

The Writers

OF

South Carolina

With a Critical Introduction, Biographical
Sketches, and Selections in
Prose and Verse

BY

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PREFACE

I trust that both the casual reader and the special student will find this book of selections from the writers of South Carolina a thing of sufficient interest and value to prove "its own excuse for being." To those, however, who yet believe that writers are as scarce in the South as snakes in Ireland, it should be said that this work has been undertaken in no narrow, sectional spirit. It is evident that the permanent worth of a study such as this must depend upon the maintenance of relative values, and that this result can be attained only by the adoption of sound critical standards. In the interest of historic truth, therefore, as well as of the writers themselves, I have endeavored not to overrate the literary merits of any one, but to form a just estimate of each, having always in mind that larger national literature of which the individual's work, however modest, is a part.

This garnering of the choicest literary output of a single State may to some seem a mere appeal to local pride or at least an expenditure of effort in a too restricted field. But a fair consideration will show that the work may be justified on several grounds. From the wider point of view it may be regarded as a chapter in the literary history of America. Does not the long-neglected Charleston group of writers, for example, call for as close and detailed study as has been given the Knickerbocker school or the Hartford Wits? The more one becomes acquainted with the books on American literature, the more one realizes from the disproportion of space given to the South as compared with that assigned to the North that literary appreciation must begin at home. Is it to the discredit of New England that her most insignificant poetaster has received painstaking though ill-deserved criti-

cal consideration, or is it to the credit of the South that some of her greatest writers are little more than names north of the Potomac? It is certainly a matter of regret that the works of many of our gifted men of letters have been allowed to remain so long lost and forgotten in the pages of defunct magazines and rare books. Surely all the fault should not be laid at the door of our Northern critics if, as in a recent important literary history of America, thirty-five pages are vouchsafed to Southern writers (fifteen of which are devoted to Poe, only two each to Simms and Timrod, and one to Hayne), while five hundred pages are given to authors of the other sections. In literature the proverb of the prophet not without honor is reversed, and the moral of the old fable of the man bestride the lion holds good. Each State must first discover and show a proper appreciation of her own men of genius, and national or international attention will follow.

The purpose of this volume is, first, to define more clearly and to illustrate by suitable selections a few figures in the literature of South Carolina which should fill a wider horizon in our national literature. The Palmetto State has made a splendid contribution to the political and military history of the country; her share in its literary history is almost equally important and should be a source of just pride and gratulation. It aims also to rescue from oblivion a larger number of minor writers who have made a small but very creditable addition to the literature of America, and who did much under unfavorable conditions to keep alive an interest in pure letters by their example, culture, and influence. It offers, too, a means of calling attention to the great service rendered by that long succession of magazines and other periodicals that were born and died in Charleston, and that, poorly supported and short-lived as they were, furnished an organ for a few professional writers, and were a stimulus to literary productiveness on the part of a large number of

amateurs. Who can deny that American literature is far richer for many a fugitive lyric or occasional sketch that first saw the light in those faded and musty pages?

This book aspires, of course, to an humble but, we hope, useful place in the library of home, school, and town. In the old-fashioned phrase, the gentle reader is here presented with a volume of elegant and instructive extracts, which, though sometimes taken from their original connection, still retain an interest and significance of their own. The uses to which such a work may be put are numerous. In the family circle it will serve as an anthology of choice readings in stately or idiomatic English on a variety of pleasing and important subjects. In the school it may be used as supplementary reading matter, furnishing material for criticism and topical exercises. The original sources which it contains will incidentally give our young people an insight into the spirit of historic times and enable them to form a first-hand acquaintance with the thoughts and experiences of their forefathers. To book clubs and teachers' associations it will be a convenient manual of reference, suggesting starting points for special investigation, reports, and discussions.

An explanation should here be made in regard to the rules of selection which have been followed. It has seemed best not to include the work of any writer still living, though many such authors are mentioned in the critical and biographical sections. This principle was adopted with regret mainly from considerations of space, but partly because of the impossibility of avoiding invidious distinctions. The embarrassment was usually not in finding suitable selections, but in choosing from the wealth of material. Another difficulty was more serious and necessitated some arbitrary decisions on the part of the editor. A number of the writers owed allegiance by nativity or residence to two or more States, and the line had to be drawn somewhere. Some have

been included, no doubt, to whom Georgia, North Carolina, and other States will lay superior claim. This situation is not wholly to be regretted, and is, indeed, merely an evidence of our solidarity as a nation. Let us be thankful that there is no Chinese wall about South Carolina, and hope that she will ever continue to maintain with her sister States this beautiful reciprocity of intellect. Seven Grecian cities proudly claimed to be the birthplace of Homer: why should not we similarly have our pretty controversies over Longstreet, Meek, Requier, Pettigrew, and others? I have felt at liberty to include any native of the State, also others like McDuffie, Preston, and Mrs. Gilman, who were born elsewhere but who considered themselves South Carolinians by adoption, and still a few others who, like the foreign-born Cooper, Lieber, and Dawson, produced their most important work while residents of the State. In general, I have regarded the birthplace of a piece of literature more important than that of the author.

In the preparation of the selections I have received prompt and gracious assistance, often at much personal sacrifice, from a large number of friends, to all of whom I desire to make my grateful acknowledgments. My special thanks are due Mr. Ambrose E. Gonzales, of Columbia, without whose constant encouragement and generous coöperation the work could not have been successfully carried through. To Hon. William Ashmead Courtenay,¹ Colonel August Kohn, and Doctor J. W. Babcock my indebtedness is great for the use of their fine collections of rare books and pamphlets. I must also express my great obligations to Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn, of Charleston, whose scholarly "History of Literature in South Carolina," contributed to *The News and Courier*, of Charleston, in 1903, has been frequently consulted, and to Professor William P. Trent, of Columbia University, whose "Southern Writers" (1905), the most recent and authorita-

¹Died March 17, 1908.

tive work on the subject, has furnished many valuable suggestions. My indebtedness to Davidson's "Living Writers of the South" (1869), Simms's "War Poetry of the South" (1867), and other works on Southern literature, is specifically acknowledged elsewhere. It is a pleasure also to record the kind assistance rendered in the way of critical advice by my colleague, Professor Yates Snowden, whose knowledge of South Carolina history and literature is nothing short of encyclopædic, by Mr. A. S. Salley, Jr., the accomplished historian, and by Hon. John J. McMahan, formerly State Superintendent of Education. I would also express my thanks for the many courtesies extended to me by Miss Ellen M. FitzSimons, librarian of the Charleston Library Society, and by Miss Margaret H. Rion and Miss Margaret LeConte, of the Library of the University of South Carolina. Among those who have assisted by the loan of rare volumes and pamphlets or by replying to letters of inquiry should be mentioned Miss Katharine B. Trescot, Mrs. C. T. Dunham, of Massachusetts, Rev. Thomas Cary Johnson, of Virginia, Mr. Joseph N. Allston, of McCormick, South Carolina, Mr. A. Markley Lee, Hon. Joseph W. Barnwell, Mrs. Washington Finley, Mr. William B. Foster, and Mr. Wilmot D. Porcher, all of Charleston; Mrs. Sarah LeConte Davis, Mr. Julian A. Selby, Dr. James Woodrow, Professor Patterson Wardlaw, Mr. E. H. Cain, Professor Edwin L. Green, Mr. Charles J. Colcock, Professor F. Horton Colcock, and Dr. Stanhope Sams, all of Columbia, and Miss Carrie Margaret Reaves, Editor of the Winthrop College *Tatler* of 1901, which furnished a basis for my bibliography of South Carolina writers. It is a pleasure to record my thanks also to the several publishers who hold the copyright of some of the authors, and who have generously allowed the use of the selections from their works.

Such a work as this must necessarily be incomplete, and there are probably errors of fact or of judgment which have crept in unawares. The author would, therefore, be grateful to have his attention called to inaccuracies and omissions which any reader may discover.

G. A. W.