

**LEATHERS (THOMAS P. AND FAMILY) PAPERS**

Mss. 1548

Inventory

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections  
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library  
Louisiana State University Libraries  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

Reformatted 2003

Revised 2011

Updated 2020

**CONTENTS OF INVENTORY**

SUMMARY ..... 3  
BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE ..... 4  
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE ..... 4  
COLLECTION DESCRIPTION ..... 5  
INDEX TERMS ..... 11  
CONTAINER LIST ..... 12

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**SUMMARY**

<b>Size.</b>	1.3 linear feet, 1 volume, 2 microfilm reels
<b>Geographic locations.</b>	Louisiana, Mississippi, Washington, D.C.
<b>Inclusive dates.</b>	1823-1952
<b>Bulk dates.</b>	1823-1898
<b>Language.</b>	English
<b>Summary.</b>	Steamboat master and owner, and native of Kentucky. Papers mainly relate to steamboat transportation and commerce on the Mississippi River in Louisiana and Mississippi.
<b>Restrictions on access.</b>	Access to items in vault requires curator's permission. Photographic negatives are restricted.
<b>Related collections.</b>	None.
<b>Copyright.</b>	Copyright of the original materials is retained by descendants of the creators in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
<b>Citation.</b>	Thomas P. Leathers and Family Papers, Mss. 1548, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
<b>Stack location(s).</b>	UU:116-117; H:1; OS:L; 65:60; VAULT:23, VAULT:38; MSS.MF:L

## BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Captain Thomas P. Leathers was a native of Kentucky and was a steamboat master and owner. He piloted vessels between St. Louis, Mo., and New Orleans, La., including the steamboat *Natchez* that he built and mastered. He married Charlotte Claiborne of Pointe Coupee Parish, La.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Papers pertain chiefly to Mississippi River steamboat transportation and commerce. Some concern Thomas P. Leathers' arrest by Federal forces as a Confederate spy and his subsequent release. Papers reflect Leathers' investments in cotton (1865), and his post war activities in the improvement of navigation on the Mississippi River. Also included is a presidential pardon given by President Andrew Johnson (July 26, 1865).

Papers also contain Congressional claims for payment due to Leathers for the transport of United States mail in 1861, and documentation of items and machinery taken from sunken vessels during the Civil War. Four Mardi Gras medals of the Krewe of Rex (1878-1885) are also part of this collection.

Claiborne family Civil War papers pertain to Federal occupation in New Orleans and Pointe Coupee Parish. Antebellum family estate papers of the Claiborne and Leathers families are included. One receipt book (1854-1855) contains entries recording the construction of the steamboat *Natchez No. 4* in Cincinnati, Ohio.

## COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

<u>Date</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1823-1849	5 items: Papers Mrs. Thomas Claiborne relinquishes to George R. Dent her claim to land rights, Jefferson County, in estate of Mrs. J. C. H. Claiborne (1823); Baptismal certificate of Charlotte Claiborne, Elm Ridge, Maryland (Sept. 3, 1849); statement reporting death of Culbush signed by Charles A. Atwill and B. S. Leathers [brother of Thomas P.] (Apr. 24, 1841); letter from Harriet Leathers, sister-in-law of Thomas P., seeking information from Thomas Leathers concerning whereabouts of her husband (May 1, 1842); receipt for payment of legal services rendered Thomas Leathers and [Martin] Van Fleet, brother-in-law of Thomas, by J. T. McMussan (Feb. 14, 1849)
1851-1859	30 items: Papers Deed of conveyance of Myrtle Terrace, Natchez, from Nathaniel Carpenter to Thomas Leathers (July 12, 1851); broadside announcing funeral of William Leathers, brother Thomas (Feb. 16, 1852); letters discussing failure to collect insurance on flatboat <i>Hope</i> (May 31 and June 5, 1852); indenture between John D. Freeman, Hinds County, and Courtney Ann Claiborne [wife of Ferdinand Leigh Claiborne], Adams County (1852); letter from John W. Leathers, brother of Thomas P., captain, proposes exchange of acreage from father's estate, expects river appointment from U.S. Congress, offers assistance in hiring boat laborers, states higher cost of iron makes boat building more expensive (Dec. 13, 1852); letter from Henry Huntington expressing sympathy on loss of <i>Natchez No. 3</i> (Feb. 11, 1853); memorandum concerning settlement of estate of Jesse Bell, father-in-law of Thomas P. Leathers (Feb. 18, 1853); John Leathers (father of Thomas P.) estate papers, Kenton County, Ky. (Feb. 21, 1853 and July 22, 1856)  Receipt for payment of fees by Thomas P. Leathers, guardian of Jessie B. and Frances S. Leathers, to probate court (Nov. 1, 1853); description of Pushmataha, tribal chief (Leathers was frequently called "Pushmataha," according to Harnett Kane), and tomb stone inscription, Washington, D. C. (1854); petition by Elizabeth A. Bell, wife of Martin Van Fleet and sister-in-law of Thomas P. Leathers, for divisions of property to heirs of Jessie Bell, deceased wife of Thomas P. Leathers (June 30, 1854); medical dissertation, "The Treatment of New Born Children," by Junius Claiborne, University of St. Louis (1855); plat showing division of land [Kenton County] to heirs (circa 1856); co-partnership agreement of Leathers, D. R. Carroll, and T. C. Holmes in Carroll, Holmes, and Co., factors, New Orleans (July 4, 1858); decree rendered for co-partnership adjustment (circa 1858)
1860-1863	49 items: Papers John Leathers estate memorandum concerning sale of bonds (Feb. 3, 1860); survey report of damage by fire to <i>Natchez No. 3</i> submitted by Richard Swain and Richard L., Robertson, New Orleans (Oct. 10, 1860); service agreement in Confederate States Army of A. J[unius] Claiborne [son of Ferdinand Leigh Claiborne], medical doctor (May 26, 1861); letters from Ferdinand O. Claiborne [nephew of Mrs. Thomas P. Leathers] to Thomas P. Leathers mention strong fortifications and nearness of enemy, dislikes Yorktown (June 24, 1861);

Date

Contents

impresment of *Natchez No. 5* by P. G. T. Beauregard for service at White River and Memphis (Apr. 15 and 23, 1862); receipt for payment of services on *Natchez No. 5* by Leathers and considered by him a claim against the Confederate government (May 10, 1862); United States Provost Marshal, New Orleans, confirms return of property statement by Leathers, an enemy of the United States (Oct. 4, 1862)

I. Gorgas, Confederate chief of ordnance, Richmond, Va., recommends Leathers and Montgomery to Col. J. M. Kennard for moving needed ordnance stores after they have removed machinery and engines from sunken vessels in the Yazoo River (Apr. 29, 1863); I. C. Denis, Confederate Provost Marshal, Mobile, informs John H. Winder, brigadier general, Richmond, of orders by Dabney H. Maury, confederate general, to arrest Leathers for disloyalty (Sept. 8, 1863); reports to Winder arrest of Leathers at Enterprise, Clarke County, Miss., and states Maury's request to prohibit Leathers' return to New Orleans via Mobile (Sept. 13, 1863); J. F. H. Claiborne (uncle of Charlotte C. Leathers) defends conduct of Leathers and assumes blame for entertainment of Federal officer (circa Sept. 1863); affidavits against Leathers by James Forbes, Mobile, charging Leathers and J. F. H. Claiborne with entertainment of Federal officers and disposal of steamer and cotton to Federals (Sept. 14, 1863); D. Ferguson, special messenger for Gen. Richard Taylor, Mobile, reporting threat of Leathers at time of his arrest (Sept. 14, 1863); Moses Greenwood, Mobile, providing source of information concerning cargo of schooner on which Leathers and J. F. H. Claiborne left New Orleans (Sept. 17, 1863); instructions for Charlotte C. Leathers to call for payment of rent on seized property (Sept. 12, 1863); affidavit claiming citizenship prevents seizure of property (Sept. 16, 1863)

1864-1865

48 items: Papers

Appointment of James F. Claiborne (brother of Charlotte C. Leathers (?)), 1<sup>st</sup> Choctaw Regiment, as acting adjutant (Jan. 23, 1864); paroled as prisoner of war, Shreveport (June 19, 1865); certificate signed by Edwin L. Jewell, Pointe Coupee Parish, stating Claiborne's mules seized by Gen. Arnold's soldiers (Nov. 7, 1864); list of supplies for 5 whites and 35 blacks approved by U.S. Marshal (Nov. 22, 1864); receipts for cotton sold in New Orleans (Feb. 13, 1865); request by U.S. Provost Marshal, New Orleans, to verify reported contract of Leathers with Confederate government to raise sunken vessels in Yazoo River (Apr. 4, 1864); letter of Louis Claiborne, brother of Charlotte C. Leathers, Pointe Coupee Parish, to niece, states he lost many friends in battle one year ago (July 28, 1865); U.S. Department of Gulf, New Orleans, informed of release and whereabouts of Thomas P. Leathers (Jan. 9, 1864); approval by U.S. Department of Gulf to move cotton to Rodney, Jefferson County, (Feb. 27, 1865); affidavits acknowledging ownership of cotton before special agent of the U.S. Treasury Department (May 30 and June 5, 1865); letter of Fergus Peniston, New Orleans, explains seizure of Mississippi cotton, regrets difficulties encountered in Rodney by Leathers, expects order on subject by General Canby soon, advises Leathers to move all cotton possible under permit (May 27, 1865); presidential pardon by Andrew Johnson (in vault; July 26, 1865), received and forwarded by L. Thomas, Washington, D.C., (Sept. 29, 1865); Thomas A. Runhton (?), Grand Gulf, Claiborne County, applies for agency of steamboat *Magenta*, purchased by Leathers (Aug. 21, 1865)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1866-1868	9 items: Papers Amnesty oath of James F. Claiborne, Pointe Coupee Parish (May 7, 1866); letter from J. F. H. Claiborne, Shieldsboro, summarizes services rendered Leathers during the war; states reasons for failure of their cotton venture; states Charlotte C. Leathers prevented confiscation of husband's property and his imprisonment; describes personal poverty, and states he has started peach orchard and saw mill (Jan. 26, 1868); agreement for recovery of claim against U.S. government (June 10, 1867); memorandum stating selling price of steamboat <i>St. Mary</i> and rental cost between June 1, 1865 and July 22, 1867 (July 22, 1867); Fergus Peniston, New Orleans, sends permit to ship cotton, advises Leathers to prove it is not Confederate cotton (May 20, 1868)
1871-1879	41 items: Papers Letter from C.A. Claiborne, Pointe Coupee Parish, relates family news to Courty Leigh Leathers (Mar. 23, 1872); letter and photograph from B.C. Wrenn, Harris County, informs Leathers of new invention for surface water blow-off (Nov. 26, 1872); letters from Krewe of Rex transmitting cross of Legion of Honor and extending invitation to 12 persons to be presented to Court (Feb. 6, 1876); registration certificates claiming New Orleans residence since 1859 (1874-1878); assured payment of wharfage for <i>Natchez No. 6</i> protects boat from New Orleans taxes (May 26, 1877); receipts issued by Capt. John Cowdon for subscriptions to <i>Barataria Canal Enterprise</i> (1877-1879), explains program for financing Canal and states need for funds (1876-1878), claims passage of legal legislation is more difficult than raising funds (Mar. 7, 1878), reports on progress of Barataria Ship Canal bill in Congress (May 13, 1878); Louisiana Legislature requests U.S. Congress to grant charter for opening of Barataria Ship Canal (Apr. 1877)
1880-1884	38 items: Papers Letter from Leathers in which he accepts presidency of Barataria Ship Canal, states he has secured control of Harvey Canal (Apr. 10, 1880); letters from John Cowdon in which he promises half of profits from <i>Enterprise</i> to Leathers for service rendered (Nov. 4, 1881), mentions opposition encountered, wants Capt. M. McSweeney to sound South Pass (June 7, 1881), states need for Leathers to be in Washington for bill to pass Congress (May 8, 1884); copies of briefs and Supreme Court opinion from J. G. Carlisle, U.S. Representative (May 29, 1882); letters from John F. Hume, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., inquires about Barataria Canal charter, mentions interest of [George W. Smiley] to promote it with European capital (June 10, 1882), states Smiley needs Canal papers and power of attorney to sell lands granted by Louisiana (Jan. 23, 1883), approves Smiley's proposition concerning division of stock and sale of land (Mar. 16, 1883), wants approval of Smiley's proposition by Leathers and Cowdon (Mar. 24, 1883), forwards Smiley's letter stating terms under which capital can be raised (circa 1883); letter from William A. Burwell, secretary, New Orleans Chamber of Commerce, opposes outlet system, and offers plan for possible protection from back water (Dec. 7, 1882); appointment by La. Gov. Samuel D. McEnery of Leathers as delegate to the Mississippi River Improvement Convention at St. Louis (Oct. 14, 1881)
1885-1889	25 items: Papers Jonathan Leathers, uncle of Thomas P. Leathers, reported dead by Julia M. Chesney, Glade

Date

Contents

Spring, Virginia (Aug. 23, 1888); L. G. Jeffers, on board *Natchez* [No. 7], offers interest in mechanical invention provided Leathers puts it into active operation (Jan. 26, 1885); Baratavia Ship Canal Co. contributors relinquish rights to John Cowdon for return of investment (May 29, 1885); John Cowdon purchases Leather's interest in canal (July 3, 1885), urges Leathers to buy stock in canal, and states plan to lease canal before assuming ownership (Nov. 24, 1886); J. W. Person, Port Gibson, regrets public sale of his property, seeks information concerning lowest cash payment Leathers will accept for judgment (Aug. 3, 1886); Justin Patin, steamboat and stage patentee, New Roads, tries to interest Leathers in his patent (June 1, 1888); U. S. Representative Benjamin Butterworth urged to help pass bill introduced by Senator Vest for payment of Civil War claim to Leathers (Jan. 4, 1889)

1890-1898

43 items: Papers

F. L. Claiborne estate statement rendered by John H. Irvine and Son, Bayou Sara, West Feliciana Parish (June 25, 1895); letters from Commodore J. E. Montgomery, Washington, D. C., stating Leathers, Sr., warmly received at Capitol (Apr. 4, 1890), explaining association of Leathers, Sr., with John Cowdon, and reporting Louisiana delegates favor levees (Apr. 8 and 15, 1890), stating outlet system gaining ground in Congress (Apr. 15 and 19, and June 1, 1890), giving instructions for work to be made on steamboat *T. P. Leathers* (Apr. 19, 1890); describing interview with President Benjamin Harrison who favors outlet system (Apr. 19, 1890); Henry B. Richardson, on board *Leathers*, comments unfavorably on passages in Cowdon's memorial pertaining to levees (Mar. 9, 1890); J. E. Montgomery, Washington, D. C., reports arrest of Cowdon for vagrancy and forwards Cowdon's explanation of his arrest (Feb. 27, 1890), sends copy of newspaper article on Mississippi River overflow (Mar. 24, 1890), discusses progress of claim in Congress (Feb. 27, June 12, and July 4, 10, 1890), states silver bill and federal election prevent other legislation, (July 4, 1890); [United States Congress Commerce Committee] report advocating outlet of Mississippi River through Lake Borgne (circa 1890), letter from John Cowdon relates progress of outlet bill in Congress (June 1, 1890 and Aug. 8, 1893); Justin Patin, carpenter and builder, New Roads, sends patent for boat free of charge because he has no money to develop it (Mar. 14, 1893); William S. Fell, secretary, Baratavia Land and Improvement Co., states company is different from Baratavia Ship Canal, has employed James Seldon Cowdon, son of John Cowdon (July 30, 1893), discusses ownership of stock by Leathers in his company through transfer of trust stock with Cowdon (Sept.-Oct., 1893); Thomas P. Leathers, New Orleans, to Fell, states mouth of Mississippi River is ruined (Sept. 7 and 14, 1893), believes his investment in Canal was about \$3,000 (Sept. 14, 1893); E. D. Small, Wilmington, Ill., inquires about disposal of cotton seized in November 1863 from *Black Hawk* by U.S. *Osage* (Dec. 11, 1894); funeral notice of Leathers (June 15, 1896); bill for removal of body to Natchez (April 3, 1898)

1904-1952

16 items: Papers

Thomas P. Leathers succession papers filed in Civil District Court, New Orleans, and approved by Charlotte C. Leathers, executrix (Aug. 8, 1904); letters from Paul Leigh Winchester to mother, Mrs. C. L. Winchester (daughter of Thomas P. Leathers), New Orleans, describes life at military post (Apr. 9, Dec 3, 1905), promises financial assistance (Apr. 9, July 19, and Dec. 3, 1905), urges mother to visit doctor (May 24, 1914); letter from



<u>Date</u>	<u>Contents</u>
	Mrs. C. L. Winchester to daughter, Courtney Winchester, New Roads, relating family news (Aug. 6, 1912); copy of Sunday's <i>New Orleans States</i> from John P. Coleman, journalist, New Orleans, to Courtney Winchester ("Ting") containing article on her mother's home, states indebtedness to her grandfather for favors shown, mentions death of Captain Foulke, recalls Mississippi River trip on steamboat <i>America</i> (Oct. 12, 1922); Corwin family genealogy (Sept. 1921); information on James Ross (May 16, 1928)
undated	18 items: Papers Memoranda; family correspondence; note mentioning that Mrs. Claiborne won suit for separation of property with statement that plantation belonged to her; recipe; drawings; poetry
1868-1894, undated	18 items: Photographs Douglas H. Cooper (captain), steamboat "Daniel Drew," and Eliza Hutchins (1868); Henry Wehrman, New Orleans musician (1894); Tecumseh's powder horn (undated); 12 unidentified photographs of family and friends (undated); <b>RESTRICTED</b> : photographic negative of hunting dogs (undated)
1861-1896, undated	17 items: Newspaper clippings Death notices and obituaries for Capt. James F. Claiborne (May 16, 1867), Robert J. Claiborne (July 24, 1883), John Latrobe, husband of Charlotte Virginia Claiborne (Sept. 12, 1891), Ferdinand Leigh Claiborne (Dec. 12, 1893), and Martha Dunbar Claiborne (May 10, 1895); announcement of golden wedding celebration of John H. Latrobe and Charlotte Virginia Claiborne (Dec. 6, 1882); poem dedicated to F. L. Claiborne (May 20, 1893); article concerning arrest of Thomas P. Leathers as a Confederate spy (1873); Leathers obituary (June 13, 1896); <i>The (New Orleans) Times Democrat</i> quadruple sheet (June 18, 1882); article about steamboat <i>Thomas P. Leathers</i> being saved from river (Oct. 29, 1896)
1901-1954	23 items: Newspaper clippings Articles concerning Thomas P. Leathers, race of <i>Natchez No. 6</i> and <i>Robert E. Lee</i> (June 30, 1909); burning of <i>Natchez No. 3</i> (Feb. 7, 1954); obituary and death notices of Frank C. Leathers (son of Thomas P. Leathers) (May 16-18); and Thomas P. Leathers, Jr. (son of Captain Leathers) (Oct. 27, 1909); launching of <i>Thomas P. Leathers</i> , 1 page from scrapbook, (Sept. 13, 1944); Harry Cormier Wilson obituary (July 28, 1901); J. W. Carlton (captain) and wife celebrate golden wedding anniversary in Hawsville, Kentucky (June 27, 1909)
undated	35 items: Newspaper clippings Clippings from articles containing cooking recipes, poetry, death notices of Robert Claiborne and Courtney Leigh Claiborne (children of F. L. Claiborne), and articles on the Mississippi River levee history, race of <i>Natchez No. 6</i> with <i>Lee</i> , and Charles P. Dimitry's article on the Louisiana story
1872-1907, undated	38 items: Printed items Senate bills to improve navigation on Mississippi River and reclaim lowlands (May 14,

Date

Contents

1879), to develop and facilitate interstate commerce (Nov. 3, 1893); address of Thomas P. Leathers to Western Waterways Convention (Apr. 7, 1885); political speeches (1872-1879); claim presented to U. S. Senate for reimbursement for machinery and other materials seized from steamer *Natchez* (June 1, 1894); John Cowdon's Senate memorials concerning Mississippi River navigation (1878), and Lake Borgne outlet (1890), reply to Mississippi River Commission (circa 1884), speech on outlet system (Sept. 2, 1897), and newspaper interview on damming the mouth of the Mississippi River (undated); program for Claiborne family reunion day, Jamestown Exposition (June 18, 1907); concert program mentioning Leathers family, First Baptist Church, New Orleans (June 1, 1901)

1851-1893

Pamphlets:

Hazen, W. B. "History of the signal service with catalog of publications, instruments, and stations." Washington, D. C., 1884.

Jones, T. L., A. Pauly and T. P. Leathers. "The combined high and low pressure steam condensing engine." Picayune Steam Book and Job Printing Establishment. New Orleans, La. 1874

"Natchez Outlet and Levee Convention." Addresses by Dr. G. H. Tichenor, T. P. Leathers, and Governor Fishback, of Arkansas, on the all-levee fallacy. A. M. Escudier, printer, New Orleans, 1893.

Leathers, Thomas P. "Address to the U. S. Committee on Commerce, Washington, D. C., Mar. 31, 1882." L. Graham & Son, printers, New Orleans. 1882.

Mississippi Valley and River Improvement Company. "Article of agreement and subscription to the preliminary association, June 1, 1878." Judd and Detweiler, printers. [1878]

Stratton, Joseph B. "Piety in youth." Natchez Courier Book and Job Office, printers, Natchez. 1851.

United States Congress. House Committee on Commerce. Remarks of John Cowdon on Lake Borgne Outlet . . . Washington, 1890.

1900,  
undated

2 items: Printed volumes

(Title page missing). *My pretty country picture book of lane, and lake, and hill, and brook.* T. Nelson and Sons, London. undated.

*New Orleans shipping guide.* New Orleans 1900.

1854-1855,  
undated

Manuscript volume 1: Receipt book

a. Memorandum book. 1854, undated.

b. Receipt book. 1854-1855, undated.

Entries pertaining to the construction of steamboat *Natchez No. 4* in Cincinnati.

1878-1885

Medals:

4 medals from the Krewe of Rex, New Orleans carnival organization, for 1878, 1880-1881, and 1885.

INDEX TERMS

**Materials relating to these people, places, and things can be found throughout the entire collection.**

Claiborne family.

Cotton trade--Mississippi River.

Krewe of Rex--Medals, badges, decorations, etc.

Leathers family.

Leathers, Charlotte Claiborne.

Mississippi River--Commerce.

Mississippi River--Navigation.

Natchez No. 4 (Steamboat)

New Orleans (La.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

Packets--Mississippi River.

Pardons.

Pointe Coupee Parish (La.)--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.

River steamers--Mississippi River.

Ship captains--Confederate States of America.

Shipwrecks--Mississippi River.

Steamboats--Mississippi River.

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders</u>	<u>Contents</u>
UU:116	1	1-14	Papers, 1823-1879
	2	1-6	Papers, 1880-1889
	3	1-6 7-9	Papers, 1890-1944, 1952, undated Newspaper clippings, 1861-1954, undated
UU:117	4	1-4	Printed items, 1872-1907, undated
		5	Pamphlets, 1851-1893
6		Printed volumes, 1900, undated	
7		Envelopes, undated	
	5	--	Photographs, 1868-1894, undated
H:1	--	--	Manuscript volume 1: Receipt book, 1854-1855, undated
			<b>RESTRICTED: Do not page.</b>
65:60	--	--	Item 1: Photographic negative, undated
OS:L	--	1	Certificates: Amnesty oath of Charlotte C. Leathers, Krewe of Rex (1864-1881); sketch of machinery (undated)
		2	Newspaper clippings, 1861-1896
		3	Speeches and writings pertaining to the Mississippi River, 1897, undated
			<b>RESTRICTED: Access to items in vault requires curator's permission.</b>
VAULT:23	--	1	Presidential pardon by Andrew Johnson, 1865
VAULT:38	6	--	Mardi Gras Medals of Krewe of Rex, 1878-1885
MSS.MF:L	--	--	Reel 1: Boxes 1-3
	--	--	Reel 2: Boxes 4-6, Vault and oversize items Omissions: Printed volume: <i>My pretty country picture book of lane, and lake, and hill, and brook.</i> T. Nelson and Sons, London, undated