

**SONGS OF
SINGULARITY, OR, LAYS
FOR THE ECCENTRIC**

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Songs of singularity, or, Lays for the eccentric by Various

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VARIOUS

**SONGS OF
SINGULARITY, OR, LAYS
FOR THE ECCENTRIC**

SONGS OF SINGULARITY

OR,

Says for the Eccentric, *W. H. W.*

BY THE LONDON HERMIT.

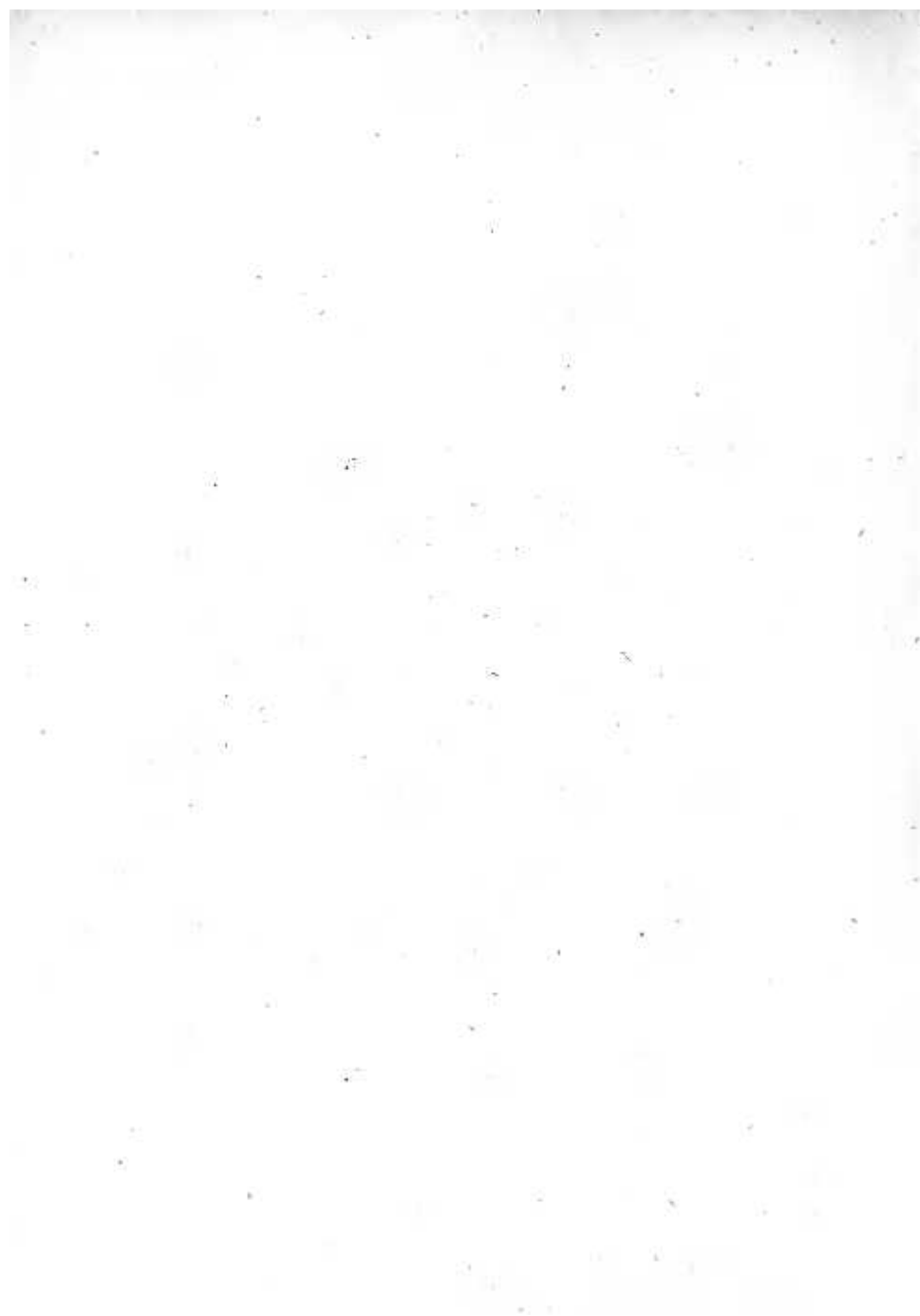
WITH FIFTY ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR AND OTHERS



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THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED,
WITH THE
PROFOUNDEST RESPECT,
AND THE
MOST COMPLETE IMPARTIALITY,
TO ALL
WHO ARE INTERESTED
IN
ITS CONTENTS.



P R E F A C E.

“**A**ND wherefore ‘The London Hermit?’” it may be asked. “Hermits are out of date in the nineteenth century, and particularly out of place in the world’s most populous city. This thronged and busy metropolis of ours is no locality for the ‘mossgrown cave,’ garnished with hour-glass, skull, and maple dish, and tenanted by the cowed anchorite with his ‘staff and amice grey.’” But though such accessories belong traditionally to the hermitical character, they are not essential to it, and whether or not they exist in the present case is of little consequence. Real seclusion depends far more upon a certain mental attitude and temperament than upon any mere outward circumstances of garb, and time, and place. It is, therefore, as attainable in the centres of life and activity, as

“*Far in a wild, remote from public view.*”

Indeed, to be in the world, but not of it; to dwell in its midst, but aloof from all its gayer and busier scenes, has

been acknowledged the condition most favourable for true solitude.

The above remarks, while explaining the designation adopted by the author, will also serve to account for the somewhat isolated and reflective tone often observable in this volume, and the absence of those subjects bearing upon modern society which form the staple of our light literature.

The title of the book itself needs little apology. The "Singularity" of the "Songs" cannot well be disputed; they are the diversions of solitude, the wild vagaries of the mind in its more mirthful and freakish moods; their madness slightly controlled by method; their capricious flights somewhat curbed by the necessities of poetical form. Some are intended to illustrate the triumph of Rhyme over Reason, others the triumph of Reason over Rhyme; or, in other words, the verbal difficulties, as well as verbal resources, which the English language presents to the diligent versifier. Under this extravagance there is, however, sometimes a serious purpose, and lest

"Laughter holding both his sides"

(or even *one* of them) may find that position fatiguing if too long continued, the general whimsicality has been now and then relieved by the outpourings of the writer's more melancholy vein, which, it is to be hoped, will produce upon the reader's mind a sufficiently depressing effect.

Some of these lyrics have already appeared in various periodicals. The book is not, however, a mere random collection of fugitive pieces, the greater part of its contents having been written with the express view of production in the present form; and in arrangement every effort has been made to impart the charm of variety and the force of contrast.

With these pleas in his own defence, the author ventures to hope that any literary judges whose province it may be to try his case will find sufficient extenuating circumstances to mitigate the severity of their sentence.

THE HERMITAGE, LONDON, E.C.,

November 20, 1874.

