

= Adelaide Anne Procter =

Adelaide Anne Procter (30 October 1825 ? 2 February 1864) was an English poet and philanthropist . She worked prominently on behalf of unemployed women and the homeless , and was actively involved with feminist groups and journals . Procter never married . She became unhealthy , possibly due to her charity work , and died of tuberculosis at the age of 38 .

Procter 's literary career began when she was a teenager ; her poems were primarily published in Charles Dickens 's periodicals *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* and later published in book form . Her charity work and her conversion to Roman Catholicism appear to have strongly influenced her poetry , which deals most commonly with such subjects as homelessness , poverty , and fallen women .

Procter was the favourite poet of Queen Victoria . Her poetry went through numerous editions in the 19th century ; Coventry Patmore called her the most popular poet of the day , after Alfred , Lord Tennyson . Her poems were set to music and made into hymns , and were published in the United States and Germany as well as in England . Nonetheless , by the early 20th century her reputation had diminished , and few modern critics have given her work attention . Those who have , however , argue that Procter 's work is significant , in part for what it reveals about how Victorian women expressed otherwise repressed feelings .

= = Life = =

Adelaide Anne Procter was born at 25 Bedford Square in the Bloomsbury district of London , on 30 October 1825 to the poet Bryan Waller Procter and his wife Anne (née Skepper) . The family had strong literary ties : novelist Elizabeth Gaskell enjoyed her visits to the Procter household , and Procter 's father was friends with poet Leigh Hunt , essayist Charles Lamb , and novelist Charles Dickens , as well as being acquainted with poet William Wordsworth and critic William Hazlitt . Family friend Bessie Rayner Belloc wrote in 1895 that " everybody of any literary pretension whatever seemed to flow in and out of the house . The Kembles , the Macreadys , the Rossettis , the Dickens [sic] , the Thackerays , never seemed to be exactly visitors , but to belong to the place . " Author and actress Fanny Kemble wrote that young Procter " looks like a poet 's child , and a poet ... [with] a preter @-@ naturally [sic] thoughtful , mournful expression for such a little child " .

Dickens spoke highly of Procter 's quick intelligence . By his account , the young Procter mastered without difficulty the subjects to which she turned her attention :

When she was quite a young child , she learnt with facility several of the problems of Euclid . As she grew older , she acquired the French , Italian , and German languages ... piano @-@ forte ... [and] drawing . But , as soon as she had completely vanquished the difficulties of any one branch of study , it was her way to lose interest in it , and pass to another .

A voracious reader , Procter was largely self @-@ taught , though she studied at Queen 's College in Harley Street in 1850 . The college had been founded in 1848 by Frederick Maurice , a Christian Socialist ; the faculty included novelist Charles Kingsley , composer John Hullah , and writer Henry Morley .

Procter showed a love of poetry from an early age , carrying with her while still a young child a " tiny album ... into which her favourite passages were copied for her by her mother 's hand before she herself could write ... as another little girl might have carried a doll " . Procter published her first poem while still a teenager ; the poem , " Ministering Angels " , appeared in Heath 's *Book of Beauty* in 1843 . In 1853 she submitted work to Dickens 's *Household Words* under the name " Mary Berwick " , wishing that her work be judged on its own merits rather than in relation to Dickens 's friendship with her father ; Dickens did not learn " Berwick 's " identity till the following year . The poem 's publication began Procter 's long association with Dickens 's periodicals ; in all , Procter published 73 poems in *Household Words* and 7 poems in *All the Year Round* , most of which were collected into her first two volumes of poetry , both entitled *Legends and Lyrics* . She was also published in *Good Words and Cornhill* . As well as writing poetry , Procter was the editor of the journal *Victoria Regia* , which became the showpiece of the Victoria Press , " an explicitly feminist

publishing venture " .

In 1851 , Procter converted to Roman Catholicism . Following her conversion , Procter became extremely active in several charitable and feminist causes . She became a member of the Langham Place Group , which set out to improve conditions for women , and was friends with feminists Bessie Rayner Parkes (later Bessie Rayner Belloc) and Barbara Leigh Smith , later Barbara Bodichon . Procter helped found the English Woman 's Journal in 1858 and , in 1859 , the Society for the Promotion of the Employment of Women , both of which focused on expanding women 's economic and employment opportunities . Though on paper Procter was merely one member among many , fellow @-@ member Jessie Boucherett considered her to be the " animating spirit " of the Society . Her third volume of poetry , A Chaplet of Verses (1861) , was published for the benefit of a Catholic Night Refuge for Women and Children that had been founded in 1860 at Providence Row in East London .

Procter became engaged in 1858 , according to a letter that her friend William Makepeace Thackeray wrote to his daughters that year . The identity of Procter 's fiancé remains unknown , and the proposed marriage never took place . According to her German biographer Ferdinand Janku , the engagement seems to have lasted several years before being broken off by Procter 's fiancé . Critic Gill Gregory suggests that Procter may have been a lesbian and in love with Matilda Hays , a fellow member of the Society for the Promotion of the Employment of Women ; other critics have called Procter 's relationship with Hays " emotionally intense . " Procter 's first volume of poetry , Legends and Lyrics (1858) was dedicated to Hays and that same year Procter wrote a poem titled " To M.M.H. " in which Procter " expresses love for Hays ... [Hays was a] novelist and translator of George Sand and a controversial figure ... [who] dressed in men 's clothes and had lived with the sculptor Harriet Hosmer in Rome earlier in the 1850s . " While several men showed interest in her , Procter never married .

Procter fell ill in 1862 ; Dickens and others have suggested that her illness was due to her extensive charity work , which " appears to have unduly taxed her strength " . An attempt to improve her health by taking a cure at Malvern failed . On 3 February 1864 , Procter died of tuberculosis , having been bed @-@ ridden for almost a year . Her death was described in the press as a " national calamity " . Procter was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery .

= = Literary career = =

Procter 's poetry was strongly influenced by her religious beliefs and charity work ; homelessness , poverty , and fallen women are frequent themes . Procter 's prefaces to her volumes of poetry stress the misery of the conditions under which the poor lived , as do poems such as " The Homeless Poor " :

In that very street , at that same hour ,
In the bitter air and drifting sleet ,
Crouching in a doorway was a mother ,
With her children shuddering at her feet .
She was silent ? who would hear her pleading ?
Men and beasts were housed ? but she must stay
Houseless in the great and pitiless city ,
Till the dawning of the winter day . (51 ? 58)

Procter 's Catholicism also influenced her choice of images and symbols ; Procter often uses references to the Virgin Mary , for example , to " introduce secular and Protestant readers to the possibility that a heavenly order critiques Victorian gender ideology 's power structure . "

Procter wrote several poems about war (the majority of poems published on this topic in Household Words were by Procter) , although she rarely deals directly with the topic , preferring to leave war " in the background , something to be inferred rather than stated . " Generally , these poems portray conflict as something " that might unite a nation that had been divided by class distinctions . "

According to critic Gill Gregory , Procter " does not overtly ponder the vexed question of the poet , particularly the woman poet and her accession to fame " , unlike many other women poets of the

time , such as Felicia Hemans and Letitia Elizabeth Landon . Procter is instead primarily concerned with the working classes , particularly working @-@ class women , and with " emotions of women antagonists which have not fully found expression " . Procter 's work often embodies a Victorian aesthetic of sentimentality , but , according to Francis O 'Gorman , does so with " peculiar strength " ; Procter employs emotional affect without simplification , holding " emotional energy [in tension] ... against complications and nuances . " Procter 's language is simple ; she expressed to a friend a " morbid terror of being misunderstood and misinterpreted " , and her poetry is marked by " simplicity , directness , and clarity of expression " .

= = = Reputation = = =

Procter was " fabulously popular " in the mid @-@ 19th century ; she was Queen Victoria 's favourite poet and Coventry Patmore stated that the demand for her work was greater than that for any other poet , excepting Alfred , Lord Tennyson . Readers valued Procter 's poems for their plainness of expression , although they were considered " not so very original in thought ; [their merit is that] they are indeed the utterances ' of a believing heart ' , pouring out its fulness . " Procter herself expressed little ambition about her work : her friend Bessie Raynor Belloc thought that Procter was pained that her reputation as a poet had outstripped her father 's , and quoted Procter as saying that " Papa is a poet . I only write verses . "

Procter 's popularity continued after her death ; the first volume of *Legends and Lyrics* went through 19 editions by 1881 , and the second through 14 editions by the same year . Many of her poems were made into hymns or otherwise set to music . Among these was " *The Lost Chord* " , which Arthur Sullivan set to music in 1877 ; this song was the most commercially successful of the 1870s and 1880s in both Britain and the United States . Her work was also published in the United States and translated into German . By 1938 , Procter 's reputation had fallen so far that a textbook could mention her poems only to pronounce them " stupid , trivial and not worthy of the subject " . Critics such as Cheri Larsen Hoeckley , Kathleen Hickok , and Natalie Joy Woodall argue that the demise of Procter 's reputation is due at least in part to the way Charles Dickens characterized her as a " model middle @-@ class domestic angel " and a " fragile and modest saint " rather than as an " active feminist and strong poet . " Emma Mason argues that although Dickens 's portrayal of Procter " extinguished modern interest " in her , it also " has helped rescue Procter from the kind of endless conjecture about her private life that has confused studies of women like Letitia Landon . "

Modern critics have given Procter 's work little attention . The few critics who have examined Procter 's poetry generally find it important for the way that she overtly expresses conventional sentiments while covertly undermining them . According to Isobel Armstrong , Procter 's poetry , like that of many 19th @-@ century women poets , employs conventional ideas and modes of expression without necessarily espousing them in entirety . Francis O 'Gorman cites " *A Legend of Provence* " as an example of a poem with this kind of " double relationship with the structures of gender politics it seems to affirm . " Other critics since Armstrong agree that Procter 's poetry , while ladylike on the surface , shows signs of repressed emotions and desires . Kirstie Blair states that the suppression of emotion in Procter 's work makes the narrative poems all the more powerful , and Gill Gregory argues that Procter 's poetry often explores female sexuality in an unconventional way , while as often voicing anxiety about sexual desires . Elizabeth Gray criticizes the fact that the few discussions of Procter 's poetry that do exist focus primarily on gender , arguing that the " range and formal inventiveness of this illuminatingly representative Victorian poet have remained largely unexplored . "

= = List of works = =

A House to Let , a short story co @-@ written with Charles Dickens , Elizabeth Gaskell and Wilkie Collins

Legends and Lyrics , first series , 1858

Legends and Lyrics , second series , 1861

A Chaplet of Verses , 1862

The Haunted House , a short story co @-@ written with Charles Dickens , Elizabeth Gaskell , Wilkie Collins , George Sala and Hesba Stretton