

Legends and Lyrics - Second Series

Legends and Lyrics - Second Series by Adelaide Anne Procter is a collection of poetry that reflects on themes of faith, love, and moral integrity, offering lyrical and inspirational verses that emphasize spiritual and emotional depth.

VERSE: A LEGEND OF PROVENCE

In a moment of solitude and dim light, the narrator finds themselves entranced by a portrait of a sorrowful nun, launching into a legend tied to this image. The story, set in the picturesque south of France, unfolds around a convent known as "Our Lady of the Hawthorns," celebrated for its benevolence, skill in the healing arts, and a peaceful life dedicated to service and prayer. Among the nuns, Sister Angela, a young orphan raised within the convent's walls, stood out for her devotion, innocence, and the joy she brought to her sisters.

Angela's peaceful existence took a dramatic turn when war brought a wave of wounded soldiers to the convent's door. Among them was a foreign knight whose tales of the world beyond the convent walls filled Angela's imagination with dreams of chivalry, romance, and beauty. Enticed by these stories and the affection she developed for the knight, Angela fled the convent with him, only to face betrayal and disillusionment. As the years passed, Angela's life outside the convent spiraled into misery, leading her to yearn for her former home and redemption.

One night, driven by desperation and remorse, Angela returned to the convent. In a miraculous turn, she discovered that the Virgin Mary had taken her place during her absence, ensuring none knew of her departure. Wrapped in this divine forgiveness and acceptance, Angela found peace.

The story concludes years later as Angela, on her deathbed, confides her tale to her fellow sisters, emphasizing the mercy and forgiveness that shaped her final years back at the convent. Her life and return exemplify the profound themes of repentance and divine grace, leaving a lasting impression of serenity and redemption on those she leaves behind.

VERSE: BEYOND

"Beyond" is a meditative poem exploring the transcendence of love beyond the constraints of earthly existence and its inferior elements—pride, fame, science, learning, wealth, and power. These, despite their seeming significance, fade into obsolescence against the backdrop of eternity, emphasizing that Heaven, in its purity, cannot accommodate such transient achievements. The poem suggests that on Earth, love's journey begins but remains constrained, unable to flourish amidst the mundanity and materialism that predominate. It posits that love, when true and unalloyed, endures the trials of earthly life—symbolized by the reference to a "bloody baptism of woe"—only to be perfected and completed in the afterlife.

The poem contrasts fleeting, insincere loves, which are abundant and easily perishable, with genuine Love—portrayed as a mighty, enduring force, destined to be reborn and transfigured in the divine light of God's realm. The speaker firmly believes in the infinite strength and brilliance that Love will possess when it finally arrives in its celestial home, having been purified and empowered through its earthly adversities. This perspective is steeped in the reassurance that the essence of love, and the profound connections it fosters among individuals, will not only persist beyond death but will also be recognized and celebrated in the afterlife, intensifying the joys of Heaven.

Central to the poem is the refutation of doubts concerning the afterlife's ability to preserve the core of human relationships—the "Life of Life." The speaker rejects the notion that love could ever be a "soulless clod," to be discarded if it failed to transcend mortality. Instead, the poem champions the conviction that love, in its truest form, is destined for a divine evolution, retaining its identity and intensifying in its capacity to glorify the heavenly realm. Through its lyrical discourse, "Beyond" articulates a vision of love as the quintessential, immutable force, whose journey from earthly constraints to celestial fulfillment embodies the ultimate reconciliation of human longing with divine perfection.

VERSE: PHILIP AND MILDRED

In the serene twilight, Philip and Mildred tread the quiet valley, embroiled in the somber air of a farewell instead of the joyous occasion of their intended wedding. Mildred, whose childhood dreams have always been entwined with Philip, now faces a future apart as Philip is called to London, propelled not by his ambition but by recognition of his genius by others. A traveler of renown has seen his potential and invited him to a world of greater opportunities, a chance Mildred cannot deny him despite the personal cost. On what was to be their wedding day, they exchange vows of enduring love and part with the promise of Philip's return upon establishing his name.

Mildred, bereft but steadfast, clings to Philip's letters as her only solace in a life that now moves amidst shadows, her existence dimmed by his absence. Philip's letters, abundant with his exploits and ambitions, provide a vivid contrast to her static life, illuminating her days with tales of foreign lands and scholarly achievements. Yet, as his success grows, so does the chasm between them, his world expanding far beyond the confines of the village life they once shared.

Years pass, with Philip's fame and fortune soaring, leading him to claim Mildred as his bride at last. The reunion is bittersweet; the man who returns is markedly changed, his youthful idealism replaced by a seasoned assurance. Mildred perceives a distance that cannot be bridged by mere proximity, a realization that deepens as they transition to life together in the city. The home she had envisioned, filled with shared dreams and mutual growth, feels empty despite Philip's kindness and their material comfort.

As time unfolds, Mildred comes to the sorrowful understanding that while Philip loves her, he has moved beyond her in spirit and intellect. The life she leads beside him, though devoid of strife, lacks the intimacy and connection she yearns for. Her realization that love, no matter how profound, cannot always transcend the divergences wrought by time and experience, marks a poignant reflection on the complexities of human relationships and the evolution of individual paths within them.

VERSE: LIGHT AND SHADE

In the verse "Light and Shade" from the second series of "Legends and Lyrics," the poet delves into the complex fabric of human experience, juxtaposing the dualities of light and darkness, success and failure, and joy and sorrow. The poem begins with a commendation for accepting life's trials with humility and understanding, recognizing that suffering can be a source of growth and enlightenment. It acknowledges the inevitability of bitter hours when simple truths no longer provide solace, urging a deeper recognition of our interconnectedness within the human family.

The poet emphasizes the importance of understanding our lives as part of a greater divine brotherhood, where each person's actions and experiences are interlinked, contributing to a larger, more intricate tapestry of existence. This interconnectedness is portrayed not only as a material dependency but also as a bond of shared destinies and collective evolution towards a greater good.

Through the metaphor of a tree struck by lightning, the verse beautifully illustrates how personal loss and pain can reveal previously unseen heavens, suggesting that our darkest moments may lead to newfound clarity and purpose. It conveys a message of hope, asserting that the echoes of our deepest struggles can resonate across vast distances, touching and transforming the lives of others in unforeseen ways.

The notion of failure is reinterpreted as a vital part of a grand, harmonious design. Every setback, every cry of anguish, is framed as an essential note in the symphony of existence, ultimately contributing to a fuller, more complex melody. The poem reassures the reader that their suffering and their joy, their defeats and their triumphs, are all integral to the divine orchestration of life.

In a poignant conclusion, "Light and Shade" suggests that our individual lives, with all their imperfections and contradictions, might only find their true significance within the context of a broader, universal harmony. It invites us to find solace in the thought that our personal narratives, no matter how fraught with discord, play a crucial role in the unfolding of a greater, more beautiful whole, even if their ultimate purpose becomes clear only in a transcendent, all-encompassing light.

VERSE: THE STORY OF THE FAITHFUL SOUL

The tale "The Story of the Faithful Soul," rooted in an old French legend, whispers of spirits bound, undergoing penance in purgatorial realms. These spirits, shrouded in remnants of earthly taints, find solace only during the feast of Mary. It is during such holy observances that the Archangel Michael, bearer of relief, decrees a temporary reprieve, known affectionately as "Our Lady's Peace." Amidst this serenity, a singular wail disrupts the harmonious chorus, its source a spirit unable to embrace peace while ensnared by earthly bonds of love and loss.

This spirit, once promised in union just to be seized by Death's untimely claim, recounts the tale of a love left languishing, a partner enveloped in shadows of despair, capable of eclipsing even the torment of purgatorial flames. The spirit's anguish, rather than being quelled by divine blessings, intensifies with the knowledge of the beloved's suffering. On what was to be a day of joined fates, Death had intervened, leaving the partner in a mire of sorrow for a year.

Hearing this lament, Archangel Michael, the harbinger of heavenly mercy, offers a solemn proposition rooted in compassion. The spirit, if choosing, could once more tread the earthly realm, to offer a whisper of consolation, a balm for the beleaguered heart of the one left behind. This divine intervention illuminates the profundity of love, a force transcending the confines of life and death, capable of invoking celestial grace.

Thus, the narrative unfurls, delving into themes of undying love, the cyclic agony of loss, and the quest for solace amidst eternal separations. It paints a vivid portrait of the bittersweet interplay between celestial duty and mortal affection, encapsulating the soul's relentless yearning for closure and comfort. The legend, with its mystical undertones, serves as a poignant reminder of love's enduring power, echoing through the annals of time and beyond the veil of mortality, where even in the depths of purgatory, a single soul's plea for peace can stir the heavens to mercy.

VERSE: DISCOURAGED

"Discouraged" is a lyrical poem that vividly details the journey of a stream from its modest beginnings to its eventual merge with the sea, paralleling the emotional and philosophical journey of the speaker. The poem begins with the speaker discovering a small, babbling streamlet, barely visible as it trickles through soft moss, and decides to follow it to the sea, embarking on a journey of discovery and companionship.

As the stream progresses, it becomes a mirror to various landscapes and forms of beauty, from gleaming amid the purple heather, dashing through mountain gorges like a silver thread, to eventually slowing down, as though savoring its journey amongst the rushes and an array of delicate flowers like the Willow-herb and Forget-me-nots. Each phase of the stream's journey is meticulously described, evoking a sense of movement and transformation. The stream then grows broader, becoming a haven for cattle and reflecting the sky in its serene waters.

However, as the river quickens and deepens, becoming more fierce, the speaker's initial excitement and dedication are replaced with disillusionment and despair. The rough, stony path mirrors the speaker's tiredness and mounting disappointment with the challenging journey, leading to a moment of capitulation where the speaker abandons the quest for the sea, fearing the anticipation was in vain.

In the concluding stanzas, the speaker finds solace in distraction, loitering among the meadows far from the river, attempting to escape the constant reminder of their abandoned quest. Yet, there's a lingering regret and wonder about what might have been if the journey had continued—a few more steps could have revealed the wide, infinite sea. This evokes a contemplation on giving up too soon, suggesting that true fulfillment requires perseverance through adversity. The poem elegantly captures the complex emotions of inspiration, struggle, despair, and withdrawal, urging the reader to ponder the value of pursuing one's goals despite the obstacles.

VERSE: A WOMAN'S ANSWER

In "A Woman's Answer," the speaker articulates an expansive vision of love that surpasses the confines of romantic devotion to a single individual. She begins by challenging the notion that a woman's role is solely to offer unlimited love to her partner alone, asserting instead that her heart responds to a vast array of claims beyond just his. The poem envelops the reader in a tapestry of affection that the speaker has for the natural world, seasons, and memories, as well as the deep emotional connections she has formed beyond her romantic relationship.

The speaker cherishes the summer for its nurturing light and warmth, reminiscent of when she first encountered her love, and holds the winter dear for the return of her beloved after a long absence. Stars and flowers are imbued with personal significance; stars as distant companions during separation, and flowers as keepers of cherished moments. These natural elements serve not just as backdrops to her love story, but as integral parts of her emotional world.

Moreover, the speaker values the acknowledgment and respect from others, which enriches her sense of self and strengthens the bond she shares with her partner. Her heart is stirred not only by personal interactions but also by the recognition of her beloved's virtues by others. This external validation heightens her own appreciation and love for him.

The poem extends the sphere of her affection to include those influenced by her love—those who have been comforted by him, and even those who have forgotten him, reflecting a magnanimous spirit that finds it possible to empathize with a wide range of experiences and emotions connected to her beloved.

Lastly, the speaker expresses a profound attachment to the poets and books they shared, indicating how literature and shared intellectual experiences have become entwined with her love and memories. Through this, the poem subtly argues that love, in its truest form, is not a limited resource but a multifaceted emotion that enriches the lover's connections to the world and its inhabitants.

"A Woman's Answer" beautifully encapsulates a woman's rebuttal to restrictive notions of love, illustrating a robust and inclusive vision that transcends romantic love to encompass a broader appreciation of the world and its various relationships. Through elegant imagery and a heartfelt voice, the speaker asserts the breadth

and depth of her capacity to love, challenging conventional boundaries and celebrating the multidimensional nature of human affection.

VERSE: A LETTER

"Legends and Lyrics - Second Series" contains a deeply poignant verse titled "A LETTER," elucidating the complexities and emotive intensity of attempting to convey love through written words. The speaker starts by expressing a yearning to encapsulate the entirety of their affection in a letter to their beloved. The essence of the struggle lies in the inherent inadequacy of written love as a medium to fully articulate feelings, which, according to the speaker, would be much more effortlessly communicated through the simple act of being in the beloved's presence, where non-verbal cues such as holding hands or looking into each other's eyes speak volumes.

The speaker details the process of writing the letter, followed by a period of contemplation and doubt concerning how the letter would be received by their loved one. There's an underlying fear about whether the moment of its reading would align with an appropriate mood or situation, pondering if the letter might either be unwelcome or not given the gravitas it was intended to carry. This reflection leads to a moment of hesitation, influenced perhaps by a mix of shyness, love, and pride, culminating in a decision not to send the letter, after all, leaving the speaker to turn their gaze wistfully towards the sunset, a symbol of unrequited or unrevealed love.

In a moment of epiphany, the speaker realizes that the true essence of love transcends the physical and temporal, hinting at a spiritual or telepathic connection between lovers. Embracing this concept, the speaker decides to "send" their love through the silence, holding onto a belief or hope that their beloved, perhaps in a moment of solitary reflection, would sense and reciprocate this intangible communication of deep affection.

Through lush, evocative language, this verse captures the eternal dilemma faced by lovers: the struggle to adequately convey the depth of one's feelings through mere words. It highlights an alternative, almost mystical pathway of emotional exchange where souls can communicate beyond the limitations of the material world, suggesting that the most profound expressions of love are often those felt rather than spoken.

VERSE: OPTIMUS

"Optimus," a verse from "Legends and Lyrics - Second Series," eloquently conveys the theme of altruism over personal glory. It begins by warning against a deceptive snare that appeals to the noble-hearted with the allure of doing good, which, despite its appealing façade, misguides by advocating for the assumption of duties not meant for oneself. The verse portrays this temptation as a false angel, advocating for action when one finds others failing in their duties or when great tasks remain unaddressed, attributing silence and inaction to others' sloth or fear, urging the individual to undertake the tasks themselves.

However, the poem swiftly counters this temptation with a call to recognize the sacredness of individual responsibilities. It emphasizes that each person is called to their unique duties, and one must not overstep by taking on tasks assigned to others, no matter how noble the intention. Instead, it suggests a more virtuous path: to awaken and encourage others to fulfill their obligations, highlighting that facilitating and supporting others in their duties can be equally, if not more, noble.

The verse stresses the importance of empowering others—by clarifying their responsibilities, aiding their preparation, and offering encouragement—and posits that such support not only fulfills a divine intention but also brings a deeper satisfaction than achieving personal accolades. The poem concludes by suggesting that by prioritizing others' success over one's own achievements, one attains a purer, more profound sense of accomplishment and honor, aligning with divine virtues of selflessness and altruism. This narrative

seamlessly blends moral instruction with poetic expression, advocating for a recognition of collective duty and individual limitation within the pursuit of righteousness.

VERSE: TWO WORLDS

In "Two Worlds," a chapter from the collection "Legends and Lyrics - Second Series," the ethereal nature of God's world is contrasted with the tarnished reality of the human domain. This poetic verse opens with a vivid illustration of God's creation, abundant in beauty and light, enveloped in a majesty that adorns the day, orchestrates the nocturnal sky with stars, and fills the earth with melodious wonder. The essence of this divine environment is encapsulated in the omnipresent notion of Love, a force that interweaves through the silver veins of the earth, the autumn tempests, and the soft murmurings of doves. The poem further elaborates on the harmony found within God's realm, where Strength is rendered beautiful, Beauty emerges strong, and both are caressed by Light, God's celestial veil, creating a symphony of sweetness across the globe.

The narrative shifts dramatically as the focus turns to the world fashioned by mankind, depicting a stark antithesis mired in darkness, decay, and sin. Human endeavors, however noble in intent, are invariably flawed, corrupted by an innate leprosy of spirit. The human landscape is described as bleak, as humanity's touch desecrates the native tenderness of earth and distorts the benevolence from above, substituting Strength with oppression, transforming Beauty and Joy into afflictions, and Love into a devastating blemish.

This mortally woven domain is characterized by Pain and Terror. Man, inheriting a world of purity, has ensnared it in nets of sorrow and despair, marking his territory with desolation, distinctly his curse rather than God's. Amid this despondency, the chapter elucidates that although God's world persistently reaches out, mankind is engrossed in the cacophony of his own making, blaming the Divine for his own failures.

In essence, "Two Worlds" serves as a profound meditation on the dichotomy between the divine creation and human alteration of the world. It laments the spiritual myopia that prevents humanity from seeing and embracing the fundamental essence of Love and beauty in God's creation, urging a recognition of and a return to the pure, unfettered glory of the world as originally intended by the Divine.

VERSE: A NEW MOTHER

In "Legends and Lyrics - Second Series," a poignant narrative unfolds around Sir Arthur, his children, and the entry of a new figure into the family dynamic following a significant loss. Sir Arthur's wife, mother to their three children, is dearly missed. Her presence is keenly felt within the household, particularly through the adherence to routines that keep her memory alive, such as the nightly viewing of her portrait. Upon Sir Arthur's remarriage to Margaret, a friend of his late wife, the children struggle with this transition, expressing their loyalty to their mother's memory.

Margaret, despite her efforts to bond and win the affection of her stepchildren, faces coldness and rejection. They cannot see past their loyalty to their mother, and this loyalty is deepened by their nurse's stories of the late Lady. Sir Arthur, on the other hand, experiences a renewal of spirits with Margaret, which contrasts sharply with his previous, more somber demeanor.

The narrative deeply explores themes of grief, loyalty, and the struggles of blending families in the face of loss. The late Lady's friendship with Margaret provides a complex backdrop, suggesting a blend of duty, sacrifice, and unspoken tensions. Margaret's attempt to bridge the divide with the children, especially her request to the eldest girl to call her "Margaret" as her mother did, is a poignant moment of connection, yet it underscores the chasm her presence has inadvertently created.

As war looms, Sir Arthur is called to duty, deepening the sense of impending loss and separation in the household. His conversation with the children, invoking the memory of their mother and her relationship with Margaret, seeks to mend the fractures within the family. He emphasizes the bond between their mother and Margaret, hoping to frame Margaret's presence in a light that fosters acceptance and warmth.

The approach Sir Arthur takes, focusing on shared history and deep connections, marks an effort to weave together the strands of family loyalty, love, and memory. This story captures the delicate balance of honoring past relationships while navigating the intricacies of new ones, set against a backdrop of personal and societal upheaval.

VERSE: MY WILL

In the verse titled "My Will" from "Legends and Lyrics - Second Series," the speaker, devoid of tangible wealth like lands or gold, devises a bequest of intangible but deeply personal gifts to beloved individuals in anticipation of a time when they will no longer be present. To Mabel, the speaker wills their memory and name, cherished through an unwavering bond that refuses to share even the slightest thought acknowledged by the speaker. Bertha, recognized for her potential to surpass the speaker's contributions to their kind, is bequeathed an ongoing project — albeit tangled and unfinished — with faith that her efforts will not only complete but elevate it, endearing it to her more for its initiator's sake.

Ruth is entrusted with the speaker's dearest vehicle of duty, a task demanding persistent commitment and emotional resilience, valued for its inherent blessing and the shared years of struggle to uphold it. To Alice, the speaker leaves their undiminished love, a sanctuary of warmth and light against the encroachment of darkness or cold in her life, untouched by past hurts, a gift exclusive and steadfast.

Concluding, the speaker contemplates the value of these legacies, questioning their worth yet confident in the future enrichment of these gifts by the passage of years. Despite the apparent poverty of material bequests, the speaker avers a wealth incomparable, rooted not in the gifts themselves but in the wealth of true, enduring affection and legacy they represent. This verse embodies a thoughtful contemplation on the intangible, yet invaluable, legacies one can pass on, emphasizing emotional bonds and personal growth over material possessions.

VERSE: THE CARVER'S LESSON

In "The Carver's Lesson," the speaker imparts a profound message about the essence of art and creativity. The poem opens by dispelling the notion that mere technical skill and dexterity constitute the entirety of an artist's craft. Instead, it insists upon the presence of a hidden spirit, an enigmatic essence that animates the work, enabling it to transcend mere physical form. This spirit, according to the speaker, is the ability to infuse one's creations with deep, noble thoughts—turning every carved flower, bird, or angel into a vessel for divine or wise messages.

The poet emphasizes the importance of embedding these creations with "tender words of peace," and "some true, loving message to your kind." This act of embedding messages goes largely unappreciated in the present, eliciting mixed reactions from onlookers who may praise, blame, or simply ignore the artwork without recognizing the thought and patience invested in it.

However, the speaker envisions a future where, long after the carvers have passed and their names are forgotten, their creations will persist, imbued with timeless messages. In this future, individuals burdened with strife or suffering might stumble upon these works and find solace, guidance, and a gentle "rain" of compassion within the "quaint" and seemingly ancient carvings. Through engaging with the art, these

individuals might feel as though the carvings are directly communicating with them, offering insights and solutions to their pains—unaware that these messages were intentionally left behind by the artists.

"The Carver's Lesson" ultimately celebrates the power of art to convey enduring messages of love, wisdom, and comfort. It suggests that true artistic expression is not merely a display of technical skill but a profound act of communication, capable of reaching across generations to touch souls and ease burdens. Through this lens, the poem itself serves as a loving message, encouraging readers to look beyond the surface of things to uncover the profound truths hidden within.

VERSE: A CONTRAST

In "A Contrast," the narrator invites us to gaze into an ebony casket, hinting at its contents—a few old letters destined to be burnt, a quaint locket, a ring, but most importantly, a small portrait hanging by a crimson string. The casket, not opened for many years, holds relics from a past relationship ended in anger. The significance of the little portrait is profound; it represents a younger version of the narrator, glowing with optimism and unaware of the life's harsh realities yet to come.

The portrait captures a time when the narrator's face bore a radiant vision, adorned with blue eyes that gazed into the future with boundless trust and anticipation. It embodied the innocence and unshaken confidence in the promises of tomorrow. Yet, the narrator reflects on the stark contrast between her past and present self—transiting from a dreamful young spirit to a weary, disillusioned woman, whose early dreams have faded away, encapsulating the inevitability of life's cruel transformations.

This recount is not solely a mourning of lost youth or the harsh awakening from life's naive dreams, but also an empathetic reflection. The narrator pities her younger self for being unaware of the forthcoming challenges and disillusionment while asserting a deeper sense of understanding towards the inevitabilities of change. Life, as depicted, drifts people into unforeseen trajectories, gradually healing old wounds and loosening the grips of past ties, often making individuals forget the intensity of their previous experiences and how much they have altered over time.

The act of revisiting the portrait and the casket's contents serves as a poignant reminder of the passage of time, the innocence lost, and the wisdom gained through hardship. It is an acknowledgment of life's fleeting nature, yet an appreciation of the growth and healing that often goes unnoticed. In reminiscing a lost time through the tangible memories of the portrait, letters, locket, and ring, the narrator finds a bittersweet solace in recognizing how far she has journeyed from the person she once was—illustrating the profound transformation one undergoes through the experiences of love, loss, and the relentless march of time.