

VERSES

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649728893

Verses by Lusina Strong Mills & Jessie Mills

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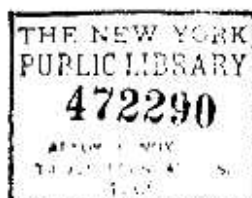
BOSTON
RICHARD G. BADGER

The Gorham Press

1908

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The Gorham Press, Boston, U. S. A.

FOREWORD

The verses in this little volume were written for the most part in the year 1896. Before this, since her girlhood days, my mother had written mainly in prose. During that year we were almost constantly together and took great pleasure in our associated work. Afterward she thought about publishing what we had written; but we soon concluded the great hurrying world would have little interest in our simple verses. Since she went away it comes to me to publish the verses together, in accordance with her thought, not "in memory of her death," but to call to mind afresh her abounding life; her energy, her courage, her vigor of mind, her sense of humor, her quick sympathy with all life, whether lived in the shadow or the sunshine, and her vital interest in the great movements of the world, which kept her young to the last.

When thinking of her, lines written by Matthew Arnold of his father come to my mind:

"In the gloom of November we passed
Days not dark at thy side;
Seasons impaired not the ray
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear."

As we were so closely associated in the work and my mother took much pleasure in the fact, it has been deemed fit to leave the manuscript in its present form.

J. M.



BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lusina Strong was born in Portage, Livingston County, New York, January 29, 1823. Her parents were pioneers in that portion of the Empire State. Her father, through accidental treatment when suffering from the malaria of a new country, was constitutionally weakened. Her mother, who gave birth to twelve children, was both physically and intellectually remarkable. She had the resources of a giantess.

At two and one half years Lusina commenced her school life, and thereafter had as good privileges of this sort as a raw country could furnish. Pains were taken to secure for her the best. Her first joys of authorship were through the school paper. Her student life was one glow.

In childhood she acquired skill with the needle which later became a very special skill. Astonishing was the ease with which she threw off beautiful work, contrived and fitted by her own skill, during that portion of life making greatest demand for it. But it was her delight to produce evidence of a perfection in her mother's like art which, she insisted, put the daughter's skill within the shadow. To whatever she gave her hand, in it Lusina was likely to appear as an expert through the elasticity of her power.

Love of beauty was a controlling force of her nature. And this love had nurture from her early days. Within the farm which was her home she could scarcely open her eyes without taking in a scene of elevated lands and of dales, skirted with deep woods. Some three miles away the waters of the upper Genesee River, through a series of falls, leaped to a cavernous depth. For a long

distance they find their way between lofty, precipitous banks. The depth of portions of this defile were not wholly strange to her elastic tread. The rank wildness of the scene spoke to her inner self.

Her love for flowers approached a passion, largely silent, thus escaping evaporation through words. Where-soever she lived, with her own hand she cultivated them, and when possible she had them near her. Receiving from a friend, with whom she was in special rapport, a gift of flowers, she answered in the following hasty lines:—

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“God could not make the earth bring forth
 Enough for great and small,
 Enough for every want of ours
 And not a flower at all;
 Except He first should countermake
 This beauty-loving race;
 And take away the *want* for flowers —
 Oh, what could fill the place!”

Her striking flexibility and variousness of powers had answer in her countenance. A talented French portrait painter, in her youthful period, undertook her portrait. Day after day he called for sittings with fresh canvases. At last, passing his charged brush athwart his work, he gave up incontinently — she had no two faces alike! Equally she was the despair of the photographer, so far as obtaining a representative result was concerned.

As she was ripening she instinctively turned to teaching. Teaching with her was equally gift and an enthusiasm. She was luminous and inspiring. It was in her and of her to pass over to others her acquirements of mind and