

**SOUTH SONGS:
FROM THE LAYS OF
LATER DAYS**

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South Songs: From the Lays of Later Days by T. C. De Leon

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T. C. DE LEON

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LATER DAYS**

South Songs:

FROM THE

LAYS OF LATER DAYS.

COLLECTED AND EDITED

BY

T. F. DE LEON.

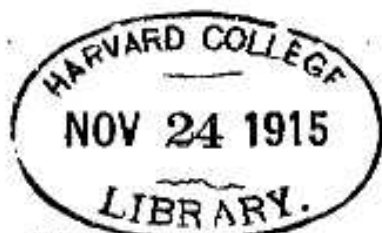


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T. O. DE LEON,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the District of
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TO THE

Women of Richmond,

WHOSE NOBLE SACRIFICES AND UNTIRING EXERTIONS

FOR THE SICK DURING THE WHOLE WAR,

HAVE WRITTEN THEM IN LETTERS OF LOVE,

VERITABLE SISTERS OF MERCY,

This Volume is Inscribed.

P R E F A C E.

A book without a preface is like a salad without salt; but in offering the poems in this volume to the public, I can add little to what they speak for themselves.

The sole object of the collection is to make known a few noble poems that belong rather to the world than to any particular section, and to show those who have read *RUSSAL RHYMES* that

" There's life in the old land yet "

to do higher and better things.

Knowing that the South was surrounded during the war by a Chinese wall, that hid many important points of her *history* even from those beyond it, I was still surprised at the utter ignorance in the North of her having produced any thing like a high order of poetry. This ignorance extended, too, even to those whose principles or sympathies made them peer, with straining eyes, through every possible crevice in the barrier.

It is with diffidence, proportioned to the difficulties that surround it, that I have approached the task. The garland is to be gathered from a field extensive and teeming with a rank luxuriance of growth, that it must often puzzle the analyst to separate from the really valuable.

Little as is known of it, and confined, as it has ever been, to particular cliques, there is yet much latent literature in the South. The terrible friction, however, so long and so roughly applied, brought only the metrical element to the surface.

In prose of all kinds the South stood still, perhaps retrograded; but she

"Lisped in numbers, for the numbers came!"

The thousand tragical incidents and picturesque situations of a war like this offered rare motives to the true poet, and tempting opportunities to the rhymster of low degree.

Magazines, albums, and newspaper corners overflowed with the effusions of these latter, on all subjects, and of all lengths.

But occasionally in a great crisis of the war, or when a heavy calamity bore upon the whole people, some mightier one lifted his voice and spoke words that live. These I have endeavored to preserve in more durable form than the pressure of the times when they were uttered could allow. Some of them were comparatively unknown, even in the South; partly, that grave and absorbing duties of the hour weighed upon the public mind; but more, I imagine, from want of some general medium of circulation.

Many again found their way to the camps, were at once adopted by the soldiers, and became

"Familiar in their mouths as household words."

But, as with the popular poems of most revolutions, these were the "taking" songs of a lower order—ephemera that have lived out the day for which they were born.

In this effort to show the *quality*, and not the *quantity*, of Southern poetry, few even of the most popular of these have been introduced.

Where possible, I have had each poem carefully corrected by its author.

I have been warned that in certain quarters the poems are considered rebellious—incendiary, even—and as tending to re-

vive a bitterness now buried and still. To these irrationals I have no word to say. I ask no favor at their hands, having sufficient confidence in my adopted children to trust them to stand alone.

If poems, born of revolution, bore no marks of the bitter need that crushed them from the hearts of their authors, they would have no value whatever, intrinsic or historical.

The feelings that prompted them live no longer. The South put her cause in the hands of the God of Battles. She has made no murmur since his decree was spoken.

A people who have accepted the inevitable with the dignified quiet of hers, can be taught no wrong by the repetition, in perfect peace, of words spoken to them while yet in the heat of a bitter struggle.

The effect of the war has been to raise the Southern character in the opinion of the North; and the feeling that the South is a conquered province—abject and bound—is fast dying out in the breadth of the land. These poems may aid in this good work; but read at every fireside in the South, they are to-day as harmless as the "*Lays of Ancient Rome*."

Their authors, whatever they may have been, are now simply private citizens. I shall not invade their *sancta* to search for the motives that impelled them. That they wrote honestly, none who read their words can doubt; and I am well content to leave them in the hands of the public, saying only:

"By their works shall ye know them."

T. C. DE L.

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