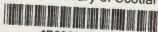


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LOST COUNTRY

LOST COUNTRY
AND OTHER VERSES

MARION ANGUS

GLASGOW
GOWANS & GRAY, LIMITED
1937



*Printed in Great Britain
by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh*

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Most of the poems in this book were published for the first time in "The Glasgow Herald." The dates of appearing were as follows: "When at Familiar Doors," Feb. 23rd, 1931; "News," Dec. 3rd, 1931; "New Year's Morning," Dec. 31st, 1931; "The Plaid," Jan. 13th, 1932; "The Widow," Mar. 14th, 1932; "Martha's House," Aug. 18th, 1932; "On a Birthday," Sept. 29th, 1932; "Naomi," Nov. 4th, 1933; "The Burden," Nov. 25th, 1933; "Nicht o' Nichts," Dec. 23rd, 1933; "The Faithful Heart," Feb. 2nd, 1934; "Chance Acquaintance," May 8th, 1934; "Foxgloves and Snow," July 21st, 1934; "The Spae-Wife," Nov. 17th, 1934; "Once Long Ago," July 20th, 1935; "The Musician," Sept. 24th, 1935; "Lost Country," Nov. 7th, 1935; "Memory's Trick," Dec. 14th, 1935; "In a Little Old Town," Sept. 26th, 1936. "A Woman Sings" was first printed in "The Modern Scot," Jan. 1933; "Corrichie" in "The Listener," May, 20th 1931; "Desires of Youth" in "The Outlook," April, 1936.

Some of these poems have been refashioned, and all have been revised, by the author for the present volume. The remaining poems are here published for the first time.

LOST COUNTRY

Two mountain streams that swiftly pass
Thro' dark and hilly lands,
By secret names I named you, as
You slipped between my hands.

Footpath with the wondrous way
Of spreading sparse and sweet,
Even on a winter's day,
Wild thyme for my feet,

That climbed and climbed as if to find,
High on the moorland's lift,
One aged solitary tree
Swept by the stormy drift :

Cold moorland, vext by winds' alarms
Lost footpath, naked streams,
To you I'm stretching out my arms,
Country of my dreams.

CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE

“ Wha’ever bides in this hoose,
Noo nicht is drawin’ doon,
Rise up and tell a young man
The road to Forfar toon.”

She’s ta’en a new candle
To licht him sweetly ben,
He thinks on stars at gloamin’,
On summers in the glen.

The weary winds grow quaiet
To hear her bonnie words
That fill his he’rt wi’ music
And the chaunt o’ singin’ birds,

And, oh, it is a sorrow
For a likely lad and wise,
To turn his face to Forfar,
His back on Paradise.

WHEN AT FAMILIAR DOORS

When at familiar doors
None answers to our call,
'Twere well to board the ship
That sails at evening-fall ;

Chartless and rudderless,
To track the ocean broad,
Like them that dreaming go,
Borne by the winds of God ;

To other country where,
By other journeys led,
Strangers shall light our evening fire,
Strange hands shall make our bed.

TWO IS COMPANY

We gaed and we gaed to the ha'thorn tree
That hings by the weepin' well,
Jean and Nelly o' Upper Stanehive
And the third ane was mysel'.

Quoth Jean, "That silken goon o' mine
Had ye seen when it was new,
Ere the flitterin' moth won into the kist
And riddled it thro' and thro'!"

Says Nellie, "My locks was like the corn
On the bonnie hairst fields o' hame;
The tides o' sorrow gaed ower my heid
And turned them white as faem."

And never a sough, as we sat and sat
By the weary, weary well,
O' the brows I had lang syne, or hoo
I wasna' ill-faured mysel'.

CORRICHIE

By oor burnside a queen rade licht
Thro' moor and moss and saugh,
To see her gay lords win a fecht *
In yon braid haugh.

The rowan tree its berry shed,
The leaf had tint its green,
When gallant wi' her lads lang syne
She rade, the bonnie queen.

The years gang roond ; frae green to gowd
The moor and moss maun turn—
Oh, whaur dwalt I when she rade by
My ain Corrichie Burn ?

* The Battle of Corrichie between Mary, Queen of Scots,
and the Clan Gordon, October, 1562.

NAOMI

All the city was moved about them, and they said, 'Is this Naomi?'—*The Book of Ruth.*

Naomi, Naomi, what wait ye for?
The elders have steppit the causey ower,
Wi' a sigh and a frown and a mournfu' e'e,
Wailin', "Naomi! It canna be!"

The wives have lookit ye up and doon,
Yer tremblin' mou' and yer faded goon,
Sorrowfu' steppin' the causey ower—
Naomi, Naomi, what wait ye for?

For some dear lass ye kent lang syne,
When days of youth were clear and fine,
'To tak' yer hand in the twa o' her ain,
The tears upon her cheeks like rain,
Wi' a word o' comfort the he'rt to fill,
"It's yersel', Naomi, and bonnie still."

THE BURDEN

“ Set doon your pack,
Puir weary wife,”
Quoth I, “ and rest a wee.
Lang is the road,
Sair is the load,
And the wind
Sings in the tree.”

“ A puir auld wife,
A weary wife,
And something frail and sma’,
But I maun on
And tak’ the hill
Wi’ a fair
‘ Guid nicht to ye a’.’

“ The same as the wing
Is to the bird,
The sail to the ship
On the sea,
Sae is the burden

To the back,
Gin ye cairry it
Cannily," quo' she,
"Gin ye cairry it cannily."

THE WIDOW

*John Andrew Davidson
Lies buried here,
Tenant in Easter Drum
For forty year.*

The buss o' aipple-ringie
At your feet
Is growin' rare and sweet.
I'se hae anither at your heid the same.
I wad hae liked "Respeckit" at your name,
"Respeckit Tenant".

Man, your een o' grey
Glint into mine
Like rinnin' fire in strae!
Here in the kirkyaird lane;
"I daur ye put sic ony daftlike word
On Easter Drum's heidstane,"
I hear ye say.

DESIRES OF YOUTH

An auld wife cam' to oor door
The day and nicht atween,
She looked at me and looked awa'
Wi' her lang-sichted een.

Says she, " I ken a young lass
Wha gangs her hamely ways,
Her thochts set on a fairer land
Ayont these hills and braes.

" Wha dances gay upon the green
And licht at countra fairs,
And hears abune the fiddler's tune
A bonnier lilt than theirs.

" And, wanderin' wi' her sweethe'rt
Doon by the rocky shore,
Thinks to hersel', ' He's nae the luvè
Sae long I've waited for.' "

An auld wife cam' to oor hoose
When nicht was like to fa'.
I looked in her lang-sichted een
And syne I looked awa'.

GATHERING SHELLS

I aye likit my Grannie's sister,
Likit her rael weel,
Her, that cam' from a fisher toon
And carried the fisher creel.

Speer at her o' ships and sailors,
Storms on the sauty brine—
"It's far eneuch awa'," says she,
"And ower lang syne."

Aince, when wind in the tree was soughin'
Like watters flowin' deep,
I h'ard her singin' to hersel',
Wauken or asleep.

"There's cowries and there's siller buckies,
Spinks and fairies' boats,
And a necklace for a leddy
O' the peerrie-weerie groats."

She sang a wee thing rauch and timmer
Nor kent nae lilt nor reel.
She cam' from the the cauld east countra,
I likit her rael weel.

THE PLAID

I had a plaid o' tartan
Frae ower the western sea,
As saft as silk, as warm as milk,
And happed me to the knee.

A ragged wife gaed by me
Ae cauld and wintry morn ;
I gaithered in aboot my plaid
And passed her by wi' scorn.

Wae's me, she's cursed my plaidie !
For noo, come sun, come rain,
Mair rauch than sark o' tinker wife
It cuts me to the bane.

A WOMAN SINGS

My licht feet farin'
Ben the the hoose and through,
Oh, will ye come at cock-craw,
Or wi' the fa' o' dew ?

Will ye come a puir man,
A beggar, to my board,
Or wi' a lauch and wi' a toss
To tak' me like a lord ?

There's a still day dawnin'
When I'll no' care
Gin ye come like lord or loon
Or gin ye come nae mair ;

Wi' cauld hands weavin'
Oot the hoose and in
A bonnie white grave-goon
To fauld aneath my chin.

THE GREEN YAIRD

I had a green yaird
Wi' a sweet pink may,
Whaur a yella-breisted bird
Sang a' the simmer day.

And a wanderin' wind,
Saft as smirr o' rain,
In an' oot the may-tree
Gaed and cam' again.

Far hae I traivelled,
Mickle hae I seen,
Oh, it's "Hame noo" seekin'
For my gairden green.

The bird's sang's ended,
The pink may's deid,
The wind blaws the soor leaf
O' the nettle weed.

THE GREEN YAIRD

Sae the laigh wind soughed,
Sae the licht wind stirred,
Ere a tree was shapit
Or a singin' bird
Or a he'rt to moorn
Ower a sma' green yaird.



THE MUSICIAN

The fiddler from Kilbirnie
He plays but ae tune,
Be it early, be it late,
Sunlight or mune.

Nine bonnie bairnies
Were dancing in a ring,
He fiddled wi' the lilt
O' a laverock in the spring.

Twa wives sat weavin',
He garred them lauch and greet,
The birl o' a blythe reel
Stirrin' their auld feet.

Ower the dark muir, and
The deein' heather-bell,
Wi' a weary sough he
Fiddled to himsel'.

Lightsome at mornin',
Dowie in the mirk,
He plays the tune o' Dauvid's Psalm,
Learned in Kilbirnie Kirk.

IN A LITTLE OLD TOWN

The haar creeps landward from the sea,
The laigh sun's settin' reid.
Wha's are the bairns that dance fu' late
On the auld shore-heid?

Wi' linkit hands and soople feet,
Slae turnin' in a ring,
Even on and even on
They sing and better sing.

"In gangs she" and "Oot gangs she",
Their steps noo lood, noo saft,
Witless words to an eerie tune,
Sae solemn and sae daft.

And come they from the Windy Wynds
Or oot o' the years lang deid,
I harken wi' a stounin' he'rt
On the auld shore-heid.

NEWS

“ Whaur hae ye been ?
The nicht draws in.”
“ At the back o’ yon hill
Whaur twa burns rin.”
“ What did ye hear,
What hae ye seen ?”
“ Lasses and lads
On the dancin’-green ;
A woman singin’
Her bairn a sang ;
The hush o’ a hoose
Whaur mourners gang ;
The piper that plays
To the naked air,
A bawdy tale,
And an auld wife’s prayer.
The world and a’
That’s haud therein,
At the back o’ yon hill
Whaur twa burns rin.”

NICHT O' NIGHTS

Quiet by the fireside,
Warm the lowe o' peat,
Ne'er a cry upon the hill,
Rain nor snaw nor sleet.

Twa clear candles,
Bonnily they shine,
The loaf is o' the wheaten meal,
The cloth o' linen fine.

Strangers from the hill-roads,
Ye sall mak' the feast,
O puir man! o young lass
Wi' the baby at your breist!

Bless and break the white loaf
Atween the twa lights;
Let me mysel' gang hungry,
This nicht o' a' the nights.

THE SPAE-WIFE

The spae-wife cries at oor door,
“ Come, rise and let me ben ;
I hev' the herb o' healin'
Will ease fouks o' their pain
And gar them thole nae langer
The hurt that they hev' ta'en.”

But whaur, o skilly spae-wife,
Whaur is growin' green
The sweet leaf o' healin'
Will soothe my sleepless een
And gar me greet nae langer
The hurt that I hev' gi'en ?

NEW YEAR'S MORNING

The bells on new year's morning
Strike twelve and then are dumb;
Now lover turns to lover
With thoughts of days to come.

Now old folks sigh and wonder,
"Who sees the next year dawn?"
And wise folks say, "There's comfort
Though half the best be gone."

While one guest all unbidden
Keeps whispering in my ear,
"When little's left to hope for,
The less will be to fear."

MARTHA'S HOUSE

And so at last I came to "Martha's House".
By the roadside it stands,
Where fields of corn creep to the mountain lands,
Silent and sweet and clean,
A table spread
With linen fair and fine,
Whereon was bread
And cups of country wine.

No sound, no stir save dove's soft whirr
Till, from a chamber high,
One clear quick cry
One name, one word,
"Mary"—yet nothing stirred,
Only small winds that blew,
Inward, the scent
Of mint and myrrh and rue.

'Twas "Martha's House", folks said,
Yet why called so,
I never heard, nor read
Nor sought to know.

FOXGLOVES AND SNOW

Two things have set the world a-twist
And spoiled the music of the spheres ;
One is a lovely secret missed,
And one a wrong beyond all tears.

Sweet secret—I shall never know,
Though seas run dry, and suns turn cold,
How many purple foxgloves grow
This summer by the ruined fold.

And—sorry wrong—though roses red
By western waters bloom and fall,
No more I watch the last snows fade
On a dark hill above Glen Doll.

MEMORY'S TRICK

Three of us on the hill-roads
From morn till evening's end,
You my kind acquaintance
And you my best friend.

Beyond the woods a stranger
Passed the time of day,
Lingered for a moment
And went upon his way.

Our voices woke the moorland,
The blue hills' lonely dream.
Now all the words are vanished
Like bubbles on the stream—

Your words, my dear acquaintance,
And yours, my friend the best—
All but the passing stranger,
His careless, heedless jest.

ONCE LONG AGO

Climbing on Cades-Muir
Before the town woke,
Seeking flinty arrows
Of the elfin folk,

You said that the curlew
Was a wicked bird
And when she whistles
Cries a bad word.

One or the other
Told how foxgloves stand
Pointing lost fairies
Home to fairy-land,

And of the junipers,
With sad twisted faces,
Wringing their lean hands
In wild haunted places.

But, oh ! the sun darkened,
Birds hushed to hear

ONCE LONG AGO

A soft drift, drifting,
Coming very near.

So last night I heard it,
Lisp, lisp of rain
And felt my small hand
In your hand again.

FAIRY TALES

Ye tell me o' the Guid Folk
Aneath the hills o' whin,
Wha ne'er hae grat for sorrow
Nor yet hae tasted sin ;

Wi' een like lichted candles,
Ahint their laigh doors
Weavin' silken mantles
O' the rose and lily floors.

Strange folk and sorrowless,
Their een as clear as glass—
But I hae seen a bonny licht
In the face o' a Gipsy lass,

As she slippit aff her shou'der
The plaid sae thin and auld
And hapt it roond her nameless bairn
Agin the winter's cauld.

THE FAITHFUL HEART

There cam' a man from Brig o' Feugh,
Whaur I was wild and young ;
I kent him by his heather step
And the turn upon his tongue.

He spak' o' crofters on the hill,
The shepherd from the fauld,
Simmers wi' the flourish sweet,
Winters dour and cauld ;

O' this guid man and that guid wife,
Aince lads and lasses brave,
Hoo ane still whustles at the ploo'
And ane is in his grave ;

O' them that's ower the faemy seas,
And them that bides at hame,
But I socht nae news o' my auld love
Nor named her bonnie name.

LINKS O' LUNAN

By the Links o' Lunan
On a clear simmer's eve
Young Annie Lizzie
Wad play at 'Mak' Believe'.

Watch her on the white shore!
Licht, licht as faem,
She's the glimmer o' a wave,
The deep sea its hame.

Wi' lang saft fingers
Cunnin' noo it slinks,
Seekin' oot the wild rose
Blawin' in the links.

The sands o' Time rin doon—doon,
The years turn blin' and spare ;
Annie Lizzie's gane and wi' her
A' that's young and fair.

But, gin ye gang by Lunan,
When the green tide flows,

LINKS O' LUNAN

And hear the whisper o' a wave
'Tellin' to a rose,

Hereawa' or thereawa'
On midsimmer's eve,
Young Annie Lizzie's
At her game o' 'Mak' Believe'.

AT PARTING

Her body, lissom as a tree,
Its leaf wi' tempest tossed ;
Her tearless een like water-springs
Smitten in winter's frost ;

Her hand sae tender and sae young
As oot o' mine it slips ;
I weel maun bear—but hoo to thole
The tremblin' o' her lips !

NOVEMBER IN EDINBURGH

A magic falls upon the town
On still November eves,
When down along the Water of Leith
Flutter the golden leaves.

There stands a little sombre house
With dusty ivy twined ;
Last night Carlyle's grey shadow fell
Across the lamp-lit blind.

And whose the chaise, that down the Mound
This misty evening wends ?
And whose the face that smiles from it
On all ' Rab's ' faithful friends ?

I walk beneath the Castle Rock
And in the ' Gardens ' glade
Linger to hear a halting step
And touch ' the Shirra's ' plaid.

NOVEMBER IN EDINBURGH

For there's a spell upon the town
On still November eves,
And one goes on expecting
Such sights and sounds as these.

ON A BIRTHDAY

Time, why are you going so fast?
I like not furious paces.
Milestones glimmer and then are past,
White, solemn faces.

I'm coming near to Forever and Ever,
With its flower and leaf unfalling,
Where you, poor Time, are an ancient measure,
Fit for a dream's recalling.

And fain am I to turn again,
Before this journey's ended,
For a long, long look at the road I came,
So rough and dark and—splendid!

