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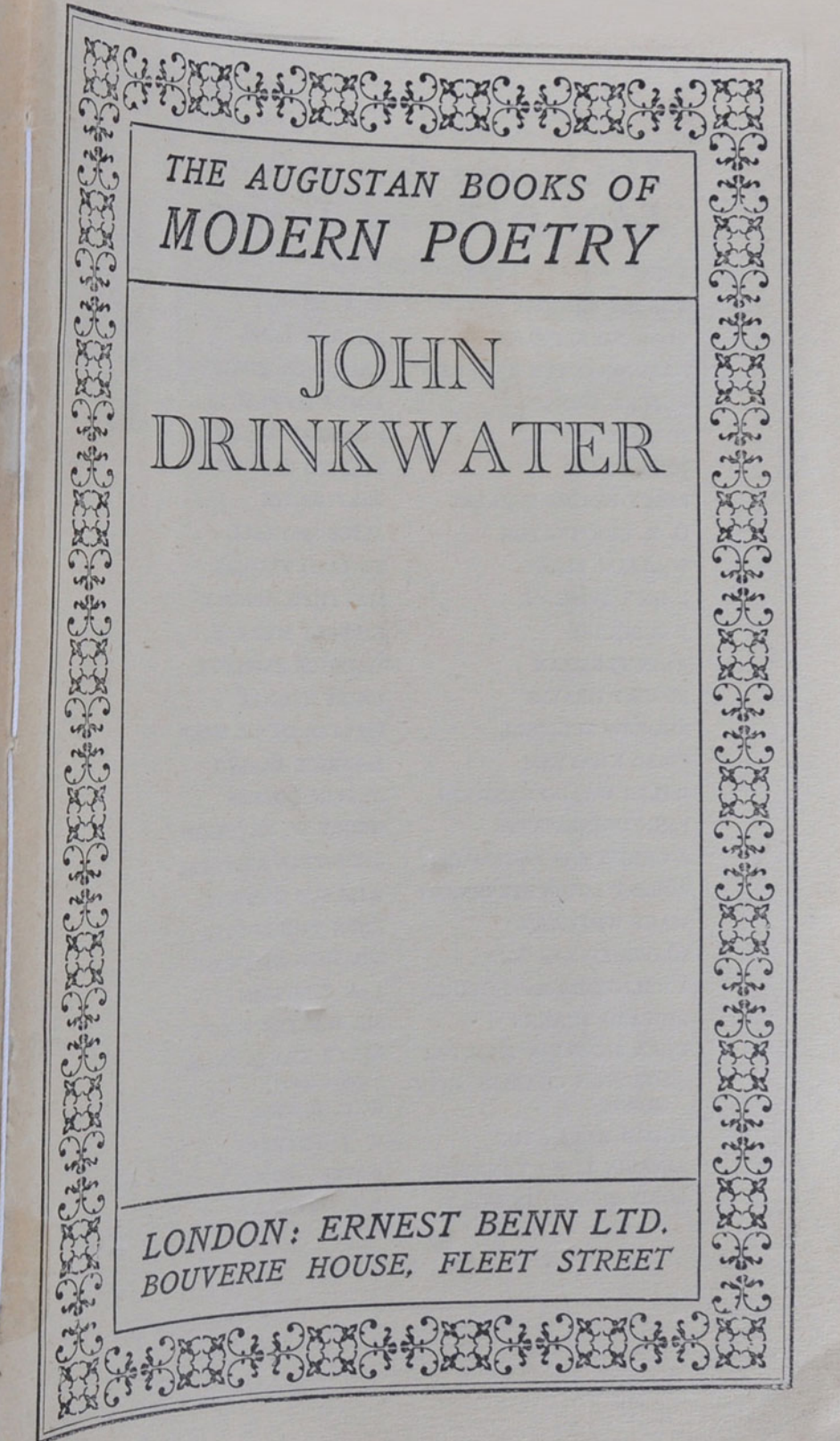
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JOHN DRINKWATER

Born 1882, educated at Oxford High School; co-founder of the Pilgrim Players, which developed into the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

Thanks are due to Mr. Drinkwater's publishers, Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., for permission to print this selection, the poet's own.

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Mystery

THINK not that mystery has place
In the obscure and veiled face,
Or when the midnight watches are
Unaccompanied of moon or star,
Or where the fields and forests lie
Enfolded from the loving eye
By fogs rebellious to the sun,
Or when the poet's rhymes are spun
From dreams that even in his own
Imagining are half-unknown.

These are not mystery, but mere
Conditions that deny the clear
Reality that lies behind
The weak, unspeculative mind,
Behind contagions of the air
And screens of beauty everywhere,
The brooding and tormented sky,
The hesitation of an eye.

Look rather when the landscapes glow
Through crystal distances as though
The forty shires of England spread
Into one vision harvested,
Or when the moonlit waters lie
In silver cold lucidity;
Those countenances search that bear
Witness to very character,
And listen to the song that weighs
A life's adventure in a phrase—
These are the founts of wonder, these
The plainer miracles to please
The brain that reads the world aright;
Here is the mystery of light.

Deer

SHY in their herding dwell the fallow deer.
They are spirits of wild sense. Nobody near
Comes upon their pastures. There a life they live,
Of sufficient beauty, phantom, fugitive,
Treading as in jungles free leopards do,
Printless as evelight, instant as dew.
The great kine are patient, and home-coming sheep
Know our bidding. The fallow deer keep
Delicate and far their counsels wild,
Never to be folded reconciled
To the spoiling hand as the poor flocks are;
Lightfoot, and swift, and unfamiliar,
These you may not hinder, unconfined
Beautiful flocks of the mind.

Birthright

LORD RAMESES of Egypt sighed
Because a summer evening passed;
And little Ariadne cried
That summer fancy fell at last
To dust; and young Verona died
When beauty's hour was overcast.

Theirs was the bitterness we know
Because the clouds of hawthorn keep
So short a state, and kisses go
To tombs unfathomably deep,
While Rameses and Romeo
And little Ariadne sleep.

Mamble

I NEVER went to Mamble
That lies above the Teme,
So I wonder who's in Mamble,
And whether people seem
Who breed and brew along there
As lazy as the name,
And whether any song there
Sets alehouse wits aflame.

The finger-post says Mamble,
And that is all I know
Of the narrow road to Mamble,
And should I turn and go
To that place of lazy token
That lies above the Teme,
There might be a Mamble broken
That was lissom in a dream.

So leave the road to Mamble
And take another road
To as good a place as Mamble
Be it lazy as a toad;
Who travels Worcester county
Takes any place that comes
When April tosses bounty
To the cherries and the plums.

Cotswold Love

BLUE skies are over Cotswold
And April snows go by,
The lasses turn their ribbons
For April's in the sky,
And April is the season
When Sabbath girls are dressed,
From Rodboro' to Campden,
In all their silken best.

An ankle is a marvel
When first the buds are brown,
And not a lass but knows it
From Stow to Gloucester town.
And not a girl goes walking
Along the Cotswold lanes
But knows men's eyes in April
Are quicker than their brains.

It's little that it matters,
So long as you're alive,
If you're eighteen in April,
Or rising sixty-five,
When April comes to Amberley
With skies of April blue,
And Cotswold girls are bridging
With slyly tilted shoe.

Blackbird

HE comes on chosen evenings,
My blackbird bountiful, and sings
Over the gardens of the town
Just at the hour the sun goes down.
His flight across the chimneys thick,
By some divine arithmetic,
Comes to his customary stack,
And couches there his plumage black,
And there he lifts his yellow bill,
Kindled against the sunset, till
These suburbs are like Dymock woods
Where music has her solitudes,
And while he mocks the winter's wrong
Rapt on his pinnacle of song,
Figured above our garden plots
Those are celestial chimney-pots.

Reciprocity

I DO not think that skies and meadows are
Moral, or that the fixture of a star
Comes of a quiet spirit, or that trees
Have wisdom in their windless silences.
Yet these are things invested in my mood
With constancy, and peace, and fortitude,
That in my troubled season I can cry
Upon the wide composure of the sky,
And envy fields, and wish that I might be
As little daunted as a star or tree.

The Vagabond

I KNOW the pools where the grayling rise,
I know the trees where the filberts fall,
I know the woods where the red fox lies,
 The twisted elms where the brown owls call.
And I've seldom a shilling to call my own,
 And there's never a girl I'd marry,
I thank the Lord I'm a rolling stone
 With never a care to carry.

I talk to the stars as they come and go
 On every night from July to June,
I'm free of the speech of the winds that blow,
 And I know what weather will sing what tune.
I sow no seed and I pay no rent,
 And I thank no man for his bounties,
But I've a treasure that's never spent,
 I'm lord of a dozen counties.

Immortality

I

WHEN other beauty governs other lips,
And snowdrops come to strange and happy
springs,
When seas renewed bear yet unbuilted ships,
And alien hearts know all familiar things,
When frosty nights bring comrades to enjoy
Sweet hours at hearths where we no longer sit,
When Liverpool is one with dusty Troy,
And London famed as Attica for wit . . .
How shall it be with you, and you, and you,
How with us all who have gone greatly here
In friendship, making some delight, some true
Song in the dark, some story against fear?
Shall song still walk with love, and life be brave,
And we, who were all these, be but the grave?

II

No; lovers yet shall tell the nightingale
Sometimes a song that we of old time made,
And gossips gathered at the twilight ale
Shall say, "Those two were friends," or, "Unafraid
Of bitter thought were those because they loved
Better than most." And sometimes shall be told
How one, who died in his young beauty, moved,
As Astrophel, those English hearts of old.
And the new seas shall take the new ships home
Telling how yet the Dymock orchards stand,
And you shall walk with Julius at Rome,
And Paul shall be my fellow in the Strand;
There in the midst of all those words shall be
Our names, our ghosts, our immortality.

II

Written at Ludlow Castle

(In the Hall where "Comus" was first performed)

WHERE wall and sill and broken window-frame
Are bright with flowers unroofed against the
skies,

And nothing but the nesting jackdaws' cries
Breaks the hushed even, once imperial came
The muse that moved transfiguring the name
Of Puritan, and beautiful and wise
The verses fell, forespeaking Paradise,
And poetry set all this hall aflame.

Now silence has come down upon the place
Where life and song so wonderfully went,
And the mole's afoot now where that passion rang,
Yet Comus now first moves his laurelled pace,
For song and life for ever are unspent,
And they are more than ghosts who lived and sang.

Rupert Brooke

(Died April 23, 1915)

TO-DAY I have talked with old Euripides;
Shakespeare this morning sang for my content
Of chimney-sweepers; through the Carian trees
Comes beating still the nightingales' lament;
The Tabard ales to-day are freshly brewed;
Wordsworth is with me, mounting Loughrigg Fell;
All timeless deaths in Lycid are renewed,
And basils blossom yet for Isabel.

Quick thoughts are these; they do not pass; they gave
Only to death such little, casual things
As are the noteless levies of the grave,—
Sad flesh, weak verse, and idle marketings.
So my mortality for yours complains,
While our immortal fellowship remains.

Distant Music

FAR now from you, dear love, I know
How well you build from bow and strings,
Framing the melodies that flow
From your beloved minstrel kings.

But now the strings are mute, your hands
Are still, the bow is laid aside:
I see you searching out the lands
Whence love beats back to you full-tide.

And standing so you are the birth
Of all the themes that you awake;
Brahms and Beethoven bade the earth
Blossom in music for your sake.

Now falls your phrasing from afar,
Telling how they divined of old—
You cease, and on the moment are
The cause of all that you have told.

Gold

THERE is a castle on a hill,
So far into the sky,
That birds that from the valley-beds
Up to the turrets fly,
Climbing towards the sun can feel
The clouds go tumbling by.

But always far above the clouds
The sun is shining there,
It shines for ever on those walls;
And the great boughs that bear
Harvests of never fading fruit
Are golden everywhere.

Who journeys to that castled crest
Finds, with his journey done,
All ages and all colours in
Cascades of light that run
Over the broad weirs of the air
For ever from the sun.

Two things are silver : flower of plum
When April yet is cold;
And willowed floods that of the moon
Quiet leases hold.
That castle in the sky alone
Of living things is gold.

Between unfathomable blue
And the bright belts of green,
Midway the plains of heaven and earth,
Rock-borne it stands between
Woods and the sky, a golden world
Where only gold is seen.

Old carvers in the stone have cut
Forests and wraths and herds,
And these are gold: the dials tell
The sun in golden words;
The very jackdaws, from the towers
Wheeling, are golden birds.

The minting of the sun is on
The gravel everywhere,
The yellow walls are fleeces washed
In pools of sunny air,
That coming to that castle place
All men are Jasons there.

Trancelike to stand upon that hill
When the deep summer sings,
Gold-clad, gold-hearted, and gold-voiced,
And sings and sings and sings,
Is as to wait a rising world
In flight of golden wings.

And I have walked with love that way,
And on that golden crest
The sun was happy for my love,
For she is golden tressed,
Red gold, that of all golden things
The great sun marks for best.

O golden castle of the sky
Hereafter gold can be
Only your image when the sun
Transfigured her for me,
Till she was golden-clouded Jove,
And I her Danäe.

Hereafter in the chambered night
When linkèd love is told,
One thought shall spare to climb that hill
Into the sunbright fold,
For a great summer noon when love
Was gold, and gold, and gold.

Constancy

THE shadows that companion me
From chronicles and poetry
More constant and substantial are
Than these my men familiar,
Who draw with me uncertain breath
A little while this side of death;
For you, my friend, may fail to keep
To-morrow's tryst, so darkly deep
The motions mutable that give
To flesh its brief prerogative,
And in the pleasant hours we make
Together for devotion's sake,
Always the testament I see
That is our twin mortality.
But those from the recorded page
Keep an eternal pilgrimage.
They steadfastly inhabit here
With no mortality to fear,
And my communion with them
Ails not in the mind's stratagem
Against the sudden blow, the date
That once must fall unfortunate.
They fret not nor persuade, and when
These graduates I entertain,
I grieve not that I too must fall
As you, my friend, to funeral,
But rather find example there
That, when my boughs of time are bare,
And nothing more the body's chance
Governs my careful circumstance,
I shall, upon that later birth,
Walk in immortal fields of earth.

Anthony Crundle

HERE LIES THE BODY OF
ANTHONY CRUNDLE,
FARMER, OF THIS PARISH,
WHO DIED IN 1849 AT THE AGE OF 82.
"HE DELIGHTED IN MUSIC."

R.I.P.

AND OF
SUSAN,
FOR FIFTY-THREE YEARS HIS WIFE,
WHO DIED IN 1860, AGED 86.

ANTHONY CRUNDLE of Dorrington Wood
Played on a piccolo. Lord was he,
For seventy years, of sheaves that stood
Under the perry and cider tree;
Anthony Crundle, R.I.P.

And because he prospered with sickle and scythe,
With cattle afield and labouring ewe,
Anthony was uncommonly blithe,
And played of a night to himself and Sue;
Anthony Crundle, eighty-two.

The earth to till, and a tune to play,
And Susan for fifty years and three,
And Dorrington Wood at the end of day . . .
May Providence do no worse by me;
Anthony Crundle, R.I.P.

Mrs. Willow

MRS. THOMAS WILLOW seems very glum.
Her life, perhaps, is very lonely and hum-drum,
Digging up potatoes, cleaning out the weeds,
Doing the little for a lone woman's needs.
Who was her husband? How long ago?
What does she wonder? What does she know?
Why does she listen over the wall,
Morning and noon-time and twilight and all,
As though forgotten were some footfall?

"Good morning, Mrs. Willow." "Good morning,
sir,"

Is all the conversation I can get from her.
And her path-stones are white as lilies of the wood,
And she washes this and that till she must be very good.
She sends no letters, and no one calls,
And she doesn't go whispering beyond her walls;
Nothing in her garden is secret, I think—
That's all sun-bright with foxglove and pink.
And she doesn't hover round old cupboards and shelves
As old people do who have buried themselves;
She has no late lamps, and she digs all day
And polishes and plants in a common way,
But glum she is, and she listens now and then
For a footfall, a footfall, a footfall again,
And whether it's hope, or whether it's dread,
Or a poor old fancy in her head,
I shall never be told; it will never be said.

A Picture

TWO candles oaken-set upon blue folds,
No other light save the unclouded stars,
Their clusters broken by the scented downs
Massed up above us in the southern sky.
Two candles oaken-set upon blue folds,
Sending their little light along the board
Laid out beneath a honeysuckle hedge
In the cool dusk, with hospitable fare.
Blue folds clear-cut along the table's rim,
Until they meet the delicate blue robe
Of one who sends soft laughter through the hush,
Her face the haunt of clear repose and swift
Ripples of humour, gracious, mellowing.

* * * * *

We shall remember in the barren days
Blue folds and raiment, little oaken lights,
The moth stars flitting through the ghostly dusk,
Fair brow and slender throat and kindly speech,
A hermitage of leaves and shadows, set
In the deep hollow of the Sussex Hills.

For Corin To-day

OLD shepherd in your wattle cote,
I think a thousand years are done
Since first you took your pipe of oat
And piped against the risen sun,
Until his burning lips of gold
Sucked up the drifting scarves of dew
And bade you count your flocks from fold
And set your hurdle stakes anew.

And then as now at noon you'd take
The shadow of delightful trees,
And with good hands of labour break
Your barley bread with dairy cheese,
And with some lusty shepherd mate
Would wind a simple argument,
And bear at night beyond your gate
A loaded wallet of content.

O Corin of the grizzled eye,
A thousand years upon your down
You've seen the ploughing teams go by
Above the bells of Avon's town;
And while there's any wind to blow
Through frozen February nights,
About your lambing pens will go
The glimmer of your lanthorn lights.

Votive

O MOON, swung there immeasurably far,
Yet only in the pear-tree top, how then
Shall we body in thought the beauty that you are—
Your wizardry upon the souls of men?

Hush! Let us say it is the tender light
That falls in silver circumstance and red
Dimly upon the regions of the night,
And saying this how little then is said.

Why should this mute enchantment thus possess
Our hearts in adoration—how should come
This worship of a ghost of quietness,
Of spectral tides that move not and are dumb?

Why do we worship? We are but strays of will,
While the sun takes us. Folded now and far
From the day's light, we are minds possessed and still,
Vision and peace. We worship what we are.

The Common Lot

WHEN youth and summertime are gone,
And age puts quiet garlands on,
And in the speculative eye
The fires of emulation die,
But as to-day our time shall be
Trembling upon eternity,
While, still inconstant in debate,
We shall on revelation wait,
And age as youth will daily plan
The sailing of the caravan.

Absence

THIS was a fair land
For the young soul to find,
Whose orchards are renewed
And blossom in the mind.
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,
I dream of England still.

And now this year's primrose
Shines under last year's leaves.
The swallow searches out
Accustomed eaves;
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,
I dream of England still.

Though fresh devices come,
Yet is my custom true;
There my vocation is,
That was my cradle too.
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,
I dream of England still.

Penances

THESE are my happy penances. To make
Beauty without a covenant; to take
Measure of time only because I know
That in death's market-place I still shall owe
Service to beauty that shall not be done;
To know that beauty's doctrine is begun
And makes a close in sacrifice; to find
In beauty's courts the unappeasable mind.

Sampiers

IN praise of love, upon my mind
Sampiers I'll make to be,
As lovers long ago designed
Emblems of courtesy,
Threading in warm and frosty wools
Their wisdom's calendars and rules.

He errs to think those hands were set
All spinster-like and cold,
Who spelt a scarlet alphabet,
And birds of blue and gold,
And made immortal garden-plots
Of daisies and forget-me-nots.

The bodkins wove an even pace,
Yet these are lyrics too,
Breathing of spectral lawn and lace,
Old ardours to renew,
For in the corners love would keep
His fold among the little sheep.

So I will samplers make as well,
Nor shall the colours lack
In shining characters to tell
Your lovely Zodiac,
And all your kisses there and words
Shall spring again as flowers and birds.

Thrift

NO beauty beauty overthrows
But every joy its season knows,
And all enchanted hours prepare
Enchantment for to-morrow's wear.

Who in the just society
That walks with him this hour can see
But shadows of another bliss
Loses both that delight and this.

Grieve not the parting day, for soon
The nightingales will sing the moon
Climbing the track that now the sun
Leaves when the songs of day are done.

And grieve not when her beauty pales,
And silence keeps the nightingales,
For that eclipse again will bring
The sun with all his birds to sing.

Moonlit Apples

AT the top of the house the apples are laid in rows,
And the skylight lets the moonlight in, and those
Apples are deep-sea apples of green. There goes
A cloud on the moon in the autumn night.

A mouse in the wainscot scratches, and scratches, and then
There is no sound at the top of the house of men
Or mice; and the cloud is blown, and the moon again
Dapples the apples with deep-sea light.

They are lying in rows there, under the gloomy beams;
On the sagging floor; they gather the silver streams
Out of the moon, those moonlit apples of dreams,
And quiet is the steep stair under.

In the corridors under there is nothing but sleep.
And stiller than ever on orchard boughs they keep
Tryst with the moon, and deep is the silence, deep
On moon-washed apples of wonder.

At an Earthworks

RINGED high with turf the arena lies,
The neighbouring world unseen, unheard,
Here are but unhorizoned skies,
And on the skies a passing bird,

The conies and a wandering sheep,
The castings of the chambered mole,—
These, and the haunted years that keep
Lost agonies of blood and soul.

They say that in the midnight moon
The ghostly legions gather yet,
And hear a ghostly timbrel-tune,
And see a ghostly combat met.

These are but yeoman's tales. And here
No marvel on the midnight falls,
But starlight marvellously clear,
Being girdled in these shadowy walls.

Yet now strange glooms of ancestry
Creep on me through this morning light,
Some spectral self is seeking me . . .
I will not parley with the night.

To Alice Meynell

I TOO have known my mutinies,
Played with improvident desires,
Gone indolently vain as these
Whose lips from undistinguished choirs
Mock at the music of our sires.

I too have erred in thought. In hours
When needy life forbade me bring
To song the brain's unravished powers,
Then had it been a temperate thing
Loosely to pluck an easy string.

Yet thought has been, poor profligate,
Sin's period. Through dear and long
Obedience I learn to hate
Unhappy lethargies that wrong
The larger loyalties of song.

And you upon your slender reed,
Most exquisitely tuned, have made
For every singing heart a creed.
And I have heard; and I have played
My lonely music unafraid,

Knowing that still a friendly few,
Turning aside from turbulence,
Cherish the difficult phrase, the due
Bridals of disembodied sense
With the new word's magnificence.

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