

**THE LOVE POEMS  
OF LOUIS  
BARNAVAL**

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The Love Poems of Louis Barnaval by Charles De Kay

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**CHARLES DE KAY**

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*POEMS BY THE EDITOR*

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o THE LOVE POEMS  
OF  
LOUIS BARNAVAL

*EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION*

BY

CHARLES DE KAY

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NEW YORK  
D. APPLETON & CO.  
LONDON  
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE & RIVINGTON  
1883

TO  
MARIA TERESA DE KERLEREC  
FORMERLY  
MARIA BARNAVAL  
OF  
TENSAS PARISH, LOUISIANA





FEW duties are more delicate and harder to fulfil than a literary trust. It is not easy to draw the line between things sacred to the individual and things the public must know ; and in the end one is tempted to print all there is, just as the manuscript was left. But even then there are gaps to be closed, the intention of the author to be guessed, order and sequence to be introduced in papers, for the arrangement of which only the faintest clews remain.

But suppose personalities have to be protected ; suppose the story must be told and yet the actors screened from publicity ; suppose that she to whom the greater part refers be still alive, and yet her identity is to be jealously guarded ; suppose, finally, the materials are in the shape of verse. A new-comer need expect little grace at a time when the flood of books of verse known and unknown becomes a spring freshet. Yet it is always possible, viewing the large part which the unexpected has played in literature, that the posthumous work of a native singer will be read, partly from curiosity, partly from patriotism, and that judicial minds will not be frightened, if they find the touch that of an amateur rather than a professional poet. It may be that some recognition will reward the editor for his pains,

since a money return is not to be thought of. But there is always satisfaction in dealing with a work from which the money question is absent, and which appeals only to the true lover of art. In justice to the friend whose wishes are now being carried out, these are advised to read no further: Persons who have a natural indifference to verse, persons who affect to slight verse for fear of cheap ridicule, persons who pretend to love it because others do. The first waste time on what they can never hope to understand, the others are shams.

His full name was Louis Barnaval de Kerlerec, but, for obvious reasons, he never used his last name. He had his bread to win in a hard school, and the foreign look of his name was enough to prejudice many business men against its owner. At one time, perhaps a trifle loftily, Louis Barnaval called himself a citizen of Louisiana, and when a mere lad he once fought to disrupt the Union. There met in him the strains of several French families founded at the beginning of the last century in that southern portion of New France which was to join hands with Canada and establish in the Mississippi Valley a great nation to the westward of the English, Dutch, and Swedish colonies of the seaboard—a nation which might furnish France with such magazines of men and supplies as Great Britain appeared to have founded for herself so well and so wisely on the Atlantic coast. Grudgingly supported, betrayed, and at last shamefully sold to Spain, they turned for allies to the most civilized tribes of natives, and although wars and bloody outbreaks occurred, their policy was, on the whole, tolerant

and humane. Anticipating Jean Jacques Rousseau, now and then one who felt keenly the indifference of the home authorities would take a native to wife, especially if she were beautiful and highborn, the alliance a source of strength, the tribe on a grade of civilization higher than is now thought possible to Indians. For to some of them there was a philosophical pleasure in mixing two races that had such opposite virtues and vices as the French and the Indians.

Such a man was a certain M. Barnaval, one of whose ancestors had long before accompanied the Spanish conquerors to South America. Through him the mother of Louis Barnaval is said to have obtained a strong infusion of Natchez blood ; yet her portrait would not lead one to suppose so. There befell greater contrasts of penury and wealth to the planters of French and Spanish stock than to the hard-working colonists of the North. Climate, the enormous wealth of their plantations, Indian and negro slavery with all their enervating results, habits of feudal command and feudal lavishness, were so many hindrances to the handing down of fortunes. The ruin of families was hastened by the attraction of Europe. If Canada was depleted of men of mark and rank because these returned to France as soon as they could, much more was Louisiana stripped of her natural leaders. Madrid used to beggar the conquerors of Mexico and Peru ; Paris devoured the princely estates of Louisiana. So that, in truth, it was no novelty in the family history when Louis Barnaval found his name and lands a drag rather than an aid in the struggle of life. Not a