

A CENTURY of

HUMOROUS VERSE

1813

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POETRY

Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side

A CENTURY OF
HUMOROUS VERSE
1850-1950

EDITED BY
ROGER LANCELYN GREEN
M.A., B.LITT.



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PREFACE

TO BE GAY is almost a lost form of the literary art,' wrote Andrew Lang in 1907, and the reiteration of some such statement in every period must be my excuse for the shortcomings of present volume.

Any anthology must suffer to a greater or less extent from social taste and prejudice, and a collection of humorous verse is particularly liable to be marked by the taste of its editor. Humour has a dimension beyond criticism: it is possible, for example, to acknowledge the fact that *The Wrong Box* and *Three Men in a Boat* are masterpieces of humour—but to be amused by one and bored by the other.

In the *Century of Humorous Verse* from 1850 to 1950 I have found the most amusement in the middle of the period, and least towards the end. This does not, however, come amiss, for the object of the present volume is to include representative works of the acknowledged masters of humorous verse (accompanied by a sprinkling of more personal choices)—and naturally few temporary writers have yet qualified for the distinctions which we hand unhesitatingly to Lear, Lewis Carroll, W. S. Gilbert, or Calverley, though some are drawing near to the class which such writers as Godley, Seaman, Quiller-Couch, and Iloc have already taken a permanent place.

The main object being to include the most famous verse writers and their best-known poems, no excuse is needed for the priority of items in this volume. Among the giants, Lewis Carroll and Lear are not, however, represented by their most famous verses—which may already be found in other volumes of myman's Library; but Gilbert and Calverley, since this is their only appearance, by as many as seemed possible without overweighting my anthology.

While a number of the authors and poems were inevitable, the reading over the period—aided greatly by *Punch*, which covers the whole of it—has added many names and sets of verses which may be new to the majority of readers. Several writers, such as Du Maurier, Andrew Lang, F. Anstey, St John Hankin, and Patrick Barrington, have demanded an unexpectedly large allowance of space, and may one day be classed as major writers of humorous verse; while several poems by writers quite unknown, or known for utterly different kinds of writing, have demanded a place with equal insistency—though often no other poem by the author in question could be considered for an instant.

Laugh with the Giant Mirth-makers and
Satirists, the gentle Pun-makers, Lyrical
Limerickists and Completers . . . from a carefree
yesterday. . . .

' F. Anstey '	Oliver Wendell Holmes
Patrick Barrington	Tom Hood
Henry Charles Beeching	A. E. Housman
Hilaire Belloc	Dean Inge
Arnold Bennett	Rudyard Kipling
John Betjeman	Ronald Knox
' Lewis Carroll '	Edward Lear
G. K. Chesterton	E. V. Lucas
Noel Coward	A. A. Milne
Walter De La Mare	Ogden Nash
T. S. Eliot	Barry Pain
John Galsworthy	James Payn
Charles Graves	Thomas Love Peacock
George Robey, etc., etc.	



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