

Classic Poetry Series

Alice Werner
- poems -

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Alice Werner(26 June 1859 - 9 June 1935)

Alice Werner was a miscellaneous writer, poet and teacher of the Bantu language. She has lived in New Zealand, Mexico, America and throughout Europe. She was initially educated in Germany before moving to England.

After visiting Nyasaland in 1893 and Natal in 1894, her writings were focused on African themes.

In 1917 she became a part of the School of Oriental Studies, moving up from lecturer to reader to professor of Swahili and Bantu languages before retiring in 1929-1930.

In 1928, Alice Werner received the degree of Director of Literature from the University of London. Following her retirement, she received the title of Emeritus Professor from the same University. In 1931 she was awarded the Silver medal of the African Society, of which she was Vice-President.

Biography

Alice Werner was born in Trieste on 26 June 1859. In her youth she lived in New Zealand, Mexico, USA and Europe. She was educated partly in Germany, and later in England, where she attended Newnham College, Cambridge University. Her interest in Africa began with visits to Nyasaland in 1893 and Natal in 1894. In 1899 she taught Afrikaans and Zulu in London. Between 1911-1913 she toured East Africa, where she came into contact with Swahili and other languages of the region. In 1917 she joined the School of Oriental Studies as one of the original members of staff, initially as Lecturer but later as Reader and eventually Professor of Swahili and Bantu languages. She continued in this position until her retirement at the end of the 1929-1930 session. During this time, she also taught at Oxford and Cambridge, in co-operation with her sister Mary Werner. In 1928, Alice Werner received the degree of Director of Litterature from the University of London. After her retirement in 1930, she received the title of Emeritus Professor from the same University. In 1931 she was awarded the Silver medal of the African Society, of which she was Vice-President. She died on 9 June 1935.

Alice Werner made contributions on African subjects to the Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, in addition to other journals. She also produced works on African philology and mythology. Her own publications included: *The Natives of British Central Africa* (1906); *The Language Families of Africa* (1915); *A Swahili History of Pate* (1915); *Introductory Sketch of the Bantu Languages*

(1919); The Swahili Saga of Liongo Fumo (1926); Swahili Tales (1929); Structure and Relationship of African Languages (1930); The Story of Miqdad and Mayasa (1932); and Myths and Legends of the Bantu/ (1933). She also translated a number of works.

Bannerman Of The Dandenong

I rode through the Bush in the burning noon,
 Over the hills to my bride, --
 The track was rough and the way was long,
 And Bannerman of the Dandenong,
 He rode along by my side.

A day's march off my Beautiful dwelt,
 By the Murray streams in the West; --
 Lightly lilting a gay love-song
 Rode Bannerman of the Dandenong,
 With a blood-red rose on his breast.

"Red, red rose of the Western streams"
 Was the song he sang that day --
 Truest comrade in hour of need, --
 Bay Mathinna his peerless steed --
 I had my own good grey.

There fell a spark on the upland grass --
 The dry Bush leapt into flame; --
 And I felt my heart go cold as death,
 And Bannerman smiled and caught his breath, --
 But I heard him name Her name.

Down the hill-side the fire-floods rushed,
 On the roaring eastern wind; --
 Neck and neck was the reckless race, --
 Ever the bay mare kept her pace,
 But the grey horse dropped behind.

He turned in the saddle -- "Let's change, I say!"
 And his bridle rein he drew.
 He sprang to the ground, -- "Look sharp!" he said
 With a backward toss of his curly head --
 "I ride lighter than you!"

Down and up -- it was quickly done --
 &No words to waste that day! --
 Swift as a swallow she sped along,

