

**POEMS; IN FOUR
UNIFORM
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Poems; In Four Uniform Volumes, Vol. II by Eliza Cook

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P O E M S

BY

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E L I Z A C O O K.

Be ye glad, or be ye sad,
Come and list my simple song,
For Poet's dreams, though strange it seems,
Can help the weary heart along.
What are the prayers that Poets say ?
Hark ! they are told in the merry lay :
" May Health be ours where'er we go,
May Love abound for high and low,
May Reason shut out feud and foe,
And God have his own good way."

OLD FORM.

IN FOUR UNIFORM VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

FOURTH EDITION.

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PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

“FAMILIARITY breeds contempt,” so runs the old saying, and too often we see it verified; but there is another modification of the ancient saw which implies “Familiarity begets confidence,”—a much pleasanter reading, and well adapted to express my feelings at this moment, when I fancy I am addressing the public as an “auld acquaintance.”

I entertain very little fear in offering a second Collection of Poems to those who have received my first with such flattering welcome. I come to the bar with the greatest respect for my judges' opinion, but with very little dread of their condemnation. This may breathe of vanity; but, like an audacious spoiled child, I do not scruple to impute my faults to the indulgence of those who have spoiled me.

My last volume was an expensive one—in truth so expensive that it could not circulate where I most wish

it to be,—in the hands of those whose spirits may acutely respond to the voice of Song, though their means may preclude an extravagant outlay in gratifying their taste. To insure such circulation, I have arranged that a reprint of the Illustrated Poems shall be speedily issued at a very reduced price, having determined that my writings shall go forth in as cheap a form as can reasonably be effected. I would have them placed within reach of all who honour my poor muse with their admiration, and I shall experience as much pleasure in meeting the plain book on the deal table of the mechanic as in finding myself richly bedight in the boudoirs of the wealthy. I remember seeing a review of my earliest writings where the critic attempted to sneer me down as being “a poet of and for the lower classes.” Short-sighted man of letters! Did he dream of the compliment he paid me? Did he think that he installed me as one of the high priests at the altar of Nature? Surely it is no mean end to lay fast hold on sentiments unwarped by classic learning, and excite sympathy with feelings that live in simple bosoms, deep, strong, and unbiassed.

Where is the scholar of refinement—where the patrician of mental worth, whose innermost soul does not glow at the undying song “A man’s a man for a’ that?” Yet that song was written by a poet “of and for the lower classes,”—a poet whose memory is more truly hallowed by the toiling peasant’s chanting his

noble ballads than by the eloquent tirade that too often "seeks his frailties to disclose."

As regards being "*of the lower classes*," I can but smile at such wise upbraiding. Allan Cunningham was seen bruising his fingers with a stonemason's mallet while exquisite lyrics were haunting his brain. Robert Bloomfield sat in a gloomy garret over a shoemaker's last whilst planning his sweet "Seasons." James Hogg roved in his old shepherd's plaid over the moorlands eating his oaten bannock, and dreaming of "Bonnie Kilmenie." Robert Burns "drove his plough upon the mountain-side," and cast his sweat-gemmed sickle beneath the hot sun, while "immortal song was rife within him." Shakspeare went wandering about with the aristocratic reputation of a poacher, while his soul was fraught with living fires that made his name mighty—not for an age, but "for all time." Milton was "a blind old schoolmaster;" and Chaucer was so illustrious by birth that his true lineage was never known! Poor insignificant varlets these—merely poets "*of the lower classes*." Really the stigma is most degrading; and were it not for the above good company, and a host of other choice spirits to share my disgrace, I might set to and prove that my father descended from Caractacus, and my mother from Boadicea.

I have been told that I write too boldly—that a feminine pen should never have traced such songs as

“The Englishman” and “Old Time.” May I presume to ask those cavillers *why* I should never have written them? Is there aught to be condemned in the composition? Is there a line offensive to national pride or reflective morality? To such narrow-minded grumblers I can only say that I fear the fault lies rather in their weak powers of digestion than in my plain substantial food.

I can only write from my heart, and that heart has been left from infancy to the mercy of its own intense impulses. My rhyming tendency developed itself at a very early age, but the tones of judicious praise or improving censure never met my ear. The advantage of an enlightened, nay even a common education, was denied me, lest Knowledge should only serve to foster Poetry, and make “a sentimental fool” of me. I was left like a wild colt on the fresh and boundless common of Nature to pick up a mouthful of Truth where I could. The woods and forests became my tutors: the rippling stream and bulrush sighing in the wind whispered to me in sweet and gentle breathings: the silver stars in the measureless night-sky, and the bright flowers in my morning path, awoke my wonder, and opened the portals that led to the high and mysterious temple of Thought. God and Creation in all their glory were before my eyes, and as an untaught child I worshipped the Being who had endowed me with power to contemplate his works, and “rejoice therein.”

However, I must not weary with prose, whatever I may do with poetry ; so in conclusion, allow me to say that I am conscious many faults mar my Pegasus, which careful training might have cured ; but extend your mercy, gentle reader, and take him as he is, with the rough coat, and honest, though unpretending qualities of an " Old Dobbin."

