

**THE IRISH POEMS OF  
ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES:  
SONGS OF THE GAEL; A  
GAELIC STORY-TELLING**

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The Irish Poems of Alfred Perceval Graves: Songs of the Gael; A Gaelic Story-Telling by Alfred Perceval Graves

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## PREFATORY NOTE

*This volume contains all those of my poems written under the influence of the Gaelic Revival that I care to preserve. They comprise lays, laments, lullabies, and love songs and ballads, many of them reproducing the old Irish measures and rhyme-schemes, besides a collection of narrative poems set in a Shenachus frame, the story-tellers having foregathered over a good turf fire at a Gaelic League meeting.*

*I have here to acknowledge my indebtedness to Boosey & Co. for the use of lyrics published to music in "Songs of Old Ireland," "Irish Folk Songs," and "Songs of Erin," to Novello & Co. for like leave to republish songs and ballads in their musical collection of "Irish Songs and Ballads," and finally to Messrs. Breitkopf & Haertel for permission to reprint all the words of "Rascen Dhu," which they publish in musical form.*

ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES.

RED BRANCH HOUSE,  
WIMBLEDON, 6th May, 1908.



## PREFACE

*Is there anyone who has any acquaintance with Anglo-Irish literature who is ignorant of the immortalizer of the never-to-be-forgotten Father O'Flynn. Who that has ever heard that brilliant song but has desired a closer acquaintance with the other lyrics of its author. For a lyricist by nature is Alfred Perceval Graves; his verses seem to come to him unsought or inspired by the national music of which he is so enthusiastic a devotee. In this respect he resembles, to my thinking, Samuel Lover more than any of our Anglo-Irish poets. I never used to open Lover that I was not reminded more or less of Graves, nor opened Graves that I was not reminded of Lover.*

*But this was in time gone by. Of late years there has come over much of Graves' poetry a change, and to my mind a highly significant and suggestive change, which differentiates the Songs of the Gael from his preceding poems—from its predecessors in a manner which is quite unmistakable. I call the change significant and suggestive because it marks, in a manner that all may read, the effect of the Gaelic Revival upon one who does not know Gaelic, but who, being an Irishman and a scholar, has felt bound to keep in touch with the modern development of his country and her literature. Indeed, this new note in Mr. Graves' poetry follows, I should think, almost naturally from the surroundings into which his manifold services to the Irish race abroad*

has thrown him of recent years. His good work in promoting the endowment and study of Irish in London, his long labours as Hon. Secretary of the Irish Literary Society in London, and his helpful correspondence with Irish Irelanders over the bilingual methods of other countries, must naturally have had their reflex action upon his own creative genius.

It is, then, both noteworthy and of good omen to find that our real Irish literature—that written in the Irish language (which has been for the first time made generally available through the efforts of the Gaelic League and others during the last few years)—has found a sympathetic response in the Anglo-Irish poetry of Mr. Graves. This is a note which we almost entirely miss in *Lover*, though he has caught it in a couple of lyrics—notably, “*A Mother Came*,” and “*What would you do, Love?*” In this volume, however, those who know will find suggestions of Irish Ireland poetry upon almost every page. Could anything be more Irish than this, both in execution and conception?—

*I'm left all alone like a stone at the side of the street,  
With no kind "Good-day" on the way from the many I meet.  
Still with looks cold and high they go by, not one brow now  
    unbends,  
None holds out his hand of the band of my fair-weather  
    friends.*

Neither Callanan nor Mangan could have caught the Irish tone and conception more truly than this. The inimitable *Roving Pedlar* is just the *Red Haired Man's Wife*, with the two lines of refrain so cunningly thrown in. The *Songs of Summer and Winter* are close translations from Kuno

*Meyer's prose, excellently done into the original not wholly uniform metre—*

*Dull red the fern ;  
Shapes are shadows ;  
Wild geese mourn  
O'er misty meadows.*

but, as I said, those who know will recognise free versions of Irish songs in many pieces whose significance will be lost upon the English reader—as in “The Song of the Fairy King,” “Alone, all Alone,” “When We're Apart,” “I Will not Die for Love of Thee,” “The Dirge of Oscur,” &c.

Nor is the shy note of roguishness which so eminently distinguishes former volumes absent from this one either. It is another characteristic which Mr. Graves shares with Samuel Lover, and which is so pleasant an accompaniment in a lyrist to whom every significant occurrence, mood, feeling, action, idea, tone, passion, suggests a subject for his muse—

*Le parfum d'un lis pur, l'éclat d'une auréole  
La dernière rumeur du jour,  
La plainte d'un ami qui s'afflige et console,  
L'adieu mystérieux de l'heure qui s'envole,  
Le doux bruit d'un baiser d'amour.*

I find, then, the present volume an altogether interesting and suggestive one, not only for itself but also for the way in which it shows how the modern Irish-Ireland renaissance has already affected, and may in the future much more affect, the tone of Anglo-Irish poetry.

DOUGLAS HYDE.

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