

A LEGACY OF VERSE

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A Legacy of Verse by Catherine Ada Brackenbury

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CATHERINE ADA BRACKENBURY

**A LEGACY
OF VERSE**

Norman Edwards

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BY
CATHERINE ADA BRACKENBURY.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE authoress of these verses died in the twenty-second year of her age. This is a memorial volume, but to those who knew the writer there is no need of any memorial to keep her memory for ever fresh and dear to them. Even those who were only slightly acquainted with her can never forget her sweet presence and gracious influence. To those who knew her more intimately there is left a still more beautiful memory. A more perfect character than hers cannot be easily conceived of. No taint of selfishness ever marred one of her words or deeds. Hers, too, was the mind of a poet. An extraordinary imagination, an intense sympathy, a marvellous love of beauty, were, perhaps, its most marked characteristics. Beauty she saw everywhere,—no one, however vile, nothing, however ordinary, was to her devoid of it.

And this mind and character found a partial expression in the verses here printed. By us who

knew her an even more perfect expression of them was found in her every-day life. Those who knew her not may see her spirit as it breathes through this book. We do right to be jealous as to the application of the title "poem" to any composition, and it is not for me here to discuss whether these pieces deserve the name of poems. I have always held that they are truly poems, and poems even of a high degree of merit. More competent and less prejudiced critics than I, have confirmed me in this belief. One such critic, himself a poet of recognized rank, says, "They are true poems, extraordinarily beautiful, written at a spiritual high-water mark"; and again, speaking of the authoress, he says, "Her spiritual insight and lyrical facility were among the most extraordinary gifts I have ever witnessed."

I know that in submitting these poems to the public I must leave them to be judged as they are. But it is right to say that if she who wrote them had lived, only a very small portion of this volume would have been published. With none of the pieces was she satisfied; none of them are revised; some of them are unfinished. A few of the first-written pieces I have printed only because of the poetic spirit they manifest, and on account of the great beauty of occasional lines in them which I

was unwilling should be lost. "Dorothy," "The Lover and the Nun," and several other shorter pieces were written when the authoress was only sixteen or seventeen years old. Only a few weeks before her death she wrote the fragment which I have called "Sister Isobel." This pleased her more than anything else she had written, and it is by this, by portions of "The Gaoler's Daughter," especially in the latter half of it, and perhaps by a few passages of "A Lover's Reverie," that she would wish to be judged.

Her favourite poets were Shakspeare and Keats, and, next to these, Burns, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Mrs. Browning, and Tennyson. The influence of some of these can be traced through much that she has written. But in some instances where such influence appears most marked it was really not acting. No lover of English poetry who reads this volume can fail to notice a marked resemblance in thought, and even in diction, between certain parts of "The Gaoler's Daughter" and Shelley's "Sensitive Plant," or between "Sister Isobel" and Keats' "Eve of St. Mark." Yet I know that the writer of this volume did not read either "The Sensitive Plant" or "The Eve of St. Mark" until after she had written the lines which one might be pardoned for supposing had been

inspired by them. The resemblances between these verses and those of the great poets I have mentioned are due, I think, to the fact that the writers of all of them were moved by the same spirit and inspired by the same genius. Undeveloped as were the powers of the authoress of the pieces here given, we may still, I believe, claim for her some kinship with the great poets whom she so much loved.

HENRY B. BRACKENBURY.

HARRINGAY.

January 21st, 1893.