



DELPHI
CLASSICS

Adelaide Anne Procter

Complete Works

DELPHI POETS SERIES

DELPHI POETS SERIES

Adelaide Anne Procter

(1825-1864)



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DELPHI POETS SERIES

Adelaide Anne Procter



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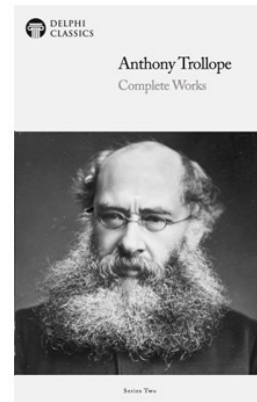
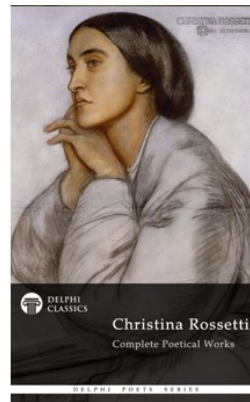
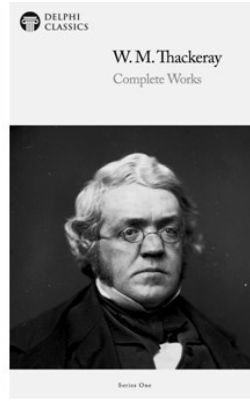
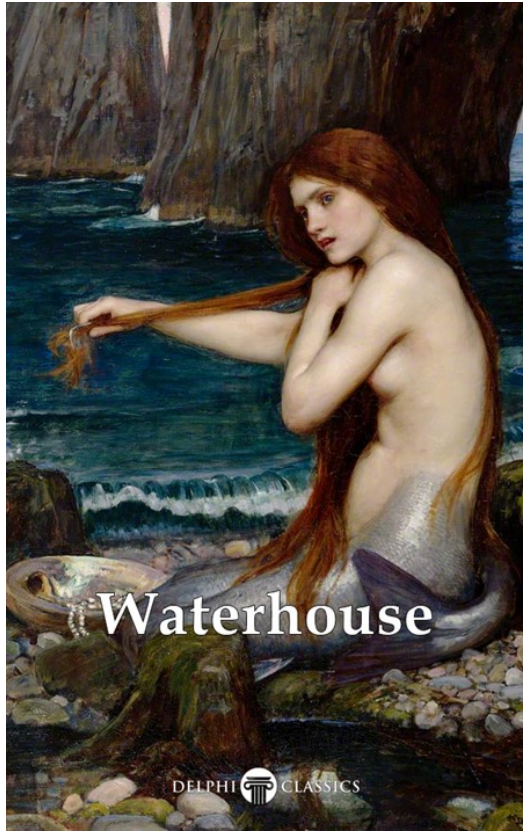
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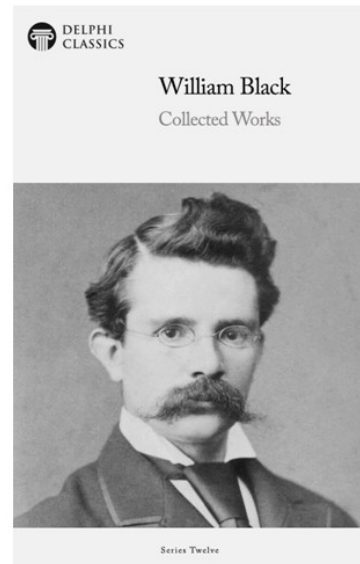
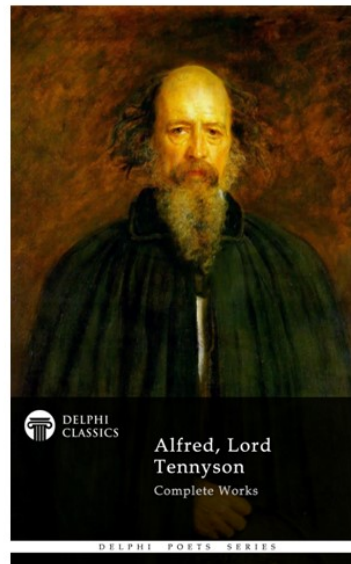
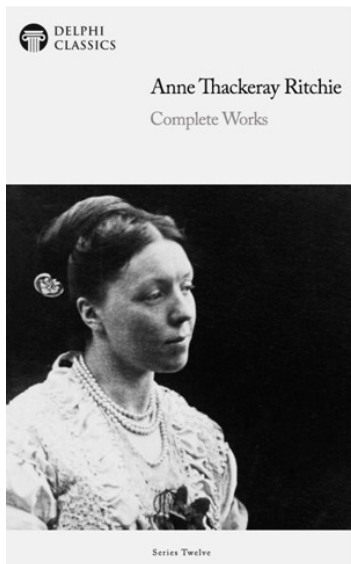
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NOTE



When reading poetry on an eReader, it is advisable to use a small font size and landscape mode, which will allow the lines of poetry to display correctly.

The Life and Poetry of Adelaide Anne Procter



Bedford Square, Bloomsbury — Procter's birthplace



25 Bedford Square, Bloomsbury — the birthplace

Brief Introduction: Adelaide Anne Procter by Elizabeth Lee

From 'Dictionary of National Biography', 1885-1900, Volume 46

ADELAIDE ANN PROCTER (1825-1864), poetess, eldest daughter and first child of Bryan Waller Procter and his wife Anne Skepper, was born 30 Oct. 1825 at 25 Bedford Square, London. Her parents were residing there with Basil Montagu and his wife, Mrs. Procter's stepfather and mother (Barry Cornwall, *Autobiography*). Her father delighted in her, addressing a sonnet to her in November 1825, beginning 'Child of my heart! My sweet beloved First-born!' and calling her in one of his songs 'golden-tressed Adelaide.' She early showed a fondness for poetry, and grew up amid surroundings calculated to develop her literary taste. Before she could write, her mother used to copy out her favourite poems for her in an album of small notepaper, which 'looks,' wrote Dickens, 'as if she had carried it about like another little girl might have carried a doll.' Frances A. Kemble wrote in 1832: 'Mrs. Procter talked to me a great deal about her little Adelaide, who must be a wonderful creature' (*Records of a Girlhood*, iii. 203). N. P. Willis describes her as 'a beautiful girl, delicate, gentle, and pensive,' looking as if she 'knew she was a poet's child' (*Pencillings by the Way*). About 1851 she and two of her sisters became Roman Catholics. The incident does not seem to have disturbed the peace of the family (Barry Cornwall, *Autobiography*).

Adelaide commenced author, unknown to her family, by contributing poems to the 'Book of Beauty' in 1843, when she was eighteen. In 1853 she began a long connection with 'Household Words' by sending some poems under the name of Mary Berwick. Dickens, the editor, was her father's friend, and she adopted the policy of anonymity because she did not wish to benefit by his friendly partiality. He approved of her verses, and printed many of them in ignorance of their source. In December 1854 he recommended the Procters to read a pretty poem by 'Miss Berwick' in the forthcoming Christmas number of 'Household Words.' Next day Adelaide revealed her secret at home. All her poems, except two in the 'Cornhill' and two in 'Good Words,' were first published in 'Household Words' or 'All the Year Round.' In 1853 she visited Turin.

In May 1858 her poems were collected and published in two volumes under the title of 'Legends and Lyrics.' A second edition was issued in October, a third and fourth in February and December 1859, and a tenth in 1866. In 1859 Miss Procter, who was thoroughly interested in social questions affecting women, was appointed by the council of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science member of a committee to consider fresh ways of providing employment for women (cf. Emily Faithfull, *Victoria Regia*, pref.) Mrs. Jameson and Lord Shaftesbury were on the same committee. In 1861 Miss Procter edited a volume of miscellaneous verse and prose, set up in type by women compositors, and entitled 'Victoria Regia.' She contributed a poem entitled 'Links with Heaven.' Among other contributors were Tennyson, Henry Taylor, Lowell, Thackeray, Harriet Martineau, and Matthew Arnold. The next year Miss Procter published a little volume of poems called 'A Chaplet of Verse,' for the benefit of a night refuge.

Her health was never robust. In 1847 Fanny Kemble wrote: 'Her character and intellectual gifts, and the delicate state of her health, all make her an object of interest

to me' (*Records of Later Life*, iii. 290). In 1862 she tried the cure at Malvern (cf. Wemyss Reid, *Life of Lord Houghton*, ii. 84-5); but, after being confined to her room for fifteen months, she died of consumption on 2 Feb. 1864, and was buried in Kensal Green cemetery (cf. the *Month*, January 1866: Mary Howitt, *Autobiography*, ii. 155). She was of a cheerful, modest, and sympathetic disposition, with no small fund of humour. An engraved portrait by Jeens appears in the 1866 edition of 'Legends and Lyrics,' and there is an oil-painting attributed to Emma Galiotti.

Miss Procter, if not a great poet, had a gift for verse, and expressed herself with distinction, charm, and sincerity. She borrowed little or nothing, and showed to best advantage in her narrative poems. 'The Angel's Story,' the 'Legend of Bregenz,' the 'Legend of Provence,' the 'Story of a Faithful Soul,' are found in numerous poetical anthologies. Her songs, 'Cleansing Fires,' 'The Message,' and 'The Lost Chord,' are well known, and many of her hymns are in common use. Her poems were published in America, and also translated into German. In 1877 the demand for Miss Procter's poems in England was in excess of those of any living writer except Tennyson (Barry Cornwall, *Autobiography*,).



The poet's father, Bryan Waller Procter (1787-1874) was also a poet, who served as a Commissioner in Lunacy.



The noted novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, featured here in an 1851 portrait by George Richmond, was a close friend of the Procter family.



Dickens, 1867 — the great author was a great admirer of Procter's verse and employed her to contribute several pomes to his Extra Christmas numbers of 'Household Words'.



Portrait of Queen Victoria (1819-1901) by Franz Xaver Winterhalter, 1843



Matilda Hays (standing) with Charlotte Cushman, 1858 — Hays is believed to have had a love interest in Procter, who dedicated 'Legends and Lyrics' to her. Procter also wrote a love poem for Hays entitled, 'A Retrospect'. Hays oversaw the tending of Procter's grave after her death and mourned her passing throughout her later years.



An undated portrait of Procter by Emma Gaggiotti Richards

Legends and Lyrics: First Series (1858)

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DEDICATION

TO MATILDA M. HAYS.



“OUR TOKENS OF love are for the most part barbarous. Cold and lifeless, because they do not represent our life. The only gift is a portion of thyself. Therefore let the farmer give his corn; the miner, a gem; the sailor, coral and shells; the painter, his picture; and the poet, his poem.” — Emerson’s Essays.

A. A. P.

May, 1858

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