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October 2017

Angelina Weld Daughter of Archibald Grimke

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Recommended Citation

"Angelina Weld Daughter of Archibald Grimke" (2017). *Manuscripts for the Grimke Book*. 32.
https://dh.howard.edu/ajc_grimke_manuscripts/32

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Angelina Weld

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Daughter of Archibald H. Grimké.

I love to recall "Nana" as the sweet sad faced little girl whose father commissioned me to guide thro the Corcoran Art Gallery, the Congressional Library, Smithsonian & other public places of interesting Washington. I love to think of those delightful Saturday forenoons with the undemonstrative intelligent child & her infrequent but pointed comments that revealed an unusually thoughtful & well stored mind. Most vividly of all do I recall the glad surprise of that father when he came upon a group of her poems printed in a Boston periodical all "unbeknownst" to him. Mr. Archibald was literally beside himself with jubilant wonder. "I didn't know it was in the child" he confided; "I feel like an old Duck that has supernaturally somehow hatched out an eaglet!"

It is regrettable that in later years Miss Grimké has not kept up the line of creative

work which her earlier successes fore-
 shadowed; & besides, like the Sibyl of old,
 she is indifferent to the preservation of the
 Children of her brain, & her present
 historiographer has had no end of
 trouble in getting together a few of the
 very excellent productions of hers already
 known to be extant. One poem in particular
 from that first flight to Parnassus that so
 astonished us all, I have tried in vain
 to recover for reproduction here. So refresh-
 ingly original was it in diction, so earnestly
 serious in application, for one so young it was
 truly a marvel of perfection. As I recall it, the
 poem was named Enceladus & pictured the
 fabled giant buried beneath Mt. Aetna. A
 slight turning to ease his tortured side
 would drive upward the fiery flood of the
 dread volcano. It ended with a warning:

Beware, Beware, O Land o' Dreams,
 The black giant sleeps, unquiet yet awhile;
 Anon, he turns to ease his tired side.
 Beware, O Land o' Dreams!

Miss Grimke's longest & most pretentious work
 to date is the play "Rachel or the Cry of the Children."

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Too literary in its flavor to tempt Broadway's jaded palates, it was nevertheless pronounced by one eminent critic to be the most significant presentation of the American Tragedy along the color line since the War of Emancipation.

It dramatizes a family problem of birth prevention to head off mercifully the suffering of children yet unborn. It is not "light" literature. Rachel "weeping for her children, or the Cry of the Children" may be found in the Howard University collection at Washington.

In the anthology by Countee Cullen (Harpers 1927) there appear 16 lyrics as follows: Hushed by the Hands of Sleep - Greenness - The Eyes of my Regret - Grass Fingers - Surrender - The Ways o' Men - Tenebris - When the Green lies over the Earth - A Mona Lisa - Paradox - Your Hands - I Keep - For the Candlelight - Dusk - The Puppet Player - A Winter Twilight.

A shorter collection is found in Kerlin's Negro Poets (Assoc. Pub. 1923) Dawn - The Want of You - El Beso - At the Spring Dawn - & To Keep the Memory of Charlotte Forten Grimké. This last we give our readers by permission (on page 7) aptly characterized by Mr. Kerlin as "the Soul of lyric poetry as well as the form with genuine passion clothed with beauty of idea", not one of these lyrics gives hint of racial bias. In fact the poem Then & Now, here appearing for the first time in print is the only one to my knowledge which presents directly & feelingly the racial complex & a poetic consciousness of Slavery.

It is sincerely hoped by this writer
that Miss Grinke will yet produce
an even loftier monument for her
family name & for the racial variety
which most eagerly welcomes every
vindication of its right to a seat
on high Parnassus.

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Then and Now

by Angelina Weld Grimké.

They knew, those gone, bent backs,
On crimsoning and shudd'ring flesh,
the lash's cut
and thirst
And hunger and all weariness, yet durst
Nor pause nor rest; but toil and toil till shut
Of day sent them to fall in noisome hut
Herded e'en in sleep. Tortured, accursed,
These knew this life as death, and death at worst
As Peace, when earth above their bones was put
But we their children, bone of them and blood
Bound, by new fetters tortured, still have seen
A light; We know that soul and mind are free;
That sorrow, tears and evil, all are good;
We know it matters not what we have been
But this and always this: what we shall be