

**LYRIC LOVE:
AN ANTHOLOGY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649640942

Lyric Love: An Anthology by William Watson

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

WILLIAM WATSON

**LYRIC LOVE:
AN ANTHOLOGY**

Golden Treasury Series

LYRIC LOVE

O lyric Love, half angel and half bird,
And all a wonder and a wild desire !

R. BROWNING.

LYRIC LOVE

AN ANTHOLOGY

EDITED BY

WILLIAM WATSON

AUTHOR OF 'WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE, AND OTHER POEMS'



London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

AND NEW YORK

1892



DEDICATION

TO

M. R. C.

FROM honeyed slopes of England's Helicon,
Where'er the visits of the Muse beget
Daisy or hyacinth or violet
Born of her tread, these floral spoils were won.
Some with caresses of the wooing sun
Are passion-flushed and sultry-hearted yet ;
And many with immortal tears are wet ;
And emptied of its odorous soul is none.

Take, then, this garland of melodious flowers,
Till he, whose hand the fragrant chaplet wove,
Another wreath from his own garden bring.
These captive blossoms of a hundred bowers
Hold thou as hostages of Lyric Love,
In pledge of all the songs he longs to sing.
W. W.

teenth and early seventeenth century verse, everything that stood my doubtlessly fastidious as well as complex tests of admissibility, it is none the less true that I have drawn upon Elizabethan and Jacobean sources with a springiness which to some critical scholars, whose enthusiasm I respect on general grounds no less than I value their erudition, will appear regrettable; but I have decided upon this course after a careful exploration of the field, and a conscientious effort to do neither more nor less than strict justice to its poetic products. Among the underwoods out of which rises the oak of Arden I have indeed gathered many of the choicest of these flowers of fancy, but I have not plucked them by handfuls, much less harvested them by the scythe. With respect to the Elizabethan lyrists, taken in the mass, a certain amount of fanaticism has latterly been in vogue; and, what is worse than fanaticism—for that implies the saving grace of sincerity—a habit of conventional and factitious admiration appears to be indulged in cases where knowledge may be supposed to invest its possessor with some distinction and superiority. There are those who constantly speak as though they would have us believe high lyrical genius to have been of almost universal diffusion in the days of Elizabeth and James; but as a matter of fact most readers who have not the misfortune to be specialists, and upon whom the necessity of professional admiration is not incumbent, know quite well that with a few splendid and memorable exceptions the song-writing of that period was a more or less musical ringing of changes upon roses and violets, darts and flames, coral lips, ivory foreheads, snowy bosoms, and starry eyes. The love-making seems about as real as that of Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses on porcelain. One may

lay it down as a general rule that—given the concurrent quality of high poetic expression—the most truly interesting effects in love poetry are where the shadow of two living and credible personalities—those of the lover and of his beloved,—are recognisably thrown across the verse; such is the case, for instance, with Shakespeare and his dark lady; but for the most part, in the amatory song-writing and sonnet-making of the Elizabethan age, there seems absolutely no personality at all either in the singer or the sung; it is an abstraction addressing an abstraction, a shade apostrophising a shade. The poet seems to have a female lay-figure before him, and from all one can gather, he might never have seen a real woman in his life. He carries hyperbole—a vice which only great style can redeem—to intolerable lengths, and demonstrates in every page how thin are the partitions between extravagance and insipidity. If he ever really is in love, he is marvellously successful in keeping his secret—even, one would suppose, from the lady. His goddess is a mere inventory of feminine graces, and she might be constructed from a stock recipe of saccharine ingredients. She is usually, also, in the attitude of obstinate resistance to a chronic siege, which adds another element of monotony; and truly, when we perceive what a fantastic and absurd figure the beleaguering party often makes, we scarcely wonder at the fortress being so slow to capitulate. In an age, too, when that swan-song of chivalry, Spenser's *Fairie Queene*, was but newly resonant upon the air, it is disconcerting to find ever and anon a tone, a spirit, which to our modern apprehension seems emphatically unchivalrous,—witness the frequent phenomenon of a foiled *inamorato* crying sour grapes when the hopelessness of his suit has at last

become manifest. He turns upon the adamantine fair, roundly tells her that henceforth he shall repay scorn with scorn, and altogether behaves with a degree of incivility which the occasion does not seem to require. Quite possibly it is a situation having more of an air of reality than usually accompanies the literary love-making of those spacious times; but none the less there is a painful want of knightliness about it. To my thinking even the fine and justly admired sonnet of Drayton's,

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part,
is not undisfigured in that way; the line,

Nay, I have done, you get no more of me,

being as coarse in feeling as it is rude in expression. Taken as a whole, however, the poem in which it occurs is so real, so convincingly alive, as to be worth a hundred of the pranked and bedizened inanities of that period.

Whilst touching upon these matters one may note the frequency with which an otherwise harmless exercise in amatory verse is marred, for us moderns, by physiological flowers of rhetoric which the mere caprices of time have made archaic and grotesque. In Shakespeare himself the mention of the liver as the seat and residence of amorous desire is far from being uncommon; and when Francis Beaumont writes,

Did all the shafts in thy fair quiver
Stick fast in my ambitious liver,
Yet thy power would I adore, etc.,

we are apt to forget that our own employment of cardiac symbolism is equally arbitrary, and may perhaps disqualify some of the most admired love poetry of the present day for inclusion in an English anthology published in the year 2092.