

**FIFTY SONNETS ON
VARIOUS
SUBJECTS, WITH SOME
ACCOUNT OF THAT POEM**

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Fifty Sonnets on Various Subjects, with Some Account of That Poem by M. Montagu

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M. MONTAGU

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FIFTY SONNETS

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THAT POEM.

By M. MONTAGU.

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

Un Sonnet sans défauts vaut seul un long Poème.

BOILEAU, A. P. II. 94.

"From grave to gay, from lively to severe."

POPE, Ep. IV. 370.

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M.DCCC.LX.

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DEDICATION.

TO MY FRIENDS.

THESE POETICAL TRIFLES,
THE LAST PRINTED TESTIMONY
OF MY REGARD,
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIRS VERY SINCERELY,

M. M.

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PREFACE.

AMONG my M. S. Poems intended for posthumous publication (for which there are left full directions and abundant means) are numerous SONNETS, both Original and Translated; among the latter all the best French and Italian, including the greater part of Petrarch's. The Fifty here given have been written since the putting away of the above Mass, chiefly within the present year 1860, and may serve as specimens of the rest.

My object in this is Threefold: Firstly,—As I have now turned the great corner of life (*æt.* lxxiv) and have no time to lose for the accomplishment of any practicable design,—To have the satisfaction of seeing these few Pieces entyped:

“T is sweet, you know, to see one'sself in print.”

Nextly__To show them as a Pattern for the arrangement of those hereafter to follow ; and especially as to the however minor point of Punctuation, about which I am more than commonly studious, taking it to be of much more importance for determining the sense (and especially in Poetry, from its inversions and ellipses) than is generally considered, which indeed is very little if at all : and Lastly__For the gratification of offering them to Friends.

FOR a short account of our here Form of Verse. The SONNET is a Poem of a peculiar and absolute construction ; not to speak of the usual general forms, the only one I think of that kind in our language, of course adopted from abroad. It is of Italian birth ; having originated in that Country, and being still continually practised and used there, by all who have any the least pretensions to court the Muses, on all imaginable subjects and occasions. It is said to have been "invented" or first framed by Guittone d'Arezzo,* who flourished about the middle of the thirteenth Century ; at least the oldest one known is by him.

* For Notes see the End.

THE SONNET is composed of Fourteen Lines; divided into Two Quatrains (or four-line Stanzas) and Two Tercets (or three-line Stanzas) the former with two rhymes only, and the latter two or three at will: the Quatrains rhyming either alternately, or the first fourth fifth and eighth lines rhyming together, and the third and fourth with the sixth and seventh: when rhyming alternately it seems (as *i. a.* here in our Sonnets 1, 11, and 12) more harmonious for the Second Quatrain to begin with a new alternation, the fourth and fifth lines rhyming together. The Tercets may be rhymed with either two or three rhymes, at pleasure; but in no case successively, nor ending with a couplet: No very good reason can be given for this latter point; but its propriety will at once be felt by a good ear; at all events the universal practice of Italy has made it a law, and must therefor be observed. Combining Practice with Theory, we have endeavoured to embody and exemplify this in our Sonnet 1, as a Foot-Note to the rest.†

Whatever may be their intrinsic merits, the French Sonnets are always perfectly legitimate in their construction; in their Quatrains generally following the more usual rather than the alternately-