

**THE GREEN FIELDS
AND
THEIR GRASSES**

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The Green Fields and Their Grasses by Anne Pratt

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By ANNE PRATT.



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PREFACE.

THE tribe of Grasses is so large that in a little work of this kind it is not possible to enumerate more than a small portion of their number. The author has therefore selected for notice such species as are common—such as make our meadows, and hills, and valleys green by their abundance. By the aid of the engravings, she hopes that the reader will be enabled to recognise many grasses familiar to him, and to gain some small knowledge of their history and uses. Of the grass-plants of other lands little is said here, save in some few instances, in which they are characteristic of scenery, or form the source of food to large multitudes of the human family.

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AND

THEIR GRASSES.

Midst meads whence early sunshine swept bright dews,
Midst fields where Harvest lends her many ears
To the rejoicing lark,—I love to muse
On earth and all its garniture, which cheers
Sad eyes with ever-changing grace. The fields
Are rich in verdura, as the wood in leaves ;
And every emerald blade which sunshine gilds
With genial gold, each feathery tuft that gives
Beauty, and food, and shelter, and each reed
That waves and whistles in the vocal wind,
Hath lessons high, that, followed well, might lead
To the calm pleasures of the peaceful mind ;
For simplest grass, as well as stately tree,
Reveals the presence of the Deity.

CALDER CAMPBELL.

It is well when time and opportunity are given us to wander over the wide field of Nature, to look upon clouds, and streams, and green meadows, and flowers. They bring their soothing

influence to our spirits. They can remind us of the God who made the world, and who cared not only to create all these beautiful objects, but who has a daily, hourly regard for them, and feeds them with sun and rain from Heaven, and with morn and nightly dews. That sunbeam which falls upon the hills, that gentle wind which sweeps the dry leaf before it, or that dew-drop glistening on the slender blade of the grass, has not only its destined purpose in the economy of Nature, but it has a beauty too with which to delight our intellect. We pause to regard it, and our mental perception is not only quickened but elevated. We learn to love grace, and beauty, and order, wherever we find them; and are acquiring continually ideas such as are unknown to those who look with careless eye on the natural world. There are multitudes to whom these things appeal in vain. Their minds have never yet awakened to a perception of the beauty which lies amid their daily paths; and so the tree may wave ever so gracefully, and the wind whisper ever so musically, and no joy shall reach them, and no sweet memories linger either from sight or sound. Not thus coldly let us look on Nature, which is the open book of God.

If the green meadows, so common to our island, had been made merely to delight our eye, yet would they be a gift of blessing, for their emerald

verdure, variegated by millions of flowers, could not fail to make a pleasant and enlivening impression upon us. And their beauty was designed to bless us, while they have other uses too. The countless blades of grass, thickening there into one green and extensive mass, bending beneath our tread, are sweet food for the thousands of cattle; and the ox, and sheep, and cow luxuriate among them, and ultimately yield to us the benefits they receive. Grasses constitute an important part of the external covering of most countries, forming large meadows on plains, and on hill sides, giving to the landscape that hue on which the eye can longest gaze untired, fringing the blue streams or crystal rills with their graceful leaves, and the flowers which spring up among them; or, planted by the hand of man, in fields, ripening gradually from the delicate and tender blade of the spring corn-field, into the rich brown of the full ear, which is to furnish our food. Many grasses grow even in the waters, some in running streams, others only where the waters are still. Some are peculiar to the mountain, others to the woodland, some to the sandy shores, but not one will grow in the sea. Several of our grass-plants are invaluable, as serving by the interlacing of their roots to fix the ever-shifting sands; and without their aid we should often be overwhelmed by torrents of sands, almost as