

ENGLISH, SCOTTISH, AND WELSH LANDSCAPE, 1760-1860. Verse chosen by John Betjeman and Geoffrey Taylor. Lithographs by John Piper. (Muller; 10s. 6d.)

This well-produced anthology offers English scenery in varying moods of climate and season, vignettes of wild flowers and glimpses of the rural life of Old England. These fruits of the leisure of the cultured hall and Rectory in the heyday of the Squirearchy and the family living are presented with the smooth observation of a painting by Constable.

Early selections offer a new slant on a poetical period—the pre-Romantic, which except for Pope and Cowper is usually dismissed as offering little beyond a dreary waste of didactic rhymed prose. The compilers are to be congratulated on having rescued from oblivion typical oases which reward the researcher into the aridities of the Georgian ‘moral endeavour.’ The majority of writers represented are clergymen or Deists even more concerned to read sermons in stones than the clergy. Enough of this appears to give a period flavour but not to deter the daring to continue the excursion into the originals for themselves.

The great names of Pope, Cowper, Crabbe, Wordsworth and Tennyson which crop up in the leisurely journey help to date but do not break the quiet evenness with which the verses flow. Themes are in the main pastoral as befitted an age which increasingly saw Nature in terms of the landscape garden and the water mill.

The book begins an illustrated series which, if the standard is maintained, will be an interesting one. Some may consider the modern mood of Mr. Piper’s lithography incongruous, but the attempted marriage of two arts may be happier in forthcoming volumes.

JANET CLEVES.

BLACKFRIARS

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