

Songs of Angus and More Songs of Angus eBook

Songs of Angus and More Songs of Angus by Violet Jacob

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Contents

Songs of Angus and More Songs of Angus eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	8
Page 3.....	10
Page 4.....	12
Page 5.....	15
Page 6.....	17
Page 7.....	20
Page 8.....	23
Page 9.....	26
Page 10.....	29
Page 11.....	31
Page 12.....	33
Page 13.....	35
Page 14.....	38
Page 15.....	41
Page 16.....	43
Page 17.....	45
Page 18.....	48
Page 19.....	51
Page 20.....	53
Page 21.....	55
Page 22.....	58



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
TAM I' THE KIRK		1
THE HOWE O' THE MEARNNS		1
THE LANG ROAD		1
THE BEADLE O' DRUMLEE		2
THE WATER-HEN		3
THE HEID HORSEMAN		3
JEEMSIE MILLER		4
THE GEAN-TREES		5
THE TOD		5
THE BLIND SHEPHERD		5
THE DOO'UCOT UP THE BRAES		6
LOGIE KIRK		6
THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE DITCH		7
THE LOST LICHT		7
THE LAD I' THE MUNE		8
I		8
II		8
III		8
IV		8
V		8
THE GOWK		9
THE JACOBITE LASS		9
MAGGIE		9
THE WHUSTLIN' LAD		10
HOGMANAY		10
CRAIGO WOODS		11
THE WILD GEESE		11
GLOSSARY		11
CONTENTS		13
IN ENGLISH		13
JOCK, TO THE FIRST ARMY		13
THE TWA WEELUMS		13
THE FIELD BY THE LIRK O' THE HILL		14
THE ROAD TO MARYKIRK		14
KIRSTY'S OPINION		14
THE BRIG		15
THE KIRK BESIDE THE SANDS		15
GLORY		16



THE SHEPHERD TO HIS LOVE	16
A CHANGE O' DEILS	16
REJECTED	17
THE LAST O' THE TINKLER	17
IN ENGLISH	18
PRISON	18
PRESAGE	19
THE BIRD IN THE VALLEY	19
BACK TO THE LAND	19
THE SCARLET LILIES	20
FROSTBOUND	21
ARMED	21
UNITY	22



Page 1

TAM I' THE KIRK

O Jean, my Jean, when the bell ca's the congregation
Owre valley an' hill wi' the ding frae its iron mou',
When a'boddy's thochts is set on his ain salvation,
Mine's set on you.

There's a reid rose lies on the Buik o' the Word 'afore ye
That was growin' braw on its bush at the keek o' day,
But the lad that pu'd yon flower i' the mornin's glory,
He canna pray.

He canna pray; but there's nane i' the kirk will heed him
Whaur he sits sae still his lane at the side o' the wa,
For nane but the reid rose kens what my lassie gie'd him—
It an' us twa!

He canna sing for the sang that his ain he'rt raises,
He canna see for the mist that's 'afore his een,
An a voice drouns the hale o' the psalms an' the paraphrases,
Cryin' "Jean, Jean, Jean!"

THE HOWE O' THE MEARNIS

Laddie, my lad, when ye gang at the tail o' the plough
An' the days draw in,
When the burnin' yellow's awa' that was aince a-lowe
On the braes o' whin,
Do ye mind o' me that's deaved wi' the wearyfu' south
An' it's puir concairns
While the weepies fade on the knowes at the river's mouth
In the Howe o' the Mearns?

There was nae twa lads frae the Grampians doon to the Tay
That could best us twa;
At bothie or dance, or the field on a fitba' day,
We could sort them a';
An' at courtin'-time when the stars keeked doon on the glen
An' its theek o' fairns,
It was you an' me got the pick o' the basket then
In the Howe o' the Mearns.



London is fine, an' for ilk o' the lasses at hame
There'll be saxty here,
But the springtime comes an' the hairst—an it's aye the same
Through the changefu year.
O, a lad thinks lang o' hame ere he thinks his fill
As his breid he airns—
An' they're thrashin' noo at the white fairm up on the hill
In the Howe o' the Mearns.

Gin I mind mysel' an' toil for the lave o' my days
While I've een to see,
When I'm auld an' done wi' the fash o' their English ways
I'll come hame to dee;
For the lad dreams aye o' the prize that the man'll get,
But he lives an' lairns,
An' it's far, far 'ayont him still—but it's farther yet
To the Howe o' the Mearns.

Laddie, my lad, when the hair is white on yer pow
An' the work's put past,
When yer hand's owre auld an' heavy to haud the plough
I'll win hame at last,
An we'll bide our time on the knowes whaur the broom stands braw
An' we played as bairns,
Till the last lang gloamin' shall creep on us baith an' fa'
On the Howe o' the Mearns.

THE LANG ROAD



Page 2

Below the braes o' heather, and far along the glen,
The road rins southward, southward, that grips the souls o' men,
That draws their fitsteps aye awa' frae hearth and frae fauld,
That pairts ilk freen' frae ither, and the young frae the auld.
And whiles I stand at mornin' and whiles I stand at nicht,
To see it through the gaisty gloom, gang slippin oot o sicht;
There's mony a lad will ne'er come back amang his ain to lie,
An' its lang, lang waitin' till the time gangs by.

An far ayont the bit o' sky that lies abune the hills,
There is the black toon standin' mid the roarin' o' the mills.
Whaur the reek frae mony engines hangs 'atween it and the sun
An the lives are weary, weary, that are just begun.
Doon yon lang road that winds awa' my ain three sons they went,
They turned their faces southward frae the glens they aye had kent,
And twa will never see the hills wi' livin' een again,
An' it's lang, lang waitin' while I sit my lane.

For ane lies whaur the grass is hiech abune the gallant deid,
An ane whaur England's mighty ships sail proud abune his heid,
They couldna' sleep mair saft at hame, the twa that sairved their king,
Were they laid aside their ain kirk yett, i' the flower o' the ling.
But whaur the road is twistin' through yon streets o' care an' sin,
My third braw son toils nicht and day for the gowd he fain would win,
Whaur ilka man grapes i' the dark to get his neebour's share,
An' it's lang, lang strivin' i' the mirk that's there.

The een o' love can pierce the mools that hide a sodger's grave,
An' love that doesna' heed the sod will naither hear the wave,
But it canna' see 'ayont the cloud that hauds my youngest doon
Wi' its mist o' greed an' sorrow i' the smokin' toon.
An whiles, when through the open door there fades the deein' licht,
I think I hear my ain twa men come up the road at nicht,
But him that bides the nearest seems the furthest aye frae me—
And it's lang, lang listenin' till I hear the three!

THE BEADLE O' DRUMLEE

Them that's as highly placed as me
(Wha am the beadle o' Drumlee)
Should na be prood, nor yet owre free.



Me an' the meenister, ye ken,
Are no the same as a' thae men
We hae for neebours i' the glen.

The Lord gie'd him some lairnin' sma'
An me guid sense abune them a',
An them nae wuts to ken wha's wha.

Ye'd think, to hear the lees they tell,
The Sawbath day could mind itsel'
Withoot a hand to rug the bell,

Ye'd think the Reverend Pairrick Broun
Could ca' the Bible up an' doon
An' loup his lane in till his goon.

Whiles, gin he didna get frae me
The wicelike wurd I weel can gie,
Whaur wad the puir bit callant be?

The elders, Ross an' Weellum Aird,
An' fowk like Alexander Caird,
That think they're cocks o' ilka yaird,



Page 3

Fegs aye! they'd na be sweir to rule
A lad sae newly frae the schule
Gin *my* auld bonnet crooned a fule!

But oh! Jehovah's unco' kind!
Whaur wad this doited pairish find
A man wi' sic a powerfu' mind?

Sae, let the pairish sleep at night
Blind wi' the elders' shinin' licht,
Nor ken wha's hand keeps a' things richt.

It's what they canna understan'
That brains hae ruled since time began,
An' that the beadle is the man!

THE WATER-HEN

As I gae'd doon by the twa mill dams i' the mornin'
The water-hen cam' oot like a passin' wraith
And her voice cam' through the reeds wi' a sound of warnin',
 "Faith—keep faith!"
"Aye, bird, tho' ye see but ane ye may cry on baith!"

As I gae'd doon the field when the dew was lyin',
My ain love stood whaur the road an' the mill-lade met,
An it seemed to me that the rowin' wheel was cryin',
 "Forgi'e—forget,
An turn, man, turn, for ye ken that ye lo'e her yet!"

As I gae'd doon the road 'twas a weary meetin',
For the ill words said yest're'en they were aye the same,
And my het he'rt drowned the wheel wi' its heavy beatin'.
 "Lass, think shame,
It's no for me to speak, for it's you to blame!"

As I gae'd doon by the toon when the day was springin'
The Baltic brigs lay thick by the soundin' quay
And the riggin' hummed wi' the sang that the wind was singin',
 "Free—gang free,
For there's mony a load on shore may be skailed at sea!"

* * * * *



When I cam' hame wi' the thrang o' the years 'ahint me
There was naucht to see for the weeds and the lade in spate,
But the water-hen by the dams she seemed aye to mind me,
Cryin' "Hope—wait!"
"Aye, bird, but my een grow dim, an' it's late—late!"

THE HEID HORSEMAN

O Alec, up at Soutar's fairm,
You, that's sae licht o' he'rt,
I ken ye passin' by the tune
Ye whustle i' the cairt;

I hear the rowin' o' the wheels,
The clink o' haims an' chain,
And set abune yer stampin' team
I see ye sit yer lane.

Ilk morn, agin' the kindlin' sky
Yer liftit heid is black,
Ilk nicht I watch ye hameward ride
Wi' the sunset at yer back.

For wark's yer meat and wark's yer play,
Heid horseman tho' ye be,
Ye've ne'er a glance for wife nor maid,
Ye tak nae tent o' me.

An' man, ye'll no suspec' the truth,
Tho' weel I ken it's true,
There's mony ane that trails in silk
Wha fain wad gang wi' you.

But I am just a serving lass,
Wha toils to get her breid,
An' O! ye're sweir to see the gowd
I braid about my heid.

My cheek is like the brier rose,
That scents the simmer wind,
An fine I'd keep the wee bit hoose,
'Gin I'd a man to mind!



Page 4

It's sair to see, when ilka lad
Is dreamin' o' his joe,
The bonnie mear that leads yer team
Is a' ye're thinkin' o'.

Like fire upon her satin coat
Ye gar the harness shine,
But, lad, there is a safter licht
In thae twa een o' mine!

Aye—wark yer best—but youth is short,
An' shorter ilka year—
There's ane wad gar ye sune forget
Yon limmer o' a mear!

JEEMSIE MILLER

There's some that mak' themsels a name
Wi' preachin', business, or a game,
There's some wi' drink hae gotten fame
And some wi' siller:
I kent a man got glory cheap,
For nane frae him their een could keep,
Losh! he was shapit like a neep,
Was Jeemsie Miller!

When he gaed drivin' doon the street
Wi' cairt an' sheltie, a' complete,
The plankie whaur he had his seat
Was bent near double;
And gin yon wood had na been strang
It hadna held oor Jeemsie lang,
He had been landit wi' a bang,
And there'd been trouble.

Ye could but mind, to see his face,
The reid mune glowerin' on the place,
Nae man had e'er sic muckle space
To haud his bonnet:
An owre yon bonnet on his brow,
Set cockit up owre Jeemsie's pow,
There waggit, reid as lichtit tow,
The toorie on it.



And Jeemsie's poke was brawly lined,
There wasna mony couldna' find
His cantie hoosie i' the wynd,

“The Salutation”:

For there ye'd get, wi' sang and clink,
What some ca'd comfort, wi' a wink,
And some that didna care for drink
Wad ca' damnation!

But dinna think, altho' he made
Sae grand a profit o' his trade,
An' muckle i' the bank had laid,
He wadna spare o't,
For, happit whaur it wasna seen,
He'd aye a dram in his machine,
An' never did he meet a freen'
But got a share o't.

Ae day he let the sheltie fa'
(Whisht, sirs! he wasna' fou—na, na!
A wee thing pleasant—that was a',
An' drivin' canny)
Fegs! he cam' hurlin' owre the front
An' struck the road wi' sic a dunt,
Ye'd thocht the causey got the brunt
And no the mannie!

Aweel, it was his hin'most drive,
Aifter yon clour he couldna thrive,
For twa pairts deid, an' ane alive,
His billies foond him:
And, bedded then, puir Jeemsie lay,
And a' the nicht and a' the day
Relations cam' to greet an' pray
An' gaiter roond him.

Said Jeemsie, “Cousins, gie's a pen,
Awa' an' bring the writer ben,
What I hae spent wi' sinfu' men
I weel regret it;
In daith I'm sweir to be disgrac't,
I've plenty left forby my waste,
An them that I've negleckit maist
It's them'll get it.”

It was a sicht to see them rin
To save him frae the sense o' sin,



Fu' sune they got the writer in
His mind to settle;
And O their loss! sae sair they felt it
To a' the toon wi' tears they tell't it,
Their dule for Jeemsie wad hae meltit
A he'rt o' metal!



Page 5

Puir Jeemsie dee'd. In a' their braws
The faim'ly cam' as black as craws,
Men, wifes, an' weans wi' their mamas
That scarce could toddle!
They grat—an' they had cause to greet;
The wull was read that garred them meet—
The U. P. Kirk, just up the street,
Got ilka bodle!

THE GEAN-TREES

I mind, when I dream at nicht,
Whaur the bonnie Sidlaws stand
Wi' their feet on the dark'nin' land
An their heids i' the licht;
An the thochts o' youth roll back
Like wreaths frae the hillside track
In the Vale o' Strathmore;
And the autumn leaves are turnin'
And the flame o' the gean-trees burnin'
Roond the white hoose door.

Aye me, when spring cam' green
And May-month decked the shaws
There was scarce a blink o' the wa's
For the flower o' the gean;
But when the hills were blue
Ye could see them glintin' through
An the sun i' the lift;
An the flower o' the gean-trees fa'in'
Was like pairls frae the branches snawin'
In a lang white drift.

Thae trees are fair and gay
When May-month's in her prime,
But I'm thravn wi' the blasts o' time
An my heid's white as they;
But an auld man aye thinks lang
O' the hauchs he played amang
In his braw youth-tide;
An there's ane that aye keeps yearnin'
For a hoose whaur the leaves are turnin'



An the flame o' the gean-tree burnin'
By the Sidlaws' side.

THE TOD

There's a tod aye blinkin' when the nicht comes doon,
Blinkin' wi' his lang een an' keekin' roond an' roon',
Creepin' by the fairmyaird when gloamin' is to fa',
And syne there'll be a chicken or a deuk awa'—
Aye, when the guidwife rises, there's a deuk awa'!

There's a lass sits greetin' ben the hoose at hame,
For when the guidwife's cankered she gie's her aye the blame,
An' sair the lassie's sabbin' an' fast the tears fa',
For the guidwife's tint her bonnie hen an' it's awa'—
Aye, she's no sae easy dealt wi' when her gear's awa'!

There's a lad aye roamin' when the day gets late,
A lang-leggit deevil wi' his hand upon the gate,
And aye the guidwife cries to him to gar the toddie fa',
For she canna thole to let her deuks an' hens awa'—
Aye, the muckle bubbly-jock himsel' is ca'd awa'!

The laddie saw the tod gang by an' killed him wi' a stane
And the bonnie lass that grat sae sair she sabs nae mair her lane,
But the guidwife's no contentit yet, her like ye never saw!
Cries she—"This time it is the lass, an' *she's* awa'!
Aye, yon laddie's waur nor ony tod, for Bell's awa'!"

THE BLIND SHEPHERD

The land is white, an' far awa'
Abune ae bush an' tree
Nae fit is movin' i' the snaw
On the hills I canna see;
For the sun may shine an' the darkness fa',
But aye it's nicht to me.



Page 6

I hear the whaup on windy days
Cry up amang the peat
Whaur, on the road that speels the braes,
I've heard my ain sheep's feet,
An' the bonnie lambs wi' their canny ways
An' the silly yowes that bleat.

But noo wi' them I mauna' be,
An' by the fire I bide,
To sit and listen patiently
For a fit on the great hillside,
A fit that'll come to the door for me
Doon through the pasture wide,

Maybe I'll hear the baa'in' flocks
Ae nicht when time seems lang,
An' ken there's a step on the scattered rocks
The fleggitt sheep amang,
An' a voice that cries an' a hand that knocks
To bid me rise an' gang.

Then to the hills I'll lift my een
Nae matter tho' they're blind,
For Ane will treid the stanes between
And I will walk behind,
Till up, far up i' the midnight keen
The licht o' Heaven I'll find.

An' maybe, when I'm up the hill
An' stand abune the steep,
I'll turn aince mair to look my fill
On my ain auld flock o' sheep,
An' I'll leave them lyin' sae white an' still
On the quiet braes asleep.

THE DOO'UCOT UP THE BRAES

Beside the doo'cot up the braes
The fields slope doon frae me,
An fine's the glint on blawin' days
O' the bonnie plains o' sea.



Below's my mither's hoosie sma',
The smiddy by the byre
Whaur aye my feyther dings awa'
And my brither blaws the fire.

For Lachlan lo'es the smiddy's reek,
An' Geordie's but a fule
Wha' drives the plough his breid to seek,
And Rob's to teach the schule;

He'll haver roond the schulehoose wa's,
And ring the schulehoose bell,
He'll skelp the scholars wi' the tawse
(I'd like that fine mysel'!)

They're easy pleased, my brithers three—
I hate the smiddy's lowe,
A weary dominie I'd be,
An' I canna thole the plough.

But by the doo'cot up the braes
There's nane frae me can steal
The blue sea an' the ocean haze
An' the ships I like sae weel.

The brigs ride oot past Ferryden
Ahint the girnin' tugs,
And the lasses wave to the Baltic men
Wi' the gowd rings i' their lugs.

My mither's sweir to let me gang.
My feyther gi'es me blame,
But youth is sair and life is lang
When yer he'rt's sae far frae hame.

But i' the doo'cot up the braes,
When a'tumn nichts are mirk,
I've hid my pennies an' my claes
An' the Buik I read at kirk,

An' come ae nicht when a' fowks sleep,
I'll lift them whaur they lie,
An' to the harbour-side I'll creep
I' the dim licht o' the sky;

An' when the eastern blink grows wide,
An' dark still smoors the west,



BOOKRAGS

A Baltic brig will tak' the tide
Wi' a lad that canna rest!

LOGIE KIRK



Page 7

O Logie Kirk amang the braes,
I'm thinkin' o' the merry days
Afore I trod thae weary ways
That led me far frae Logie!

Fine do I mind when I was young
Abune thy graves the mavis sung
An' ilka birdie had a tongue
To ca' me back to Logie.

O Logie Kirk, tho' aye the same
The burn sings ae remembered name,
There's ne'er a voice to cry "Come hame
To bonnie Bess at Logie!"

Far, far awa' the years decline
That took the lassie wha was mine
An' laid her sleepin' lang, lang syne
Amang the braes at Logie.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE DITCH

Aweel, I'm couped. But wha' could tell
The road wad rin sae sair?
I couldna gang yon pace mysel',
An' I winna try nae mair!

There's them wad coonsel me to stan',
But this is what I say:
*When Natur's forces fecht wi' man,
Dod, he maun just give way!*

If man's nae framed to lift his fit
Agin' a nat'ral law,
I winna' lift my heid, for it
Wad dae nae guid ava'.

Puir worms are we; the poo'pit rings
Ilk Sawbath wi' the same,
Gin airth's the place for sic-like things,
I'm no sae far frae hame!

Yon's guid plain raes'nin'; an' forby,
This parish has nae sense,



There's mony traiv'lin wad deny
Natur and Providence;

For loud an' bauld the leears wage
On men like me their war,
Elected saints to thole their rage
Is what they're seekin' for.

But tho' a man wha's drink's his tea
Their malice maun despise,
It's no for naething, div ye see,
That I'm sae sweir to rise!

THE LOST LICHT

(A Perthshire legend)

The weary, weary days gang by,
The weary nichts they fa',
I mauna rest, I canna lie
Since my ain bairn's awa'.

The souging o' the springtide breeze
Abune her heid blows sweet,
There's nests amang the kirkyaird trees
And gowans at her feet.

She gae'd awa' when winds were hie,
When the deein' year was cauld,
An noo the young year seems to me
A waur ane nor the auld.

And, bedded, 'twixt the nicht an' day,
Yest're'en, I couldna bide
For thinkin', thinkin' as I lay
O' the wean that lies outside.

O, mickle licht to me was gie'n
To reach my bairn's abode,
But heaven micht blast a mither's een
And her feet wad find the road.

The kirkyaird loan alang the brae
Was choked wi' brier and whin,
A' i' the dark the stanes were grey
As wraiths when I gae'd in.



The wind cried frae the western airt
Like warlock tongues at strife,
But the hand o' fear hauds aff the he'rt
That's lost its care for life.

I sat me lang upon the green,
A stanethraw frae the kirk,
And syne a licht shone dim between
The shaws o' yew and birk.



Page 8

'Twas na the wildfire's flame that played
Alang the kirkyaird land,
It was a band o' bairns that gae'd
Wi' lichts in till their hand.

O white they cam', yon babie thrang,
A' silent o'er the sod;
Ye couldna hear their feet amang
The graves, sae saft they trod.

And aye the can'les flickered pale
Below the darkened sky,
But the licht was like a broken trail
When the third wee bairn gae'd by.

For whaur the can'le-flame should be
Was naither blink nor shine—
The bairnie turned its face to me
An' I kent that it was mine.

An' O! my broken he'rt was sair,
I cried, "My ain! my doo'!
For a' thae weans the licht burns fair,
But it winna' burn for you!"

She smiled to me, my little Jean,
Said she, "The dule and pain,
O mither! frae your waefu' een
They strike on me again:

"For ither babes the flame leaps bricht
And fair and braw appears,
But I canna keep my bonnie licht,
For it's droukit wi' your tears!"

There blew across my outstreeked hand
The white mist o' her sark,
But I couldna reach yon babie band
For it faded i' the dark.

My ain, my dear, your licht shall burn
Although my een grow blind,
Although they twa to saut should turn
Wi' the tears that lie behind.



O Jeanie, on my bended knee
I'll pray I may forget,
My grief is a' that's left to me,
But there's something dearer yet!

THE LAD I' THE MUNE

I

O gin I lived i' the gowden mune
Like the mannie that smiles at me,
I'd sit a' nicht in my hoose abune
An the wee-bit stars they wad ken me sune,
For I'd sup my brose wi' a gowden spune
And they wad come out to see!

II

For weel I ken that the mune's his ain
And he is the maister there;
A' nicht he's lauchin', for, fegs, there's nane
To draw the blind on his windy-pane
And tak' an' bed him, to lie his lane
And pleasure himsel' nae mair.

III

Says I to Grannie, "Keek up the glen
Abune by the rodden tree,
There's a braw lad 'yont i' the mune, ye ken."
Says she, "Awa' wi' ye, bairn, gang ben,
For noo it's little I fash wi' men
An' it's less that they fash wi' me!"

IV

When I'm as big as the tinkler-man
That sings i' the loan a' day,
I'll bide wi' him i' the tinkler-van
Wi' a wee-bit pot an' a wee-bit pan;
But I'll no tell Grannie my bonnie plan,
For I dinna ken what she'll say.



V

And, nicht by nicht, we will a' convene
And we'll be a cantie three;
We'll lauch an' crack i' the loanin' green,
The kindest billies that ever was seen,
The tinkler-man wi' his twinklin' een
And the lad i' the mune an' me!



Page 9

THE GOWK

I see the Gowk an' the Gowk sees me
Beside a berry-bush by the aipple-tree.
Old Scots Rhyme.

'Tib, my auntie's a deil to wark,
Has me risin' 'afore the sun;
Aince her heid is abune her sark
Then the clash o' her tongue's begun!
Warslin', steerin' wi' hens an' swine,
Naucht kens she o' a freend o' mine—
But the Gowk that bides i' the woods o' Dun
He kens him fine!

Past the yaird an' ahint the sty,
O the aipples grow bonnilie!
Tib, my auntie, she canna' spy
Wha comes creepin' to kep wi' me.
Aye! she'd sort him, for, dod, she's fell!
Whisht nou, Jimmie, an' hide yersel'
An' the wice-like bird i' the aipple-tree
He winna' tell!

Aprile-month, or the aipples flower,
Tib, my auntie, will rage an' ca';
Jimmie lad, she may rin an' glower—
What care I? We'll be far awa'!
Let her seek me the leelang day,
Wha's to tell her the road we'll gae?
For the cannie Gowk, tho' he kens it a',
He winna' say!

THE JACOBITE LASS

My love stood at the loanin' side
An' held me by the hand,
The bonniest lad that e'er did bide
In a' this waefu' land—
There's but ae bonnier to be seen
Frae Pentland to the sea,



And for his sake but yestre'en
I sent my love frae me.

I gi'ed my love the white white rose
That's at my feyther's wa',
It is the bonniest flower that grows
Whaur ilka flower is braw;
There's but ae bonnier that I ken
Frae Perth unto the main,
An' that's the flower o' Scotland's men
That's fechtin' for his ain.

Gin I had kept whate'er was mine
As I hae gie'd my best,
My he'rt were licht by day, and syne
The nicht wad bring me rest;
There is nae heavier he'rt to find
Frae Forfar toon to Ayr,
As aye I sit me doon to mind
On him I see nae mair.

Lad, gin ye fa' by Chairlie's side
To rid this land o' shame,
There winna be a prooder bride
Than her ye left at hame,
But I will seek ye whaur ye sleep
Frae lawlands to the peat,
An ilka nicht at mirk I'll creep
To lay me at yer feet.

MAGGIE

Maggie, I ken that ye are happ'd in glory
And nane can gar ye greet;
The joys o' Heaven are evermair afore ye,
It's licht about yer feet.

I ken nae waefu' thochts can e'er be near ye
Nor sorrow fash yer mind,
In yon braw place they winna let ye weary
For him ye left behind.

Thae nichts an' days when dule seems mair nor double
I'll need to dae my best,
For aye ye took the half o' ilka trouble,
And noo I'd hae ye rest.



Yer he'rt'll be the same he'rt since yer flittin',
Gin auld love doesna tire,
Sae dinna look an' see yer lad that's sittin'
His lane aside the fire.



Page 10

The sky is keen wi' dancin' stars in plenty,
The New Year frost is strang;
But, O my lass! because the Auld Year kent ye
I'm sweir to let it gang!

But time drives forrit; and on ilk December
There waits a New Year yet,
An naething bides but what our he'rts remember—
Maggie, ye'll na forget?

THE WHUSTLIN' LAD

There's a wind comes doon frae the braes when the licht is spreadin'
Chilly an' grey,
An' the auld cock craws at the yett o' the muirland steadin'
Cryin' on day;
The hoose lies sound an' the sma' mune's deein' an' weary
Watchin' her lane,
The shadows creep by the dyke an' the time seems eerie,
But the lad i' the fields he is whustlin' cheery, cheery,
'Yont i' the rain.

My mither stirs as she wauks wi' her twa een blinkin',
Bedded she'll bide,
For foo can an auld wife ken what a lassie's thinkin'
Close at her side?
Mither, lie still, for ye're needin' a rest fu' sairly,
Weary an' worn,
Mither, I'll rise, an' ye ken I'll be warkin' fairly—
An' I dinna ken *wha* can be whustlin', whustlin', aerly,
Lang or it's morn!

Gin ye hear a sound like the sneck o' the backdoor turnin',
Fash na for it;
It's just the crack i' the lum o' the green wood burnin',
Ill to be lit;
Gin ye hear a step, it's the auld mear loose i' the stable
Stampin' the strae,
Or mysel' that's settin' the parritch-spunes on the table,
Sae turn ye about an' sleep, mither, sleep while ye're able,
Rest while ye may.



Up at the steadin' the trail o' the mist has liftit
Clear frae the grund,
Mither breathes saft an' her face to the wa' she's shiftit—
Aye, but she's sound!
Lad, ye may come, for there's nane but mysel' will hear ye
Oot by the stair,
But whustle you on an' I winna hae need to fear ye,
For, laddie, the lips that keep whustlin', whustlin' cheery
Canna dae mair!

HOGMANAY

(To A pipe tune)

O, it's fine when the New and the Auld Year meet,
An' the lads gang roarin' i' the lichtit street,
An' there's me and there's Alick an' the miller's loon,
An' Geordie that's the piper oot o' Forfar toon.
Geordie Faa! Geordie Faa!
Up wi' the chanter, lad, an' gie's a blaw!
For we'll step to the tune while we've feet in till oor shune,
Tho' the bailies an' the provost be to sort us a'!

We've three bonnie bottles, but the third ane's toom,
Gin' the road ran whisky, it's mysel' wad soom!
But we'll stan' while we can, an' be dancin' while we may,
For there's twa we hae to finish, an' it's Hogmanay.
Geordie Faa! Geordie Faa!
There's an auld carle glow'rin' oot ahint yon wa',
But we'll sune gar him loup to the pipin' till he coup,
For we'll gi'e him just a drappie, an' he'll no say na!



Page 11

My heid's dementit an' my feet's the same,
When they'll no wark thegither it's a lang road hame;
An' we've twa mile to traivel or it's mair like three,
But I've got a grip o' Alick, an' ye'd best grip me.

Geordie Faa! Geordie Faa!

The morn's near brak'in' an' we'll need awa',
Gin ye're aye blawin' strang, then we'll maybe get along,
An' the deevil tak' the laddie that's the first to fa'!

CRAIGO WOODS

Craigo Woods, wi' the splash o' the cauld rain beatin'
I' the back end o' the year,
When the clouds hang laigh wi' the weicht o' their load o' greetin'
And the autumn wind's asteer;
Ye may stand like gaists, ye may fa' i' the blast that's cleft ye
To rot i' the chilly dew,
But when will I mind on aucht since the day I left ye
Like I mind on you—on you?

Craigo Woods, i' the licht o' September sleepin'
And the saft mist o' the morn,
When the hairst climbs to yer feet, an' the sound o' reapin'
Comes up frae the stookit corn,
And the braw reid puddock-stules are like jewels blinkin'
And the bramble happs ye baith,
O what do I see, i' the lang nicht, lyin' an' thinkin'
As I see yer wraith—yer wraith?

There's a road to a far-aff land, an' the land is yonder
Whaur a' men's hopes are set;
We dinna ken foo lang we maun hae to wander,
But we'll a' win to it yet;
An' gin there's woods o' fir an' the licht atween them,
I winna speir its name,
But I'll lay me doon by the puddock-stules when I've seen them,
An' I'll cry "I'm hame—I'm hame!"

THE WILD GEESE

"O tell me what was on yer road, ye roarin' norlan' Wind,
As ye cam' blawin' frae the land that's niver frae my mind?"



My feet they traivel England, but I'm dee'in for the north."
"My man, I heard the siller tides rin up the Firth o' Forth."

"Aye, Wind, I ken them weel eneuch, and fine they fa' an' rise,
And fain I'd feel the creepin' mist on yonder shore that lies,
But tell me, ere ye passed them by, what saw ye on the way?"
"My man, I rocked the rovin' gulls that sail abune the Tay."

"But saw ye naething, leein' Wind, afore ye cam' to Fife?
There's muckle lyin' 'yont the Tay that's mair to me nor life."
"My man, I swept the Angus braes ye hae'na trod for years."
"O Wind, forgi'e a hameless loon that canna see for tears!"

"And far abune the Angus straths I saw the wild geese flee,
A lang, lang skein o' beatin' wings, wi' their heids towards the sea,
And aye their cryin' voices trailed ahint them on the air—"
"O Wind, hae maircy, haud yer whisht, for I daurna listen mair!"

GLOSSARY



Page 12

Airt, point (of compass). *Billies*, cronies. *Braws*, finery. *Bubbly-jock*, turkey-cock. *Cankered*, cross-grained. *Causey*, paved edge of a street. *Chanter*, mouth-piece of a bag-pipe. *Clour*, a blow. *Coup*, to fall. *Deaved*, deafened, bewildered. *Droukit*, soaked. *Dunt*, a blow. *Fit*, foot. *Fleggit*, frightened. *Gean-tree*, a wild cheery-tree. *Girnin'*, groaning. *Gowk*, a cuckoo. *Grapes*, gropes. *Hairst*, harvest. *Happit*, *happ'd*, wrapped. *Haughs*, low-lying lands. *Keek*, peer. *Kep*, meet. *Laigh*, low. *Lane*, *his lane*, alone. *Loan*, disused, overgrown road, a waste place. *Loon*, a fellow. *Lowe*, flame. *Lum*, chimney. *Mear*, mare. *Mill-lade*, mill-race. *Neep*, turnip. *Poke*, pocket. *Puddock-stules*, toadstools. *Rodden-tree*, rowan-tree. *Rug*, to pull. *Sark*, shift, smock. *Shaws*, small woods. *Sheltie*, pony. *Skailed*, split, dispersed. *Smoors*, smothers. *Sneck*, latch. *Soom*, swim. *Sort them*, deal with them. *Speels*, climbs. *Speir*, to inquire. *Steerin'*, stirring. *Sweir*, loth. *Syne*, since, ago, then. *Tawse*, a leather strap used for correcting children. *Thole*, to endure. *Thrawn*, twisted. *Tint*, lost. *Tod*, fox. *Toom*, empty. *Toorie*, a knob, a topknot. *Traivel*, to go afoot; literally, to go at a foot's pace. *Warslin'*, wrestling. *Wauks*, wakes. *Waur*, worse. *Wean*, infant. *Weepies*, rag-wort. *Whaup*, curlew. *Wildfire*, summer lightning. *Writer*, attorney. *Yett*, gate.

MORE SONGS
OF ANGUS
AND OTHERS

By
VIOLET JACOB

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To A. H. J.

Past life, past tears, far past the grave,
The tryst is set for me,
Since, for our all, your all you gave
On the slopes of Picardy.

On Angus, in the autumn nights,
The ice-green light shall lie,
Beyond the trees the Northern Lights
Slant on the belts of sky.

But miles on miles from Scottish soil
You sleep, past war and scaith,
Your country's freedman, loosed from toil,
In honour and in faith.



For Angus held you in her spell,
Her Grampians, faint and blue,
Her ways, the speech you knew so well,
Were half the world to you.

Yet rest, my son; our souls are those
Nor time nor death can part,
And lie you proudly, folded close
To France's deathless heart.

The whole of the poems under the heading In Scots appeared in Country Life. Of the others, one or two have appeared in The Cornhill or The Outlook. They are all reprinted by kind permission of the respective editors.



Page 13

CONTENTS

IN SCOTS

JOCK, TO THE FIRST ARMY
THE TWA WEELUMS
THE FIELD BY THE LIRK O' THE HILL
MONTROSE
THE ROAD TO MARYKIRK
KIRSTY'S OPINION
THE BRIG
THE KIRK BESIDE THE SANDS
GLORY
THE SHEPHERD TO HIS LOVE
A CHANGE O' DEILS
REJECTED
THE LAST O' THE TINKLER

IN ENGLISH

FRINGFORD BROOK
PRISON
PRESAGE
THE BIRD IN THE VALLEY
BACK TO THE LAND
THE SCARLET LILIES
FROSTBOUND
ARMED
"THE HAPPY WARRIOR"
UNITY

IN SCOTS

JOCK, TO THE FIRST ARMY

O Rab an' Dave an' rantin' Jim,
The geans were turnin' reid
When Scotland saw yer line grow dim,
Wi' the pipers at its heid;
Noo, i' yon warld we dinna ken,
Like strangers ye maun gang—



*"We've sic a wale^[1] o' Angus men
That we canna weary lang."*

An' little Wat—my brither Wat—
Man, are ye aye the same?
Or is yon sma' white hoose forgot
Doon by the strath at hame?
An' div' ye mind foo aft we trod
The Isla's banks before?—
—*"My place is wi' the Hosts o' God,
But I mind me o' Strathmore."*

It's daith comes skirling through the sky,
Below there's naucht but pain,
We canna see whaur deid men lie
For the drivin' o' the rain;
Ye a' hae passed frae fear an' doot.
Ye're far frae airthly ill—
—*"We're near, we're here, my wee recruit,
An' we fecht for Scotland still."*

[1] Choice.

THE TWA WEELUMS

I'm Sairgeant Weelum Henderson frae Pairth,
That's wha I am!
There's jist ae bluidy regiment on airth
That's worth a damn;
An' gin the bonniest fechter o' the lot
Ye seek to see,
Him that's the best—*whaur ilka man's a Scot*—
Speir you at me!

Gin there's a hash o' Gairmans pitten oot
By aichts an' tens,
That Wully Henderson's been thereabout
A'body kens.
Fegs-aye! Yon Weelum that's in Gairmanie,
He hadna reckoned
Wi' Sairgeant Weelum Henderson, an' wi'
The Forty-Second!

Yon day we lichtit on the shores o' France,
The lassies standin'
Trod ilk on ither's taes to get the chance



To see us landin';
The besoms! O they smiled to me—an' yet
They couldna' help it,
(Myself, I just was thinkin' foo we'd get
The Gairmans skelpit.)

I'm wearied wi' them, for it's aye the same
Whaure'er we gang,
Oor Captain thinks we've got his een to blame,
But, man! he's wrang;
I winna say he's no as smairt a lad
As ye might see
Atween twa Sawbaths—aye, he's no sae bad,
But he's no me!



Page 14

Weel, let the limmers bide; their bonnie lips
Are fine an' reid;
But me an' Weelum's got to get to grips
Afore we're deid;
An' gin he thinks he hasn't met his match
He'll sune be wiser.
Here's to mysel'! Here's to the auld Black Watch!
An' damn the Kaiser!

THE FIELD BY THE LIRK O' THE HILL

Daytime an' nicht,
Sun, wind an' rain;
The lang, cauld licht
O' the spring months again.
The yaird's a' weed,
An' the fairm's a' still—
Wha'll sow the seed
I' the field by the lirk o' the hill?

Prood maun ye lie,
Prood did ye gang;
Auld, auld am I,
But O! life's lang!
Gaists i' the air,
Whaups cryin' shrill,
An' you nae mair
I' the field by the lirk o' the hill—
Aye, bairn, nae mair, nae mair,
I' the field by the lirk o' the hill!

MONTROSE

Gin I should fa',
Lord, by ony chance,
And they howms o' France
Haud me for guid an' a';
And gin I gang to Thee,
Lord, dinna blame,
But oh! tak' tent, tak' tent o' an Angus lad like me
An' let me hame!



I winna seek to bide
 Awa owre lang,
 Gin but Ye'll let me gang
 Back to yon rowin' tide
 Whaur aye Montrose—my ain—
 Sits like a queen,
 The Esk ae side, ae side the sea whaur she's set her lane
 On the bents between.

I'll hear the bar
 Loupin' in its place,
 An' see the steeple's face
 Dim i' the creepin' haar;[2]
 And the toon-clock's sang
 Will cry through the weit,
 And the coal-bells ring, aye ring, on the cairts as they gang
 I' the drookit street.

Heaven's hosts are glad,
 Heaven's hames are bricht,
 And in yon streets o' licht
 Walks mony an Angus lad;
 But my he'rt's aye back
 Whaur my ain toon stands,
 And the steeple's shade is laid when the tide's at the slack
 On the lang sands.

[2] Sea-fog.

THE ROAD TO MARYKIRK

To Marykirk ye'll set ye forth,
 An' whustle as ye step alang,
 An' aye the Grampians i' the North
 Are glow'rin' on ye as ye gang.
 By Martin's Den, through beech an' birk,
 A breith comes soughin', sweet an' strang,
 Alang the road to Marykirk.

Frae mony a field ye'll hear the cry
 O' teuchits,[3] skirlin' on the wing,
 Noo East, noo West, amang the kye,
 An smell o' whins the wind 'll bring;
 Aye, lad, it blaws a thocht to mock
 The licht o' day on ilka thing—



For you, that went yon road last spring,
Are lying deid in Flanders, Jock.

[3] Lapwings.

KIRSTY'S OPINION



Page 15

Fine div I ken what ails yon puddock, Janet,
That aince would hae her neb set up sae hie;
There's them that disna' seem to understan' it,
I'se warrant ye it's plain eneuch to me!

Maybe ye'll mind her man—a fine wee cratur,
Owre blate to speak (puir thing, he didna' daur);
What gar'd him fecht was jist his douce-like natur';
Gairmans is bad, but Janet's tongue was waur.

But noo he's hame again, ye wadna ken her,
He isna' feared to contradic' her flat;
He smokes a' day, comes late to get his denner,
(I mind the time she'd sort him weel for that!)

What's gar'd her turn an' tak' a road divairgint?
Ye think she's wae^[4] because he wants a limb?
Ach! haud yer tongue, ye fule—the *man's a sairgint*,
An' there's nae argy-bargyin' wi' *him*!

[4] Sad.

THE BRIG

I whiles gang to the brig-side
That's past the briar tree,
Alang the road when the licht is wide
Owre Angus an' the sea.

In by the dyke yon briar grows
Wi' leaf an' thorn, it's lane
Whaur the spunk o' flame o' the briar rose
Burns saft agin the stane.

An' whiles a step treids on by me,
I mauna hear its fa';
And atween the brig an' the briar tree
Ther gangs na' ane, but twa.

Oot owre yon sea, through dule an' strife,
Ye tak' yer road nae mair,
For ye've crossed the brig to the fields o' life,
An' ye walk for iver there.



I traivel on to the brig-side,
Whaur ilka road maun cease,
My weary war may be lang to bide,
An' you hae won to peace.

There's ne'er a nicht but turns to day,
Nor a load that's niver cast;
An' there's nae wind cries on the winter brae,
But it spends itsel' at last.

O you that niver failed me yet,
Gin aince my step ye hear,
Come to yon brig atween us set,
An' bide till I win near!

O weel, aye, weel, ye'll ken my treid,
Ye'll seek nae word nor sign,
An' I'll no can fail at the Brig o' Dreid,
For yer hand will be in mine.

THE KIRK BESIDE THE SANDS

It was faur-ye-weel, my dear, that the gulls were cryin'
At the kirk beside the sands,
Whaur the saumon-nets lay oot on the bents for dryin',
Wi' the tar upon their strands;

A roofless kirk i' the bield o' the cliff-fit bidin',
And the deid laid near the wa';
A when auld coupit stanes i' the sea-grass hidin',
Wi' the sea-sound ower them a'.

But it's mair nor daith that's here on the hauchs o' Flanders,
And the deid lie closer in;
It's no the gull, but the hoodit crow that wanders
When the lang, lang nichts begin.

It's ill to dee, but there's waur things yet nor deein';
And the warst o' a's disgrace;
For there's nae grave deep eneuch 'mang the graves in bein'
To cover a coward's face.



Page 16

Syne, a' is weel, though my banes lie here for iver,
An' hame is no for me,
Till the reid tide brak's like the spate in a roarin' river
O'er the nicht o' Gairmanie.

Sae gang you back, my dear, whaur the gulls are cryin',
Gie thanks by kirk an' grave,
That yer man keeps faith wi' the land whaur his he'rt is lyin',
An' the Lord will keep the lave.

GLORY

I canna' see ye, lad, I canna' see ye,
For a' yon glory that's aboot yer heid,
Yon licht that haps ye, an' the hosts that's wi' ye,
Aye, but ye live, an' it's mysel' that's deid!

They gae'd frae mill and mart; frae wind-blawn places,
And grey toon-closes; i' the empty street
Nae mair the bairns ken their steps, their faces,
Nor stand to listen to the trampin' feet.

Beside the brae, and soughin' through the rashes,
Yer voice comes back to me at ilka turn,
Amang the whins, an' whaur the water washes
The arn-tree[5] wi' its feet amangst the burn.

Whiles ye come back to me when day is fleein',
And a' the road oot-by is dim wi' nicht,
But weary een like mine is no for seein',
An', gin they saw, they wad be blind wi' licht.

Daith canna' kill. The mools o' France lie o'er ye,
An' yet ye live, O sodger o' the Lord!
For Him that focht wi' daith an' dule afore ye,
He gie'd the life—'twas Him that gie'd the sword.

But gin ye see my face or gin ye hear me,
I daurna' ask, I maunna' seek to ken,
Though I should dee, wi' sic a glory near me,
By nicht or day, come ben, my bairn, come ben!

[5] Alder.



THE SHEPHERD TO HIS LOVE

Abune the hill ae muckle star is burnin',
Sae soft an' still, my dear, sae far awa,
There's ne'er a wind, noo day to nicht is turnin',
To lift the brainches o' the whisperin' shaw;
Aye, Jess, there's nane to see,
There's just the sheep an' me,
And ane's fair wastit when there micht be twa!

Alang the knowes there's no a beast that's movin',
They sheep o' mine lie sleepin' i' the dew;
There's jist ae thing that's wearyin' an' rovin',
An' that's mysel', that wearies, wantin' you.
What ails ye, that ye bide
In-by—an' me ootside
To curse an' daunder a' the gloamin' through?

To haud my tongue an' aye hae patience wi' ye
Is waur nor what a lass like you can guess;
For a' yer pranks I canna but forgi'e ye,
I'fegs! there's naucht can gar me lo'e ye less;
Heaven's i' yer een, an' whiles
There's heaven i' yer smiles,
But oh! ye tak' a deal o' courtin', Jess!

A CHANGE O' DEILS

“A change o' deils is lichtsome.”—
Scots Proverb.



Page 17

My Grannie spent a merry youth,
She niver wantit for a joe,
An gin she tell't me aye the truth,
Richt little was't she kent na o'.

An' whiles afore she gae'd awa'
To bed her doon below the grass,
Says she, "Guidmen I've kistit[6] twa,
But a change o' deils is lichtsome, lass!"

Sae dinna think to maister me,
For Scotland's fu' o' brawlike chiels,
And aiblins[7] ither folk ye'll see
Are fine an' pleased to change their deils.

Aye, set yer bonnet on yer heid,
An' cock it up upon yer bree,
O' a' yer tricks ye'll hae some need
Afore ye get the best o' me!

Sma' wark to fill yer place I'd hae,
I'll seek a sweethe'rt i' the toon,
Or cast my he'rt across the Spey
An' tak' some pridefu' Hieland loon.

I ken a man has hoose an' land,
His airm is stoot, his een are blue,
A ring o' gowd is on his hand,
An' he's a bonnier man nor you!

But hoose an' gear an' land an' mair,
He'd gie them a' to get the preen
That preened the flowers in till my hair
Beside the may-bush yestre'en.

Jist tak' you tent, an' mind forbye,
The braw guid sense my Grannie had,
My Grannie's dochter's bairn am I,
And a change o' deils is lichtsome, lad!

[6] Coffined. [7] Sometimes.



REJECTED

I'm fairly disjaskit, Christina,
The world an' its glories are toom;
I'm laid like a stane whaur ye left me,
To greet wi' my heid i' the broom.

A' day has the lav'rock been singin'
Up yont, far awa' i' the blue,
I thocht that his sang was sae bonnie,
Bit it disna' seem bonnie the noo!

A' day has the cushie been courtin'
His joe i' the boughs o' the ash,
But gin Love was wheeped frae the pairish,
It isn't mysel' that wad fash!

For losh! what a wark I've had wi' ye!
At mairkit, at kirk, an' at fair,
I've ne'er let anither lad near ye—
An' what can a lassie need mair?

An' oh! but I've socht ye an' watched ye,
Whauriver yer fitsteps was set,
Gin ye had but yer neb i' the gairden
I was aye glowerin' in at the yett!

Ye'll mind when ye sat at the windy,
Dressed oot in yer fine Sawbath black,
Richt brawly I kent that ye saw me,
But ye just slippit oot at the back.

Christina, 'twas shamefu'—aye was it!
Affrontin' a man like mysel',
I'm thinkin' ye're daft, for what ails ye
Is past comprehension to tell.

Guid stuff's no sae common, Christina,
And whiles it's no easy to see;
Ye micht tryst wi' the Laird or the Provost,
But ye'll no find the marrows[8] o' me!

[8] Match.



THE LAST O' THE TINKLER

Lay me in yon place, lad,
The gloamin's thick wi' nicht;
I canna' see yer face, lad,
For my een's no richt,
But it's owre late for leein',
An' I ken fine I'm deein',
Like an auld craw fleein'
To the last o' the licht.



Page 18

The kye gang to the byre, lad,
An' the sheep to the fauld,
Ye'll mak' a spunk o' fire, lad,
For my he'rt's turned cauld;
An' whaur the trees are meetin',
There's a sound like waters beatin',
An' the bird seems near to greetin',
That was aye singin' bauld.

There's jist the tent to leave, lad,
I've gaithered little gear,
There's jist yersel' to grieve, lad,
An' the auld dug here;
An' when the morn comes creepin',
An' the waukw'nin' birds are cheipin',
It'll find me lyin' sleepin'
As I've slept saxty year.

Ye'll rise to meet the sun, lad,
An' baith be traiv'lin west,
But me that's auld an' done, lad,
I'll bide an' tak' my rest;
For the grey heid is bendin',
An' the auld shune's needin' mendin',
But the traiv'lin's near its endin',
And the end's aye the best.

IN ENGLISH

FRINGFORD BROOK

The willows stand by Fringford brook,
From Fringford up to Hethe,
Sun on their cloudy silver heads,
And shadow underneath.

They ripple to the silent airs
That stir the lazy day,
Now whitened by their passing hands,
Now turned again to grey.

The slim marsh-thistle's purple plume
Droops tasselled on the stem,



The golden hawkweeds pierce like flame
The grass that harbours them;

Long drowning tresses of the weeds
Trail where the stream is slow,
The vapoured mauves of water-mint
Melt in the pools below;

Serenely soft September sheds
On earth her slumberous look,
The heartbreak of an anguished world
Throbs not by Fringford brook.

All peace is here. Beyond our range,
Yet 'neath the selfsame sky,
The boys that knew these fields of home
By Flemish willows lie.

They waded in the sun-shot flow,
They loitered in the shade,
Who trod the heavy road of death,
Jesting and unafraid.

Peace! What of peace? This glimpse of peace
Lies at the heart of pain,
For respite, ere the spirit's load
We stoop to lift again.

O load of grief, of faith, of wrath,
Of patient, quenchless will,
Till God shall ease us of your weight
We'll bear you higher still!

O ghosts that walk by Fringford brook,
'Tis more than peace you give,
For you, who knew so well to die,
Shall teach us how to live.

PRISON

In the prison-house of the dark
I lay with open eyes,
And pale beyond the pale windows
I saw the dawn rise.
From past the bounds of space
Where earthly vapours climb,
There stirred the voice I shall not hear



On this side Time.
There is one death for the body,
And one death for the heart,
And one prayer for the hope of the end,
When some links part.
Christ, from uncounted leagues,
Beyond the sun and moon,
Strike with the sword of Thine own pity—
Bring the dawn soon.



Page 19

PRESAGE

The year declines, and yet there is
A clearness, as of hinted spring;
And chilly, like a virgin's kiss,
The cold light touches everything.

The world seems dazed with purity,
There hangs, this spell-bound afternoon,
Beyond the naked cherry tree
The new-wrought sickle of the moon.

What is this thralldom, pale and still,
That holds so passionless a sway?
Lies death in this ethereal chill,
New life, or prelude of decay?

In the frail rapture of the sky
There bodes, transfigured, far aloof,
The veil that hides eternity,
With life for warp and death for woof.

We see the presage—not with eyes,
But dimly, with the shrinking soul—
Scarce guessing, in this fateful guise,
The glory that enwraps the whole,

The light no flesh may apprehend,
Lent but to spirit-eyes, to give
Sign of that splendour of the end
That none may look upon and live.

THE BIRD IN THE VALLEY

Above the darkened house the night is spread,
The hidden valley holds
Vapour and dew and silence in its folds,
And waters sighing on the river-bed.
No wandering wind there is
To swing the star-wreaths of the clematis
Against the stone;
Out of the hanging woods, above the shores,



One liquid voice of throbbing crystal pours,
Singing alone.

A stream of magic through the heart of night
Its unseen passage cleaves;
Into the darkened room below the eaves
It falls from out the woods upon the height,
A strain of ecstasy
Wrought on the confines of eternity,
Glamour and pain,
And echoes gathered from a world of years,
Old phantoms, dim like mirage seen through tears,
But young again.

“Peace, peace,” the bird sings on amid the woods,
“Peace, from the land that is the spirit’s goal,—
The land that nonce may see but with his soul,—
Peace on the darkened house above the floods.”
Pale constellations of the clematis,
Hark to that voice of his
That will not cease,
Swing low, droop low your spray,
Light with your white stars all the shadowed way
To peace, peace!

BACK TO THE LAND

Out in the upland places,
I see both dale and down,
And the ploughed earth with open scores
Turning the green to brown.

The bare bones of the country
Lie gaunt in winter days,
Grim fastnesses of rock and scaur,
Sure, while the year decays.

And, as the autumn withers,
And the winds strip the tree,
The companies of buried folk
Rise up and speak with me;—

From homesteads long forgotten,
From graves by church and yew,
They come to walk with noiseless tread
Upon the land they knew;—



Page 20

Men who have tilled the pasture
The writhen thorn beside,
Women within grey vanished walls
Who bore and loved and died.

And when the great town closes
Upon me like a sea,
Daylong, above its weary din,
I hear them call to me.

Dead folk, the roofs are round me,
To bar out field and hill,
And yet I hear you on the wind
Calling and calling still;

And while, by street and pavement,
The day runs slowly through,
My soul, across these haunted downs,
Goes forth and walks with you.

THE SCARLET LILIES

I see her as though she were standing yet
In her tower at the end of the town,
When the hot sun mounts and when dusk comes down,
With her two hands laid on the parapet;
The curve of her throat as she turns this way,
The bend of her body—I see it all;
And the watching eyes that look day by day
O'er the flood that runs by the city wall.

The winds by the river would come and go
On the flame-red gown she was wont to wear,
And the scarlet lilies that crowned her hair,
And the scarlet lilies that grew below.
I used to lie like a wolf in his lair,
With a burning heart and a soul in thrall,
Gazing across in a fume of despair
O'er the flood that runs by the river wall.

I saw when he came with his tiger's eyes,
That held you still in the grip of their glance,
And the cat-smooth air he had learned in France,



The light on his sword from the evening skies;
When the heron stood at the water's edge,
And the sun went down in a crimson ball,
I crouched in a thicket of rush and sedge
By the flood that runs by the river wall.

He knew where the stone lay loose in its place,
And a foot might hold in the chink between,
The carven niche where the arms had been,
And the iron rings in the tower's face;
For the scarlet lilies lay broken round,
Snapped through at the place where his tread would fall,
As he slipped at dawn to the yielding ground,
Near the flood that runs by the river wall.

I gave the warning—I ambushed the band
In the alder-clump—he was one to ten—
Shall I fight for my soul as he fought then,
Lord God, in the grasp of the devil's hand?
As the cock crew up in the morning chill,
And the city waked to the watchman's call,
There were four left lying to sleep their fill
At the flood that runs by the city wall.

Had I owned this world to its farthest part,
I had bartered all to have had his share;
Yet he died that night in the city square,
With a scarlet lily above his heart.
And she? Where the torrent goes by the slope,
There rose in the river a stifled call,
And two white hands strove with a knotted rope
In the flood that runs by the river wall.



Page 21

Christ! I had thought I should die like a man,
And that death, grim death, might himself be sweet,
When the red sod rocked to the horses' feet,
And the knights went down as they led the van;—
But the end that waits like a trap for me,
Will come when I fight for my latest breath,
With a white face drowned between God and me
In the flood that runs by the banks of death.

FROSTBOUND

When winter's pulse seems dead beneath the snow,
And has no throb to give,
Warm your cold heart at mine, beloved, and so
Shall your heart live.

For mine is fire—a furnace strong and red;
Look up into my eyes,
There shall you see a flame to make the dead
Take life and rise.

My eyes are brown, and yours are still and grey,
Still as the frostbound lake
Whose depths are sleeping in the icy sway,
And will not wake.

Soundless they are below the leaden sky,
Bound with that silent chain;
Yet chains may fall, and those that fettered lie
May live again.

Yes, turn away, grey eyes, you dare not face
In mine the flame of life;
When frost meets fire, 'tis but a little space
That ends the strife.

Then comes the hour, when, breaking from their bands,
The swirling floods run free,
And you, beloved, shall stretch your drowning hands,
And cling to me.



ARMED

Give me to-night to hide me in the shade,
That neither moon nor star
May see the secret place where I am laid,
Nor watch me from afar.

Let not the dark its prying ghosts employ
To peer on my retreat,
And see the fragments of my broken toy
Lie scattered at my feet.

I fashioned it, that idol of my own,
Of metal strange and bright;
I made my toy a god—I raised a throne
To honour my delight.

This haunted byway of the grove was lit
With lamps my hand had trimmed,
Before the altar in the midst of it
I kept their flame undimmed.

My steps turned ever to the hidden shrine;
Aware or unaware,
My soul dwelt only in that spot divine,
And now a wreck lies there.

Give me to-night to weep—when dawn is spread
Beyond the heavy trees,
And in the east the day is heralded
By cloud-wrought companies,

I shall have gathered up my heart's desire,
Broken, destroyed, adored,
And from its splinters, in a deathless fire,
I shall have forged a sword.

“THE HAPPY WARRIOR”

I have brought no store from the field now the day is ended,
The harvest moon is up and I bear no sheaves;
When the toilers carry the fruits hanging gold and splendid,
I have but leaves.

When the saints pass by in the pride of their stainless raiment,
Their brave hearts high with the joy of the gifts they bring,

I have saved no whit from the sum of my daily payment
For offering.



Page 22

Not there is my place where the workman his toil delivers,
I scarce can see the ground where the hero stands,
I must wait as the one poor fool in that host of givers,
With empty hands.

There was no time lent to me that my skill might fashion
Some work of praise, some glory, some thing of light,
For the swarms of hell came on in their power and passion,
I could but fight.

I am maimed and spent, I am broken and trodden under,
With wheel and horseman the battle has swept me o'er,
And the long, vain warfare has riven my heart asunder,
I can no more.

But my soul is still; though the sundering door has hidden
The mirth and glitter, the sound of the lighted feast,
Though the guests go in and I stand in the night, unbidden,
The worst, the least.

My soul is still. I have gotten nor fame nor treasure,
Let all men spurn me, let devils and angels frown,
But the scars I bear are a guerdon of royal measure,
My stars—my crown.

UNITY

I dreamed that life and time and space were one,
And the pure trance of dawn;
The increase drawn
From all the journeys of the travelling sun,
And the long mysteries of sound and sight,
The whispering rains,
And far, calm waters set in lonely plains,
And cry of birds at night.

I dreamed that these and love and death were one,
And all eternity,
The life to be
Therewith entwined, throughout the ages spun;
And so with Grief, my playmate; him I knew
One with the rest,—
One with the mounting day, the east and west—



Lord, is it true?
Lord, do I dream? Methinks a key unlocks
Some dungeon door, in thrall of blackened towers,
On ecstasies, half hid, like chill white flowers
Blown in the secret places of the rocks.