

ON VERS DE SOCIETE

In "On Vers De Société," addressed to Mr. Gifted Hopkins, the chapter dissects the art and history of light verse, specifically within societal and courtly contexts. The ancient Greeks and Romans are initially dismissed for their lack of societal structure conducive to the creation of sociable verses, highlighting the absence of women in social equality. The narrative transitions to the emergence of court life in France as the inception point for this style of verse, crediting figures like Charles d'Orleans and poets of "Livre des Cent Ballades" for their contributions. It celebrates the evolution of poetic expression in light verse through to the likes of Clement Marot and Ronsard, culminating in the effusive works of Voiture and Sarrazin.

The discourse shifts to English literature, referencing Mr. Locker's anthology, "Lyra Elegantiarum," to trace the timeline of English sociable verse from Skelton through Sidney to the more familiar territory of Ben Jonson, Carew, and Herrick. Jonson's adaptation from Greek prose and Carew's golden-dusted poetry exemplify the era's inclination towards lightly adorned, musically influenced poetry. The focus on physical beauty and romantic endeavors is distinguished in Herrick's works, presenting a more tangible, fleshed-out vision of love compared to his predecessors and contemporaries.

Suckling's blend of martial swagger and Lovelace's noble expressions of fidelity represent the soldier-poet archetype, merging the pursuits of love and war with lyrical finesse. The author laments the post-Civil War shift in English verse to the more restrained and polished, yet emotionally detached sensibilities of poets such as Pope and the Queen Anne wits, including Prior, whom the author still holds in high esteem for his candidness and charm.

Landor's classical touches are lauded, though Praed's reliance on clever antithesis earns mixed feelings. Thackeray's occasional carelessness in verse is forgiven for the breadth of his humor and tenderness. Among contemporary authors, Mr. Locker and

Mr. Austin Dobson receive praise for their contributions to the tradition of vers de société, marking a continuum of light verse that spans the complexities of societal changes, romantic ideation, and the nuances of human emotion, all while maintaining a playfully engaging and intellectually stimulating demeanor.

