

**SONG LEAVES
FROM THE BOOK OF
LIFE AND NATURE**

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Song Leaves from the Book of Life and Nature by Matthew Bennett Wynkoop

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MATTHEW BENNETT WYNKOOP

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SONG LEAVES.

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101

102

103

104

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FROM THE

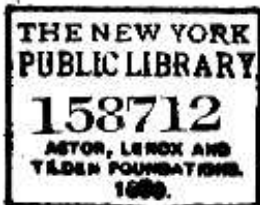
BOOK OF LIFE AND NATURE.

BY AN AMERICAN.

Oh deem not, midst this worldly strife,
An idle art the Poet brings :
Let high Philosophy control,
And ages calm the stream of life,
'Tis he refines its fountain-springs,
The nobler passions of the soul.

CAMPBELL.

NEW YORK:
J. S. REDFIELD, CLINTON HALL.
1852.



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District of New York.

PREFACE.

THOUGH Poetry may be classed among the elegancies of Literature, and be looked upon more as an ornamental appendage to the library and drawing-room than as a source of amusement or instruction, it has its mission upon earth as well as writings in prose. And that mission is to speak unto the hearts of men. To place itself on the side of Virtue and Truth; and, by its pictures of Life and Nature, graced, as the artist may be able, with the drapery of Romance, or the colors of Fancy, draw mankind closer together in bonds of sympathy and fellowship. And, while cultivating a taste for the Beautiful in Art and Nature, raise in the breast a desire to extend those earthly blessings which Providence has showered upon them to their less fortunate brethren.

There have been occasions when a simple song has effected more than volumes of prose. Hood's "Song of the Shirt" is a memorable instance of the influence of Poetry; for it tended more to the amelioration of an unfortunate class of English laborers than the

efforts of humane societies for years. In ancient times the influence of song was more regarded than at present. The wandering minstrel seemed to possess a magic power in his harp and rudely-chaunted song ; for he roused warriors to heroic deeds, and drew tears from the eyes of women. He was placed at the head of armies to inspire the soldiers, and when Peace smiled, no festive board was complete without the presence of a bard. Yet, even in late years, there have been poets whose power over the hearts of men is indeed marvellous. The songs of BURNS are as familiar as household words, not only in Scotland, but the world over, from India to the far West ; and the Scotchman feels his blood tingling in his veins at the martial strains of " Scots wha hae," or melts into tears when he listens to the touching farewell to " Highland Mary."

In this utilitarian age, however, he who would inculcate great truths had better, probably, write in prose ; for poetry, in weak hands, is a powerless weapon. It is only the masters of Poesy who can command not only the ears, but the hearts of men. This should have been sufficient, it may be said, to have warned me from a field where the chances of success are more than counter-balanced by the probabilities of failure. To this I can offer but a weak excuse. Conscious of my own unworthiness, yet proud of being even a humble laborer in the cause of philanthropy and human progress, my enthusiasm may have led me beyond the bounds of prudence, and caused me to undertake that which was far above my abilities ; yet the purity of my motives will sustain

me, and I will have a nobler satisfaction in failing in a praiseworthy effort, than had I succeeded in an ignoble one.

These "Song Leaves" are but fragments, and, it must be confessed, thrown together with little order or sequence. Parts in themselves may be considered complete, so far as I was capable; but as a whole, I would indeed be blind not to see that it is a very insufficient poem. This is a source of regret to me: not that my vanity led me to suppose I had the genius necessary for the production of a finished work, but that I have fallen so far below even my own conceptions, and that which I pictured in my mind, my poor abilities as a writer failed to do justice to in language. But I frankly own that I have done my best, be it for better or worse, and as such submit my Leaves to the public, not without misgivings, yet hoping the reader may at least be as kind as I have been candid.

THE AUTHOR.

New York, January, 1852.