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THE
TINKER'S ROAD
AND OTHER VERSES

MARION ANGUS

LONDON & GLASGOW
GOWANS & GRAY, LIMITED

1924

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THE TINKER'S ROAD

The broon burn's speerin',
Frettin' a' the wye,
"What gars ye gang
Auld Tinker's Road,
Whaur there's naither fouk nor kye,

Kirk nor croft nor mill,
A' thing lane and still?"
But it's aye "Haud on"
Wi' the Tinker's Road
Fur the far side o' the hill.

Stannin' stanes gloomin',
Grim an' straucht an' dour—
"An unco place for a Tinker's Road
On sic a ghaist-rid moor!"

Ghaist or witch or deil,
Stanes o' dule an' ill,
It's aye "Hing in"
Wi' the Tinker's Road
Fur the far side o' the hill.

THE TINKER'S ROAD

The black thorn's maenin',
"O rauch winds, let me be!
Atween ye a'
Ye've brak ma he'rt,
An' syne I canna dee!"

Weerin' til a threid,
Smooored wi' mosses reid,
The soople road wins ower the tap
An' tak's nor tent nor heed.

The muir-cock's crawin',
"I ken a dowie bed
Far bén in a nameless glen
Wi' lady breckan spread."

Whaur dreepin' watters fill
The bonnie green mools intil,
The Tinker's Road maun sough awa'
At the far side o' the hill.

THE SEAWARD TOON

Gin ye hadna barred yer painted door
Fur dreid o' the dreepin' mists,
Ye micht hae h'ard the news gang by
That blaws as the wind lists.

Better hae spun wi' a gowden threid
By the grey ash o' the peat,
Than woven yer sorra's weary web,
Cauld as a shroodin' sheet,

Moornin' aye for the seaward toon,
Lapt roond wi' the hungry wave,
Wi' ilka ruint stane a wound,
An ilka yaird a grave.

Gin ye hadna steekit sae fast yer door
Wi' heid and he'rt fu' hie,
A lily bud for a fair breist-knot
An' a sprig o' the rosemarie,

Ower the bent, an' ower the bent
Ayont the blawing sand,

THE SEAWARD TOON

Yer fit wad hae fint a seaward toon
Ne'er biggit by mortal hand,

Wi' a glimmer an' lowe fae shinin' panes,
An' the stir o' eident feet,
A'thing hapt in a droosy air
That's naither cauld nor heat.

Thir's ane that cries sae clear and sweet
Three names baith kin an' kind,
Marget, Maud'lin, Elizabeth,
Far ben a quaiet wynd.

Gin ye hadna steekit yer painted door
Ere the licht o' day was dune,
Ye micht hae h'ard the Host gang by
Ower this braw Seaward Toon.

MARY'S SONG

I wad ha'e gi'en him my lips tae kiss,
Had I been his, had I been his ;
Barley breid and elder wine,
Had I been his as he is mine.

The wanderin' bee it seeks the rose ;
Tae the lochan's bosom the burnie goes ;
The grey bird cries at evenin's fa',
" My luve, my fair one, come awa'."

My beloved sall ha'e this he'rt tae break,
Reid, reid wine and the barley cake,
A he'rt tae break, and a mou' tae kiss,
Tho' he be nae mine, as I am his.

IN ARDELOT

In Ardelot
Nine years ago,
'Twas you who sang
In Ardelot.

Of doves that to
Their ark repair,
And find a constant
Refuge there,
All gentle souls
My heart enthrall,
And you most gentle
Were of all.

In little houses
Warm and lit,
When with the country
Folk you sit,
Dream of your altars
Still, my dove,
The resting-places
Of your love.

IN ARDELLOT

Yet hear in winds' call
My heart's call,
For you the dearest
Were of all

In Ardelot,
In Ardelot,
By rocking pines
Of Ardelot.

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

ABERDEEN, 1924

This ae nicht, this ae nicht
By the saut sea faem,
The auld grey wife
O' the auld grey toon,
She's biddin' her bairns hame
Fae the far roads
An' the lang roads
An' the land that's ayont them a',
She's cryin' them hame
Till her ain toon
Atween the rivers twa.

This ae nicht, this ae nicht
Fan the win' dra's fae the sea,
Thir's a laddie's step
On the cobbled steens—
Fatna laddie can it be?
Is't him that sang
Wi' the stars o' morn,
An' brak his he'rt

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

On a bleedin' thorn
An' thocht nae mair o' me?

This ae nicht, this ae nicht,
The mirk an' the dawn atween,
Yon bairn he weers the Gordon plaid
An' his een's the eagle's een.
He sings as he gangs
By the Collidge Croon,
He fustles it ower the faem,
A queer auld rune
Til a gey auld tune,
I'm thinkin' my bairn's won hame.

For it's : "*Brig o' Balgownie,
Black's yer wa',
Wi' a mither's ae son
An' a mare's ae foal
Doon ye sall fa'.*"*

* Byron knew this rhyme as a child.

IN A MIRROR

My mirror is a starlit lake
Where three tall candles flare and shake.
Hark to the song the night-winds make.
The bairns chaunt the fairy tune
A little one would love to croon.

“Yin that blew the thistle seed,
Yin that strung the rowans reid,
Yin that danced fu’ daintily
Abune the green o’ the blaeberries.”

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
Shadows rise and shadows fall,
Who will answer when I call?

But the wind blows out the candles three
So that the better I may see
The little one look back at me.

ANNIE HONEY

When we gave him no "Good-e'en"
At the cross or on the green,
Nor welcomed him with laughter for the love
Of the songs he once was making
At the brewing or the baking,
Songs we were a-wearied of,

It was Annie Honey who
Said he went at dawning thro'
The valley where the white mist chills.
Softly, so that none should waken,
He the secret road had taken,
For the country of the Kind Folk
That lies beyond the hills.

Annie Honey, heart of gold,
In the windy town acold,
Under drifting April moons,
Could not stay her eyes from weeping,
Sorrowed waking, sorrowed sleeping,
For his wild lamenting tunes.

ANNIE HONEY

Welladay and welladay!
Came October mournfully,
Brindled moths a-spinning
In a twilight green;
Every plane-tree mist-enfolden,
Black as velvet, amber-golden,
Was a leopard lithe and lean.

All a-tremble did she hear,
Now so far, now so near,
With a music rarer than the brown bird trills,
"Annie Honey, Annie Honey—Annie H-o-n-e-y."
And she followed where it led her,
To the land beyond the hills.

PATRICK

Ye lads and ye lasses
That rins thro' the toon,
Hear ye aucht o' Auld Patrick
Wha mends the fouk's shoon ?
Mendin' auld shoon,
Tinkerin' at shoon,
Grey o' the mornin'
Till evenin' reid ;
An' the robin sings saft
In the green glen-heid.

Ye gentle an' simple
That walks in the wynd,
Wi' Patrick be hamely,
Wi' Patrick be kind.
Doon the lang wynd,
At the fit o' the wynd,
Grim wi' sorrow
And grey wi' greed . . .
An' there's gowd on the broom
In the green glen-heid.

I'll gang nivver mair
At morn, nicht or noon,
Lily-licht fitted
On dancin' shoon,
On elfin shoon,
On fairy shoon,
Whaur the rose burns bricht
An' the berry burns reid,
Tae the he'rt o' the warld
In the green glen-heid.

The lads and the lasses
That rins ower the toon
Cares nocht for Auld Patrick
Wha mends the fouk's shoon.
Puir auld shoon,
Weerin' dune !
Grim wi' sorrow
An grey wi' greed . . .
He was my ain luv
In the green glen-heid.

PENCHRISE

I shall be grave and old,
I shall be cold and wise,
When I forget the moorland
Lifting to Penchrise ;
The lovely, ancient moorland
Beneath the dappled skies.

There every trembling willow
Can show a silver crest
To the bright crystal water
Streaming from the west.
And Joy, the Gypsy, found me there
And clasped me to her breast.

We tracked the green Catrail
Winding like a snake,
Where bluebells lisp and flutter
And solemn thistles quake,
For fear the buried hill-men
Should hear them and awake.

Wind kissed the heather,
Sun smote the pine,

PENCHRISE

They brewed the cup together,
Lusty, strong and fine;
And Joy, the mad Gypsy,
She's drunk the honey wine.

Sleek, silken creatures
Were peering thro' the leaves
(Oh, the darlings, the sly eyes,
Robbers, murderers, thieves!)
In and out the meshes
That Chance, their mother, weaves.

Deep was the thicket
Where the strange gods stirred
The flame of the world
To a magic chord,
In the pure high singing
Of the hidden bird.

I shall grow grave and old,
I may grow cold and wise,
Even now in distant dream

PENCHRISE

The moorland faints and dies ;
The lovely, ancient moorland
Lifting to Penchrise,

Where cold crystal waters
Come streaming from the west,
And Joy, the wild Gypsy,
In tattered beauty dressed,
Has found some other lover
To gather to her breast.

AT CANDLEMAS

Lang syne at Candlemas
At first cam o' the mune,
I, a bit lassie,
Hame-gaun fae the toon,
Fell in wi' a stranger
Frail as ony reed,
Wi' a green mantle
Hapt aboot her heid.

Haste, I wad haste me,
The whinny road along,
Whinny, crookit road
Faur the grey ghaists gang.
Wi' her een fu' o' spells,
Her broo runkled sair,
She micht weel be the witch
O' the Braid Hill o' Fare.

Here cams Candlemas,
A wan deein' mune,
Eh! bit I'm weary.
Cauldrife wis the toon!

AT CANDLEMAS

Yon's a blythe bairnie
Soople as a reed,
Rinnin' wi' a hankey
Tied aboot her heid,
Hastin', hastin',
Limber-licht fit,
Doon the crookit road
Faur the grey moths flit.

Quo' she, "Ye'r sma'-bookit,
Yer broo's runkled sair,
Er' ye the auld witch
O' the Braid Hill o' Fare?"

MOST SAD IS SLEEP

In summer-time
Most sad is sleep,
When hawthorns still
Their blossoms keep;
So thin sleep's veil is,
Faint and rare,
Scarcely a dream
Can shelter there.

Only dim thoughts
Of sunny squares,
Marigold fields
And Country Fairs,
Of missing now
In every place,
The present comfort
Of your face.

In summer-time
Just at daybreak
How blessèd it
Would be to wake

MOST SAD IS SLEEP

In a fine world
Of towns and trees,
Marigold fields
And sunny seas,
Where flying rains
The blossoms kiss,
But yet a different
World from this !

Because beyond
The marigold,
Where little hills
Great woods enfold,
I run to push
The boughs apart
And fall a-weeping
On your heart.

DREAM-MAGIC

The larch-tree's a lady
With long green sleeves,
Swinging in the meadow
Where she weaves and weaves
Silken soft coverlets
Spun with gold seams.
Sleep and you'll dream there
The dream of all the dreams.

The burn she's a gypsy,
She runs through the glen,
She twists like an adder,
She flits like a wren,
Dancing to a very
Curious, ancient tune
Learnt from a brown elf
At the full moon.

That very same elfin thing,
Crouching in the leaves,
Taught the dream-magic
To Lady Greensleeves.

THE FIDDLER

A fine player was he . . .
'Twas the heather at my knee,
The Lang Hill o' Fare
An' a reid rose-tree,
A bonnie dryin' green,
Wind fae aff the braes,
Liftin' and shiftin'
The clear-bleached claes.

Syne he played again . . .
'Twas dreep, dreep o' rain,
A bairn at the breist
An' a warm hearth-stane,
Fire o' the peat,
Scones o' barley meal
An' the whirr, whirr, whirr,
O' a spinnin'-wheel.

Bit aye, wae's me !
The hindmaist tune he made . . .
'Twas juist a dune wife
Greetin' in her plaid,

THE FIDDLER

Winds o' a the years,
Naked wa's atween,
And heather creep, creepin'
Ower the bonnie dryin' green.

THE LANE KIRKYAIRD

The lane kirkyaird
Kens naither buss nor tree,
Bit bonnie gowden whin
Glintin' til the sea,
An' grey heid-stanes
O' the auld kith an' kin,
Weet wi' the spindrift thin.

Ower the lane kirkyaird
Gin a flame licht hie
Wi' the hindmaist trumpet's blast
Soondin' fae the sea,
"Roose ye, roose ye,
Auld kith an' kin,
Sleepin' late amang the whin,"

Syne saft wad she maen,
Yon saut-mou'd sea,
"The auld kith an' kin
They hae lang won free—"
Oh, feat gangs the win'
An' the spindrift thin
An' the fine, cauld smell o' the whin!

ALAS! POOR QUEEN

She was skilled in music and the dance
And the old arts of love
At the court of the poisoned rose
And the perfumed glove,
And gave her beautiful hand
To the pale Dauphin
A triple crown to win—
And she loved little dogs
 And parrots
 And red-legged partridges
And the golden fishes of the Duc de Guise
And a pigeon with a blue ruff
She had from Monsieur d'Elbœuf.

Master John Knox was no friend to her;
She spoke him soft and kind,
Her honeyed words were Satan's lure
The unwary soul to bind.
"Good sir, doth a lissome shape
And a comely face
Offend your God His Grace

ALAS ! POOR QUEEN

Whose Wisdom maketh these
Golden fishes of the Duc de Guise?"

She rode through Liddesdale with a song ;
" Ye streams sae wondrous strang,
Oh, mak' me a wrack as I come back
But spare me as I gang."
While a hill-bird cried and cried
Like a spirit lost
By the grey storm-wind tost.

Consider the way she had to go,
Think of the hungry snare,
The net she herself had woven,
Aware or unaware,
Of the dancing feet grown still,
The blinded eyes.—
Queens should be cold and wise,
And she loved little things,
 Parrots
 And red-legged partridges
And the golden fishes of the Duc de Guise

ALAS ! POOR QUEEN

And the pigeon with the blue ruff
She had from Monsieur d'Elbœuf.

THINK LANG

Lassie, think lang, think lang,
Ere his step comes ower the hill.
Luve gi'es wi' a lauch an' a sang,
An' whiles for nocht bit ill.

Thir's weary time tae rue
In the lea-lang nicht yer lane
The ghaist o' a kiss on yer mou'
An' sough o' win' in the rain.

Lassie, think lang, think lang,
The trees is clappin' their han's,
The burnie clatterin' wi' sang
Rins ower the blossomy lan's.

Luve gi'es wi' a lauch an' a sang,
His fit fa's licht on the dew.
Oh, lass, are ye thinkin' lang,
Star een an' honey mou'?

THE GHOST

The wind that brings
The twilight in
Is musky-scented,
Faint and thin,
When light as dew
On tender herb
A footstep falls
Across the kerb.

Into the street
The children pack,
With, "Here's the pedlar-
Man come back!
The pedlar with
The red balloons
And flutes that play
The dancing tunes."

The wind that brings
The twilight home
Is frailer than
The drifted foam,

THE GHOST

When light as vapour
On a glass
The footstep falls
Upon the grass.

“ O Mary, loose
Your cloudy wrap!
The gate is shut,
No timorous tap
Comes on the empty
Window-pane,
To wake your life
To joy again.

The old one broods
Beside the fire.
No grief has she,
And no desire.
With puckered lips
And crooked smile
She mutters to
Herself the while.

THE GHOST

“ A year, or two—
Or maybe three—
And I the pedlar-
Man shall be,
And I the baby
Soft and white
That Mary cries for
In the night,
And I the wind
So faint and thin,
The wind that blows
The twilight in.”

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

BY CANDLE-LIGHT

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 loneliest 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

THE DROVE-ROAD

On the lonesome track above dark Culblean—
The blithest days are the days that have been.

The laugh and the cry
And the blue eye's 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 gi'en 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.

REMEMBRANCE 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 hapt roond ma chin.

A star is shining 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 ;

THE FOX'S SKIN

A thoosand years o' clood 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."

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 weet 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—

TREASURE-TROVE

There's a queer, low lauchin' on the grey hill-heids—
An' the bricht drops, glancin', following 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 was 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.

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 gaither yon rose yer lane
An' yer he'rt 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,

THE LILT

And naething gi'en and a' thing ta'en
But yon nicht o' 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.

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 til her ;
The blooms they made a croon til her ;
I was a graceless loon til 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 til her,
An' auld folks he'rts 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.

THE GRACELESS LOON

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.





