

**UNCLE CHARLIE'S
POEMS. MIRTHFUL
AND OTHERWISE**

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Uncle Charlie's Poems. Mirthful and Otherwise by Charles Noel Douglas

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CHARLES NOEL DOUGLAS

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The Author—1896.

*Very Sincerely Yours
Charles Noel Douglas
(Uncle Charlie)*

copy
1918

UNCLE CHARLIE'S POEMS.

MIRTHFUL AND OTHERWISE.

BY

Charles Noel Douglas.

TO MILLIONS OF FRIENDS,
SCATTERED BROADCAST O'ER THIS MAJESTIC LAND,
I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE VOLUME OF VERSE.

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Charles Noel Douglas,
1299 Park Place.

PREFACE.

AT the urgent request of many friends, who have been kind enough to take an interest in the verse I have, from time to time, contributed to various magazines, I have gotten together a number of my published efforts, and herewith present them to the public.

This little work is called a book of poems, but, as a matter of fact, it does not contain a single poem, for which I am thankful, as publishers inform me that poetry does not sell.

All I claim for this book is that it contains some verse which may, possibly, bring a smile to the faces of those who read it, if those readers are not hopeless dyspeptics, or confirmed hypochondriacs.

If the mirth-seeker finds nothing laughable in the so-called humorous verse, perhaps in the section devoted to the more serious subjects he may discover sufficient excuse for indulging his risibilities to his heart's content.

In any event, I hope the reader will mark the note of cheerfulness and optimism which runs through the book, in spite of the fact that every line in this volume has been written during ten years of shut-in life, six of which were passed in the wards of hospitals and institutions—among scenes which cannot be recalled without a shudder.

THE AUTHOR.

AN APPRECIATION.

I WISH to tender my sincere thanks to those publishers who have so kindly permitted me to reproduce, in this volume, verse that has appeared in their publications.

I have to thank the New York *Herald* for permitting me to use the "Glorious Fourth and How We Got It," and "When the New Boy Came." The *Christian Herald* for "God Knows Best," "God Will Take Care of Me," "Sundays in the Old Church," "Preach Jesus to Me," "Cobbler Jim," etc. *St. Nicholas* for "Willie on Classic Fiction." *Judge* for "A Cautious Lover," and "When Casey Came Home Sober." *The Designer* for "Sidney Alexander and His Halidome," "Belinda Anne." *The Delineator* for "What Boys and Girls Are Made Of." *The Woman's Home Companion* for "Don't Forget That Gun," and "When Baby Writes a Letter." *Recreation* for "When Father Hangs a Picture on the Wall," "The Predicament of a Poet." *The Ladies' World* for "Baby's First Sunday in Church." W. H. Gannet, Esq., of *Comfort*, for "Turkey and Pie," "The Art of Being Good," "Santa Claus," "Willie's Opinion of Babies," "Squash," "The Confessions of a Dunce," "He Knew It Then," etc. The Currier Boyce Co., of *The Woman's World* and *Homefolks*, for "Mandy and Si," "Since Katie Went to Cooking-school," "God Knows," "When Pop Played Santa Claus," "The Little Bird That's Always Telling Ma," "Butt Right In," "Careful Ma," "A Few Things to Be Thankful For," "Actor's Story," "So

Did I," "Hard-Luck Story," "A Novelty at Last," "Matter of Money." *Spare Moments* for "The Boy Who Talked and the Boy Who Did." The *Sunday Telegraph* for "The Actor's Prayer," "Summer Plans," "Tragedian's Lament," "Confessions of a Villain," "The Family Theatrical," etc. The *Brown Book*, of Boston, for "The Tragedy of an Apple." *New Idea* for "Dollie's Sick." *The Classmate* for "Passing of the Old Church," and *Home Life*, Chicago, for the greater portion of the biographical sketch.

THE AUTHOR.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

IN February, 1897, after some years of failing health, I was stricken with an obscure nervous trouble, which rendered me almost entirely helpless, and put me on a bed of sickness, which I have never left.

Sickness is an expensive matter, and it forced me eventually to sacrifice a home and surroundings of refinement for a ward in a hospital. After nine months of hospital life, as the doctors could do nothing for me, I was listed as a chronic case, and informed that I must vacate, or go to a public hospital, which is a polite term for the poor-house. My means were exhausted, and, with the exception of one or two faithful friends, everyone had forgotten me.

I realized the plight I was in, and begged the hospital authorities to give me a few days' grace. My request was granted, and then if ever a man prayed for help and guidance I did. I did not pray in vain, and I never have. An inspiration came to me to write the words for a song. Coon songs were then all the rage, and, as I had sung many during my stage career, I decided I would write a coon song—and, on borrowed paper and with a borrowed pen and ink, the words of my first lyric were dictated to a fellow-patient. I had not held a pen in months, and had almost forgotten how to write, but my amanuensis was patient and skilful, and eventually got my lines on paper. A borrowed envelope

and borrowed stamp took my little verses to a very celebrated actress. Two days of agonizing suspense passed, and then, to my intense delight and unspeakable joy, a letter was brought me from the famous singer, and inside the envelope was a check for twenty dollars. That night I thought out another song "pome," and Weber and Fields, then in the zenith of their fame, sent me twenty dollars for it. Forty dollars now were mine. I felt richer than Rockefeller, and if happiness were wealth I certainly had the oil king beaten to a finish. With my forty dollars I moved to another hospital, and here I wrote my first magazine poem—"Sundays in the Old Church"—which, after months of effort, I sold to the *Christian Herald* for twelve dollars. My next product, an eight-verse humorous "pome," went to *Youth's Companion*, and brought me twenty-five dollars.

My initial successes were too much for me in my intensely delicate condition, and soon after moving to the new hospital, I collapsed, and for three months hardly knew my own name. From this on it was one long, grim, heart-breaking, soul-crushing fight, but I was not in the least discouraged. In the slang of the day, I was up against a tough proposition, but it is the same thing every other man has had to experience who has sought a living by the pen. One piece, I remember, in which I had sublime faith—a faith afterward justified by events—I sent out twenty-nine times. It was a set of humorous verses entitled "The Tragedy of an Apple," and it nearly became the tragedy of a would-be versifier before I got through with it, for after it had been rejected twenty-eight times, for once my optimism left me and I think I broke down. At last I sent the verses off on their twenty-ninth mission, to the *Brown Book*, of Boston, and a substantial check was the result. It had taken me two years to sell that poem—but I sold it!