

**LES TROPHÉES:  
THE SONNETS**

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Les Trophées: The Sonnets by José-Maria de Heredia

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**JOSÉ-MARIA DE HEREDIA**

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# LES TROPHEES

JOSÉ-MARIA DE HEREDIA

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## THE SONNETS

Translated by

HENRY JOHNSON

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NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT  
Yale University Press  
1910

**J**osé-Maria de Heredia, one of the most eminent recent poets, a member of the French Academy, was born November 22, 1842 in Cuba, at Fortuna-Cafeyere near the City of Santiago. His family traces a direct descent from one of the early Spanish discoverers of America. He was still a youth when he went to France, where he was to receive his education, first, at the Collège de St. Vincent in Senlis. He then passed a year at the University of Havana, and returning to France followed the professional training of an archivist in the École des Chartes in Paris. The success of these studies was proved by a scholarly translation, with notes, of the Spanish discoverer, Bernal Diaz del Castillo's History of the Conquest of New Spain. This work was published in four volumes in 1878-1887. His scrupulous care and brilliant prose style appeared also in another translation from the Spanish, of a brief narrative, *La Nonne Alfarez*, made public in 1894.

As a poet Heredia was not known to the great public prior to the issue in 1892, in his fiftieth year, of *Les Trophées*, a volume of sonnets together with

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other poems of a descriptive nature. Like many an artist of long-trained technical power, to whose skill the expressed approval or disapproval of the untrained public could make no addition, and whose springs of ambition flowed in their own fulness within himself, Heredia never courted a wide fame, but wrote and published at long intervals, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and elsewhere, poetry which a few had understood and duly prized.

His literary affiliation is chiefly with the poet Leconte de Lisle, of whom he was an ardent disciple, and to whom, on pages following a most affectionate dedication of *Les Trophées* to his deceased mother, he addressed a preliminary epistle. Heredia's indebtedness to his master is for exemplification of the principles of the poetic art seriously conceived, and for insistence on the best literary workmanship, founded on exacting standards. His own powerful originality appeared in the wide range of subjects, and their thoroughly modern, almost erudite treatment; and even more prominently, in a rich, pictorial style, handled with distinguished clarity and firmness.

His election to membership in the French Academy in 1894 followed the publication of *Les Trophées*. His selection as the official poet to honor the Emperor Alexander III of Russia, and

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his appointment in 1901 as Administrator of the Library of the Arsenal, next to the National Library the most important in France, have given wider public knowledge of the Academician and professional archivist; but Heredia's great gift to literature remains his noblest title to fame. His death occurred in October, 1905.



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