom

ON a day—alack the day!—
Love, whose month is ever May,
Spied a blossom passing fair
Playing in the wanton air:
Through the velvet leaves the wind
All unseen 'gan passage find;
That the lover, sick to death,
Wish'd himself the heaven's breath.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Air, quoth he, thy cheeks may blow;
Air, would I might triumph so!
But, alack, my hand is sworn
Ne'er to pluck thee from thy thorn:
Vow, alack, for youth unmeet;
Youth so apt to pluck a sweet!
Do not call it sin in me
That I am forsworn for thee;
Thou for whom e'en Jove would swear
Juno but an Ethiop were;
And deny himself for Jove,
Turning mortal for thy love.

125. *Spring and Winter*

i

WHEN daisies pied and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver-white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo!
Cuckoo, cuckoo!—O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!
When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,
When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,
And maidens bleach their summer smocks
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo!
Cuckoo, cuckoo!—O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

126.

ii

WHEN icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
To-whit!
To-who!—a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.
When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
To-whit!
To-who!—a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

127.

Fairy Land

i

OVER hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;

126. keel] skim.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green:
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours
I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

128.

ii

YOU spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong;
Come not near our fairy queen.

Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby!
Never harm,
Nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby.

Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby!
Never harm,
Nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby.

129.

iii

COME unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands:
Court'sied when you have, and kiss'd,—
The wild waves whist,—
Foot it featly here and there;
And, sweet sprites, the burthen bear.
Hark, hark!
Bow, wow,
The watch-dogs bark:
Bow, wow.
Hark, hark! I hear
The strain of strutting chanticleer
Cry, Cock-a-diddle-dow!

130.

iv

WHERE the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily:
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

131.

v

FULL fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Ding-dong.
Hark! now I hear them—
Ding-dong, bell!

132.

Love

TELL me where is Fancy bred,
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourishèd?
Reply, reply.
It is engender'd in the eyes,
With gazing fed; and Fancy dies
In the cradle where it lies.
Let us all ring Fancy's knell:
I'll begin it,—Ding, dong, bell.
All: Ding, dong, bell.

133.

Sweet-and-Twenty

O MISTRESS mine, where are you roaming?
O, stay and hear! your true love 's coming,
That can sing both high and low:
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.
What is love? 'tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What 's to come is still unsure:
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet-and-twenty!
Youth 's a stuff will not endure.

134.

Dirge

COME away, come away, death,
And in sad cypres let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O prepare it!
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown;
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corse, where my bones shall be thrown;
A thousand thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O, where
Sad true lover never find my grave
To weep there!

135. *Under the Greenwood Tree*

Amiens sings:

UNDER the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

Who doth ambition shun,
And loves to live i' the sun,
Seeking the food he eats,

134. cypres] crape.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

And pleased with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

Jaques replies:

If it do come to pass
That any man turn ass,
Leaving his wealth and ease
A stubborn will to please,
Ducdamè, ducdamè, ducdamè:
Here shall he see
Gross fools as he,
An if he will come to me.

136. *Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind*

BLOW, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.
Heigh ho! sing, heigh ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then heigh ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly.
Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
That dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remember'd not.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Heigh ho! sing, heigh ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then heigh ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly.

137. *It Was a Lover and His Lass*

IT was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
That o'er the green corn-field did pass,
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
These pretty country folks would lie,
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

This carol they began that hour,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
How that a life was but a flower
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

And, therefore, take the present time
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
For love is crownèd with the prime
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

138. *Take, O Take Those Lips Away*

TAKE, O take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn!
But my kisses bring again,
Bring again;
Seals of love, but seal'd in vain,
Seal'd in vain!

139. *Aubade*

HARK! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phœbus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies;
And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes:
With everything that pretty bin,
My lady sweet, arise!
Arise, arise!

140. *Fidele*

FEAR no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.
Fear no more the frown o' the great,
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Not an angel of the air,
Bird melodious or bird fair,
Be absent hence!

The crow, the slanderous cuckoo, nor
The boding raven, nor chough hoar,
Nor chattering pye,
May on our bride-house perch or sing,
Or with them any discord bring,
But from it fly!

? or John Fletcher

142. *Dirge of the Three Queens*

URNS and odours bring away!
Vapours, sighs, darken the day!
Our dole more deadly looks than dying;
Balms and gums and heavy cheers,
Sacred vials fill'd with tears,
And clamours through the wild air flying!

Come, all sad and solemn shows,
That are quick-eyed Pleasure's foes!
We convènt naught else but woes.

? or John Fletcher

143. *Orpheus*

ORPHEUS with his lute made trees
And the mountain tops that freeze
Bow themselves when he did sing:
To his music plants and flowers
Ever sprung; as sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring.

Every thing that heard him play,
Even the billows of the sea,

142. dole] lamentation.

convènt] summon

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Hung their heads and then lay by.
In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing, die.

? or John Fletcher

144. *The Phoenix and the Turtle*

LET the bird of loudest lay
On the sole Arabian tree,
Herald sad and trumpet be,
To whose sound chaste wings obey.

But thou shrieking harbinger,
Foul precurrer of the fiend,
Augur of the fever's end,
To this troop come thou not near.

From this session interdict
Every fowl of tyrant wing
Save the eagle, feather'd king:
Keep the obsequy so strict.

Let the priest in surplice white
That defunctive music can,
Be the death-divining swan,
Lest the requiem lack his right.

And thou, treble-dated crow,
That thy sable gender mak'st
With the breath thou giv'st and tak'st,
'Mongst our mourners shalt thou go.

Here the anthem doth commence:—
Love and constancy is dead;
Phoenix and the turtle fled
In a mutual flame from hence.

144. can] knows.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

So they loved, as love in twain
 Had the essence but in one;
 Two distincts, division none;
Number there in love was slain.

Hearts remote, yet not asunder;
 Distance, and no space was seen
 'Twixt the turtle and his queen:
But in them it were a wonder.

So between them love did shine,
 That the turtle saw his right
 Flaming in the phoenix' sight;
Either was the other's mine.

Property was thus appall'd,
 That the self was not the same;
 Single nature's double name
Neither two nor one was call'd.

Reason, in itself confounded,
 Saw division grow together;
 To themselves yet either neither;
Simple were so well compounded,
That it cried, "How true a twain
 Seemeth this concordant one!
 Love hath reason, reason none
If what parts can so remain."

Whereupon it made this threne
 To the phoenix and the dove,
 Co-supremes and stars of love,
As chorus to their tragic scene.

THRENOS

BEAUTY, truth, and rarity,
 Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclosed in cinders lie.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Death is now the phoenix' nest;
And the turtle's loyal breast
To eternity doth rest,

Leaving no posterity:
'Twas not their infirmity,
It was married chastity.

Truth may seem, but cannot be;
Beauty brag, but 'tis not she;
Truth and beauty buried be.

To this urn let those repair
That are either true or fair;
For these dead birds sigh a prayer.

Sonnets

145.

i

SHALL I compare thee to a Summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And Summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:
But thy eternal Summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wanderest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.