

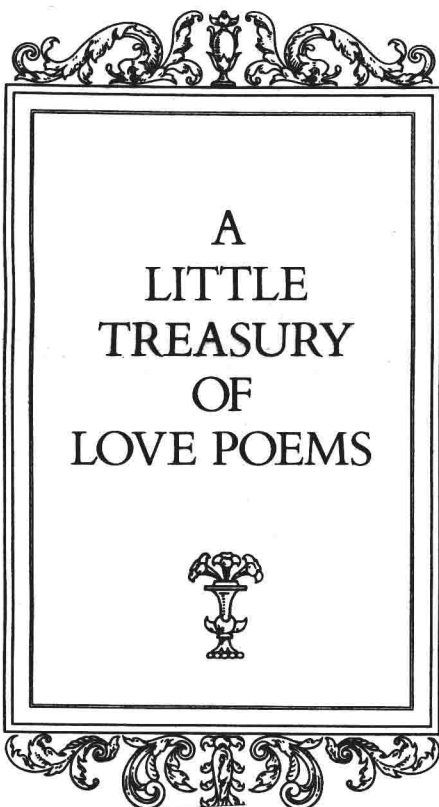


A
LITTLE
TREASURY
OF
LOVE POEMS



Edited by
CARY WILKINS

AVENEL BOOKS
New York



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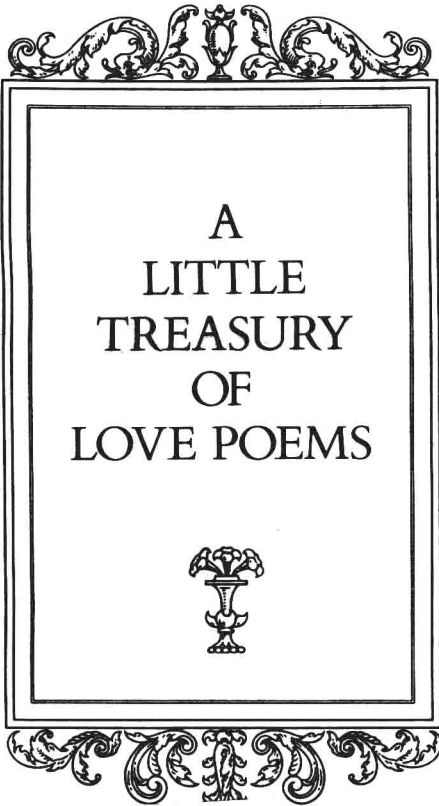
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*Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can the floods drown it.*
The Song of Solomon



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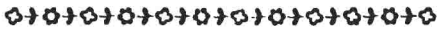
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Introduction



From the Bible to Shakespeare to Whitman and Dickinson, the face of love in poetry through the ages has changed. But the soul of love, which a good poem ultimately reveals, has remained the same. The joys and sorrows, ecstasies and agonies of love are universal qualities that will never change.

Love between friends, love between a dog and his master, love for one's neighbor or oneself—most of the poems in this book do not extol these kinds of love. Instead, they describe the fireworks caused by the first meeting of two pairs of eyes, the longing of one soul for another, the longing of one anatomical part for another, "two hearts beating each to each"—in short, Love with a capital L.

A great many love poems have become popular favorites, and many of these are included in this collection, along with a few interesting, unfamiliar ones.

The poems are roughly grouped according to attitudes toward and stages of love. Opening the collection, we have Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Andrew Marvell, and others reminding us that the time for love is now, today: "Time will not be ours for ever, / He at length, our good will sever."

Next we have many interesting definitions of love from Sir Walter Raleigh, Samuel Daniel, Blake, Robert Browning, Shelley, and Keats. Everyone has his own definition of love, and you will find almost all of them

here: "that fountain and that well," "a sunshine mix'd with rain," "a thing that creeps," "a sickness full of woes," "Summer redundant,/Blueness abundant," "a doll dress'd up."

Following these are several poems in which a lovesick wooer entreats some cruel person to end his or her heartache. Some are not so desperate, as in Christopher Marlowe's inviting poem "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love."

Once the lovers have been united, we have many poets singing the joys of love and singing the praises of their loved ones: Tennyson, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Byron, Whitman, Wordsworth, and many others. In contrast to Edgar Allan Poe's lofty tribute "To Helen" is Andrew Lang's poem "To Helen," a terrific bowler.

Some loves are like evergreens, but some bloom and fade with the seasons. Farewells are difficult, but they can at least be done with style, as expressed here by Byron, Shelley, and others. For those who can survive the rough times, the rewards are sometimes great. Emerson, Wordsworth, Anne Bradstreet, and Robert Browning are among those who think so.

With the last few poems in the book, we sail away from earth into the shadowy realm of dreams and the poignant, empty world of separated lovers. Christina Rossetti, John Donne, and Matthew Arnold are among those who offer glimpses into the sometimes painful, sometimes comforting dreams of lovers.

Most everyone will agree that love will always make the world go round. From biblical times to the early 1900s, the poems here show that Love with a capital L has not changed over the centuries.

CARY WILKINS



O MISTRESS MINE

from *Twelfth Night*



O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O, stay and hear! your true-love's coming
That can sing both high and low;
Trip no further, pretty sweeting,
Journeys end in lovers' meeting, —
Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 't is not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure:
In delay there lies no plenty, —
Then come kiss me, Sweet-and-twenty,
Youth 's a stuff will not endure.

William Shakespeare

SONG: TO CELIA



Come, my Celia, let us prove,
While we may, the sports of love;
Time will not be ours for ever,
He, at length, our good will sever.
Spend not then his gifts in vain.
Suns, that set, may rise again:
But, if once we loose this light,
'T is, with us, perpetual night.
Why should we defer our joys?
Fame, and rumour are but toys.
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poor household spies?
Or his easier ears beguile,
So removed by our wile?
'T is no sin, love's fruit to steal,
But the sweet theft to reveal:
To be taken, to be seen,
These have crimes accounted been.

Ben Jonson

TO HIS COY MISTRESS



Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.

Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Should'st rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews;
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near,
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song: then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,

Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chaped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife,
Thorough the iron gates of life;
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

Andrew Marvell

TO THE VIRGINS
TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME



Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles today,
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the Sun,
The higher he's a-getting
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times, still succeed the former.