

**CHRISTMAS-NIGHT
IN THE QUARTERS,
AND OTHER POEMS**

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Christmas-night in the quarters, and other poems by Irwin Russell

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IRWIN RUSSELL

**CHRISTMAS-NIGHT
IN THE QUARTERS,
AND OTHER POEMS**

THE
LITTLE
BLACK
DANCER
BY
K. H. K.



"Balance all!—now, step out rightly"



CHRISTMAS-NIGHT
IN THE QUARTERS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
IRWIN RUSSELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

AND AN HISTORICAL SKETCH BY
MAURICE GARLAND FULTON

ILLUSTRATED BY
E. W. KEMBLE



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EDITOR'S NOTE

In my editorial work on this book, I am chiefly indebted to Miss Mary Elizabeth Russell of Los Angeles, California. She has not only placed at my disposal valuable manuscript material left by her brother, Irwin Russell, but she has furnished important biographical information, thus making it possible to put straight several matters which have been confused in other sketches of the poet.

I am also largely indebted to Mrs. Maggie Williams Musgrove of Port Gibson, Mississippi, who has placed all lovers of Irwin Russell under obligations by her faithfulness in gathering recollections of him from those who knew him personally in his native town. I have derived much help from articles by those who in the past have been interested enough in making the work of Russell better known to write about him. Espe-

EDITOR'S NOTE

cially should I mention several recent articles by Professor Alfred Allen Kern of Millsaps College, Jackson, Mississippi.

Of the new poems appearing in this volume, "The Mocking-Bird," "Summer Idyllers" and "Pot-liquor" are from Russell's unpublished manuscript; "Ships from the Sea" and "Dat Peter" first appeared in local newspapers of the poet's home town; "The Kingdom Gate" and "Uncle Caleb's Views" were found in the files of *The New Orleans Times*; and "A Mississippi Miracle" was printed originally in *Puck*.

M. G. F.

Davidson College,
Davidson, N. C.

INTRODUCTION

THERE are books that are written and published with high hopes and ambitious longings, but this volume is in the nature of a memorial to its author. It represents the results of the brief literary career of IRWIN RUSSELL, of Mississippi, who was born at Port Gibson, Mississippi, on the 3d of June, 1853, and who died at New Orleans on the 23d of December, 1879.

He possessed, in a remarkable degree, what has been described as the poetical temperament, and though he was little more than twenty-six years old at the time of his death, his sufferings and his sorrows made his life a long one. He had at his command everything that affection could suggest; he had loyal friends wherever he went; but, in spite of all this, the waywardness of genius led continually in the direction of suffering and sor-

INTRODUCTION

row. In the rush and hurly-burly of the practical, every-day world, he found himself helpless; and so, after a brief struggle, he died.

IRWIN RUSSELL was among the first—if not the very first—of Southern writers to appreciate the literary possibilities of the negro character, and of the unique relations existing between the two races before the war, and was among the first to develop them. The opinion of an uncritical mind ought not to go for much, but it seems to me that some of IRWIN RUSSELL'S negro-character studies rise to the level of what, in a large way, we term literature. His negro operetta, "Christmas-Night in the Quarters," is inimitable. It combines the features of a character study with a series of bold and striking plantation pictures that have never been surpassed. In this remarkable group,—if I may so term it,—the old life before the war is reproduced with a fidelity that is marvelous.

But the most wonderful thing about the dialect