

**SONNETS OF JOS?-
MARIA DE HEREDIA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649080052

Sonnets of Jos?-Maria de Heredia by Jos?-Maria de Heredia

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JOS?-MARIA DE HEREDIA

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SONNETS OF

José-Maria de Heredia

Done into English by

Edward Robeson Taylor



SAN FRANCISCO: WILLIAM DOXEY, *at the*
Sign of the LARK . . . M DCCC XCVII

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TO MY FRIENDS
LEVI COOPER LANE AND PAULINE COOK LANE
THESE TRANSLATIONS
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

PREFACE

"Les Trophées" (The Trophies) is a volume of poetry so entitled made up of the one hundred and eighteen sonnets here translated and of other poems with the following titles: "Le Serrement de Mains," "La Revanche de Diego Laynez," "Le Triomphe du Cid," and "Les Conquérants de l'Or."

The sonnets, however, make up much the greater part in quantity as well as in quality of "Les Trophées," and are, indeed, in matter of art quite incomparable and unique—the "central characteristic of these splendid sonnets" being, as Mr. Edmund Gosse says, "their technical perfection. There is nothing loose or ungirt, nothing said vaguely because it would take time and labor to be precise." What the poet designs, to again quote Mr. Gosse, "is no more than a rapid descent of the ages, with here and there a momentary revelation of some highly suggestive and entertaining scene, or incident, or personage, rapidly given and as rapidly withdrawn, but seen for that moment with all the precision and

effulgence possible, so that in the dimness of the grey past this one figure or incident may blaze out like a veritable luminary. For this purpose, everything needless, trifling or accidental, every triviality of expression, every superfluous phrase or image, must be rigidly suppressed. In so sudden and brief a revelation every touch must burn."

José-Maria de Heredia, as Mr. Gosse tells us, is a Cuban by birth and a Frenchman by education, his mother being French, while on his father's side "he is the direct descendant of that Adelantado don Pedro de Heredia, who came to America in the company of the second Admiral Diego Columbus, and who founded Cartagena in the West Indies." It is this ancestor to whom reference is made in the Conquerors series of the sonnets. He was born on the 22d of November, 1842, and is a member of the French Academy. Mr. Gosse devotes an interesting paper to the poet in his "Critical Kit-Kats" which is well worth one's reading. In his opinion, there delivered, Heredia is "beyond all question a great poetic artist and probably the most remarkable now alive in Europe."

In the construction of his sonnets the poet has adhered rigidly to that particular form without which no sonnet can

be said to be good literary art. In every one of them you will find in the octet two quatrains, and in the sestet two tercets, and each will be found to be perfect in itself, with each contributing in due proportion to a determinate artistic unity. He never employs more than two rhymes in the octet, and in every instance, without exception, he rhymes the first, fourth, fifth and eighth lines with each other, and the second, third, sixth and seventh lines with each other. In the sestet he employs (except in a few instances where but two are used) three rhymes, these being distributed in a variety of ways; but in most of the sonnets the arrangement is: a-a-b-c-b-c or a-a-b-c-c-b. He follows the privilege of his Italian model in rhyming words which have the same articulate sound but different meanings, and in fact in one sonnet ("Le Tombeau du Conquérant") we have the rhyme of the octet thus: catalpas, pétale, fatale, pas, trépas, Occidentale, s'étale, pas; and in fact such rhymes occur frequently in his work. This privilege is exercised to a very limited extent by the English and American sonneteer, the genius of the language, perhaps, not lending itself gracefully or at least successfully to it—which, perhaps, may be subject of some

lament, as the English language is not rich in rhyme.

In the versions here presented the form, including the rhyme arrangement, has been rigidly followed. In several of the versions two rhymes have been employed in the sestet instead of the three of the original, but the arrangement of the rhyme is, in these instances, the same as that of the original.

E. R. T.

San Francisco
September 1897.