SONGS OF TOIL

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Songs of Toil by Carmen Sylva & John Eliot Bowen

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CARMEN SYLVA & JOHN ELIOT BOWEN

SONGS OF TOIL

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SONGS OF TOIL

CARMEN SYLVA, QUEEN OF RUMANIA

TRANSLATED BY

JOHN ELIOT BOWEN

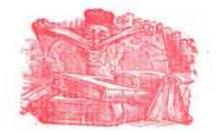
With an Introductory Sketch

THIRD EDITION.

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INTRODUCTORY SKETCH.

In writing of Carmen Sylva, Queen of Rumania, one does not know whether to call her poet-queen or queen-poet. Doubtless her royal position has had something to do with her fame as poet, and certainly her poetry has directed the world's eye to that far-off throne in southern Europe. She would not, then, be what she is, we are forced to conclude, were she not both poet and queen. Queens have always been interesting in literature, even if posing only as an inspiration. They have almost invariably been "fair women." Pictures and poems arise as we name them - Esther of Persia, Dido of Carthage, Cleopatra of Egypt, Mary of Scotland. The last is said even to have written poems herself; she certainly wrote a celebrated Latin hymn, but the pocms - presumably not addressed to her cousin Elizabeth, else there would be no lack of fervor in them -do not find their place in literature. In general, royalty has inspired rather than produced literature. But with the present age this has changed. Applicable to monarchs as to men is the statement that "now-adays every one writes books," and no truer in one case than in the other is the wicked end of the saying, "but

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only fools publish them." The Queen of England publishes her journals; one of her daughters writes articles for the magazines; the King of Sweden prints sagas in verse; the Crown Prince of Austria publishes tales of travel and adventure; and even the Pope of Rome publishes to the world a collection of poems. But with all these the production of what may be kindly called literature, is pastime; to the Queen of Rumania, on the other hand, her literary work is life. How and why this is so may be learned from a brief glance at her career.

Like many of the heroines of fiction, Elizabeth, Princess of Wied and Queen of Rumania, was born of an ancient and honorable family. So far back as 1093, says Natalie Frelin von Stackelberg, in her life of Carmen Sylva,* the counts of Wied were a mighty race of rulers. Their possessions on the right and left banks of the Rhine stretched as far as Eifel and the Westerwald. Their most ancient residence was the castle of Upper-Altwied; afterward for generations the family lived in the castle of Lower-Altwied; and finally in the early part of the eighteenth century the castle of Neuwied was built, and in this the Princess Elizabeth was born. The town of Neuwied is situated in one of the most beautiful sections of the Rhine country. It is a short distance below Coblenz and on the same bank

* Nus Carmen Sylva's Leben, Bon Ratalle Freiin von Stadelberg.

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