

**ANTHOLOGY OF FRENCH
POETRY FROM THE TIME OF
FROISSART UP TO THE
BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT
CENTURY**

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Anthology of French Poetry from the Time of Froissart up to the Beginning of the Present
Century by Frederick Lawton

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FREDERICK LAWTON

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POETRY

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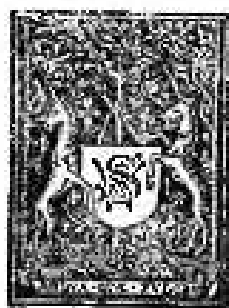
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EDITED BY

FREDERICK LAWTON, M.A.



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PREFACE

IN making the selections for this Anthology, the compiler, while giving preference primarily to poems in themselves interesting, has sought to include in it as large a number as possible of authors whose literary and poetic talents entitle them to appear in such a work. The small size of the book necessitated his choosing short poems, with one or two exceptions. This length restriction has caused some omissions, yet none, it is believed, which deprive the Anthology of its claim to be fairly representative of French poetic literature—at any rate of its lyrical element—from the age of Villon down to the beginning of our own century.

Froissart was taken as a suitable starting-point, since the close of the fourteenth century in France offers, just as it does in England, the first texts easily understandable by modern readers. To go farther back would have been to risk including less intelligible and—to that extent—less interesting material. The orthography followed is, in the main, that of the editions from which the extracts have been made, with a few alterations for the sake of avoiding obscurity. These editions, however, not being all originals, there is perforce, some anachronism in the spelling.

While endeavouring to maintain proportion between the spaces allotted to ancient and

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modern authors, the compiler felt that the extraordinary development of French poetry which has taken place since Victor Hugo and his contemporaries broke the fetters of classicism, in which it had long languished, called for due recognition. Among the nineteenth-century and up-to-date selections will be seen traces of the evolution of the French poetic muse towards greater freedom both in matter and form. Whether the younger contemporary advocates of still more sweeping changes will succeed in doing as much for their art as the school of Victor Hugo, cannot be discussed here. Their experiments are at least worthy of being watched with sympathetic interest.

Since it is hoped that this Anthology will appeal to a larger reading public than has hitherto been obtained for French poetry, a few practical hints may not be amiss.

Tonic accent, which plays such an important rôle in English poetic rhythm, is much less marked in the French language; and, in general, there is no other guiding principle for attaining any proper knowledge of it than the somewhat fluctuating tendency to accentuate the last sonorous syllable of a word. In reality, however, the comparative weight of a word's component parts often produces a predominant tonic emphasis in another syllable than the last sonorous one. For example, this emphasis predominates in the first syllables of "*monter*," and "*maison*," they being weightier than the finals, albeit these latter are sonorous. The same thing occurs in polysyllables—many, at least,

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"physiologie," "préalablement," "narration," for instance—there being, in these and other words of like formation, an emphasis on the antepenultimate, which corresponds to the Latin usage, and which, though not taught in grammar, is observed in practice.

The French unaccented "s," which, when final, is usually mute in prose, nevertheless constitutes a syllable in conjunction with the consonant preceding it, and is not mute in poetry. There is no need to pronounce it too audibly; but its presence in the metric foot must be marked by the voice, unless it is followed by a vowel. In fact, the same rule must be observed as in reading Chaucer; and, until this can be done with facility, the rhythm of the verse is not appreciated.

French rhyme differs in one important respect from English, inasmuch as, contrarily to the latter, its supporting consonants may be the same, providing the sense of the two words forming the rhyme is different. For example, whereas in English it would be impossible to rhyme "box" (the plant) with "box" (a blow), and hardly less so to rhyme "freeze" with "frieze" or "seas" with "seize," these sorts of rhyme in French are richer than those of "know" and "grow," "race" and "pace," etc. Again, there being many terminal consonants which are not pronounced in French, it is permissible to rhyme "mais" with "fait," "lait" with "laid," etc.

The system of French diphthongs also needs attention, since not a few—such as "ieu," "iai,"