

**LANG
ANDREW**

GRASS OF
PARNASSUS

Andrew Lang
Grass of Parnassus

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Lang A.

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Andrew Lang Grass of Parnassus

TO

E. M. S

Primâ dicta mihi, summâ dicenda Camenâ

The years will pass, and hearts will range,
You conquer Time, and Care, and Change.
Though Time doth still delight to shed
The dust on many a younger head;
Though Care, oft coming, hath the guile
From younger lips to steal the smile;
Though Change makes younger hearts wax cold,
And sells new loves for loves of old,
Time, Change, nor Care, hath learned the art
To fleck your hair, to chill your heart,
To touch your tresses with the snow,
To mar your mirth of long ago.
Change, Care, nor Time, while life endure,
Shall spoil our ancient friendship sure,
The love which flows from sacred springs,
In 'old unhappy far-off things,'
From sympathies in grief and joy,
Through all the years of man and boy.

Therefore, to you, the rhymes I strung
When even this 'brindled' head was young
I bring, and later rhymes I bring
That flit upon as weak a wing,
But still for you, for yours, they sing!

Many of the verses and translations in this volume were published first in *Ballads and Lyrics of Old France* (1872). Though very sensible that they have the demerits of imitative and even of undergraduate rhyme, I print them again because people I like have liked them. The rest are of different dates, and lack (though doubtless they need) the excuse of having been written, like some of the earlier pieces, during College Lectures. I would gladly have added to this volume what other more or less serious rhymes I have written, but circumstances over which I have no control have bound them up with *Ballades*, and other toys of that sort.

It may be as well to repeat in prose, what has already been said in verse, that Grass of Parnassus, the pretty Autumn flower, grows in the marshes at the foot of the Muses' Hill, and other hills, not at the top by any means.

Several of the versions from the Greek Anthology have been published in the *Fortnightly Review*, and the sonnet on Colonel Burnaby appeared in *Punch*. These, with pieces from other serials, are reprinted by the courteous permission of the Editors.

The verses that were published in *Ballades and Lyrics*, and in *Ballads and Verses Vain* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York), are marked in the contents with an asterisk.

GRASS OF PARNASSUS

Pale star that by the lochs of Galloway,
In wet green places 'twixt the depth and height
Dost keep thine hour while Autumn ebbs away,
When now the moors have doffed the heather bright,
Grass of Parnassus, flower of my delight,
How gladly with the unpermitted bay—
Garlands not mine, and leaves that not decay—
How gladly would I twine thee if I might!

The bays are out of reach! But far below
The peaks forbidden of the Muses' Hill,
Grass of Parnassus, thy returning snow
Between September and October chill
Doth speak to me of Autumns long ago,
And these kind faces that are with me still.

DEEDS OF MEN

αιιδε δ' αρα κλέα ανδρων

TO

COLONEL IAN HAMILTON

To you, who know the face of war,
You, that for England wander far,
You that have seen the Ghazis fly
From English lads not sworn to die,
You that have lain where, deadly chill,
The mist crept o'er the Shameful Hill,
You that have conquered, mile by mile,
The currents of unfriendly Nile,
And cheered the march, and eased the strain
When Politics made valour vain,
Ian, to you, from banks of Ken,
We send our lays of Englishmen!

SEEKERS FOR A CITY

“Believe me, if that blissful, that beautiful place, were set on a hill visible to all the world, I should long ago have journeyed thither.. But the number and variety of the ways! For you know, *There is but one road that leads to Corinth.*”

Hermotimus (Mr Pater’s Version).

“The Poet says, *dear city of Cecrops*, and wilt thou not say, *dear city of Zeus?*”
M. Antoninus.

To Corinth leads one road, you say:
Is there a Corinth, or a way?
Each bland or blatant preacher hath
His painful or his primrose path,
And not a soul of all of these
But knows the city ’twixt the seas,
Her fair unnumbered homes and all
Her gleaming amethystine wall!

Blind are the guides who know the way,
The guides who write, and preach, and pray,
I watch their lives, and I divine
They differ not from yours and mine!

One man we knew, and only one,
Whose seeking for a city’s done,
For what he greatly sought he found,
A city girt with fire around,
A city in an empty land
Between the wastes of sky and sand,
A city on a river-side,
Where by the folk he loved, he died. ¹

Alas! it is not ours to tread
That path wherein his life he led,
Not ours his heart to dare and feel,
Keen as the fragrant Syrian steel;
Yet are we not quite city-less,
Not wholly left in our distress —
Is it not said by One of old,
Sheep have I of another fold?
Ah! faint of heart, and weak of will,
For us there is a city still!

Dear city of Zeus, the Stoic says, ²

¹ January 26, 1885.

² M. Antoninus iv 23.

The Voice from Rome's imperial days,
In Thee meet all things, and disperse,
In Thee, for Thee, O Universe!
To me all's fruit thy seasons bring,
Alike thy summer and thy spring;
The winds that wail, the suns that burn,
From Thee proceed, to Thee return.

Dear city of Zeus, shall we not say,
Home to which none can lose the way!
Born in that city's flaming bound,
We do not find her, but are found.
Within her wide and viewless wall
The Universe is girdled all.
All joys and pains, all wealth and dearth,
All things that travail on the earth,
God's will they work, if God there be,
If not, what is my life to me?

Seek we no further, but abide
Within this city great and wide,
In her and for her living, we
Have no less joy than to be free;
Nor death nor grief can quite appal
The folk that dwell within her wall,
Nor aught but with our will befall!

THE WHITE PACHA

Vain is the dream! However Hope may rave,
He perished with the folk he could not save,
And though none surely told us he is dead,
And though perchance another in his stead,
Another, not less brave, when all was done,
Had fled unto the southward and the sun,
Had urged a way by force, or won by guile
To streams remotest of the secret Nile,
Had raised an army of the Desert men,
And, waiting for his hour, had turned again
And fallen on that False Prophet, yet we know
Gordon is dead, and these things are not so!
Nay, not for England's cause, nor to restore
Her trampled flag – for he loved Honour more —
Nay, not for Life, Revenge, or Victory,
Would he have fled, whose hour had dawned to die.
He will not come again, whate'er our need,
He will not come, who is happy, being freed
From the deathly flesh and perishable things,
And lies of statesmen and rewards of kings.
Nay, somewhere by the sacred River's shore
He sleeps like those who shall return no more,
No more return for all the prayers of men —
Arthur and Charles – they never come again!
They shall not wake, though fair the vision seem:
Whate'er sick Hope may whisper, vain the dream!

MIDNIGHT, JANUARY 25, 1886

To-morrow is a year since Gordon died!
A year ago to-night, the Desert still
Crouched on the spring, and panted for its fill
Of lust and blood. Their old art statesmen plied,
And paltered, and evaded, and denied;
Guiltless as yet, except for feeble will,
And craven heart, and calculated skill
In long delays, of their great homicide.

A year ago to-night 'twas not too late.
The thought comes through our mirth, again, again;
Methinks I hear the halting foot of Fate
Approaching and approaching us; and then
Comes cackle of the House, and the Debate!
Enough; he is forgotten amongst men.

ADVANCE, AUSTRALIA

ON THE OFFER OF HELP FROM THE AUSTRALIANS AFTER THE FALL OF KHARTOUM

Sons of the giant Ocean isle
In sport our friendly foes for long,
Well England loves you, and we smile
When you outmatch us many a while,
So fleet you are, so keen and strong.

You, like that fairy people set
Of old in their enchanted sea
Far off from men, might well forget
An elder nation's toil and fret,
Might heed not aught but game and glee.

But what your fathers were you are
In lands the fathers never knew,
'Neath skies of alien sign and star
You rally to the English war;
Your hearts are English, kind and true.

And now, when first on England falls
The shadow of a darkening fate,
You hear the Mother ere she calls,
You leave your ocean-girdled walls,
And face her foemen in the gate.

COLONEL BURNABY

συ δ' εν στροφάλιγγι κονίης
κεισο μέγας μεγαλωσι, λελασμένος ιπποσυνάων

Thou that on every field of earth and sky
Didst hunt for Death, who seemed to flee and fear,
How great and greatly fallen dost thou lie
Slain in the Desert by some wandering spear:
'Not here, alas!' may England say, 'not here
Nor in this quarrel was it meet to die,
But in that dreadful battle drawing nigh
To thunder through the Afghan passes sheer:

Like Aias by the ships shouldst thou have stood,
And in some glen have stayed the stream of flight,
The bulwark of thy people and their shield,
When Indus or when Helmund ran with blood,
Till back into the Northland and the Night
The smitten Eagles scattered from the field.'

MELVILLE AND COGHILL

(THE PLACE OF THE LITTLE HAND.)

Dead, with their eyes to the foe,
Dead, with the foe at their feet,
Under the sky laid low
Truly their slumber is sweet,
Though the wind from the Camp of the Slain Men blow,
And the rain on the wilderness beat.

Dead, for they chose to die
When that wild race was run;
Dead, for they would not fly,
Deeming their work undone,
Nor cared to look on the face of the sky,
Nor loved the light of the sun.

Honour we give them and tears,
And the flag they died to save,
Rent from the rain of the spears,
Wet from the war and the wave,
Shall waft men's thoughts through the dust of the years,
Back to their lonely grave!

RHODOCLEIA

TO RHODOCLEIA ON HER MELANCHOLY SINGING

(Rhodocleia was beloved by Rufinus, one of the late poets of the Greek Anthology.)

Still, Rhodocleia, brooding on the dead,
Still singing of the meads of asphodel,
Lands desolate of delight?
Say, hast thou dreamed of, or remembered,
The shores where shadows dwell,
Nor know the sun, nor see the stars of night?

There, 'midst thy music, doth thy spirit gaze
As a girl pines for home,
Looking along the way that she hath come,
Sick to return, and counts the weary days!
So wouldst thou flee
Back to the multitude whose days are done,
Wouldst taste the fruit that lured Persephone,
The sacrament of death; and die, and be
No more in the wind and sun!

Thou hast not dreamed it, but remembered
I know thou hast been there,
Hast seen the stately dwellings of the dead
Rise in the twilight air,
And crossed the shadowy bridge the spirits tread,
And climbed the golden stair!

Nay, by thy cloudy hair
And lips that were so fair,
Sad lips now mindful of some ancient smart,
And melancholy eyes, the haunt of Care,
I know thee who thou art!
That Rhodocleia, Glory of the Rose,
Of Hellas, ere her close,
That Rhodocleia who, when all was done
The golden time of Greece, and fallen her sun,
Swayed her last poet's heart.

With roses did he woo thee, and with song,
With thine own rose, and with the lily sweet,

The dark-eyed violet,
Garlands of wind-flowers wet,
And fragrant love-lamps that the whole night long
Burned till the dawn was burning in the skies,
Praising *thy golden eyes*,
And feet more silvery than Thetis' feet!

But thou didst die and flit
Among the tribes outworn,
The unavailing myriads of the past:
Oft he beheld thy face in dreams of morn,
And, waking, wept for it,
Till his own time came at last,
And then he sought thee in the dusky land!
Wide are the populous places of the dead
Where souls on earth once wed
May never meet, nor each take other's hand,
Each far from the other fled!

So all in vain he sought for thee, but thou
Didst never taste of the Lethæan stream,
Nor that forgetful fruit,
The mystic pom'granate;
But from the Mighty Warden fledst; and now,
The fugitive of Fate,
Thou farest in our life as in a dream,
Still wandering with thy lute,
Like that sweet paynim lady of old song,
Who sang and wandered long,
For love of her Aucassin, seeking him!
So with thy minstrelsy
Thou roamest, dreaming of the country dim,
Below the veiled sky!

There doth thy lover dwell,
Singing, and seeking still to find thy face
In that forgetful place:
Thou shalt not meet him here,
Not till thy singing clear
Through all the murmur of the streams of hell
Wins to the Maiden's ear!
May she, perchance, have pity on thee and call
Thine eager spirit to sit beside her feet,
Passing throughout the long unechoing hall
Up to the shadowy throne,
Where the lost lovers of the ages meet;
Till then thou art alone!

AVE

*'Our Faith and Troth
All time and space controules
Above the highest sphere we meet
Unseen, unknowne, and greet as Angels greet.'*

Col. Richard Lovelace. 1649

CLEVEDON CHURCH

In Memoriam

H. B

Westward I watch the low green hills of Wales,
The low sky silver grey,
The turbid Channel with the wandering sails
Moans through the winter day.
There is no colour but one ashen light
On tower and lonely tree,
The little church upon the windy height
Is grey as sky or sea.
But there hath he that woke the sleepless Love
Slept through these fifty years,
There is the grave that has been wept above
With more than mortal tears.
And far below I hear the Channel sweep
And all his waves complain,
As Hallam's dirge through all the years must keep
Its monotone of pain.

* * * * *

Grey sky, brown waters, as a bird that flies,
My heart flits forth from these
Back to the winter rose of northern skies,
Back to the northern seas.
And lo, the long waves of the ocean beat
Below the minster grey,
Caverns and chapels worn of saintly feet,
And knees of them that pray.
And I remember me how twain were one
Beside that ocean dim,
I count the years passed over since the sun
That lights me looked on him,
And dreaming of the voice that, save in sleep,
Shall greet me not again,
Far, far below I hear the Channel sweep
And all his waves complain.

TWILIGHT ON TWEED

Three crests against the saffron sky,
Beyond the purple plain,
The kind remembered melody
Of Tweed once more again.

Wan water from the border hills,
Dear voice from the old years,
Thy distant music lulls and stills,
And moves to quiet tears.

Like a loved ghost thy fabled flood
Fleets through the dusky land;
Where Scott, come home to die, has stood,
My feet returning stand.

A mist of memory broods and floats,
The Border waters flow;
The air is full of ballad notes,
Borne out of long ago.

Old songs that sung themselves to me,
Sweet through a boy's day dream,
While trout below the blossom'd tree
Plashed in the golden steam.

* * * * *

Twilight, and Tweed, and Eildon Hill,
Fair and too fair you be;
You tell me that the voice is still
That should have welcomed me.

1870.

METEMPSYCHOSIS

I shall not see thee, nay, but I shall know
Perchance, the grey eyes in another's eyes,
Shall guess thy curls in gracious locks that flow
On purest brows, yea, and the swift surmise
Shall follow and track, and find thee in disguise
Of all sad things, and fair, where sunsets glow,
When through the scent of heather, faint and low,
The weak wind whispers to the day that dies.

From all sweet art, and out of all old rhyme,
Thine eyes and lips are light and song to me;
The shadows of the beauty of all time,
In song or story are but shapes of thee;
Alas, the shadowy shapes! ah, sweet my dear,
Shall life or death bring all thy being near?

LOST IN HADES

I dreamed that somewhere in the shadowy place,
Grief of farewell unspoken was forgot
In welcome, and regret remembered not;
And hopeless prayer accomplished turned to praise
On lips that had been songless many days;
Hope had no more to hope for, and desire
And dread were overpast, in white attire
New born we walked among the new world's ways.

Then from the press of shades a spirit threw
Towards me such apples as these gardens bear;
And turning, I was 'ware of her, and knew
And followed her fleet voice and flying hair, —
Followed, and found her not, and seeking you
I found you never, dearest, anywhere.

A STAR IN THE NIGHT

The perfect piteous beauty of thy face
Is like a star the dawning drives away;
Mine eyes may never see in the bright day
Thy pallid halo, thy supernal grace;
But in the night from forth the silent place
Thou comest, dim in dreams, as doth a stray
Star of the starry flock that in the grey
Is seen, and lost, and seen a moment's space.

And as the earth at night turns to a star,
Loved long ago, and dearer than the sun,
So in the spiritual place afar,
At night our souls are mingled and made one,
And wait till one night fall, and one dawn rise,
That brings no noon too splendid for your eyes.

A SUNSET ON YARROW

The wind and the day had lived together,
They died together, and far away
Spoke farewell in the sultry weather,
Out of the sunset, over the heather,
The dying wind and the dying day.

Far in the south, the summer levin
Flushed, a flame in the grey soft air:
We seemed to look on the hills of heaven;
You saw within, but to me 'twas given
To see your face, as an angel's, there.

Never again, ah surely never
Shall we wait and watch, where of old we stood,
The low good-night of the hill and the river,
The faint light fade, and the wan stars quiver,
Twain grown one in the solitude.

ANOTHER WAY

*Come to me in my dreams, and then,
One saith, I shall be well again,
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.*

Nay, come not *thou* in dreams, my sweet,
With shadowy robes, and silent feet,
And with the voice, and with the eyes

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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