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VERSE OF OUR DAY

AN ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN
AMERICAN AND BRITISH POETRY

WITH
STUDIES IN POETRY

BY
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NEW YORK
D. APPLETON-CENTURY COMPANY
INCORPORATED

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

VERSE OF OUR DAY

TO
OUR MOTHERS

*All that is good in them belongs
Only to you.*

W. E. HENLEY

*"I will give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball,
It will lead you in at heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's Wall."*

WILLIAM BLAKE

FOREWORD

There is no better way to open the door of the child's mind to the beauty of the world around him than through the study of poetry. In reading poetry understandingly the child's senses are sharpened, his imagination stimulated, his sympathies broadened. He must see and feel and think with the poet. Contrary to popular opinion, most children have an instinctive love of poetry which can be developed. The little child loves jingles and rhymes, loves the colorful, the imaginative. After he emerges from childhood, these tastes lie dormant, but are ready to flower again in adolescence, if they are cultivated. All too often the taste that is flowering is killed by the unskillful selection and presentation of the poetry given to him.

In 1918, while we were teaching Gray's "Elegy" and Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," we found it difficult, as we had frequently found it before, to link these poems with the student's experience. As we were in the midst of a poetry revival, we felt that we might stimulate in the students a more vital, and, we hoped, a more permanent interest in poetry by bringing them into contact first with the poets of their own day. Accordingly we asked them to select from current magazines poems by living authors. Their surprise that there were any "living authors" was illuminating. It had not occurred to them that literature is in the making; that once the Goldsmith and the Gray of their text-books were contemporary writers; that our contemporaries, Noyes, Masfield, and others, would appear in text-books of the future.

To acquaint them, then, with the contemporary poets, and to open their eyes to the very excellent verse of their own day, we assigned as a term problem to our students the compilation of an anthology of modern poetry. This poetry was selected from current magazines and volumes suggested by us.

Verse of Our Day had its inspiration in this student anthology. Its contents reflect the expressed tastes and interests of the adolescent as tested in the classroom. Its grouping follows the grouping of the original anthology made by the students.

We have in this volume 347 poems representing the work of 134 modern poets, both American and British. We are providing a large body of material as we are convinced from experience in teaching that the crying need in any textbook is a wealth of material from which the teacher may cull selections suited to the age and interests of the pupil and to the phases of the work to be emphasized in any one term. We have tried to give as much variety of material as possible to meet the variety of interests of students of all types.

Our aim is to introduce the pupil to poetry rather than to poets. Hence we have frequently taken the work of occasional poets as well as that of poets more widely known. We feel that we must first of all make our girls and boys know and love *poetry*. By cultivating in them a taste for good poetry wherever they may find it, whether it is by known or unknown authors, we are building a foundation for critical judgment and discrimination in their later reading.

We have in some cases chosen a large number of poems from individual poets, because the poems of these authors are lyric and for that reason will appeal to youth, which is itself essentially lyric. On the other hand, we have included fewer poems of a reflective nature, as poetry of this type is less within the range of the adolescent's experience.

The title "*Verse of Our Day*" is, of course, not to be interpreted too literally. We have chosen poems of many poets not strictly of "our day," as their work is expressive of the modern spirit; the so-called new poetry is, after all, not a sporadic growth but an evolution.

Nor should it be assumed that all modern poets whose work we recognize as significant and suitable for our purpose are represented in the anthology. With deep regret we have been obliged to omit several poets because of the

restrictions placed by the owners of copyrights upon such reproduction of their work.

We are grateful to our students in the Julia Richman High School and in the High School of Commerce, New York City, for the inspiration which they gave us for this work: to Mr. Edwin A. Kane, of the High School of Commerce, for his suggestions and his criticism of our manuscript; to our former pupil, Miss Mary Aiello, for her skill and efficiency in typing our manuscript for the publisher.

MARGERY GORDON
MARIE B. KING

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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George H. Doran Co., for selections from *Banners* by Babette Deutsch; *Dreamers and Other Poems* by Theodosia Garrison; *Candles That Burn* by Aline Kilmer; *Poems, Essays and Letters* by Joyce Kilmer; *Songs for a Little House* by Christopher Morley; *A World of Windows* by Charles Hanson Towne; and *Waste Paper Philosophy* by T. P. Cameron Wilson.

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Macmillan Company, for selections from *Poems* by Madison Cawein; *Wild Earth and Other Poems* by Padraic Colum; *Myself and I* by Fannie Stearns Davis; *Crack o' Dawn* by Fannie Stearns Davis; *Breakers and Granite* by John Gould Fletcher; *Neighbors*, and *Poems* by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson; *General William Booth Enters Into Heaven* by Vachel Lindsay; *Poems and Plays* by Percy Mackaye; *Poems and Plays of John Masefield*; *Enslaved* by John Masefield; *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters; *Songs from the Clay* by James Stephens; and *Flame and Shadow*, *Love Songs*, and *Rivers to the Sea* by Sara Teasdale.

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Charles Scribner's Sons, for selections from *Poems* by Eugene Field; *Moods, Songs and Doggerels* by John Galsworthy; *Poems* by Alan Seeger; *Poems and Ballads* by Robert Louis Stevenson; *Poetical Works of Robert Bridges*; and *Poems* by Henry van Dyke.

Small, Maynard & Co., for selections from *April Airs* by Bliss Carman; and *Poems* by John Banister Tabb.

Frederick A. Stokes Co., for selections from *Collected Poems* by Alfred Noyes; *Poems* by Cecil Roberts.

H. Grace Brown, for "The Christ Candle" by Kate Louise Brown.

Grace Hazard Conkling, for "To the Schooner Casco."

John Gould Fletcher, for the selection from *Breakers and Granite*.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, for selections from *Neighbors* and *Poems*.

Rudyard Kipling, for "Recessional" from *The Five Nations*.

Vachel Lindsay, for selections from *General William Booth Enters Into Heaven*.

Percy Mackaye, for a selection from *Poems*.

Edgar Lee Masters, for a selection from *Spoon River Anthology*.

Harold Monroe, for "Milk for the Cat," "The Nightingale Near the House" and "Wind in the Dusk."

James Stephens, for a selection from *Songs from the Clay*.

Sara Teasdale, for selections from *Flame and Shadow*, *Love Songs*, and *Rivers to the Sea*.

The Editors are deeply grateful to the following publishers, poets, editors, magazines, and individual holders of copyright, who graciously gave them the use of the copyrighted poems enumerated on the following pages.

D. Appleton & Co., for selections from *Narratives in Verse* by Ruth Comfort Mitchell.

Boni & Liveright, for selections from *The Cobbler in Willow Street* by George O'Neil.

Brentano's, for selections from *Complete Poems of Francis Ledwidge*.

Estate of Edmund D. Brooks, for selections from *A Lark Went Singing* by Ruth Guthrie Harding.

Century Company, for selections from *At the World's Heart*, *Earth and New Earth*, *Shadowy Thresholds*, and *Trails Sunward* by Cale Young Rice.

Dodge Publishing Company, for a selection from *The Quiet Singer and Other Poems* by Charles Hanson Towne.

Duffield & Co., for a selection from *The Book of Love* by Elsa Barker.

E. P. Dutton & Co., for selections from *Yellow Clover* by Katherine Lee Bates; *A Wild Knight and Other Poems* by Gilbert Keith Chesterton; *Collected Poems* by Austin Dobson; *The Spires of Oxford and Other Poems* by Winifred Letts; *Soldier Songs* by Patrick MacGill; *A Canopic Jar* by Leonora Speyer; *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* and *Picture Show* by Siegfried Sassoon; *The Earth Turns South* by Clement Wood.

Harper & Bros., for selections from *Poems* by Dana Burnet; *Star-Glow and Song* by Charles Buxton Going; *The Mirthful Lyre* by Arthur Guiterman; and *Flowers of Grass* by Ada Foster Murray.

B. W. Huebsch, for selections from *Before Dawn*, and *Songs to Save a Soul* by Irene Rutherford McLeod; *Poems* by Wilfred Owen; *Under the Tree* by Elizabeth Madox Roberts; and *The Hesitant Heart* by Winifred Welles.

Marshall Jones Company, for selections from *New York and Other Verse* by Frederick Mortimer Clapp.

Estate of Sara Beaumont Kennedy, for a selection from *Poems* by Sara Beaumont Kennedy.

Mitchell Kennerley, for selections from *Earth Cry* and *Joy o' Life* by Theodosia Garrison; and *Renascence* and *Second April* by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

Alfred A. Knopf, for a selection from *Verse* by Adelaide Crapsey.

Thomas Bird Mosher, for selections from *The Rose Jar* and *The Voice in The Silence* by Thomas S. Jones, Jr.; *Ballades in Blue China* by Andrew Lang; *Lyrical Ballads* by Lucy Lyttleton; *An Italian Garden* by A. Mary F. Robinson; *A Handful of Lavender*, *A Quiet Road*, and *A Wayside Lute* by Lizette Woodworth Reese.

G. P. Putnam's Sons, for selections from *The Shadow of Ætna and Other Poems* by Louis V. Ledoux; *A Florentine Cycle* by Gertrude Huntington McGiffert; and *Ships in Harbour* by David Morton.

Norman Remington Co., for selections from *Green Days and Blue Days* by Patrick Chalmers; and *Spicewood* by Lizette Woodworth Reese.

The Vigilantes, 1917, for "Prayer During Battle" by Hermann Hagedorn.

James T. White & Co., for a selection from *Let The Flag Wave* by Clinton Scollard.

Yale University Press, for selections from *Blue Smoke* by Karle Wilson Baker; *Young Adventure* by Stephen Vincent Benét; *Sea Moods and Others* by Edward Bliss Reed; and *Horizons* by Viola Chittenden White.

Zöe Ackerman, whom the Editors were unable to reach, for "My Canary's Rhapsody."

Kenneth Slade Alling, for "Wind, Wind."

Phoebe Crosby Allnut, for "Colors."

Joseph Auslander, for "A Blackbird Suddenly," "Hill Hunger," and "Words."

Katherine Lee Bates, for "Love Planted a Rose."

Dana Burnet, for "Song."

Bliss Carman, for "An April Morning," "Autumn," "An Autumn Song," "The Enchantress," and "The Winter Scene."

Patrick Chalmers, for "The Gardener's Cat," "In an Old Nursery," and "Pan Pipes."

Frederick Mortimer Clapp, for parts of "Sky-Signs" and "Steam."

Florence Earle Coates, for "Dream The Great Dream," "For Joy," "Per Aspera," and "Song" from *Poems* published by the Houghton Mifflin Company; and for "The Smile of Reims."

Lincoln Colcord, for "The Fishing Fleet."

Helen Gray Cone, for "A Chant of Love for England" and "A Yellow Pansy."

Claudia Cranston, for "If I Were The Lord God."

Eugene F. Clark, for "The Dreamers," "Red Geraniums," and "The Stay at Home" by Martha Haskell Clark.

Olive Tilford Dargan, for "On Clingman Dome."

Louise Driscoll, for "The Blue Jay."

Hamlin Garland, for "Magic," and "The Mountains Are a Lonely Folk."

Theodosia Garrison, for "April," "A City Voice," "The Dreamers," "The Gypsy," "May Flowers," "The Poplars," and "A Song to Belinda."

Marie Emilie Gilchrist, whom The Editors were unable to reach, for "Springtime Theft."

Charles Buxton Going, for "Columbus," "Joan of Arc at Domremy," "Landlocked," "Rain in The Hills," "A Sleepy Song," and "Spring in England."

Arthur Guiterman, for "Hills," "Pussy-Willows," and "In The Hospital."

Hermann Hagedorn, for "Day's End," "Prayer During Battle," and "Song of The Grail Seekers."

Ruth Guthrie Harding, for "Daffodils" and "From a Car Window."

Rose Henderson, for "An Abandoned Adobe," and "The Patio."

Robert Silliman Hillyer, for "To a Scarlatti Passepiep."

Helen Hoyt, for "Ellis Park."

Burges Johnson, for "The Service."

Thomas S. Jones, Jr., for "After All," "April," "As in a Rose-Jar," "Ave atque Vale," "Candle-Light," "Clonard," "Daphne," "I know a Quiet Vale," "In Trinity Church-Yard," "My Soul is Like a Garden-Close," "Noon-Tide," "To Song," "Two Songs in Spring," and "The Way Back."

Louis V. Ledoux, for "Slumber Song."

Agnes Lee, for "The Quest."

Dorothy Leonard, for "The Minuet."

Amy Lowell, for "Apology," "A London Thoroughfare Two A. M.," "The Precinct—Rochester," "Prime," and "A Tulip Garden."

Gertrude Huntington McGiffert, for "The Garden."

Mary Lanier Magruder, for "Lights."

Edwin Markham, for "Lincoln, The Man of the People" and "The Man with the Hoe."

Alice Duer Miller, for "A Bread and Butter Letter."

Ruth Comfort Mitchell, for "Barbara," "El Poniente," "¿Quien Sabe?" "Symphony Pathetique," and "The Travel Bureau."

Ada Foster Murray, for "Reveille."

Mary Rachel Norris, for "Pax Beata."

George O'Neil, for "The Cobbler in Willow Street" and "Margot."

Dorothy Paul, for "Heritage."

Ellis M. Potter, for "The River."

Cale Young Rice, for "As the Tide Comes In," "The Immortal," "In an Oriental Harbor," "I Know Your Heart, O Sea," "On the Beach," "The Runaway," and "Swallows."

John R. Rathom, for "The 'Unknown' Dead."

Elizabeth Madox Roberts, for "The Hens," "The Sky," "Water Noises," and "The Worm."

Clinton Scollard, for "A Bell," "Marathon," "Time," from *Poems* published by the Houghton Mifflin Co., and for "Cricket," "A Hill in Picardy," and "Sunflowers."

Nora Archibald Smith, for "Morning in the Market."

Katherine Tynan, for "Farewell."

Charles Hanson Towne, for "Carouse," "How Will It Seem," "The Last Sleep," and "The Quiet Singer."

Winifred Welles, for "Climb," "The Hesitant Heart," "One Voice," and "School."

Viola Chittenden White, for "Dutch Slumber Song."

Clement Wood, for "Berkshires in April" and "Tipsiness."

Atlantic Monthly, for "A Blackbird Suddenly," "Hill Hunger," and "Words" by Joseph Auslander; "Autumn" by Bliss Carman; "If I Were the Lord God" by Claudia Cranston; "Prime" by Amy Lowell; "The Hens" by Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

William Stanley Braithwaite, for "My Canary's Rhapsody" by Zöe Ackerman; "The Quest" by Agnes Lee; and "Morning in The Market" by Nora Archibald Smith; which appeared in *The Poetry Review of America*.

Century Magazine, for "The Minuet" by Dorothy Leonard; "The Travel Bureau" by Ruth Comfort Mitchell; "Carouse" by Charles Hanson Towne; "Battle Sleep" by Edith Wharton.

Good Housekeeping, for "The Dreamers," "Red Geraniums," and "The Stay at Home" by Martha Haskell Clark.

Peter Anderson Graham, editor of *Country Life*, London, for "Dawn" by Isabel Butchart; "Her Allowance" by Lillian Gard; and "Parliament Hill" by H. H. Bashford.

Harper's Magazine, for "The Service" by Burges Johnson; "Pax Beata" by Mary Rachel Norris; and "The Last Sleep" by Charles Hanson Towne.

Leslie's Magazine, for "Wind" by Kenneth Slade Alling.

Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry, A Magazine of Verse*, for "Ellis Park" by Helen Hoyt; "The Sky," and "Water Noises" by Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

The Nation, for "A Winter Scene" by Bliss Carman.

The New Republic, for "Colors" by Phoebe Allnut; "The Fishing Fleet" by Lincoln Colcord; "The Patio" and "An Abandoned Adobe" by Rose Henderson; "To a Scarlatti Passepied" by Robert Silliman Hillyer; and "A Bread and Butter Letter" by Alice Duer Miller.

Poetry Review, London, for "The Princess" by C. Ethel Evans.

Saturday Evening Post, for "Lights" by Mary Lanier Magruder; for "Heritage" by Dorothy Paul.

Scribner's Magazine, for "In the Hospital" by Arthur Guiterman.

Charles Wharton Stork, editor of *Contemporary Verse*, for "The Blue Jay" by Louise Driscoll; and "Springtime Theft" by Marie Emilie Gilchrist.

Westminster Gazette, London, for "The Journey" by L. Le Mesurier.

Providence Journal, for "The Unknown Dead" by John R. Rathom.

Acknowledgments are also due to the following British publishers for the use of selections from the volumes enumerated opposite:

Burns & Oates, Ltd., for a selection from *The Works of Francis Thompson*; and for selections from *Poems* by Alice Meynell.

J. M. Dent & Sons, for selections from *A Chant of Love for England and Other Poems* by Helen Gray Cone.

Macmillan Company, for selections from *Poems* by Thomas Edward Brown; *Moments of Vision and Late Lyrics and Earlier* by Thomas Hardy; and *Poems of London* by John Presland.

David Nutt, for selections from *Poems* by W. E. Henley.

Martin Secker, for selections from *Collected Poems* by James Elroy Flecker.

Sidgwick & Jackson, for selections from *The Wind and The Trees* by Katherine Tynan.

Smith, Elder & Co., for selections from *Songs from Leinster*, by Winifred Letts.

Society of SS. Peter and Paul, for a selection from *Sonnets of The Cross* by Thomas S. Jones, Jr.

The Editors are also deeply grateful to the poets who generously furnished facts of their lives for the biographical notes in this volume.

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