

ST.
JOHN: A POEM

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St. John: A Poem by Robert F. Horton

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ROBERT F. HORTON

**ST.
JOHN: A POEM**



Alinari, Firenze

S. JOHN THE EVANGELIST
LUCA DELLA ROBBIA, PAZZI CHAPEL, FLORENCE

©

ST. JOHN

A POEM



ROBERT F. HORTON

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON AND CO.

1904

My apology for handing the lines over to an indulgent publisher is simply this—that for a time I am laid aside from work, and may neither read, nor write, nor preach, nor visit. And in the long, silent hours, meditating on St. John and his message, I have found a certain consolation as my thoughts have fallen into a familiar rhythm. The mechanic exercise of composing has soothed and comforted a restless mind, and longing as I do to communicate with dear friends whose sympathy and response have formed for years the main blessing of my life, I offer them these verses on the greatest of all subjects, not for their poetical merit, but for the greatness of the subject, and for the delight of being in communion with them.

I do not suppose that this tiny booklet will so much as attract the attention of the

critic; it would be, therefore, superfluous to deprecate the severity which will never be evoked. But if some exasperated reviewer, turning over the piles of unnecessary verses, should light upon this modest effort, I would crave his indulgence by reminding him that as a poet may sometimes write prose without claiming to be prosaic, so one whose familiar vehicle is prose may sometimes write verse without claiming to be poetic. And, indeed, I can very honestly assure every critic that I have no ambition to gain a poet's laurel, though I ardently desire to gain the crown of life in commendation of which St. John wrote and I venture to write of him.

The only liberty that I have taken with my subject is, that I have introduced three references to the legendary history of St. John—the rescue of the young robber chieftain, the

Apostle's playing with the tame partridge, and the leaving of the Bath in which Cerinthus was; and I have ventured to identify the young hunter who was astonished that St. John should play with the bird, and the converted robber, with the amanuensis who writes from St. John's dictation.

ROBERT F. HORTON

EVERLEIGH, HAMPSTEAD

Easter, 1904

ST. JOHN

I

BRING me the parchment, son, and sit beside me,
And write for me the things I saw and heard ;
The hasting years and gathering shadows chide me,
Because I have not written of the Word.



Though I am old, I needs must tell the story
Of that great thing which happened in my youth.
He became flesh, and I beheld His glory,
Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

At first we thought that nothing need be written,
For His Parousia, sudden and aflame,
Would dawn, and all the darkness would be smitten
In the new coming of the One who came.



Then the years passed, and when the city perished,
Three of the Brethren, who were writers, stored
Some of the precious things which memory cherished,
The sufferings and the sayings of our Lord.