

# THE COLLEGE BOOK OF VERSE

1250-1925

COMPILED BY

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## PREFACE

COLLEGE courses in the appreciation of poetry and the technique of verse are more and more commonly forming a part of the English curriculum, especially in the freshman year, but the books available for use in such courses are as a rule either too large and too expensive or are, like the classic *Golden Treasury*, composed almost entirely of songs and lyrics. Teachers are agreed, I think, that for arousing a student's interest in poetry, the narrative, whether ballad or longer tale in verse, is particularly useful and that, although "pure poetry" is most often found in the lyric, to restrict the beginner's attention to the lyric is likely to give him a false notion of both the variety and the scope of poetic expression. From the course in appreciation, for example, epic and dramatic and reflective blank verse cannot be omitted. There are, moreover, a great many forms of verse which, although they are not essentially poetic in spirit, are delightful and sometimes important. In the eighteenth century, for instance, the lyric, except in Scotland, was of little account, but certain sophisticated forms, such as the poetic epistle, the prologue, the fable, the character-sketch, and the essay, were brought to perfection. These form a part of the poetic tradition and do not deserve to be wholly neglected. Similarly, at other periods, the artificial French or Provençal forms, such as the ballade, rondeau, villanelle, and triolet, have been the subjects of much experimentation. They have never reached the dignity of the sonnet, and yet, if only as patterns,

have their place in the study of verse in general. And finally, although the date at which a poem was written is of minor significance, it still has its interest; and a consideration of epochs or periods is sometimes of more than academic importance.

It was such considerations that guided me in the compilation of *The College Book of Verse*. The form of the book has been a matter of much thought. It presented itself to me as a problem which may be expressed as follows: To produce a volume, of small dimension and low price and containing as rich a selection of poems as possible, in which the great masters should receive a fair representation but which should be an anthology of poems rather than poets and should illustrate the variety of verse and verse-forms rather than the history of poetry. My plan, more in detail, contemplated the inclusion of some half-dozen narratives of considerable length, — such as *Tam o' Shanter*, the *Eve of Saint Agnes*, the *Hamadryad*, the *Morte d'Arthur*, and *Isaac and Archibald*, — illustrating severally the realistic, romantic, classic, epic, and idyllic styles; three complete tragic scenes from Marlowe and Shakespeare; a selection of lyric passages from the *Psalms*, *Job*, the *Song of Songs*, and *Ecclesiastes*; a generous representation of ballads and sonnets; and a richer choice of poems of both the earliest and the latest periods, — the Middle English and Tudor, on the one hand, and the twentieth century, on the other, — than is usually found in anthologies. I have not hesitated to use excerpts when these would enrich the book and were complete in themselves.

The selection of contemporary poems is always a difficult task and can never hope to be entirely satisfactory to either the compiler or the reader; and the

difficulty is by no means merely one of taste and judgment, because it is always complicated by questions of copyright. I have followed about the only plan possible in the circumstances, of using those poems that I liked, when I could get them, but always deferring to expert opinion. In the choice of contemporary poems many friends have helped me, often unconsciously, and I owe a special debt to Mr. Louis Untermeyer and Mr. Odell Shepard, who checked over my lists and made many valuable suggestions. For the earlier periods, Mr. Walter Hinchman, poetry editor of the *Forum*, generously performed a similar service. For the inception of the book and for countless helps and criticisms I am indebted to the English staff of Simmons College, and to many students in Harvard University, Boston University, and Simmons College.

It seemed best, for the convenience of teachers and students, to arrange the contents as far as possible according to date, but to keep poems by the same author together, even though by doing so I had to violate the strict chronological order. Many of the dates are, of course, only approximate. They are, in general, the dates of composition, but since these are often unknown or (by me) undiscoverable, they may sometimes represent merely a guess. The dates of the births and deaths of authors will be found in the general Index.

It seemed advisable in the Index to list authors, titles, and first lines under one alphabet, distinguishing them by different printing-types. A second index, — of Subjects, Types, Forms, and Technique, — will, it is hoped, prove of value in the classroom, particularly in the technical study of verse. The footnotes have been made as few as possible and in general do not explain words that can be found in a dictionary.



## NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

Page 8 (footnote). *Seint Loy*. Professor Lowes has proved that Saint Loy was the "fashionable saint" of the time and that the Prioress, though she did swear, mildly, swore elegantly.

Page 9 (footnote). *gauded*. Professor Manly now rejects the explanation given in the text, because in Chaucer's time rosaries were still very short, consisting of only ten or twelve beads.

Pages 41 ff. In dating the poems of the late Tudor period, I have in general followed Norman Ault, *Elizabethan Lyrics*, 1925; of the next century, Professor Schelling's *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*, 1899.

Page 79. "Wraggle Taggle Gipsies." Walter de la Mare, in *Come Hither*, intimates that this song is of Somersetshire origin.

Page 126. Sylvester seems to have spelled his first name Josuah.

Page 127. "Phyllida Flouts Me." The version is that given by Ault.

Page 134. "Aspatia's Song." The version is that given by Ault. He says: "The poem is here correctly printed for the first time in nearly 300 years."

Page 254. "My Auld Breeks." This is placed too early in the text. I have not discovered the date, but it is no doubt after 1801.

Page 336. "The Sailor's Consolation." The ascription to Pitt is that of Tom Hood the younger, in his *Illustrated Readings*. Dibdin wrote a song under the same title, whence probably the persistent error in ascribing this one to him.

Page 355. "One Crowded Hour." The discovery of the authorship of this famous quatrain was made in 1920. The facts are given in the *Literary Digest* for September 11, of that year.

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**Note.** This book, with a special introduction, "Some Notes on Poetry," is printed in a library edition for the general reader under the title, *The Riverside Book of Verse*.

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