

declaring the Bolsheviki outlaws. We were much cheered thereby, and the Russian prisoners were delighted. Chicherin's impertinent reply to this note was also printed in this paper. At the end of four weeks, the members of the Consulate and the officers, seventeen in all, were liberated, and, while glad for their sakes, we were a little depressed for our own. Three more weeks passed drearily by, and in the meantime my health had broken down. I had an attack of bronchitis, brought on by the damp and cold, my nerves gave way, and my heart was affected, as the result of the trying conditions under which I was arrested and the ordeal of expecting to be shot.

On Sunday, October the 20th, at midday, just as I was having a bite of food, I heard my name sung out by the guard on watch in the corridor, who ordered me to dress at once and collect

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my things together. My preparations took me no more than two minutes, and with beating heart and nerves at breaking point I followed the guard to the commandant's office. After waiting two and a half hours, I was given a document, the order of release. I staggered under my burden of bundles through the Fortress gateway, and as for fifty days I had not seen the sky nor enjoyed the fresh air, I was overcome. Faint and weary from weakness, I stumbled along, with head nearly bursting from the effects of the fresh air. I made my way home, ten miles away, where I utterly broke down. I felt that I required a quiet rest and a sojourn in England, a land of real liberty and freedom; and I pray God she may be kept from the blighting and monstrous inhumanities, the murders and robberies of the travesty of a system known as Bolshevism, which is really Socialism run mad.

## VICTORIAN POETRY

BY LAURENCE BINYON

I MET the other day a young Frenchman who, after serving with the army, had been studying English literature; and he brimmed over with enthusiastic wonder at the inexhaustible fountain of poetry which for hundreds of years has flowed from the heart of this nation and never seems to fail. He seemed to be in a state of perpetual stupefaction before this phenomenon, and, like other foreigners, was the more struck because we pass for a race distinguished by our lack of imagination.

However it is to be explained, the fact is there. The bull-dog breed and the British Empire may pass away; but English poetry will always be remembered. The new volume of *The English Poets*, edited by Mr. Humphry Ward, is a reminder, if one were needed, of the continuity and rich abundance of the stream. It opens with Browning, Arnold, and Tennyson, and closes with the trumpet-notes of Rupert Brooke's last sonnets. It may be remembered that the original edi-

tion ended with Rossetti. Later, the fourth volume was fattened, in order to include selections from Tennyson and others who died since the first edition came out. Now the fourth volume has been reduced to its original size, and the appendix to it has been expanded to a fifth volume by selections from poets who died in the intervening period, up to the present year. By the accident of their earlier death, Rossetti and several others, like Mrs. Browning, Emily Brontë, and Clough, are thus separated from their true contemporaries; but this fifth volume, with these exceptions, represents fairly enough the flower of Victorian poetry.

To bring such a book as this up to date is, of course, something of an adventure. It is easy even for fine judges to be deceived about contemporaries, and a book which claims a permanent place for writers of the most recent day is apt to include pages which a future time will wonder at. If Mr. Ward errs, it is rather on the other side, the side of prudence. His omissions are more likely to be criticized than his inclusions. The *Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, which it is interesting to compare with this volume, both for the choice of authors and the choice of poems, is certainly over-weighted with too much verse of merely respectable quality; the standard here is higher. If Mr. Ward has been anywhere over-liberal, it is in the space given to prose writers who wrote verse; George Eliot is an instance. Some of this space might have been saved for specimens from poets who are not likely to be read in complete editions, but are of genuine interest. There are a number of such in the earlier volumes, and many must have been grateful for the pleasure they had in discovering through those selections these *minora sidera*: the great names are in no danger of being forgotten and

neglected. Among the Earlier Victorians, Darley deserves equal station with Beddoes, if only for his obscure but gorgeous *Nepenthe*. Two boys of wonderful promise who died very young — Dolben and Oliver Madox Brown — might have had a page. I should have liked to see something from the *Wild Honey* of Michael Field, who did not only write poetic dramas; and since there is a section of humorous verse, why not have had Samuel Butler's *Psalm of Montreal*? Other names that occur to me are more doubtful; but Oscar Wilde, languid and imitative as most of his verse was, deserved selection; and among the poets of the present day it would hardly have been rash to accord a page to Sorley. Still more regrettable is the absence of Flecker; indeed, his exclusion, whether from inadvertence or design, is a real injustice to a poet of much more genuine quality (to say the least) than some of those included. Each of us has his own quarrel with every anthologist. When Southey, in the fourth volume, is given twenty-one pages, it seems hardly proportionate to allow Francis Thompson only seven — no more space than is given to Andrew Lang, less than is accorded to Adam Lindsay Gordon, less than half the pages filled (very pleasantly) by Stevenson. And some of Thompson's most beautiful pieces are missing.

But when all is said, this is a fascinating volume; and the whole work, a delight in youth to many of us in its original form, stands out among collections of the kind by its high standard of selection and by the high interest of the critical introductions. To have Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, and Pater, to name no others, as collaborators, was indeed a happy fortune; and some of the introductions are classics in themselves. Mr. Gosse, who has contributed to all the volumes, is

at his best in the latest, writing congenially on Swinburne and on Patmore. Here, as we said, is the flower of Victorian poetry. How does it impress us? What do we feel about it on the threshold of 1919? Each reader can but speak for himself. I tried the experiment of reading the book straight through and trying to keep an innocent mind, as if one were reading the pages for the first time. Impossible, of course, to succeed in such an object, where so much was long familiar; yet even to make the attempt was interesting, for one does not often have such an opportunity for fresh and close comparison. Victorian poetry has not the same appeal to the present time as the poetry of the opening nineteenth century, when, as now, vast convulsions in the world engendered vast aspirations; nor do the greatest of the Victorians scale the heights of the greatest of their immediate predecessors. Fame is an unconscious conspiracy between certain men and their public; and in the Victorian era, with few exceptions, the great men of their time happened to find an intimately responsive public. Tennyson satisfied his own time so completely that one could not expect him to satisfy any succeeding time in the same degree. Browning, who found his public with so much more difficulty, grasps our hands to-day more firmly, because, as Mrs. Woods in her admirable essay points out, he has the power of 'singing straight from the heart,' and still more because he is fearlessly truthful in his presentation of human nature. How rich, how alive he is! He brought new material into poetry; among his contemporaries he is the great pioneer.

Browning, Arnold, Tennyson make a splendid opening to the volume; and Arnold gains, of course, in that the greater range and abundance of the other two cannot be fully displayed. But for one reader, at any rate, it must

be added also that the poetic quality of Tennyson's famous *Morte d'Arthur* seemed decidedly inferior to Arnold's *Death of Sohrab*. Time has not dulled the charm of Tennyson's early masterpieces nor the noble harmonies of the Wellington ode, nor the lyrical vigor of the *Revenge*; but pieces like *Tithonus*, weary with their mannered ornateness, and the admired *Farewell of Arthur*, from *Guinevere*, stirs in many readers of to-day a really cordial antipathy. It is a pity that Tennyson was so ill-served by his introducer, Sir Richard Jebb, who wrote in that vein of absolute adulation, common to most Victorian critics, which has done so much to provoke inevitable reaction; and he was not very fortunate in his selection. Instead of the exquisite *Mariana* poems and the fiercely passionate *Fatima*, we have pages of *Eleanore*; and how heartily one agrees with Fitzgerald, who said that this and its like 'always were and are and must be a nuisance'! Great figure as Tennyson is, there is a lack of elemental power in his imagination; he seems to represent something closed and perfected, rather than something still germinating and challenging to the mind. Even his applauded beauty of form turns out often to be less a beauty of structure than of finish. Free criticism can only serve his real fame. Wonderful, indeed, was his range of melody, hardly surpassed even by Swinburne, the most dazzling figure of the second great flowering-time of the period. In Swinburne also there is a lack of touch with the present generation; he seems to be singing his radiant songs in a world somewhere apart. He perfected his instrument; no one could go further on those lines; he has had no followers.

And just now, perhaps, we turn with quickest appreciation to poets less complete in themselves who still, as artists or thinkers, point a path and

indicate new horizons. In the whole volume nothing seemed to me finer, nothing so 'contemporary' as Meredith's Ode on France in 1870, and that not alone for its appositeness of subject, but because its teeming energy of thought seems still to be brimming over, it has not exhausted itself in its expression; and also we breathe a European, not an insular, atmosphere, and that (except for Arnold) is too rare in the Victorians. Would that Meredith had oftener shown the sense of form that for once distinguishes this magnificent ode! It is a misfortune that Dante Rossetti is missing from the mid-Victorian group; but Christina is here to charm with her native singing notes; and there is the much less known R. W. Dixon, whose *Ode on Advancing Age* is strangely impressive; and Patmore, lofty but narrow; and William Morris, who is richly represented.

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Morris's theory that poetry was a jolly kind of craft, like weaving, made for a happy narrative, and how rare is that art in our poetry! Yet is not *Mother and Son* (passionate, beautiful poem!) more memorable even than the *Earthly Paradise*? I have already outrun my space, though there is so much more to say. Time is sifting and revaluing the Victorians, like their predecessors; and a good deal of what most impressed its own time has a waning hold on us to-day. But whatever detractions are made, it is a period astonishing in its abundance and variety of achievement, the less known poets, as Mr. Ward's volume shows, contributing much of original effort to enrich that impression. The Georgians, with all their promise and ambition, will need to apply their powers with a full measure of the once-scoffed-at Victorian 'earnestness' to attain a comparable result.

## A LOST VILLAGE

BY W. H. HUDSON

THE apple has not come to its perfection this season until the middle of May; even here, in this West country, the very home of the spirit of the apple tree! Now, it is, or seems, all the more beautiful because of its lateness and of an April of snow and sleet and east winds, the bitter feeling of which is hardly yet out of our blood. If I ever recover the images of all the flowering apple trees I have ever looked delightedly at, adding those pictured by poets and painters, including that one beneath which Fiametta is standing

forever, with that fresh glad face almost too beautiful for earth, looking out as from a pink and white cloud of the multitudinous blossoms—if I could see all that I could not find a match for one of the trees of to-day. It is like nothing on earth, unless we say that, indescribable in its loveliness, it is like all other sights in Nature which wake in us a sense of the supernatural.

Undoubtedly the apple trees seem more beautiful to us than all other blossoming trees, in all lands we have