

**THE MOXFORD
BOOK OF ENGLISH
VERSE, 1340-1913**

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The Moxford book of English verse, 1340-1913 by A. Stodart-Walker

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A. STODART-WALKER

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of English Verse

1340—1913

Presented by
A. Stodart-Walker.

SECOND IMPRESSION

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Eveleigh Nash
1913

PREFACE

FOR this collection I have tried to range over the whole field of British verse from the beginning, or from the fourteenth century to the opening years of the twentieth, and to choose the poems that have most references to contemporary events and modern emotions. It is remarkable how poets even of the early centuries wrote of things and persons who are alive to-day. There is more of the prophetic spirit in poetry than even the Occultists imagine.

Having set my heart on choosing what I wished to choose, I resolved not to be dissuaded by common objections against collections of verse—that they repeat one another until the proverb “the best is not good enough for me” (I am sorry I have forgotten the original Sanskrit) loses all application—or perturbed if my judgment often disagrees with that of the worst critics. The best is often the worst, and the worst is often the best, and those between are still between and occupy much the same attitude as did the third portion of the ten thousand troops led by the grand old Duke of York. That is a fact, though a hundred judges

PREFACE

have declared it is so; nor had it been any feat to omit the first-rate merely because it happened to be popular. To be sure, a man must come to such a task as mine haunted by things he has never known.

It will be imagined by some feeble intellects that the verses included are merely parodies—or rather paraphrases—as line by line they bear a distinct resemblance to poems well known in the language. But surely the critic will not be deceived by anything so evident. The Evident is what is most to be mistrusted. Any post-impressionist will tell you this, and if intellects on that level are so wise, surely I may depend on the ordinary sane man to be even wiser.

My thanks are here tendered to those living writers who have helped me with permission to include from their poetry; to Mr. Astor Dobson, Mr. Rydard Kipling, Mr. Henry Newbolt, Mr. John Masefield, Mr. Harry Graham, Mr. Lawrence Binyon, Mr. W. B. Yeats, Mr. Owen Sison, Mr. R. C. Lehmann, Sir A. T. Quiller Couch and Miss Ella Wheeler Wilcox. To mention all who in other ways have furthered me is not possible in this short preface, which, however, must not conclude without a word of special thanks to Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. J. L. Gervin, Mr. Gilbert Chesterton, Miss Pankhurst (who wrote me a most kindly letter from the Island of St. Kilda), and Mr. Algernon Ashton.

A. S.-W.

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