

A BOOK OF INSCRIPTIONS

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A book of inscriptions by Esther Matson

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ESTHER MATSON

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INSCRIPTIONS**

A Book of Inscriptions

*Those wished-for words—that name the
house, inscribe its hearth and garth,
or bear its owner's friendly messages.*

By *ESTHER MATSON*



NEW YORK McBRIDE, NAST & CO. 1914



LET us dream of evanescence, and linger in the beautiful foolishness of things.

From THE BOOK OF TEA, Okakura-Kakuzo.

FOREWORD



HO has not at some time wished for a word, a phrase, a verse or two, or perhaps merely for a name, to fit a particular place or occasion? It may be the desire was to inscribe some sentiment over a chimney-piece; it may be it was for a word or so to accompany some gift, or else to send with some missive of goodspeed to the friend who went a-traveling. Again, it may have been only the wish to give that final cachet of personality and sense of own-ness to one's house and garden that goes with nomenclature.

To whoever has any such wishes, the present little volume offers its service,—not presuming surely at fulfilment of them, or at any sort of exhaustiveness,—but hoping to prove itself hintful and suggestive.

True, the compiling of wise saws and modern instances never comes to any end, and what is more the use of inscriptions, indoors and out of doors, in season and out of season, were the easiest of enthusiasms to ride to death. None the less something there is in human nature that makes it always go jump, like the little maid in the play, at the apt word and the telling phrase. And in further excuse

for ourselves, the associations that go with certain inscriptions and certain names are quite as real, though tangible, as the fragrances of flowers. Whence, a hearth with a text wrought over it may not only enhance the sense of possession but may also induce a feeling of kinship between the owner and some loved or celebrated person. Whence, a word of dedication with a book may increase its interest tenfold or more. Or again, a verse accompanying flowers or fruit may outlast the fragile gift and linger as a pleasant recollection long after.

In the matter of choosing a place name most of us make much ado, but oddly enough even after we have made our own decisions we continue to take interest in other names of other places, especially perhaps in those belonging to the homes of olden time.

Within doors and out, in hearth and garth, the idea of using mottoes as decorative features opens up all sorts of entertaining possibilities. Only the note of warning must be sounded. For only too mighty is the lure of them and only too difficult to resist a temptation to inscribe them here, there, and everywhere. Nothing could be drearier to contemplate than the mere thought of a house and grounds that should bristle with texts howsoever apt. But then, discretion is a part of valor to be taken for granted and it may well be left to each gentle reader to prove himself both weatherwise and passing wary in his use of any mottoes, whether merrie, wise or otherwise.

We trust the grouping of place names first, of house and garden texts next, and thirdly of gift accompaniments may make for ease in reference, so that he who runs may read and perchance choose therefrom or better still be urged to further thought hereupon.