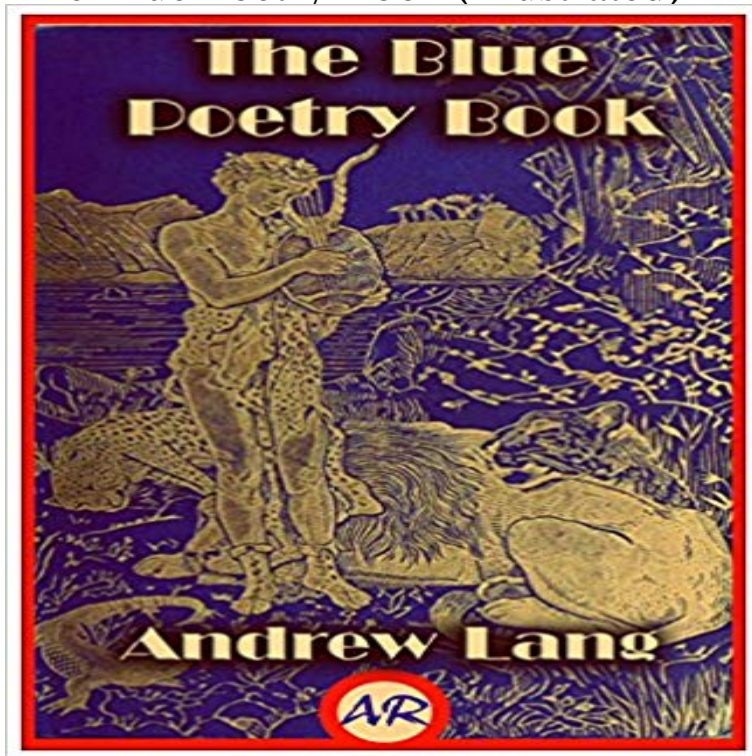


The Blue Poetry Book (Illustrated)



The purpose of this Collection is to put before children, and young people, poems which are good in themselves, and especially fitted to live, as Theocritus says, on the lips of the young. The Editor has been guided to a great extent, in making his choice, by recollections of what particularly pleased himself in youth. As a rule, the beginner in poetry likes what is called objective artverse with a story in it, the more vigorous the story the better. The old ballads satisfy this taste, and the Editor would gladly have added more of them, but for two reasons. First, there are parents who would see harm, where children see none, in Tamlane and Clerk Saunders. Next, there was reason to dread that the volume might become entirely too Scottish. It is certainly a curious thing that, in Mr. Palgrave's Golden Treasury, where some seventy poets are represented, scarcely more than a tenth of the number were born north of Tweed. In this book, however, intended for lads and lassies, the poems by Campbell, by Sir Walter Scott, by Burns, by the Scottish song-writers, and the Scottish minstrels of the ballad, are in an unexpectedly large proportion to the poems by English authors. The Editor believes that this predominance of Northern verse is not due to any exorbitant local patriotism of his own. The singers of the North, for some reason or other, do excel in poems of action and of adventure, or to him they seem to excel. He is acquainted with no modern ballad by a Southern Englishman, setting aside Christabel and the Ancient Mariner poems hardly to be called ballads which equals The Eve of St. John. For spirit-stirring martial strains few Englishmen since Drayton have been rivals of Campbell, of Scott, of Burns, of Hogg with his song of Donald McDonald. Two names, indeed, might be mentioned here: the names of the late Sir Francis Doyle and of Lord Tennyson. But the scheme of this book excludes a choice from contemporary

poets. It is not necessary to dwell on the reasons for this decision. But the Editor believes that some anthologist of the future will find in the poetry of living English authors, or of English authors recently dead, a very considerable garden of that kind of verse which is good both for young and old. To think for a moment of this abundance is to conceive more highly of Victorian poetry. There must still, after all, be youth and mettle in the nation which could produce The Ballad of the Revenge, Lucknow, The Red Thread of Honour, The Loss of the Birkenhead, The Forsaken Merman, How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix, The Pied Piper of Hamelin, and many a song of Charles Kingsleys, not to mention here the work of still later authors. But we only glean the fields of men long dead.

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