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*THE AUGUSTAN BOOKS OF
MODERN POETRY*

ROBERT
BRIDGES

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The Augustan Books of Poetry
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ROBERT BRIDGES

Robert Seymour Bridges, born 1844, in Kent; educated at Eton and Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Practised as a physician, in "Barfs," in the Children's Hospital, and the Great Northern Hospital, retiring in 1882. Poet Laureate, July, 1913.

The publishers acknowledge the great generosity with which Mr. Bridges has given, and Mr. John Murray, Mr. Humphrey Milford and Messrs. Heinemann have sanctioned, so large a selection. It is a generosity which few poets could afford; but Mr. Bridges can show a larger body of first-rate lyrical work, flawless in inspiration and in technique, than any other English poet. Lovers of his work will complain of the absence from this book of many favourites; but poems that are the regular spoil of the anthologist have been deliberately passed over, except for a few that could not be omitted. Those who are dissatisfied can get, at a ridiculously cheap price, the poems that they miss, along with many others of equal excellence, in Mr. Humphrey Milford's edition.

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ROBERT BRIDGES

Open for Me the Gates of Delight

OPEN for me the gates of delight,
The gates of the garden of man's desire;
Where spirits touch'd by heavenly fire
Have planted the trees of life.—
Their branches in beauty are spread.
Their fruit divine
To the nations is given for bread,
And crush'd into wine.

To thee, O man, the sun his truth hath given,
The moon hath whisper'd in love her silvery dreams;
Night hath unlockt the starry heaven,
The sea the trust of his streams:
And the rapture of woodland spring
Is stay'd in its flying;
And Death cannot sting
Its beauty undying.

Fear and Pity disentwine
Their aching beams in colours fine;
Pain and woe forgo their might.
After darkness thy leaping sight,
After dumbness thy dancing sound,
After fainting thy heavenly flight,
After sorrow thy pleasure crown'd:
O enter the garden of thy delight,
Thy solace is found.

Dejection

WHEREFORE to-night so full of care,
My soul, revolving hopeless strife,
Pointing at hindrance, and the bare
Painful escapes of fitful life?

Shaping the doom that may befall
By precedent of terror past:
By love dishonoured, and the call
Of friendship slighted at the last ?

By treasured names, the little store
That memory out of wreck could save
Of loving hearts, that gone before
Call their old comrade to the grave ?

O soul, be patient: thou shalt find
A little matter mend all this;
Some strain of music to thy mind,
Some praise for skill not spent amiss.

Again shall pleasure overflow
Thy cup with sweetness, thou shalt taste
Nothing but sweetness, and shalt grow
Half sad for sweetness run to waste.

O happy life! I hear thee sing,
O rare delight of mortal stuff!
I praise my days for all they bring,
Yet are they only not enough.

/ have Loved Flowers

I HAVE loved flowers that fade,
Within whose magic tents
Rich hues have marriage made
With sweet unmemoried scents:
A honeymoon delight,—
A joy of love at sight,
That ages in an hour:—
My song be like a flower!

I have loved airs, that die
Before their charm is writ
Along a liquid sky
Trembling to welcome it.
Notes, that with pulse of fire
Proclaim the spirit's desire,
Then die, and are nowhere: —
My song be like an air!

Die, song, die like a breath,
And wither as a bloom:
Fear not a flowery death,
Dread not an airy tomb!
Fly with delight, fly hence!
'Twas thine love's tender sense
To feast; now on thy bier
Beauty shall shed a tear.

London Snow

WHEN men were all asleep the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying.

Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:

Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;
Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.

All night it fell, and when full inches seven
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,
The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;

And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness
Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare:
The eye marvelled—marvelled at the dazzling whiteness;

The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air;
No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,
And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.

Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling,
They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze
Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snowballing;
Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees;
Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,
" O look at the trees!" they cried, " O look at the trees!"

With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder,
Following along the white deserted way,
A country company long dispersed asunder:

When now already the sun, in pale display
Standing by Paul's high dome, spread forth below
His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of the day.

For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow;
And trains of sombre men, past tale of number,
Tread long brown paths, as toward their toil they go:

But even for them awhile no cares encumber
Their minds diverted; the daily word is unspoken,
The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber

At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the
charm they have broken.

Thou didst Delight

THOU didst delight my eyes:
Yet who am I? nor first
Nor last nor best, that durst
Once dream of thee for prize;
Nor this the only time
Thou shalt set love to rhyme.

Thou didst delight my ear :
Ah! little praise; thy voice

Makes other hearts rejoice.
Makes all ears glad that hear;
And short my joy: but yet,
O song, do not forget.

For what wert thou to me?
How shall I say? The moon,
That poured her midnight noon
Upon his wrecking sea;—
A sail, that for a day
Has cheered the castaway.

Awake, my Heart

AWAKE, my heart, to be loved, awake, awake!
The darkness silvers away, the morn doth break,
It leaps in the sky: unrisen lustres slake
The o'ertaken moon. Awake, O heart, awake!

She too that loveth awaketh and hopes for thee;
Her eyes already have sped the shades that flee,
Already they watch the path thy feet shall take:
Awake, O heart, to be loved, awake, awake!

And if thou tarry from her,—if this could be,—
She cometh herself, O heart, to be loved, to thee;
For thee would unashamed herself forsake:
Awake to be loved, my heart, awake, awake!

Awake, the land is scattered with light, and see.
Uncanopied sleep is flying from field and tree:
And blossoming boughs of April in laughter shake;
Awake, O heart, to be loved, awake, awake!

Lo all things wake and tarry and look for thee:
She looketh and saith, " O sun, now bring him to me.
Come more adored, O adored, for his coming's sake.
And awake my heart to be loved: awake, awake!"

/ Love all Beauteous Things

I LOVE all beauteous things,
I seek and adore them;
God hath no better praise,
And man in his hasty days
Is honoured for them.

I too will something make
And joy in the making;
Altho⁵ to-morrow it seem
Like the empty words of a dream
Remembered on waking.

The Clouds

THE clouds have left the sky,
The wind hath left the sea,
The half-moon up on high
Shrinketh her face of dree.

She lightens on the comb
Of leaden waves, that roar
And thrust their hurried foam
Up on the dusky shore.

Behind the western bars
The shrouded day retreats,

And unperceived the stars
Steal to their sovran seats.

And 'whiter grows the foam,
The small moon lightens more;
And as I turn me home,
My shadow walks before.

The Windmill

THE green corn waving in the dale,
The ripe grass waving on the hill :
I lean across the paddock pale
And gaze upon the giddy mill.

Its hurtling sails a mighty sweep
Cut thro' the air: with rushing sound
Each strikes in fury down the steep,
Rattles, and whirls in chase around.

Beside his sacks the miller stands
On high within the open door:
A book and pencil in his hands,
His grist and meal he reckoneth o'er.

His tireless merry slave the wind
Is busy with his work to-day:
From whencesoe'er, he comes to grind;
He hath a will and knows the way.

He gives the creaking sails a spin,
The circling millstones faster flee,
The shuddering timbers groan within,
And down the shoot the meal runs free.

The miller giveth him no thanks,
And doth not much his work o'erlook:
He stands beside the sacks, and ranks
The figures in his dusty book.

Angel Spirits of Sleep

ANGEL spirits of sleep,
White-robed, with silver hair,
In your meadows fair,
Where the willows weep,
And the sad moonbeam
On the gliding stream
Writes her scattered dream:

Angel spirits of sleep,
Dancing to the weir
In the hollow roar
Of its waters deep;
Know ye how men say
That ye haunt no more
Isle and grassy shore
With your moonlit play;
That ye dance not here,
White-robed spirits of sleep,
All the summer night
Threading dances light?

The Palm Willow

SEE, whirling snow sprinkles the starved fields,
The birds have stayed to sing;
No covert yet their fairy harbour yields.
When cometh Spring?
Ah! in their tiny throats what songs unborn
Are quenched each morn.

The lenten lilies, through the frost that push,
 Their yellow heads withhold:
The woodland willow stands a lonely bush
 Of nebulous gold;
There the Spring-goddess cowers in faint attire
 Of frightened fire.

/ Never shall Love the Snow

I NEVER shall love the snow again
Since Maurice died:
With corniced drift it blocked the lane
And sheeted in a desolate plain
 The country side.

The trees with silvery rime bedight
 Their branches bare.
By day no sun appeared; by night
The hidden moon shed thievish light
 In the misty air.

We fed the birds that flew around
 In flocks to be fed:
No shelter in holly or brake they found.
The speckled thrush on the frozen ground
 Lay frozen and dead.

We skated on stream and pond; we cut
 The crinching snow
To Doric temple or Arctic hut;
We laughed and sang at nightfall, shut
 By the fireside glow.

Yet grudged we our keen delights before
 Maurice should come.

We said, In-door or out-of-door
We shall love life for a month or more,
 When he is home.

They brought him home; 'twas two days late
 For Christmas Day:
Wrapped in white, in solemn state,
A flower in his hand, all still and straight
 Our Maurice lay.

And two days ere the year outgave
 We laid him low.
The best of us truly were not brave,
When we laid Maurice down in his grave
 Under the snow.

Larks

WHAT voice of gladness, hark!
In heaven is ringing?
From the sad fields the lark
Is upward winging. -

High through the mournful mist that blots our day
Their songs betray them soaring in the grey.
 See them! Nay, they
In sunlight swim; above the furthest stain
Of cloud attain; their hearts in music rain
 Upon the plain.

Sweet birds, far out of sight
Your songs of pleasure
Dome us with joy as bright
As heaven's best azure.

Nightingales

BEAUTIFUL must be the mountains whence ye
come.

And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams, wherefrom
Ye learn your song :

Where are those starry woods ? O might I wander there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air
Bloom the year long!

Nay, barren are those mountains and spent the streams:
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our dreams,
A throe of the heart,

Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound,
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As night is withdrawn

From these sweet-springing meads and bursting boughs of
May,
Dream, while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.

Weep not To-day

WEEP not to-day: why should this sadness be ?
Learn in present fears
To o'ermaster those tears
That unhindered conquer thee.

Think on thy past valour, thy future praise :
Up, sad heart, nor faint
In ungracious complaint,
Or a prayer for better days.

Daily thy life shortens, the grave's dark peace
Draweth surely nigh,
When good-night is good-bye;
For the sleeping shall not cease.

Fight, to be found fighting: nor far away
Deem, nor strange thy doom.
Like this sorrow 'twill come,
And the day will be to-day.

The Fair Brass

AN effigy of brass
Trodden by careless feet
Of worshippers that pass;
Beautiful and complete,

Lieth in the sombre aisle
Of this old church unwreckt,
And still from modern style
Shielded by kind neglect.

It shows a warrior arm'd :
Across his iron breast
His hands by death are charm'd
To leave his sword at rest,

Wherewith he led his men
O'ersea, and smote to hell
The astonisht Saracen,
Nor doubted he did well.

Would we could teach our sons
His trust in face of doom,
Or give our bravest ones
A comparable tomb:

Such as to look on shrives
The heart of half its care;
So in each line survives
The spirit that made it fair;

So fair the characters.
With which the dusty scroll.
That tells his title, stirs
A requiem for his soul.

Yet dearer far to me,
And brave as he are they,
Who fight by land and sea
For England at this day;

Whose vile memorials,
In mournful marbles gilt,
Deface the beauteous walls
By growing glory built:

Heirs of our antique shrines,
Sires of our future fame,
Whose starry honour shines
In many a noble name

Across the deathful days,
Link'd in the brotherhood
That loves our country's praise,
And lives for heavenly good.

The Hill Pines

THE hill pines were sighing,
O'ercast and chill was the day:
A mist in the valley lying
Blotted the pleasant May.

But deep in the glen's bosom
Summer slept in the fire
Of the odorous gorse-blossom
And the hot scent of the brier.

A ribald cuckoo clamoured.
And out of the copse the stroke
Of the iron axe that hammered
The iron heart of the oak.

Anon a sound appalling,
As a hundred years of pride
Crashed, in the silence falling:
And the shadowy pine-trees sighed.

My Spirit

MY spirit kisseth thine,
My spirit embraceth thee:
I feel thy being twine
Her graces over me,

In the life-kindling fold
Of God's breath; where on high,
In furthest space untold
Like a lost world I lie:

And o'er my dreaming plains
Lightens, most pale and fair,
A moon that never wanes;
Or more, if I compare,

Like what the shepherd sees
On late mid-winter dawns,
When thro' the branched trees,
O'er the white-frosted lawns,

The huge unclouded sun,
Surprising the world whist,
Is all uprisen thereon,
Golden with melting mist.

In Still Midsummer Night

IN still midsummer night
When the moon is late
And the stars all watery and white
For her coming wait,

A spirit, whose eyes are possest
By wonder new,
Passeth—her arms upon her breast
Enwrapt from the dew

In a raiment of azure fold
With diaper
Of flower'd embroidery of gold
Bestarr'd with silver.

The daisy folk are awake
Their carpet to spread,
And the thron'd stars gazing on her make
Fresh crowns for her head,

Netted in her floating hair
As she drifteth free
Between the starriness of the air
And the starry lea,

From the silent-shadow'd vale
By the west wind drawn
Aloft to melt into the pale
Moonrise of dawn.

Winter Nightfall

THE day begins to droop,—
Its course is done:
But nothing tells the place
Of the setting sun.

The hazy darkness deepens,
And up the lane
You may hear, but cannot see.
The homing wain.

An engine pants and hums
In the farm hard by:
Its lowering smoke is lost
In the lowering sky.

The soaking branches drip.
And all night through
The dropping will not cease
In the avenue.

A tall man there in the house
Must keep his chair:
He knows he will never again
Breathe the spring air:

His heart is worn with work;
He is giddy and sick
If he rise to go as far
As the nearest rick:

He thinks of his morn of life,
His hale, strong years;
And braves as he may the night
Of darkness and tears.

Rejoice, ye Dead

REJOICE, ye dead, where'er your spirits dwell,
Rejoice that yet on earth your fame is bright;
And that your names, remember'd day and night,
Live on the lips of those that love you well.
'Tis ye that conquered have the powers of hell,
Each with the special grace of your delight:
Ye are the world's creators, and thro' might
Of everlasting love ye did excel.

Now ye are starry names, above the storm
And war of Time and nature's endless wrong
Ye flit, in pictured truth and peaceful form,
Wing'd with bright music and melodious song,—
The flaming flowers of heaven, making May-dance
In dear Imagination's rich pleasance.

Johannes Milton (Senex)

Scazons

SINCE I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Man's Maker and Judge, Overruler of Fortune,
'Twere strange should I praise anything and refuse
Him praise,
Should love the creature forgetting the Creator,
Nor unto Him^v in suff'ring and sorrow turn me :
Nay how could I withdraw me from His embracing ?

But since that I have seen not, and cannot know Him,
Nor in my earthly temple apprehend rightly
His wisdom and the heav'nly purpose Sternal;
Therefore will I be bound to no studied system

Nor argument, nor with delusion enslave me,
Nor seek to pledge Him in any foolish invention,
Which my spirit within me, that loveth beauty
And hateth evil, hath reprov'd as unworthy:

But I cherish my freedom in loving service,
Gratefully adoring for delight beyond asking
Or thinking, and in hours of anguish and darkness
Confiding always on^v His excellent greatness.

January

COLD is the winter day, misty and dark:
The sunless sky with faded gleams is rent:
And patches of thin snow outlying, mark
The landscape with a drear disfigurement.

The trees their mournful branches lift aloft:
The oak with knotty twigs is full of trust,
With bud-thronged bough the cherry in the croft;
The chestnut holds her gluey knops upthrust.

No birds sing, but the starling chaps his bill
And chatters mockingly; the newborn lambs
Within their strawbuilt fold beneath the hill
Answer with plaintive cry their bleating dams.

Their voices melt in welcome dreams of spring,
Green grass and leafy trees and sunny skies:
My fancy decks the woods, the thrushes sing,
Meadows are gay, bees hum and scents arise.

And God the Maker doth my heart grow bold
To praise for wintry works not understood,
Who all the worlds and ages doth behold,
Evil and good as one, and all as good.

A Winters Night

A WINTER'S night with the snow about:
'Twas silent within and cold without :
Both father and mother to bed were gone :
The son sat yet by the fire alone.

He gazed on the fire, and dreamed again
Of one that was now no more among men :
As still he sat and never aware
How close was the spirit beside his chair.

Nay, sad were his thoughts, for he wept and said
Ah, woe for the dead! ah, woe for the dead!
How heavy the earth lies now on her breast,
The lips that I kissed, and the hand I pressed.

The spirit he saw not, he could not hear
The comforting word she spake in his ear :
His heart in the grave with her mouldering clay
No welcome gave—and she fled away.

Noel: Christmas Eve, 1913

Pax hominibus bone voluntatis

A FROSTY Christmas Eve
when the stars were shining
Forth I fared alone
 where westward falls the hill.
And from many a village
 in the watered valley
Distant music reach'd me,
 peals of bells aringing.
The constellated sounds
 ran sprinkling- on earth's floor

As the dark vault above
with stars was spangled o'er.

Then sped my thought to keep
that first Christmas of all
When the shepherds watching
by their folds ere the dawn
Heard music in the fields
and marveling could not tell
Whether it were angels
or the bright stars singing.

Now, blessed be the tow'rs
that crown England so fair,
That stand up strong in prayer
unto God for our souls:
Blessed be their founders
(said I) an' our country folk
Who are ringing for Christ
in the belfries to-night
With arms lifted to clutch
the rattling ropes that race
Into the dark above
and the mad romping din.

But to me heard afar
it was starry music,
Angels' song comforting
as the comfort of Christ
When he spake tenderly
to his sorrowful flock:
The old words came to me
by the riches of time
Mellow'd and transfigured
as I stood on the hill
Heark'ning in the aspect
of th' eternal silence.

Nimium Fortunatus

I HAVE lain in the sun,
I have toil'd as I might,
I have thought as I would,
And now it is night.

My bed full of sleep,
My heart of content
For friends that I met
The way that I went.

I welcome fatigue
While frenzy and care
Like thin summer clouds
Go melting in air.

To dream as I may
And awake when I will
With the song of the birds
And the sun on the hill.

Or death—were it death—
To what should I wake
Who loved in my home
All life for its sake ?

What good have I wrought ?
I laugh to have learned
That joy cannot come
Unless it be earned;

For a happier lot
Than God giveth me
It never hath been
Nor ever shall be.

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