

**A NEW  
PILGRIMAGE,  
AND OTHER POEMS**

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A new pilgrimage, and other poems by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

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A NEW PILGRIMAGE.

# A NEW PILGRIMAGE,

AND OTHER POEMS,

BY

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT,

AUTHOR OF "THE LOVE SONNETS OF PROTEUS," "THE WIND  
AND THE WHIRLWIND," "IN VINCULIS,"

ETC., ETC.



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## PREFACE.

The poems contained in the present volume belong in part to the Author's literary period of "Proteus", in part to more recent times ; nor will the reader find difficulty in distinguishing between them. All that needs explaining is that the series of Sonnets giving their name to the book were written in the winter of 1886-1887 ; and the Pastorals, which end it, in the past and present years.

So much for the psychology of the volume. With regard to its manner the author would speak more at length.

"Sed nos qui vivimus" and the pieces "from the Arabic" represent an attempt

made in all diffidence to deal with the difficult problem of assonance, a form of ending which has never been seriously tried in English metres, but which in the author's opinion deserves better attention. Complete success in assonance would doubtless be to produce the illusion of rhyme, or at least to leave the ear satisfied with a half result, as it is (but how rarely!) with the no result of blank verse. For this we in England need education, and the author is not sanguine as to the judgment which will be passed upon his skill. As a suggestion, however, he believes his attempt will be one day considered valuable, and he commends it now to the notice of critics.

Another and more important point which he raises and endeavours to meet, is with regard to the construction of the English sonnet. Our critics seem to have decided



that no form of sonnet is admissible in English other than the Petrarchan, or, at least, that some precedent must be shown in early Italian literature for each variation from it. Against this assumption of finality on a foreign model the author ventures to protest on the double ground that the genius and scope of English rhyme is essentially different from that of the Italian,—and that for the treatment of modern subjects (the only ones, perhaps, of permanent value in any literature) the Italian form lacks elasticity, and so is not the practically best. In the matter of rhyme, its greater redundancy and license in the Italian places the English imitator at a clear disadvantage. The Italian doubleendings, so effective in adding strength, are more difficult with us, and, being so, can only be used sparingly without offence to our ears. Deprived of them the ordinary model

of the Italian sextett becomes poor and monotonous, for it needs a very strong single rhyme to be recognized at its full value after the usual Petrarchan interval. Of course, the author does not assert that these difficulties have not been successfully met by our best English poets. Milton, Wordsworth, Mrs. Browning, Rossetti, are proofs to the contrary. Yet, when you have mentioned these names, there are probably not a hundred English sonnets in strict Petrarchan measure which are not intolerably dull. This surely should not be. How much stronger too becomes our case when modern subjects are approached. Tennyson, the greatest of our living poets, and the most modern in his treatment, gives us hardly a specimen on contemporary subjects of his skill. Browning, William Morris, Longfellow, Lowell are almost equally silent; Lord Lytton and

Alfred Austin give us a few good ones, and Matthew Arnold has left us a bare half-dozen. Yet why? The sonnet, with the Italian writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, was the vehicle of their daily thoughts about their daily affairs, as well as that of their profoundest utterances in religion, love and politics; nor is there any reason beyond the trammels of convention why it should not be so yet with us. It seems to the author that our critics, like the Scribes and Pharisees of the New Testament, are placing on our shoulders a burden heavier than we English poets can bear. By insisting on the mint and cummin of certain rhymes and endings, they have set at nought the intellectual law on which the sonnet rests, and made it of no practical avail.

For this reason the author makes bold in