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Oxford Book of English Verse. Palgrave had Tennyson as his adviser. Q's counsellor was the adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic, who has given herself so prodigally but never to the Philistines; the beautiful city, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of the century, so serene; the Oxford of Newman, Arnold, Jowett, Pater. Palgrave begins with Tom Nashe and ends with Sam Rogers, although a later hand added to the garland a coronal of Tennyson, Browning, Mr. O'Shaughnessy and Mr. Swinburne. The Oxford Book opens with the last enchantments of the Middle Age and reaches the Recessional of Rudyard Kipling. A quarter of Q's space is devoted to the Victorians.

And now, since a generation has sprung up that knows not Tennyson, a generation that demands more of the poet's head than of his heart, Messrs. Gollancz have had the intelligent idea of presenting us with a third anthology, of appointing a world sharer in the triumvirate, who will repair omissions and interpret modern taste. Their choice fell wisely enough upon the recent editor of Gerard Manley Hopkins, the author of *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, one who would not wish poetic reasonableness to be more sweet than tough, Mr. Charles Williams. Conscious of his high office and loath to be dubbed a Lepidus, Mr. Williams has enlisted the service of three lieutenants: the author of *The Stricken Deer*, who has an understanding of the nineteenth century rare at the present time; Professor Ernest de Selincourt, who has done so much for one of the two sublime egoists of English poetry, and Dr. Tillyard, who has done even more for the other. These are respected names and with their support Mr. Williams emerges no Lepidus, but an Octavius Caesar. "Be a child o' the time," says Shakespeare's Antony whom we love. "Possess it, I make answer," retorts the boy Caesar whom we unwillingly admire. The two mighty opposites are summed and distinguished in a dozen words. The same gulf divides the gaiety and feeling of the Oxford Book with all its faults from the correctness and intelligence of the *New Book of English Verse*. Where Palgrave and Q were satisfied to delight, Mr. Williams is not unwilling to instruct. It is a neo-classic age and Eliot is the Dryden, the Arnold, *de nos jours*.

The prime condition of the new anthology was that it should contain no poem to be found in either of its famous predecessors. From that condition, as I think, certain consequences must follow: and the chief of these is that it must be essentially the same kind of book as the other two. It must reinforce and amplify and bring their selections up to date. Mr. Williams appears to have thought otherwise. Palgrave's intention is clearly expressed in his title and Q tells us that the numbers chosen are either lyrical or epigrammatic. "Indeed I am mistaken," he adds, "if a single epigram included fails to preserve at least some faint thrill of the emotion through which it had to pass before the Muse's lips let it fall, with however exquisite deliberation. But the lyrical spirit is volatile and notoriously hard to bind with definitions; and seems to grow wilder with the years." But whereas Palgrave and Q, like Herrick's maidens,

With wicker arks did come
To kiss and bear away
The richer cowslips home,

Mr. Williams has rooted up some shrubs and hewn down the branches of some forest trees. *The New Book of English Verse* is more concerned with the epic and dramatic than the lyrical. We find here satire and didactic verse. This does not mean that it is not good anthology; nearly all anthologies are good and such an editorial board as this must claim our respect; but an anthology which includes passages from the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, from the plays of Shakespeare, Jonson, Tourneur, from *The Essay on Man*, *The Prelude*, *The Task*, *The Vision of Judgment*, *The Prophetic Books*, and the blank verse of Ebenezer Jones cannot be thought to have anything whatever to do with the Oxford Book and the Golden Treasury. The excellent intention of Messrs. Gollancz remains unfulfilled.

Were there perhaps too few cowslips to make a bunch? The Elizabethan and the Romantic meadow had been very fully gathered. Seventeenth-century lyric on the other hand had much to give and the Victorian pieces had not been too happily chosen. Palgrave and the Oxford Book assign Rossetti no more than *The Blessed Damsel*. Mr. Williams might well have allowed Hopkins more than six pages and Hardy more than three brief pieces. He is able to repair a serious miss in the eighteenth century with the inclusion of Swift's *Verses on his own Death*, but was Collins's *Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands of*

Scotland considered? It would at least have called the editor's attention to the line

Round the moist marge of each cold Hebrid isle
and prevented a mis-statement in the notes. The notes indeed are not very necessary. The comments are desultory, the style involved. "I have eschewed notes," wrote Q in his Preface, "reluctantly when some obscure passage or allusion seemed to ask for a timely word; with more equanimity when the temptation was to criticise or 'appreciate.' For the function of the anthologist includes criticising in silence." Mr. Williams yields to temptation very readily.

Had it proved that insufficient lyrical and elegiac material of value remained, the editors might have taken Q's hint, who included Milton's *Invocation to Light*, and strengthened their book with passages, not too many or too long, from the *Faery Queen*; with *Tintern Abbey* and the close of *Solrab and Rustum*, and several other of Mr. Williams's choices. But such licence needs to be exercised with moderation and taste. As it is, the anthology before us, well-printed, fairly priced and not without interest, must not claim kinship with the friend of Lord Tennyson, or with the author of *The Art of Reading*.

GEORGE RYLANDS

A WILDERNESS TRANSFORMED

Four Hedges. By CLARE LEIGHTON. Gollancz. 10s. 6d.

English love and appetite for gardening grows so speedily and so big that I like to visualise a Utopia in which wars are made impossible by horticulture, in which man will have much time for flowers and none for fighting: in which, in fact, a man might say and also be upheld: "Damn your war. I've got my onions to sow." In such a happy constitution Miss Clare Leighton would hold high social rank, decorated with orders of merit for sensible things like art and onion-sowing, instead of the pomposities for which men are now laden with empty orders and tin-can medallions. For who is to say whether seed-sowing is not as good a thing and even as profitable a thing, as the jiggery-pokery of stocks and shares? Or that a war against worms is not as good a thing, and even as profitable a thing, as a war against man?—since, whichever way you have it, the worms win in the end.

But these are gloomy thoughts with which to begin a recommendation of a book from which gloom is entirely absent. *Four Hedges* is the happiest of books, about the happiest of gardens. Tired of the autocracy of Robinson, weary of the colour-and-form sermons of Miss Jekyll, I turn with relief to Miss Leighton's book, much as one might turn from Milton to Herrick. Miss Leighton's garden is on the Chilterns, on those charming but chalk-earthen slopes which are so pleasant to see but so hellish to cultivate. All Miss Leighton's soil has long since been washed down to the Oxfordshire vale, leaving her with a fork's depth of dirty flour which looks dark and normal only during and after rain. "One might," says Miss Leighton, "be hacking at the cliffs of Dover." So the book is virtually the story of the transformation of a wilderness. Four years before the time of her writing, these four hedges contained only "rough meadowland, housing only larks and field-mice." To-day Miss Leighton has the garden of at least some of her dreams, and we in turn the record of it.

It is a record made precious by Miss Leighton's own illustrations. Already well known as a wood-engraver in arresting if rather wooden style, she comes completely into her own with seeds and flowers, in a medium where she might easily have been more wooden still. Good though her prose is, and there are times when it is unexpectedly good, her pictures, delightful in craft and feeling, are still better: dark-candled wild arums, a sitting blackbird, silk-podded beans, auriculas, poppy-seeds, mouth-gaping nestlings, cowslips, even Brussel sprouts, all are tenderly but never sentimentally done, with an authentic but always imaginative touch. Authors dream of such illustrations. Colour alone could have bettered them. In compensation, there is colour enough in the prose. Prose about flowers is like verse about flowers, which in turn is like the little girl; when good, it is very good; when bad, God help us. Thankfully, Miss Leighton's is admirable.

Altogether, then, a delightful book. Not that any gardener will learn anything from it. But what matter? Enough for once to meet someone who gardens and writes about it for nothing but love.

H. E. BATES