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MYSTERY BOOKS.

Occasionally—at intervals far too long, alas!—there reaches the sad groaning tables of reviewers a little volume whose charm and distinction brings with it the freshness and surprise of a May Queen dancing into a committee meeting of frowsy kill-joys or a jolly young Bacchus raiding the headquarters of the Pussy-foots. There have only been five of these occasional volumes, including a sort of distant relative which, being outside the series, I do not mention here. They come modestly into the world, receive a really notable appreciation from some of our few discriminating reviewers, and pass, no less modestly, into, I imagine, the goodly company of books kept by our connoisseurs.

For modesty is the one natural raiment of these volumes. The title-pages bear the imprint "The Vine Press, Steyning," which is just sufficient to tell you whence, in Sussex, you may secure copies. Indeed, beyond that, in none of them except the "distant relation" and the fifth shall you find any clue as to authorship or editorship. On the other hand, you will not need to look over many pages to find verses of perfect and captivating tune—idylls that make the pipes of Pan flute again over the years that are still. Much of the verse is the work of a poet who can express himself in a fine lyric measure, of one who is steeped in folklore, and of one who can distil the golden classics not merely as a translator but as a creative artist; the remaining verse, some of it little known and precious, is by poets with similar qualities, the selection showing a very extensive sympathetic knowledge.

The first of these volumes was *Lillygay*, an anthology of anonymous poems which a writer in an early November Number of *The Bookman's Journal* hailed as "a benediction of a book—a book eternal" in whose pages the reader might "recapture lost May Days and lost pay-days." Nest, a year later, appeared the anonymous *Swift Wings: Songs in Sussex*, containing some rich melodies which more than maintained the promise of the original work in the previous volume and au-

gured well for the future. *Songs of the Groves*, the successor (1921), was in some ways a more ambitious work, in which the author, still veiling himself, in achieving some finer moments in his songs and translations frequently ran the full course of his unrestrained themes of Arcadian loves and passions. The latest volume is *Larkspur: A Lyric Garland*, by various hands.

These books are issued in certified ordinary editions of 550 copies, each numbered, printed on antique laid paper, for a few shillings each; with editions de-luxe limited to 40 copies on handmade paper, the woodcut decorations hand-coloured, numbered and signed. There is a very individual note in the production of these books, and though they offer points for typographical criticism, the founts of type used and the arrangement are in effective harmony with the verse. The woodcuts, variously by Eric and Percy West, are crude (though better in some of the later examples), but there is character in them which makes their very crudeness delightful. Altogether, one feels in handling the volumes that they have been dreamed over, and planned, and dreamed over again: they are instinct with the spirit of the verse of the Dedication in *Larkspur*—

So to the Rose of Beauty,
The Heart in each Star impearled,
Is sung the Artist's duty,
The Poet's love for his world.

As for *Larkspur*, the recent publication of which is the occasion for the above notes, this book is a departure from the previous ones in the series. An anthology, the poems—with the exception of the Dedication, Prologue, Epilogue and Colophon—are this time ascribed, the "contributors" being given as Tom D'Urfey, John Norris, Robert Greene, Dr. James Smith, John Keats, Chrystopher Crayne, Aphra Behn, Edward Moore, Paul Pentreath, Nicholas Udall, William Drummond, Edmond Waller, Harold Stevens, Laurence Edwards, Arthur French, and Nicholas Pyne. Now, there are some names here that we know well enough; but there are others for which we may search the British Museum until we tread on our beards without ever tracing the authors and their alluring lines. I would fain pursue this matter now, but I leave it until I have more space and liberty.

Keats? I wonder how many lovers of Keats know a five-stanza poem credited to him, "Sharing Eve's Apple," whose last verse is:—

There's a sigh for yes, and a sigh for no,
And a sigh of I can't bear it!
O what can be done, shall we stay or run?
O cut the sweet apple and share it.

Larkspur, with its known and unknown singers, is a book to transport the reader to the woods and their spirits

Rose-leaves rustle
And poppy-leaves fall;
Oak-boughs tussle
And rude rooks brawl

And to far-off things which are the best things and near enough for those who sing with "The Amorous Shepherdess" (by Christopher Crayne)

O come my deare! Thy Love is here,
And waits the silver straines
Of thy sweete Pipe
Nowe Sprynge is rype,
Come with the firste new Raines.

There is no better recommendation than to say that *Larkspur* will go with its predecessors to join the goodly company of books sought by those who delight in these "Songs of ripe-lipped love and of honey-coloured laughter: old lamps for new: ancient lights."