

**GREEK LAYS, IDYLLS,
LEGENDS, &C.: A SELECTION
FROM RECENT AND
CONTEMPORARY POETS**

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Greek Lays, Idylls, Legends, &c.: A Selection from Recent and Contemporary Poets by E. M. Edmonds

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E. M. EDMONDS

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*A SELECTION FROM RECENT AND
CONTEMPORARY POETS.*

Translated

BY

E. M. EDMONDS.

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES.

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1885.

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TO

MISS FLORENCE MCPHERSON,

IN WARM APPRECIATION,

AND WITH THE ESTEEM WHICH KINDRED SYMPATHIES

INSPIRE,

This Little Volume

IS INSCRIBED.



P R E F A C E.

IN making a selection from the works of recent and contemporary Greek poets, the desire has been not so much to represent the individual poet as the people whose voice he is. The array of names held in high and deserved estimation by their countrymen, and the amount of literary production, whether in drama, epic, or lyric, is so great, that any attempt to give a just representation of the modern Greek poets through the medium of one small volume of translations is impossible. It is possible, however, by collecting a few national and descriptive poems, to illustrate the feelings and characteristics of the people by whose almost unguided efforts the War of Liberation was carried on.

As the springs and founts of this unexampled rising had their sources deep down in the affections and religion of the people, so by the side of historical and other episodes relating to the struggle for free-

dom I have placed legendary poems, folk-songs, and other lyrics containing any cherished customs, which, whether derived from archaic or Christian times, have been from time to time so gracefully clothed in verse by several living poets.

Such having been the intention, however imperfectly carried out, it is naturally to be expected that a greater number of pages would be devoted to Aristotle Valaôritês than to any other poet; for Valaôritês is without dispute the most truly national poet of Greece, who, whether he is narrating one of his country's tragedies, or describing an individual grief,—chanting as it were an Epirote myriology,—he is through and through, alike in language as in thought, *the poet of the people*. Although a gentleman by birth and a man of the highest cultivation, he identifies himself in his poems with the peasant and his wild fancies—the patriotic Klepht of the hills,—the free-hearted brave sailor of the ocean, and the devoted bishop or monk pouring out his blood for his country and its faith. His poems may in many of their phases be objected to as presenting too often a realistic picture of human suffering, unnecessarily prolonged painful details, and almost, as it were, a revelling in horrors; yet even here he is a true delineator. Through ages of oppression a quick,

sensitive people, ever alive to receive impressions, had been made familiar with scenes of brutality which had left their marks not only in the partial obliteration of former perceptions of the bright and beautiful, but in emphasizing in language as in thought an intense hatred of the oppressor. This tendency to lengthened description of suffering is not confined to Valaôritês; it is conspicuous in some other writers, and its objectionable features are more observable in a translation than in the beautiful language of the originals.

Besides the above, there are included some few short love lyrics, and two or three poems of the sentimental school, which was of foreign origin, and happily is now exercising a diminishing influence over young writers, so that *tearful poets* and *hapless lovers* are much less frequent than formerly.

The endeavour has been to keep as nearly as possible to the metres and forms of the originals. This endeavour has, however, not been made in the case of the "Folk Songs" of Mr. George Drosinês, where the unrhymed long lines, finding their harmony in the accentuated stress of modern Greek, would have lost still more than they have already done had