

RECOLLECTIONS OF A HAPPY LIFE

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Recollections of a happy life by Elizabeth Christophers Hobson

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ELIZABETH CHRISTOPHERS HOBSON

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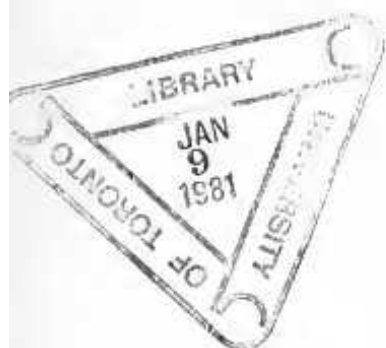
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
LOUISA LEE SCHUYLER

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press

1917





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INTRODUCTION

TO THE FIRST PUBLISHED EDITION

AN unfinished autobiography! An unknown author! How came this little book to be written? How came it to be published?

In the Preface to the edition printed for private circulation, which follows these few lines, will be found the story of how the book came to be written. As for publication—nothing more remote could have entered the mind of the gifted hostess, as she told her charming tales of life, love, and adventure to the friends gathered about her tea table in Bar Harbor, or who sat with her in Washington over a blazing wood-fire on a winter's night. Not without much persuasion could Mrs. Hobson be finally induced to commit her "story-telling" to paper. The writing once begun, she became interested in it; but the

work was never completed. Much, alas! had been left unsaid, when Death—that unwelcome guest—came to stay the pen in hand.

At first the manuscript was thought too personal to be printed, even for private use, but finally it was decided to print, with some omissions and for private circulation only, a small, limited edition of the book. Gradually, the much-worn copies found their way, as loans, into the hands of persons who had not known Mrs. Hobson, to be returned with the invariable request that the book might be published. And this from men and women whose literary judgment is undisputed, and who fully recognize the fragmentary character of the work; but who also recognize the exceptional personality, as well as the literary ability of the unknown author.

It is now four years since Mrs. Hobson died, in her eighty-first year. Many of those of whom she has written have passed away; the consent of other friends and of her family to the publication of the memoirs has been obtained; the only condition made by the latter being that any profits derived shall be used for the benefit of some one of the philanthropic objects in which Mrs. Hobson was

interested.* Finally, one of the leading publishing houses, the senior member of which had enjoyed Mrs. Hobson's hospitality in Washington, and had knowledge of her active and valuable services in the fight for international copyright of many years ago, has placed its imprint upon the book.

And so it has come to pass that the *Recollections of a Happy Life* is now given to the public.

However tempting the theme may be, I shall refrain from giving any account of Mrs. Hobson, of her New England heritage, her married life in South America, her various social and philanthropic interests and achievements in New York and Washington, of the winters spent in Italy and on the Bosphorus. She tells it all so well herself, and any added word of mine would only spoil the charm. For it is charm—that indescribable, elusive quality—which permeates this simple, direct, and unpretending little narrative.

And here—well may one pause! For how can one write of a life so replete with happiness, while the deep undertone of war, the suffering, the desolation, the horror of this great Euro-

*The Bellevue Training School for Nurses has been selected.

pean struggle, is forever sounding and resounding from the depths below. How can we for one moment not remember the tragedy of Belgium, that gallant little country, whose heroism has made her name immortal, so cruelly trampled under foot, so certain to come into her own again. England and France!—names not to be mentioned without a thrill of admiration and sympathy—those two great nations, fighting side by side in behalf of freedom, justice, and humanity, for the rights and liberties of the smaller, weaker states of Europe, for civilization itself. Opposed to them stand military imperialism, the lust of conquest, the passion which aims at worldwide domination, the violation of all principles of honor and humanity, a descent even to the warfare of those barbarous countries which, by government decree, authorize the murder and persecution of non-combatants. The lines are clearly drawn.

To those who had the privilege of knowing the writer of this autobiography, no assurance is needed as to where her sympathies would have lain had she been with us today, nor of her advocacy of the principles of righteousness and justice. And those qualities which have

made her so beloved, her efforts in behalf of the oppressed, and her warm heart would most certainly have found her enrolled in that great army of her country-women whose time and thought, for the past two years, have been devoted to the relief of suffering caused by the war.

As it is—what does our friend give us today? A bit of sunshine thrown across the background of a dark and ominous cloud, the sound of running waters, the sparkle of the sea, a murmur of gay, young voices—an hour's respite from the sadness of today, an hour of rest, of solace, of happiness, from which we return to take up our lives, refreshed and strengthened.

LOUISA LEE SCHUYLER.

HIGHLAND FALLS, N. Y.

July 15, 1916.