

**A SELECTION FROM
THE POEMS OF
MATHILDE BLIND**

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A selection from the poems of Mathilde Blind by Mathilde Blind

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Very sincerely yours,
Mathilde Blind.

A SELECTION
FROM THE
POEMS
OF
MATHILDE BLIND

EDITED BY
ARTHUR SYMONS



London
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1897

INTRODUCTION.

TO Mathilde Blind all life was an emotion ; and thought, to her, was of the same substance as feeling. That is why she has been able, in verse, to express a vivid personality, in what may often seem to be an impersonal way. *The Ascent of Man*, her largest work, is a hymn of religious ecstasy ; for the scientific teaching of Darwin, to most people a very negative sort of gospel, inflamed her with the ardour of a worshipper : she believed it, by an act of faith, as the devout Christian believes in the mysteries of his church. And in all her expressions of strenuous and reverent unbelief, which rise at times to almost the very highest rapture of Pantheism, she is giving voice to what was really deepest in her nature : a sort of universal passion, which found its keenest satisfaction in the giving up of " puny personal joy and pain," its finest reward in a perhaps vague, yet closely realised, and certainly " deathless " hope.

This instinct for what was religious, and thus emotional, in all thought, helped her to write, with an eloquence which was essentially sympathy, about many lands, and the landscapes of many religions ; and finally, about the gods and sands of Egypt ; for Egypt, more than any other country, seems to perpetuate, in somewhat desolate a splendour, the eternal elements of humanity. It was through the same instinct that she came to write her poems of what seemed to her rather a realistic kind : *The Heather on Fire*, and some of the *Dramas in Miniature*. She apprehended human life as something pitiful, to be succoured ; never as something interesting, to be observed. It was the enthusiasm of an idea or an ideal which absorbed her in certain problems of sin, injustice, misery : a universal human pity, of which, in some curious way, as of self-pity, her very personal poems have their share. Of this human sympathy, as of that religious sentiment, art was never, to her, more than the servant.

She was a poet, almost in spite of herself. It was direct, and not directed, emotion which gave her verse its share of that rapture without which poetry cannot exist. But she had confidence in the plenary inspiration of first thoughts ; and her work remains a suggestion, rather than an accomplishment, of what she might have done. Such as it is, and such as I have tried to represent it, at its best, in this selection, it is

a memorial more intimately human, more immediately the utterance of a particular, most brave and ardent soul, than almost any similar body of poetic work. To those who knew her, it is like the sound of her voice ; and I think it must have, to those who know her only by her books, the accent of a voice that seems, the first time it is heard, to be remembered.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

ROME, *Feb.* 13, 1897.

MEMORANDUM

TO : [Illegible]

FROM : [Illegible]

SUBJECT: [Illegible]

[Illegible text follows, including a list of items and a signature block.]

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