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RARE POEMS
OF
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Chosen & Edited by
L. BIRKETT MARSHALL
M.A., PH.D.



CAMBRIDGE
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INTRODUCTION

In his general introduction to the *Minor Poets of the Caroline Period* Mr George Saintsbury wrote:

From the point of view of literary history, and not from that point only, the neglect of minorities is a serious and may be fatal mistake. . . . Every fresh example may, it may almost be asserted that every fresh example does, give the rule with a difference; and by far the larger number of these differences are at least illustrative. From the confinement of the attention to a few examples, however brilliant and famous, come hasty generalisation and insufficient exposition, not seldom downright errors.

By means of this collection of very rare seventeenth-century verse I have tried to give some more worthy and distinctive minor poetry to the English Anthology and to add to our knowledge of what has been, surely, up to the present time, the greatest period of such poetry in our literature.

These poems, about two hundred in number, are a selection made from the numerous verses which I have met with while wandering along the very unfrequented by-paths of the seventeenth century. Very few indeed of them have previously appeared in modern anthologies of the poetry of that period. Yet in almost every case the poems have been chosen for some poetic merit. In no case, I think, can I be accused of selecting a poem merely for some obscure interest.

Most of the poems have come from rare, often hitherto unknown, neglected, printed volumes of poetry. Many of the latter were issued by their authors and have never been reprinted. A number exist in one single copy. But while reading MSS. in the British Museum and the Bodleian

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Libraries I have occasionally found some poems which have been overlooked by collectors and which are, nevertheless, worthy of a reprint. I have also included at the end a few anonymous poems which have never appeared in any modern anthology.

In all poems I have somewhat modernized the punctuation. The spelling of the texts, except for an obvious printer's error, I have left severely alone. In the few obscure passages, of course, there has very infrequently been a choice of reading.

I am deeply indebted to Mr John Drinkwater for introducing me to some of these poets.

L. BIRKETT MARSHALL

*Enfield and
Oxford
October, 1936*