

**POEMS BY
WILLIAM ERNEST
HENLEY; PP.1-255**

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Poems by William Ernest Henley; pp.1-255 by William Ernest Henley

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P O E M S

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By

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

*The summer's flower is to the summer sunset,
Though to itself it only live and die.*

SHAKESPEARE

Tenth Impression

LONDON

Published by DAVID NUTT

at the Sign of the Phœnix

IN LONG ACRE

1907

Added copy

TO MY WIFE

*Take, dear, my little sheaf of songs,
For, old or new,
All that is good in them belongs
Only to you ;*

*And, singing as when all was young,
They will recall
Those others, lived but left unsung—
The best of all.*

W. E. H

APRIL 1888

SEPTEMBER 1897.

ADVERTISEMENT

My friend and publisher, Mr. Alfred Nutt, asks me to introduce this re-issue of old work in a new shape. At his request, then, I have to say that nearly all the numbers contained in the present volume are reprinted from 'A Book of Verses' (1888) and 'London Voluntaries' (1892-3). From the first of these I have removed some copies of verse which seemed to me scarce worth keeping; and I have recovered for it certain others from those publications which had made room for them. I have corrected where I could, added such dates as I might, and, by re-arrangement and revision, done my best to give my book, such as it is, its final form. If any be displeased by the result, I can but submit that my verses are my own, and that this is how I would have them read.

The work of revision has reminded me that, small as is this book of mine, it is all in the matter of verse that I have to show for the years between 1872 and 1897. A principal reason is that, after spending the better part of my life in the pursuit of poetry, I found myself (about 1877) so utterly unmarketable that I had to own myself beaten in art, and to addict myself to journalism for the next ten years. Came the production by my old friend, Mr. H. B. Donkin, in his little collection of 'Voluntaries' (1888), compiled for that East-End Hospital to which he has devoted so much time and energy and skill, of those unrhyming rhythms in which I had tried to quintessentialize, as (I believe) one scarce can do in rhyme, my impressions of the Old Edinburgh Infirmary. They had long

since been rejected by every editor of standing in London—I had well-nigh said in the world; but as soon as Mr. Nutt had read them, he entreated me to look for more. I did as I was told; old dusty sheaves were dragged to light; the work of selection and correction was begun; I burned much; I found that, after all, the lyrical instinct had slept—not died; I ventured (in brief) ‘*A Book of Verses*.’ It was received with so much interest that I took heart once more, and wrote the numbers presently reprinted from ‘*The National Observer*’ in the collection first (1892) called ‘*The Song of the Sword*’ and afterwards (1893) ‘*London Voluntaries*.’ If I have said nothing since, it is that I have nothing to say which is not, as yet, too personal—too personal and too afflicting—for utterance.

For the matter of my book, it is there to speak for itself:—

*‘Here’s a sigh to those who love me
And a smile to those who hate.’*

I refer to it for the simple pleasure of reflecting that it has made me many friends and some enemies.

W. E. H.

Marvell Hill, 4th September 1897.

IN HOSPITAL

1873-1875

A

*On ne saurait dire à quel point un homme, seul dans son
lit et malade, devient personnel.—*

BALZAC.