

**THE ASCENT:  
& OTHER POEMS**

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The ascent: & other poems by Elizabeth Mills Crothers & David Starr Jordan

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**ELIZABETH MILLS CROTHERS & DAVID STARR JORDAN**

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# THE ASCENT

&  
OTHER POEMS



ELIZABETH MILLS CROTHERS

*Foreword by*  
DAVID STARR JORDAN

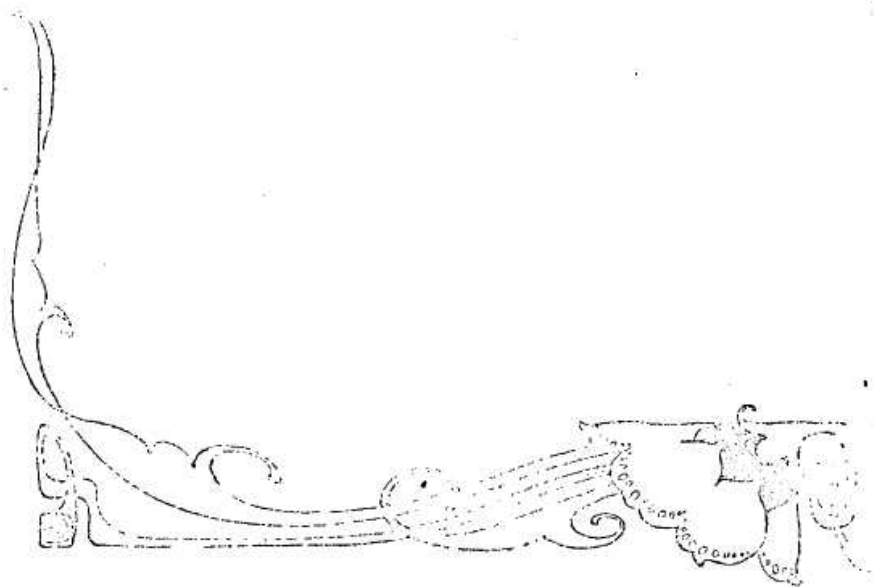
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## FOREWORD






**T**HIS volume is a memorial of a short but most happy and beautiful life. It is made up of lyric poems written by a very gifted young woman for her own pleasure and that of her friends. They were as spontaneous as the songs of birds, and were put forth in the security of a happy home and with no thought of publication.

Elizabeth Mills Crothers, daughter of William H. Mills, associate and friend of Governor Stanford, and Elizabeth Haswell Mills of Sacramento, was born in Sacramento on January 20, 1882, and died at Stanford University August 18, 1920. She was prepared for college at Miss Sarah D. Hamlin's school in San Francisco, graduating in 1898, entered Vassar College for a time, soon transferring to the University of California where she took the degree of Bachelor of Arts in December, 1909. On March 23, 1911, she was married to George Edward Crothers of San Francisco, a member of the Pioneer Class (1895) of Stanford University, of which institution he was then a trustee and being soon afterward appointed judge of the Superior Court of California.

In her youth "Bessie" Mills was a peculiarly alert and happy child. According to the testimony of her friends, "she won pleasure from the beauty her eyes revealed about her." "Sunshine and exquisite joyousness abounded in that sweet spirit of hers." "A rare appealing and heartening personality." "She lived all her life in a world of her own creating. In childhood she played with imaginary children, sang improvised songs, sometimes so sad that she shed tears, often so joyous that she would laugh over her own conception." "She was fond of the pencil and often drew faces expressive of all the various emotions, love, fear, hate, and courage, delighting to portray creations of her own imagination."



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In Miss Hamlin's school she did excellent work, especially in English, Latin and History. She was always ready with voice or pen in any of the school functions, "her speech always charming, her bearing most gracious."

French she had studied almost from childhood and she took pleasure in translations from the poets, showing a fine appreciation both of sentiment and of the social conditions in France. When she graduated her teachers were sure that "her beautiful character, her excellent training, her superior ability and her fine mental acquisitions, as well as her reverence for learning, foretold a valuable and useful life."

Her university record was one of accurate and discriminating scholarship, notably developed in very different fields under two sympathetic teachers. Of her work in English literature Professor Chauncey W. Wells writes:

"Elizabeth Mills was a member of my very first class in English in the University of California, 1901-'2, she being then, as I recollect, a sophomore. I still think the classes of that year the very finest of all the inspiring groups whom it has been my privilege to teach during these twenty years, and of that one class Miss Mills stands out in my memory, along with two or three others, as the ablest and, in point of responsiveness, the best of them all. I tried an experiment with them. Believing that writing and literary study should go hand-in-hand, I had turned to descriptive and narrative prose as the best basis for awakening interest and forming the taste for literature, and for training the powers of expression. I remember that we made a vigorous study of Stevenson's imaginative works, and I recall the eagerness with which the class read them, especially Miss Mills' vivid understanding that the author had a definite thing to say and a definite reason for saying it as he did. More than that, I remember how quickly she caught the imaginative stimulus and showed it in her own compositions. One day a professor from the University of Chicago happening to visit the classroom when the students were writing an impromptu exercise,



I turned over to him the batch of completed papers. He pitched upon Miss Mills' paper at once, saying after he had read it, 'You don't get many like that, I assume.' No, the paper was exceptional in sheer application of the principles I had been setting forth, as all her papers were. Blessedly free from the thing called temperament she could put her mind upon a problem of expression as she would upon a problem of knowledge, employing her whole intelligence.

"After her graduation she used sometimes to bring me her writings to read and criticize, or would consult me about certain of her projects. I was always aware that though she came quite genuinely for advice she kept her own guidance nor surrendered her opinion at the mere suggestion of her critic. One thing she tried hard to conceal but could not—her burning ambition to express herself, to be of some account in the intellectual world. She took her gift of writing for what it was, but she placed her reliance on her mind and her will. If she could not bring thought and interpretation into her pages she considered her labor wasted; she was unwilling to rest in the achievements of mere talent and literary grace. This spirit, I take it, she carried into all her activities, social and intellectual, and it is the loss of that spirit that makes the loss of Elizabeth Mills Crothers a real loss to this community and particularly to that circle of friends who were privileged to know intimately the aspirations and ideals of that fine young mind and heart."

Miss Mills' deepest interest proved finally to be scientific. Under Dr. John C. Merriam, she took up Vertebrate Paleontology, with special reference to the early history of man. As to this work, Doctor Merriam writes: "I remember your daughter and her relation to the work of our department in Berkeley with greatest pleasure. It was a great stimulus to me to have in my classes one who expressed such interest in his study and who showed such energy in prosecuting it."

On a visit to France in 1903, she made special trips to the localities which have yielded records of primitive man—thus

