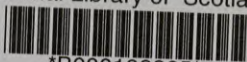


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THE LILT

AND OTHER VERSES

BY
M. E. ANGUS



ABERDEEN :
D. WYLLIE & SONS, UNION STREET.

1922.

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BY CANDLE LIGHT.

Mary Forbes weaves in the candle light
When the straw is stacked in the barn.
Round and about her fingers slim
She twists the fleecy yarn—
 The candle light—the candle light—
And the shadows on the floor
And the wrinkled leaves of the rowan bush
 A'-rustling beyond the door—

“Now what is't you think on
My yellow haired lad,
With your fiddle upon your knee”?
“On the days when I counted the lambs, mother
By the bonnie green links o' Dee”—
 The candle light—the candle light—
And a wind that sparks the peat
And a sleety rain, on the window pane,
 Like the patter o' birdies' feet.

“Come play me—‘Whaur Gowdie Rins' my son,
Or a reel with a heartsome tune.”
But he minds how he danced at the Castleton
In the long clear gloamings o' June—
 The candle light—the candle light—
And the lass with the tawny shoon,
That danced with him at the Castleton
 In the silver shine of the moon.

Mary Forbes weaves in the candle light—
Her fiddler plays in the gloom
The dowiest airs in all the world
Trail round and about the room,
And Mary blesses the candle light—
 The witchin', watchin' Flame—
The eerie night and the candle light
 That keeps her bairn at hame.

THE DROVE ROAD.

It's a dark hill track over grey Culblean
Though light on the rocks may glisten
The lonest road that ever was seen
But the old folks say—if you listen—

You may hear the tread and the march of the dead—
(The young folks know the story)
Of the wild hill men that came out of the glen—
Fierce for battle and glory.

And they tell how at dawning on dark Culblean
You may hear the slogan ringing
Where clansmen and foe in the moss below
Sleep sound—to the brown burn's singing.

I hear no tread of the wild hill men
Nor slogan at dawning pealing,
Only the tune of the brown burn's croon
And a breeze on the bracken stealing.

I wish I were hearing Wat Gordon cry
On his collie "Jock," as the herd goes by
On the lonesome track above dark Culblean.
The blithest days are the days that have been.

The laugh and the cry
And the blue eyes glisten—
Never more, never more, and the years go by
Yet . . . listen!

REMEMBRANCE DAY.

Some one was singing
 Up a twisty stair,
 A fragment of a song,
 One sweet, spring day,
When twelve o'clock was ringing,
 Through the sunny square—

*“ There was a lad baith frank and free,
Cam' doon the bonnie banks o' Dee
Wi' tartan plaid and buckled shoon,
An' he'll come nae mair to oor toon.”—*

*“ He dwells within a far countree,
Where great ones do him courtesie,
They've gien him a golden croon,
An' he'll come nae mair to oor toon ”—*

No one is singing
 Up the twisty stair.
Quiet as a sacrament
 The November day.

Can't you hear it swinging,
 The little ghostly air?—
 Hear it sadly stray
 Through the misty square,
In and out a doorway,
 Up a twisty stair—
*Tartan plaid and buckled shoon,
He'll come nae mair to oor toon.*

THE FOX'S SKIN.

When the wark's a' dune and the world's a' still,
And whaups are swoopin' across the hill,
And mither stands cryin' "Bairns, come ben,"
It's the time for the Hame o' the Pictish Men.

A sorrowfu' wind gaes up and doon,
An' me my lane in the licht o' the moon,
Gatherin' a bunch o' the floorin' whin,
Wi' my auld fur collar happed roond ma chin.

A star is shinin' on Morven Glen—
It shines on the Hame o' the Pictish Men.
Hither and yont their dust is blown,
But there's ane o' them keekin' ahint yon stone.

His queer auld face is wrinkled and riven,
Like a raggedy leaf, sae drookit and driven.
There's nocht to be feared at his ancient ways.
For this is a' that iver he says—

The same auld wind at its weary cry :
The blin' faced moon in the misty sky ;
A thousand years o' cloud and flame,
An' a'thing's the same an' aye the same—
The lass is the same in the fox's skin,
Gatherin' the bloom o' the floorin' whin.

THE BRIDGE.

She loves not this dark street of stone,
Nor loves she windows high ;
She loves the wind's wild trumpet blown
Across the moorland sky,
And the three wild cherry trees at Little Invereye.

She for herself a bridge has weft,
All wan and silvery ;
She for herself a road has cleft
To take her soundlessly
To the three tall cherry trees growing up so high.

With slender hands a branch she breaks
Between the moor and sky ;
Of blossoms white a crown she makes,
On her pale hair to lie,
From the tallest wild cherry tree at Little Invereye.

She for herself a bridge has weft
Of strands of memory ;
She for herself a road has cleft
To take her soundlessly
To the green, green waters that flow by Invereye.

Her slender hands she smooths and laves
In floods of ivory ;
Her slender feet beneath the waves
Move pale and shadowy
In the green, green waters that flow so sweetly by.

Could I her feet in fetters hold
Behind those windows high,
Her mocking heart so light and cold
Would pass me heedless by,
Haunting the green waters at Little Invereye,
Where three tall cherry trees are growing up so high.



TREASURE TROVE.

Do you mind rinnin' barefit
In the saft, summer mist
Liltin' and linkin' on the steep hill heids?
In below your tartan shawl, your hand wad aye twist
Your bonnie green beads.

Do you mind traivellin', traivellin'
Ower and ower the braes,
Reistlin' the heather, and keekin' 'naith the weeds,
Seekin' and greetin' in the cauld weat days
For yer tint green beads.

Whist! Dinna rouse him,
The auld sleepin' man—
Steek, the door; the mune-licht's on the lone hill heids—
Wee elfin cratur is delvin' in the sand,
They canna' miss the glimmer
O' yer auld green beads.

Here they come, the wee folk,
Speedin' fast and fleet—
There's a queer, low lauchin' on the grey hill heids—
An' the bricht drops, glancin', followin' at their feet—
It's green, green beads—
The last ye'll ever see o' yer bonnie green beads.

THE TURN OF THE DAY.

Under the cauld, green grass
I hear the waukenin' burn.
The day's at the turn—
Oh, winter, dinna pass!

Your snaw was white for a bride,
Your winds were merriage wine.
Love is fine, fine,
But it doesna bide.

The saft, warm April rain
An' the clear June day,
An' floors o' the May—
I'll see them a' my lane.

Under the cauld, green grass,
Wee waukenin', wanderin' burn,
Sing your ain sang.
The day's at the turn,
But simmer's lang, lang.

MOONLIGHT.

When the sweet moon has come,
Her slender pattern thrown
 Along the silent sands, the empty shore,
One, hearing with delight,
The whisper of the night,
 Softly behind her shuts her cottage door.

The wild thyme's fragrance shed
Upon its dying bed—
 Red wine all spilt upon the moon-stained bent—
To her unfaded is,
For she persuaded is,
 Of beauty triumphing in beauty spent.

When from a moon lit mist,
Silver and amethyst,
 The spendthrift waves
Fly far in broken gleams,
 She in sweet folly sees
 Enchanted treasures,
With glittering fabrics stored for endless dreams.

When the moontide is full,
Across the rocky pool,
 The salty pool, where weeds grow bitterly,
Only her own heart knows
Why she so tranquil goes
 Alone, yet in such friendly company.

When the sweet moonbeams wane
Up the lone path again
 Like a grey, flitting moth she homeward hies.
How hardly do the rich,
How hardly do the rich,
 How easily the poor in heart find Paradise.

THE LILT.

Jean Gordon is weaving a' her lane
Twinin' the threid wi' a thocht o' her ain,
Hearin' the tune o' the bairns at play
That they're singin' amang them ilka day
And saftly, saftly, ower the hill
Comes the sma, sma rain.

Aye, she minds o' a simmer's nicht
Afore the waning o' the licht—
Bairnies chantin' in Lover's lane
The sang that comes ower an' ower again,
And a young lass stealin' awa' to the hill,
In the sma, sma rain.

Oh! lass, your lips were flamin' reid,
An' cauld, mist drops lay on yer' heid,
Ye didna gaiter yon rose yer' lane
And yer' hert was singin' a sang o' its ain,
As ye slippit hameward, ower the hill,
In the sma, sma rain.

Jean Gordon, she minds as she sits her lane
O' a' the years that's bye and gane,
And naething gi'en and a' thing ta'en
But yon nicht or nights on the smoory hill
In the sma, sma rain—
And the bairns are singin' at their play
The lilt that they're liltin' ilka day—

LONELINESS.

Green were the bents to-day,
Clear shone the skies above,
But many a mile away
Are the bents I love.

The wind and waves they sang
All the sweet day long,
But never above them rang
The dearest song.

The long shore glistened fair,
All laid with silver fine,
But no footprint was there
Along with mine.

The wild thyme's purple-grey
Was soft as crooning dove
Where I sighed my heart away
For the bents I love.

ALL SOULS' EVE.

At the darkening of the west
O'er the night-bewildered sea,
Wind-borne strains my heart arrest,
Luting loveliest litany.

Sister, does a dream of me
Dim the glory in your eyes,
Fluting your wild melody
On the hills of Paradise ?

With the falling of the night
At the ebbing of the tide,
Bearing chalice of delight
Comes the bridegroom to the bride.

Brother, would you comfort me,
All with grief foredone and spent ;
From your deep tranquillity
Bid me drink content.

While the night grows dark and late,
See the shadows weave and weave
Garments for the guests who wait,
And pass, on All Souls' Eve.

THE GRACELESS LOON.

As I gaed east by Tarland toun
I heard a singin' neath the mune :
A lass sang in a milk-white goon
 Aneath a ha'thorn tree.
The sma' green trees bowed doon till her ;
The blooms they made a croon till her ;
I was a graceless loon till her,
 She frooned and scorned at me.

As I gaed east thro' Tarland toun
There came an auld wife, bent and dune,
Speirin' at me to sit me doon
 In her wee hoose up the Wynd
And wile awa' the nicht wi' her,
The weary candle licht wi' her ;
A bairn's een was a sicht till her,
 An' auld folks herts is kind.

Fu' mony a year o' sun and rain,
An' I'm for Tarland toun again,
Wi' drift upon a cauld hearth stane
 An' a wind gaen thro' the Wynd.
Oh, lass, tho' a' yer sangs be dune,
Ower leafless thorn aye hangs the mune ;
Turn ye until yer graceless loon
 Gin ye've grown auld and kind.

