

**ENGLISH SONGS OF  
ITALIAN FREEDOM,  
PP. 1-209**

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English Songs of Italian Freedom, pp. 1-209 by George Macaulay Trevelyan

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**GEORGE MACAULAY TREVELYAN**

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TO  
JOHN BAILEY

ENGLISH SONGS  
OF ITALIAN FREEDOM

CHOSEN AND ARRANGED  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
GEORGE MACAULAY TREVELYAN

Univ. of  
CALIFORNIA

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I RENDER my best acknowledgments and thanks for permission to use copyright: to Mr. Watts Dunton in the case of the poems of Swinburne; to Messrs. Constable and Company, Limited, London, and Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, in the case of Meredith; to Mrs. Hamilton King in the case of her sonnet on *Garibaldi*, and to her publishers, Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., in the case of the extract from *The Disciples*.

'It is no great matter, supposing that Italy could be liberated, who or what is sacrificed. It is a grand object—the very *poetry* of politics. Only think—a free Italy!!'

Feb. 18, 1821.

BYRON.

'As the sunrise to the night,  
As the north wind to the clouds,  
As the earthquake's fiery flight  
Ruining mountain solitudes ;  
Everlasting Italy,  
Be those hopes and fears on thee.'

SHELLEY.



## INTRODUCTION

THE influence of poetry upon English life is smaller to-day than it was during the first eighty years of the nineteenth century. So little is poetry held in account by those who set the tone of thought and feeling to our generation, that when the Victorian age is condemned as narrow, parochial, and petty, it is scarcely held to be a plea in mitigation that it was the age of the Brownings and Tennyson, of Swinburne and Matthew Arnold, of Macaulay as a ballad-writer, of William Morris and Rossetti, of Carlyle and of Meredith. Nearly all these poets acquired the commanding influence only attained by writers characteristic of the epoch in which they live. It was not a mere accident that the public whom they inspired and represented was drawn during the 'fifties and 'sixties into a national enthusiasm for the cause of Italian freedom, a movement of political opinion as closely connected with literature and poetry as the anti-slavery movement of the previous generation had been connected with evangelical religion. Each of these movements left a deep mark on our social and intellectual life, though each came to a sudden termination on the complete success of the causes advocated, the one

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in 1833 with the liberation of the slaves, the other in 1870 with the final completion of the Italian kingdom.

Like the greater struggle for the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, the English movement in aid of Italian freedom stood a little outside the ordinary lines of party controversy. It deserves the notice of posterity, not so much on account of its importance as a factor in the liberation of Italy—though that was by no means negligible—but because it was England's most characteristic attitude in the mid-nineteenth century, and the 'breath of finer air' to our countrymen during a few years otherwise somewhat torpid in their Palmerstonian self-complacency.

We are too near our own time to compare ourselves judicially with our fathers and grandfathers. But some differences may be noted, without prejudice to either generation. The men who had been nurtured on ancient and modern poetry, and on an ethical and idealist view of history, saw the most interesting event of their time in the renaissance of Italian freedom. They thought it natural that England should lend a hand, or at least a voice, to the right side in that contest. Whereas their descendants, who divide their literary allegiance between Mr. Kipling on the one hand, and Mr. Shaw and the novelists of social change on the other, have banished from their outlook on foreign affairs all virtues and vices but those which are strictly self-regarding, and have taken with unparalleled eagerness to questions concerning the daily life of men and women in our own island.

The Victorian mind is indeed already so remote

## INTRODUCTION

from all the conflicting influences of our own age, that a study of some characteristic piece of Victorian idealism might be suggestive of much. But it is with no such historical or philosophic motive, but in devotion to the Muse of Poetry, that I have beguiled some heavy hours by gathering together these *English Songs of Italian Freedom*. I feel no anxiety about the reception of this little book, for the failure to please others with that which was done to please myself will not disappoint me. The fruits of an idle summer month can only attract fellow-idlers, and idlers, having time to think, are of all mankind the most critical. But if any one is found to approve, it will be on the ground that the placing together of poems inspired by a common theme may, in some sort, reproduce the atmosphere in which they were composed, and so enhance the effect of each; and that a slight service is rendered to lovers of poetry not acquainted with the details of Italian history, by the Introduction and notes in this volume. Swinburne's magnificent *Halt before Rome*, the last uproarious stanzas of Browning's *Old Pictures in Florence*, and many of his wife's best poems, referred to events and persons familiar to all half a century ago, but now very dimly remembered. In such cases I have held that explanations should be adjusted liberally to the needs of the least learned. And if, for every two readers who are annoyed at being told in the notes what they knew before, there is one who is grateful for being 'edified by the margin,' I shall be well content.