

**THE PALL MALL GAZETTE
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ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF VERSE.

**"The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse"
Chosen by Arthur Quiller-Couch.
(Oxford: Clarendon Press.) 6s. net.**

Anthologies may serve two purposes, or one or two. They may be a criticism for the experienced, a saving of money and trouble to the less experienced. But a good anthology must always be in some degree a criticism, both by offering an epitome of the whole and by bringing into significant juxtaposition specimens of this and that quality. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's selection from Victorian poetry is one of the better sort of anthologies. It is not merely a thousand pages of the best poems written by men and women who were born or died or flourished under Victoria, from Landor to Mr. Rupert Brooke. If it were, probably Tennyson and Browning would occupy more than twenty pages apiece. It aims at representing as many kinds of poem and author as possible by the best of their kind. The number of authors exceeds two hundred and fifty. Of these a quarter are still living, and they include some whose first work has only just been published.

I have noticed few serious omissions. If a passage could be taken from Bailey's "Festus" at least one might have been taken from Mr. Charles M. Doughty's "Dawn in Britain," or "Adam Cast Forth," or "The Cliffs." Something from Messrs. A. E. Houseman, Ralph Hodgson, Vivian Locke Ellis, and Charles Dalmon, was essential. Mr. John Gray, Father Tabb, and Mr. P. H. Lulham, should not have been overlooked. **No lover of the undulating variety of mankind would intentionally have omitted Mr. Aleister Crowley,** or Mr. Alfred Williams, or Mr. Alfred Cochrane. Several of those included do not make as good a display as they might. Thus Mr. W. H. Davies has six poems which suggest that he has only one note. Mr. Walter de la Mare, again, has only two poems: his first two volumes of verse being neglected altogether in favour of "The Listeners."

Imperfections in so great a task were inevitable. The wonder is that Sir Arthur, who is Mid-Victorian by origin, should

have extended such generosity to the younger generations at the same time that he was under the spell of the universally dead. Had he been perfectly free I have no doubt he would have done still better. He would have given us, for example, more than two pieces by Mr. Sturge Moore, a poet whom he must have introduced to many by his appreciation in the "Daily News" seven or eight years ago. Perhaps he would have given us less of Tennyson. But he was handicapped by the necessity of making his anthology a safe one, and still more by being committed to a volume as large as its predecessor, although that was chosen from the whole of English poetry. The present one admits American and Colonial poetry. The editor has felt obliged to find a place for many things which everybody has read before, and has had a chance of re-reading in his "Oxford Book of English Verse." There is, however, enough here of the second-rate to satiate the most elect.

The result is something too large. It is too large and confusing to be just, and not quite large or recondite enough to be exhaustive. It is not a pageant, nor yet a representative assembly, but a motely and disordered multitude. Not a page of it is uninteresting: hardly a page but has something on it either singular or excellent or typical. The greatest merit is that the names of Oxford and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch will now recommend for perhaps the first time to popular notice poets who have too long been private property, and many Edwardian and Georgian poets who have swarmed in over the editor's boundaries. The best way to praise the book is to mention some of these later names—Lascelles Abercrombie, Belloc, Binyon, Gordon Bottomley, Mrs. Cornford, Lord Alfred Douglas, "Michael Field," W. W. Gibson, Newbolt, Noyes, Pound, Ernest Rhys, "A. E.," Symons, Mrs. Rachel Annand Taylor, Trench, and Yeats. Meredith, Davidson, Henley, Stevenson, Lang, Symonds, Amy Levy, J. M. Synge, and Mr. Hardy are also represented. It is a book which probably no one could ever master. If it ceased to offer surprises a man might count himself old. In appearance it is unexceptional, save that in my copy the poems by Mr. Newbolt have suffered a troublesome derangement.