

**A COLLECTION
OF BALLADS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649187720

A collection of ballads by Andrew Lang

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ANDREW LANG

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A COLLECTION OF BALLADS

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES

BY
ANDREW LANG

LONDON
CHAPMAN AND HALL, LIMITED

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN the learned first gave serious attention to popular ballads, from the time of Percy to that of Scott, they laboured under certain disabilities. The Comparative Method was scarcely understood, and was little practised. Editors were content to study the ballads of their own countryside, or, at most, of Great Britain. Teutonic and Northern parallels to our ballads were then adduced, as by Scott and Jamieson. It was later that the ballads of Europe, from the Faroes to Modern Greece, were compared with our own, with European *Märchen*, or children's tales, and with the popular songs, dances, and traditions of classical and savage peoples. The results of this more recent comparison may be briefly stated. Poetry begins, as Aristotle says, in improvisation. Every man is his own poet, and, in moments of strong emotion, expresses himself in song. A typical example is the Song of Lamech in Genesis—

"I have slain a man to my wounding,
And a young man to my hurt."