

VICTORIAN POETS.

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# VICTORIAN POETS

REVISED, AND EXTENDED, BY A SUPPLEMENTARY  
CHAPTER, TO THE FIFTIETH YEAR OF THE  
PERIOD UNDER REVIEW

BY

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AUTHOR OF "POETS OF AMERICA"

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PREFACE TO THE THIRTEENTH EDITION.

(1887.)

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THE origin of the book now presented in an enlarged form is given in the Preface to the edition of 1875. While it was an outgrowth, as stated, of a few essays each relating to a single personage, its main value, from the ultimate point of view, consisted first in the statement of what appear to me the true canons of imaginative art, as applied to the office of the poet; again, in studies of the creative temperament derived from sympathetic examination of its possessors; and finally, in a record of the progress of song during a noteworthy period, and of phases reflecting the thought, passion, ideality, of the specified country and age.

Chapters VII and VIII, in which miscellaneous groups were considered, though written as an afterthought, and not possessing the artistic unity of other chapters, proved especially serviceable in the last-named capacity. My gain in comprehension of the general drift was greater than any fancied loss through deviation from an eclectic literary standard. They completed, moreover, the annals of the period, and gave my book a practical if secondary value as a work of reference.

Whether its early welcome at home and abroad, and the favor still vouchsafed to it, have been due to the quality of my argument, or to the need of such a record, or to both together, it is in view of this encouragement, and of the changes incident to the close of the typical Victorian epoch, that I add the supplemental matter which extends our survey to the present year.

This seems the more expedient, because in a later treatise, *Poets of America*, I have applied the same method of criticism, with similar objects in view, to the poets and poetry of my own land. The rise of true poetry here was singularly coincident with that of the Victorian school in Great Britain, and my home-survey applies to the fifty years now ending with the celebration of Her Majesty's prolonged reign. The *Victorian Poets*, as enlarged, and its companion-volume thus proffer a general view of the poetry of our English tongue for the last half-century. The supplement itself, beyond that portion devoted to the afterwork of veteran leaders, is necessarily compressed and inclusive: in other words, is written upon the plan of Chapters VII and VIII, to discover current tendencies and the outlook, and to enhance the reference-value of the entire work.

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After a lapse of time which enables me to examine my original chapters almost as if they were the production of another hand, it would be strange if I did not observe certain portions that would be written differently, with later and perhaps riper judgment, if I were to write them now.