

# Preface

the house, and who had not approved of the marriage, had very wickedly set her brother against his wife, and to some extent succeeded. He tried to stop her singing, which seemed to him a sort of madness, and at times he treated her with great unkindness; but sing she must and sing she did, for it was what the Lord made her for; and she lived down all this trouble; his husband died, he in his old age, and Barbara, whom she nursed with motherly kindness through a long and most distressing illness, was his friend before she died. **Beatrice** is still living, at a great age now, but still retaining much of her old beauty and buoyancy, and is visited on and cared for with much affection by a pretty grand daughter bearing the same name as herself. **As** for the other songs, I have explained in the notes which I have written under them all the little that I know about them. **The** tunes, with the exception of those which I found printed in the *Caena di S. Caterina*, I gleaned from the poor people themselves, and wrote down as well as I could; most of them, (though they sound very sweet to me, bringing back the very feeling of the air in the far woods, or on the farms, where I have been used to hear them) are just such men than plaintive monotonous little chants, but a few of the airs are very pretty; the accompanying has been nearly all composed by *Sia. Serafia Poynali*. **And** the pictures sufficiently explain themselves; they are likewise, nearly all, of the country people in their every day clothes and with their every day surroundings; while as to the ornamenting of the pages, it seemed natural that road-side songs should have border-side flowers. **Of** the four long ballads, the *Madonna* and the *Cypsy*, *St. Christopher*, *St. Zita*, and the *Saynavitan*, I have put in only one (the *Saynavitan*) at full length, and of *St. Christopher* I have left out all the last half, which describes his preaching and his martyrdom, both because it was so very long, and because the details were so painful. **Already** the old songs are fast being forgotten; many of them it would be impossible now to find, and others are sung only by a few aged people who will soon be gone, or in some remote corner of the mountains; and in a few years they will probably be heard no more. **They** have served their time, and many people laugh at them now, and some have told me that I should have done better to spend my time and work on something more valuable; but in their day they have been a comfort to many. **Labouring** people have sung them at their work, and have felt their burdens lightened; they have lightened the long winter evenings of the poor women in lonely houses high among the mountains, when they have been sitting over their fires of fir-branches, with their children about them, shut in by the snow outside, and with their men all away in the *Maremma*; and I have known those who have been helped to bear sickness and trouble, and even to meet death itself, with more courage, by verses of the simple old hymns. **I** have heard *Beato Leonardo's* hymn to the cross sung in chorus by a party of pilgrims, men and women together, going to the mountain of *San Pellegrino* on a still moonlight night in August, when it has sounded to me as sweet as anything that ever I heard. **It** seems to me that there are others who will collect and preserve the thoughts of the rich and great; and I have wished to make my book all of poor people's poetry, and who knows but it may contain a word of hint or consolation for some poor soul yet to live who that may be, I have done my best to save a little of what is passing away.

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