

**SONNETS ON THE
SONNET; AN
ANTHOLOGY**

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Sonnets on the sonnet; an anthology by Matthew Russell

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MATTHEW RUSSELL

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SONNETS ON THE SONNET

DEDICATION

Within this booklet nought shall have a place
Save sonnets with the Sonnet for their theme ;
'Tis fitting, therefore, that its front should gleam
With some bright name of subtlest power and grace
In sonnet-craft—not chosen from the race
Of bygone poets, for 'tis wrong, I deem,
Back o'er past ages wistfully to dream,
As if the Present were too dull and base.

All ages have their poets, and our day
Can bravely hold its own 'gainst any other
In this poetic form that poets cherish.
The poet's poet-wife has passed away ;
Christina, too, great almost as her brother—
But Alice Meynell's sonnets shall not perish.

M. R.

DISTRIBUTION

Two models here have sat for all the rest,
Or nearly all. De Vega's quaint design
Shows you the Sonnet building line on line
Till in its perfect form it stands confessed,
Wordsworth with cunning words its worth expressed
And its true modest dignity defined,
While he the names of all the six entwined
Who till his day had woven sonnets best.

These twain hath aped full many a sonneteer :
First, in these pages Lope's copyists throng,
Next, Wordsworth and his faithful echoes come ;
And then the Sonnet's functions are made clear,
Of other self-describing forms of song
Our last few leaves will kindly shelter some.

PREFACE

THIS collection contains a hundred and fifty-seven sonnets, the subject of each of which is the Sonnet itself regarded from some point of view. A hundred and twenty-four of these are English, gathered from books and journals published in England, Ireland, and the United States. From French poets we have taken twenty-three sonnets, from German five, from Italian three, and from Spanish two. But these last two are the earliest of all our samples. We have not discovered any in early Italian literature.

Besides translations of many of the foreign sonnets, the compiler and his friends have contributed the whole of the fourth division of this book. Several years ago the subject was introduced to the readers of the 'Irish Monthly,' which is edited by the compiler of this volume. Questions and answers on the subject appeared also in 'Notes and Queries.' These premature announcements brought assistance from many correspondents on both sides of the Atlantic. One of the most generous of these helpers, MR. E. B. BROWNLOW, of Montreal, Canada, has already passed away. He died September 8, 1895. His 'Orpheus and other Poems' was published by his friends at Montreal since his death.

PREFACE

The first division of our book begins with the famous sonnets of Lope de Vega and Hurtado de Mendoza, describing humorously the mechanism of a sonnet; and with these are grouped some thirty other sonnets that deal with the physical structure of this peculiar species of poem.

The second part places in front that sonnet of Wordsworth which speaks of 'the sonnet's scanty plot of ground'; and this is followed by more than fifty others treating of the nature and objects of the sonnet.

The third part takes its note from another celebrated sonnet of Wordsworth, 'Scorn not the sonnet,' which mentions some of the great masters of this form of poetical composition; and with it are associated thirty that do likewise.

Part IV., under the title of 'The Sonnet's latest Votaries,' gives some thirty 'sonnets on the sonnet' which were written expressly with a view to this compilation.

Part V. is a sort of appendix, in which what has been done for the sonnet is done, generally by a single example, for rondeau, villanelle, roundel, ballade, triolet, and quatrain, and also for the classical metres, hexameter, anapæst, &c.

Another appendix puts together a great many pithy statements by many writers, generally of high authority, about the nature, functions, and structure of the sonnet; and a postscript directs the attention of the student to certain sonnet-articles.

Permission to make this use of their writings has been most kindly given by MR. THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON, MR. SWINBURNE, MR. AUSTIN DOBSON, MR. WALTER E. HENLEY, MR. WILFRID BLUNT,

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ARCHBISHOP ALEXANDER, REV. PROFESSOR W. W. SKEAT, and also by the Editor of 'The Spectator' for sonnets which appeared in that journal. I crave forgiveness from the owner of any copyright poem quoted here with whom I may have failed to communicate.

MR. ADDINGTON SYMONDS, who has since died, wrote as follows from Venice on April 27, 1892 :—

'I have received your note here to-day, and reply that I shall be glad to see my three Sonnets on the Sonnet reprinted in your book. Only, I must make one condition, that I should see the proofs. A good many poems by me have got into hymn-books and anthologies, and have suffered greatly from careless editing.'

MR. R. WATSON GILDER, MR. ANTONY MOREHEAD, MRS. JULIA DORR, and MISS EDITH THOMAS will be recognised as Americans. MR. S. V. COLE dates from Williamstown, Massachusetts, and MRS. HARRIET ROBINSON from Malden in the same State. MR. SHOEMAKER's sonnets appeared in 'The Literary World' of New York in the years 1879-1883.

The French sonneteers, except two or three well-known names, have been found in the 'Almanach du Sonnet,' published annually as the organ of an Académie du Sonnet which was founded at Aix, in Provence, in the year 1874. I have the volumes for four years after that date, but I do not know how long it lasted, or if it survives. Perhaps one of the members of this Academy of the Sonnet was M. LUDOVIC SARLAT, who died last year in Dordogne, aged 82, leaving after him in print sixteen hundred and seventeen sonnets.

In our collection of Sonnets on the Sonnet, some omissions will, of course, be detected. But let it be

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noted that such pieces as Thomas Hood's 'Sonnet on a Sonnet' have been purposely left out as not coming within our scope; for these are written in answer to other particular sonnets, and regard the matter of the individual sonnet in question, not the matter or form of the sonnet itself considered as a peculiar species of poetical composition. Some, indeed, that would properly belong to our plan, have remained undiscovered, though mentioned by certain authors. Thus, Italian friends, and the readers of 'Notes and Queries,' have sought in vain for an Italian sonnet on the sonnet by Marino, alluded to by Mr. Samuel Waddington in his 'Sonnets of Europe,' on the authority of Lord Holland. A similar sonnet by Nencioni, referred to by Carducci, and a French one by Poupo, mentioned in the 'Almanach du Sonnet,' have also escaped the most diligent search.

However, sins of omission are not the worst; and our readers are hardly likely to complain of our sonnets for being too few, as *we* may have to complain of our readers.

M. R.