

THE POET'S DIARY

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The Poet's Diary by Alfred Austin

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ALFRED AUSTIN

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EDITED BY LAMIA

Life is worth living, not so much for what it gives as for what it suggests.

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CALIFORNIA

London

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1904

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DEDICATION

My dear Veronica,

*I trust no one needs to be told that, though I may be the Editor of the Poet's Diary, my labours have not been undertaken without your countenance, nor concluded without your approval. Lest ill-natured persons, if there be such in this amiable world, should associate the statement with the *Permissu Superiorum* seen on the title-page of certain works of dogmatic theology, let me hasten to add that you are so tolerant of all I say and do, that even the sanction you lend me is evidence rather of your indulgence than of my discrimination, which, I have little doubt, has frequently been at fault.*

But I want you to grant me yet one more favour, which is to accept from me the Dedication of this little volume. I owe you so much, and I cast about me in vain for any way of repaying you. Not only have you given me a free entry, at all times and seasons, to the garden that I love, but you have helped to rescue me from the worst fate that can befall any one, as expressed in the opening line of what

Newman declared to be the most beautiful lyric of a great Poet,

There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away.

You both have taught me, what Sages in every age, language, and clime have asserted, the superiority of 'the life removed' over one of consuming ambition, idolatrous fashion, and social rivalry. It is to the Poet and you I owe the knowledge of the real value of things, as contrasted with the conventional estimate of them. Renunciation and the Life Removed are one and the same thing; and Renunciation is the oldest doctrine of practical wisdom. In one of not a few passages which the Poet tells me Tennyson has admirably paraphrased from Lucretius, you remember he exclaims:

*O purblind race of miserable men
Who take the false for true, the true for false.¹*

If I have learnt to avoid that mistake, you twain have been my tutors; and that is why I ask you to accept this Dedication from,

Yours ever gratefully and tenderly,

LAMIA.

¹ *O miseræ hominum mentes! O pectora caeca!
Qualibus in tenebris . . .
Degitur hoc œvi!*

De Rerum Natura. Liber II.



THE POET'S DIARY

EDITOR'S PREFACE

'Do you not think,' said the Poet, as we leaned over the orchard gate that looks out on the avenue of limes beyond, where I had been urging him to allow me to edit and publish selections from his Diary, 'that the world has heard enough of the denizens of "The Garden that I Love," whether at home or abroad; of helpful, methodical Veronica; of your sometimes paradoxical but always entertaining self; of the world-forgetting and he would be glad to think by-the-world-forgot individual you dignify with the name of The Poet; and, finally, of their chronicler whose volumes, though received, I must own, with much

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kindly favour, must have exhausted whatever interest was latent in so limited a theme ?'

'I must avail myself,' I replied, 'of what I have heard you call the logician's expedient of distinguishing. Of my irrelevant observations I am sure the world must have had more than enough, and possibly it is satiated with our Biographer's horticultural infatuation, more especially since it has been so extensively copied. But I should not wonder if it would tolerate yet more information about Veronica's purchases of apparently valueless, but, as it generally turns out, inestimably precious, articles of the cast-away Antique ; and I am certain it would fain know more about *you*. You smile incredulously ; but, to show you how unprejudiced I am, let me add that I readily believe it does not desire to form any closer acquaintance with your works ; for, as far as the main body of readers is concerned, Literature seems to have fallen on strange times. The novel has ousted in general affection poems of lofty strain and purpose ; and politics, pleasure, and gossip, the higher diversions of the mind. Am I wearying you ?'

'Not in the least. I always,' he was good enough to say, 'listen to you with pleasure, and