

SERBIAN SONGS AND POEMS

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Serbian songs and poems by James W Wiles

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JAMES W WILES

**SERBIAN SONGS
AND POEMS**

SERBIAN SONGS AND POEMS:

CHORDS OF THE YUGOSLAV HARP

TRANSLATED BY

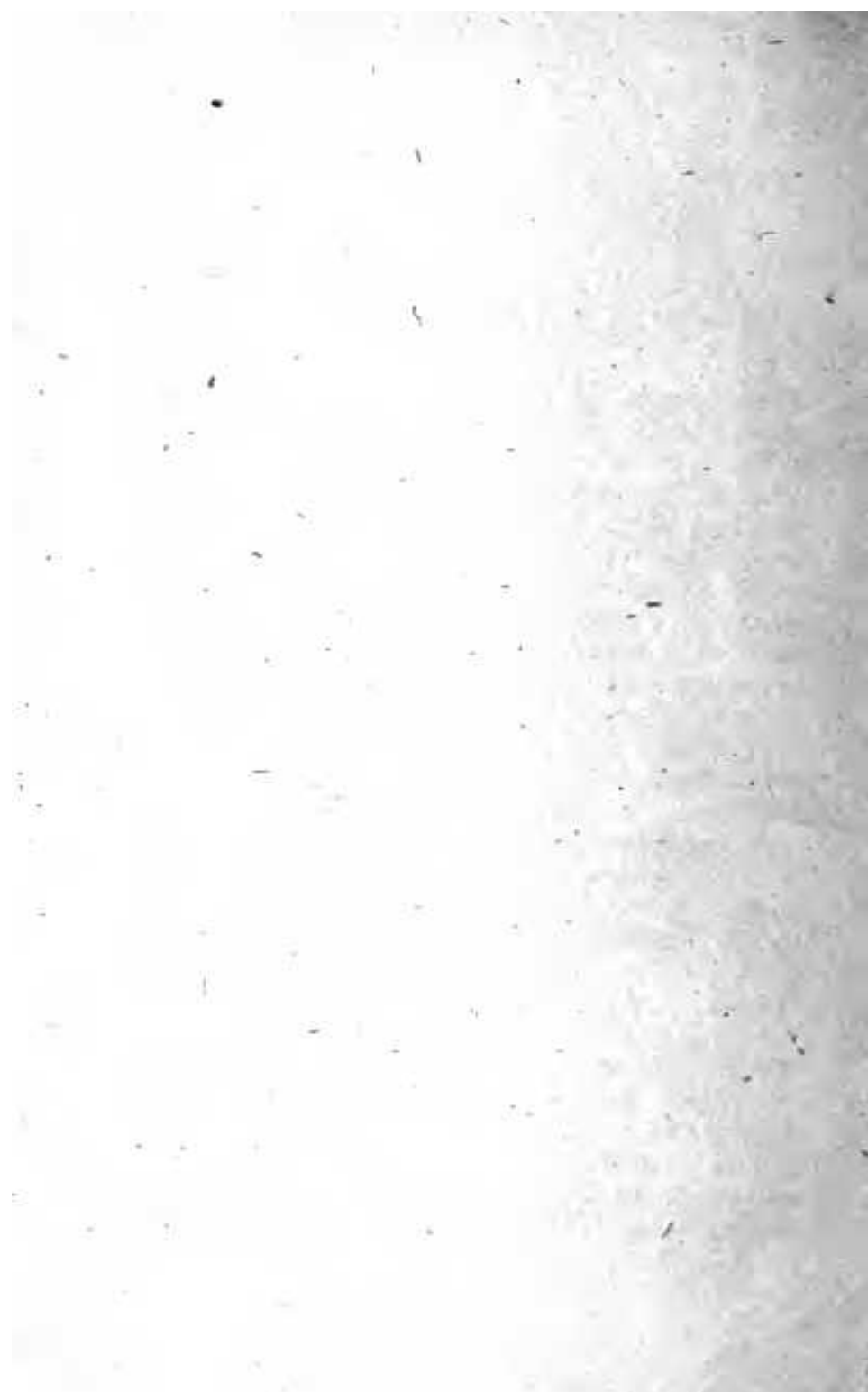
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A HUMBLE TRIBUTE TO
MY, SERBIAN COLLEAGUES
AND TO
MY PEASANT FRIENDS OF SERBIA;
TO ALL THOSE BRAVE AND CHILDLIKE SOULS WHO
UNTO DEATH HAVE SUNG AND CHEERFULLY ENDURED
"AS SEEING HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE"



PREFATORY NOTE

THESE poems, as I understand, and the reader would suppose a priori, are traditional and national in their character, resembling in this aspect the delightful old folk-songs of England. They express the deep heart of a nation, through centuries of tempest and travail. What, I think, strikes one most of all is their amazing simplicity and directness—a directness which on occasion is pungent. There is humour too in many of these poems, and the thought, as distinct from the expression, is often of a charmingly imaginative quality. Consider, for instance, the last lines of the poem entitled “Love Before and After Death.” This poem, too, presents a strange contrast in its first and second halves of a realism quite unaffected and (as some would perhaps have it) crude, with a fantasy perfectly pictorial. How distinctive the thought is at times, like nothing that is English or Latin! Here and there too a spirit of fatalism may be said to brood over a poem, Oriental, reminiscent of history.

I imagine that the most competent critic would endorse the translator's decision of retaining in more than one poem the directness of speech, the irregularity of form, without an attempt to refine and embellish which might easily induce in the mind an impression of trick or of artifice. The spirit is more vital than the letter to us in these perilous

times—were it not indeed vital in letters! Who-soever will try his hand at imposing a more literary and deliberate form on such a poem as that I have referred to, called "Love Before and After Death," will readily appreciate this. The clouds will soon darken his atmosphere!

May it bring home more nearly to many than has hitherto been possible in England, the heart of a high-souled people, whose remoter historical past will return on them once again in a greater and a happier future!

Stern bulwark once against the Turk,
The crimson-hornèd Crescent's foe
Ere that fell field of Kossovo,
There greets thee soon a greater work:

Not thine for all time foreign strife;
The future days are on the wing:
Fair drive the western winds, that bring,
Dear Serbian land, the saner life—

Arise, but not from land nor sea,
That sleepest not where tyrants lie;
Arise, resurgent from the sky,
The greater Serbia to be.

HAROLD P. COOKE, M.A.

OXFORD,

July 1917.

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