

Preface

IT is a daring adventure in these days of heroic iliads, ephemeral verses, and fugitive compositions in rhyme, for a writer to publish his poems in book form, especially if these poems are cast in a sonnetal mould. But genius cannot be fettered, and an original and gifted mind, dowered with rich exuberance, will, when the spirit of poetry visits it, burst out in spontaneous gushings, or open for itself new channels through which the treasures of its thought will flow in rich and joyous currents. Again, genius, indifferent to criticism, is ever prepared to break all fetters of rules and suggestions, and, like the eagle, dares to soar aloft in its own independent flights.

Poetic composition is often allied to inspiration, and becomes an art only when inspiration is wedded to ideas and expressed in choice and correct language. The sonnet—which the author of “Sonnets of a Recluse” has selected for the cast of his ideas and inspirations—is, perhaps, the most trying and laborious form of poetic art, for its essential requisites are clearness, unity, strength, and harmony. As its structural frame is strictly a mental effort, its foundation must be laid in a cultivated and trained mind, in the exercise of vigorous thought, on reading and observation, and on an attentive study of the meaning and force of words.

To achieve success in his art, the student must begin by a diligent attention to the rules of grammar, acquire a thorough familiarity with prosody, and know and observe the maxims of logic. He must also remember that while rhetoric clothes ideas in suitable dress, logic