

**ENGLISH SONNETS
BY LIVING WRITERS**

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English Sonnets by Living Writers by Samuel Waddington

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SAMUEL WADDINGTON

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SELECTED AND ARRANGED, WITH A NOTE ON THE

HISTORY OF THE 'SONNET' BY

SAMUEL WADDINGTON

SECOND EDITION ENLARGED

'Laborum dulce lenimen.'—HOR.

LONDON: GEORGE BELL AND SONS
YORK STREET COVENT GARDEN

1888



TO
B. D.

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY

Dedicated.

-K. Pond Bequest
1-14-39

PREFACE.



HERE have been two Selections of English Sonnets published during recent years,—one by Mr. John Dennis, the other by Mr. Main,—but neither of these anthologies has included the sonnets of living writers. It is hoped, therefore, that this volume may not only serve as a supplement to these, but may also enable readers, and students of poetry, to compare the work of the poets of our own time with that of the many generations which have passed away since the Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt wrote the first English sonnets. It were hardly to be expected that the work of one generation should, both as regards number and execution, rival that of all its predecessors, but it is for the reader to judge for himself whether such is not almost the case in the present instance. With reference to the

number it may be observed that whereas Mr. Dennis's Selection included two hundred, and Mr. Main's nearly five hundred sonnets, this volume only contains one hundred and seventy-eight, but the Editor alone is to be blamed for this,—if any blame be due,—as by admitting others of a less high class and character, the number could easily have been raised to five hundred, or more. And he would take this opportunity of apologizing to many sonneteers whose work has, from various causes, been either omitted altogether, or but inadequately represented, in order that the plan, or intention, with which the selection was commenced, might not be departed from.

It is not, however, to the number,—nor yet to the execution, the movement and progress in word-painting,—that the attention of the reader should be especially called; but to the substance, the thought, the doubts and difficulties, the passionate longings for a larger knowledge, the 'hunger and thirst after' the Unknown and, perhaps, Unknowable,—which form the lava out of which so many of these intaglios are carved. The first of modern critics has told us that "the strongest part of our religion to-day is

its unconscious poetry," and, perhaps it may be permitted us to reverse the sentence, and add, that the strongest part of our poetry to-day is its unconscious religion. There have been periods in the history of the world's literature during which the poet has, in a measure, been satisfied so long as he was

*Δεδαηκόρος μὲν εἰπεῖν
Χαρίεντως δὲ μανῆνα.—*

'skilled, indeed, to sing, and gracefully be mad : '—but the modern poet, the poet of the nineteenth century with its higher civilization and more extended culture, must, as Coleridge has pointed out, have both 'tender warmth at his heart,' and 'sound sense in his brains.' And this would appear to be especially the case as regards the 'sonnet,'—a form so admirably adapted as a tablet on which to inscribe the divine 'pensées,' the momentary flashes of light, the clear vision and deeper insight into the sacred mysteries of the infinite world around him, that visit unbidden the inspired mind of the poet and prophet.

It will be remarked that the selection has not been

restricted to examples of the so-called 'legitimate' sonnet, a term applied to the form, or variation of the form, which Guittone d'Arezzo originated, which Petrarch and Dante adopted as their model, and which of recent years, we know not for what reason, has been considered by some writers as the only 'correct' form of the Sonnet. One has but to mention the names of Shakspeare, Spenser, Keats, and Shelley, to justify this catholicity in selection; and, indeed, it would be sufficient to point out that some of the most beautiful sonnets in this volume,—those of Mrs. Fanny Kemble for instance,—are not written in the Guittonian form.

And now it remains for the Editor to thank very heartily many coadjutors for the valuable assistance they have rendered him: and especially to thank the authors who have so readily and graciously permitted their sonnets to be printed in this volume.

It may, perhaps, be well to mention that a few,—a very few,—sonnets by American writers whose poems have been published in England, and are therefore, as it were, naturalized, have been included. In order not to unwittingly offend any author by placing him at 'the very end'

of the volume, the Editor has ventured to conclude the selection with two of his own hitherto unpublished sonnets. He has also appended a short note on the Sonnet's history and composition.

47, CONNAUGHT STREET,
HYDE PARK, W.
October, 1880.