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REVIEWS.

The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse. Chosen by D.H.S. Nicholson and A.H.E. Lee. Oxford: The Clarendon Press. Pp. 644. Price 6s. net (India Paper, 7s. 6d.)

Innumerable are the sins of omission and commission that are laid, with or without justice, at the doors of compilers of anthologies. Every critical faculty the reader possesses is on the alert, and if he is an ardent poetry-lover, he hunts through the pages like a tiger searching for its prey. The compilers of this new and very welcome Oxford book will not escape lightly, for they have provided the lover of mystical poetry with some severe shocks—tempered, be it said, by some pleasant surprises. Nothing, however, can blind us to the fact that but a scanty page and a half is devoted to Christina Rossetti; that Alfred Noyes has ten pages, Shelley only five, James Rhoades and Bliss Carman eleven each, and William Sharpe but two and a half. Some unknown writers, whose work scarcely seems to reach the level necessary for inclusion in a standard volume of this kind, are copiously quoted, while William Watson, Thomas Hardy, R.L. Stevenson, James Elroy Flecker, and John Freeman are altogether omitted, though there is not one of these who has not written poems “containing intimations of a consciousness wider and deeper than the normal”—to quote the words in which the compilers themselves explain what has guided them in their choice. Again, Herbert Trench, author of some of the finest poetry in a deeply mystical vein, is quite inadequately represented, and, while there are three poems by the Indian poetess, Sarojini Naidu, there is not one by Rabindranath Tagore! This is an omission which indeed causes a gasp of dismay. Readers of the OCCULT REVIEW will, however, find many names that are familiar to them—notable those of A.E. Waite, Nora Chesson, Aleister Crowley, G.M. Hort, and Eva Gore-Booth—and the religious poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are well represented. But there are translations available of mystical passages from the ancient Welsh and Gaelic which might well have been included, in addition to the short extract from the bard Amergin with which the anthology opens.

But, havening now allowed "carping criticism" its fling, let us give thanks for the treasure here spread before our eyes. It has been said that England has given the world nine-tenths of its poetry, and though that may be an exaggerated claim, it certainly is impossible to look through any good English anthology without a feeling of pride in the noble inheritance that the years have handed down. To this pride is added—after reading, for instance, such poems as Francis Thomson's "Hound of Heaven," Henry Vaughan's "Eternity," Swinburne's "Hertha," to mention only three of the gems contained in these pages—a glow of satisfaction in the thought that a nation so often accused of hopeless materialism has yet produced so great a volume of poetry of a purely spiritual nature—poetry that expresses a deep, abiding consciousness of the unseen worlds where dwells that peace which man, for all his struggling, "did not make and cannot mar."