

PREFACE.

WHEN asked to prepare a manual of English poetry, my only hesitation arose from the number and the excellence of the collections which are already in existence. It is not long since the Archbishop of Dublin published his *Household Book of English Poetry*, and the late Mr. Emerson his *Parnassus*; and though more than twenty years have elapsed since the publication of Mr. Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, that little volume is still exceedingly precious to all lovers of Songs and Lyrics.

My hesitation was removed when I considered that the plan here adopted differs in some respects from that which is found in most other selections; and still more when I remembered the deep pleasure which thousands of readers have derived from multitudes of different volumes of the same character with this. In my own school-days it was part of our weekly work to learn by heart a certain amount of English poetry, and an Anthology was put into our hands for this purpose. The book has probably long been out of print, nor had it any very predominant claims to attention. It admitted many poems by writers altogether unknown, or long forgotten; and while it made room for some passages of only tenth-rate excellence it excluded others of the supremest merit. Yet I can testify that the little volume gave no small amount of innocent pleasure to many boys, and that the impressions left by frequent reading of the passages there collected formed a valuable part of my own early education. The practice of learning English poetry by heart in Public Schools is not, I fear, so common as it used to be, but I am quite sure that it would with very small