

THE POEMS

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The poems by H. C. Bunner

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H. C. BUNNER

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THE POEMS OF
H. C. BUNNER

*A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread, and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise to me!*
—Omar Khayyam

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INTRODUCTION

H. C. Bunner—for such was the signature Henry Cuyler Bunner chose to employ both in public and in private—was born at Oswego, N. Y., August 3, 1855, and he died at Nutley, N. J., May 11, 1896. His life was spent in the city of New York or in its immediate vicinity. Here he went to school; here he prepared for Columbia College, which he was regretfully unable to enter; here he worked for a while in a mercantile office; and here at last he was able to adopt the profession of letters. Here he wrote plays and stories and verses; and here he was for nearly a score of years the editor of *Puck*, the first comic journal to establish itself in America.

His work as a political journalist was as different as possible from most work done in that thorny field; it was vigorous but never violent. He sought to convince by sheer force of argument, and he tried always to be fair toward his opponents. But interest in the work of the journalist fades in a day or a week, or a month at most; while the story-teller and the poet are more fortunate, and their work may survive for a year or a decade, or a cen-

ture if a single story, however brief, or a single lyric, however slight, has found a lodging in the hearts of the people. It is perhaps as a poet that the author of "Airs from Arcady" is likely longest to be remembered; and it is as a poet that he would have chosen to be cherished in men's memories. And his verse met with the same good fortune that befell his fiction; it pleased both the critical and the uncritical. It has the form, the finish, the flavor of scholarship that the cultivated recognize and relish; and it has also the freshness, the spontaneity, the heartiness, and the human sympathy wanting which no poetry has ever been welcome outside the narrow circle of the dilettanti.

In the present volume are included the contents of the two books of verse he published during his lifetime, "Airs from Arcady" in 1884, and "Rowen" in 1892, and also a selection from the "Ballads of the Town" (which he had been contributing to *Puck* for half-a-dozen years), together with a few of his later lyrics and the virile and resonant lines read before the Army of the Potomac at New London in 1895.

BRANDER MATTHEWS.

Columbia University.

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