



Immortalia: An Anthology of American Ballads, Sailors' Songs, Cowboy Songs, College Songs, Parodies, Limericks, and Other Humorous Verses and Doggerel

Anonymous

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THE GENTLEMAN ABOUT TOWN has performed a service of notable worth in preserving and giving definitive form to the wealth of latter-day folk-lore which is contained within the covers of "Immortalia." American folk-lore has of necessity sought cover, driven by the indiscriminating tirades and sadistic tyrannies of the Mrs. Grundys who are an irremovable part of this melange we know as modern civilization. Undoubtedly, much material of permanent literary value has been lost. Literary worth in folk-lore depends on just one thing -- its spontaneity. Folk-lore is no hot-house plant, to be fertilized with refined chemicals and maintained at constant temperature when the winds of reality blow. On the contrary, folk-lore seeks its nourishment in the fertilizing essences of nature, and springs triumphantly forth no matter how fierce the winds or how rigorous the frost. Just as some beautiful plants seem to grow in opposition to all efforts of the gardeners and the horticulturists, so does folk-lore thrive in the face of determined efforts of the sentimentalists to deny its very existence. Folk-lore is, after all, nothing but the literature of the people. It, more truly than any more polished side of literary effort, reflects the average standard of all the people at the time of its currency. The very fact of its existence is dependent upon the willingness of the people (not of the literary guildmasters) to keep it alive. Literature with a capital "L" has all the stabilizing factors of the printed word and of learned tradition to perpetuate it—folk-lore lives only in the voices of the people themselves—the source from which the material in this book has been drawn, from cover to cover. It is not the purpose of this book to override good taste — indeed, the fact that it is issued not for public sale, but for subscribers only, is a definite and willing concession to the prevalence of the same good taste which keeps

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