

# BOG-MYRTLE AND PEAT

BY

FLORA THOMPSON



LONDON :

**PHILIP ALLAN & CO.,**

QUALITY COURT, CHANCERY LANE, W.C.

1921

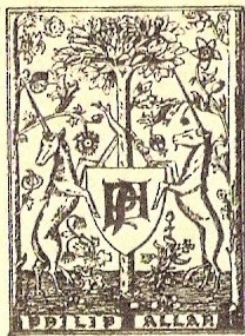




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## BOG-MYRTLE AND PEAT.

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TO RONALD CAMPBELL MACFIE.



OURS are the moors, the billowy  
    seas,  
Tall mountains and blue distances.  
Mine is a cottage garden, set  
With marigold and mignonette,  
And all the wildling things that dare,  
Without a gardener's fostering care.  
Yet very well-content I rest  
In my obscure, sequestered nest;  
For from my cottage garden I  
Can see your cloud-peaks pierce the sky!

HOME THOUGHTS FROM THE  
DESERT.



IN Hampshire now, the woods are  
brown,  
The heath-sands tawny-gold with  
rain;  
The mist lies blue on Bratley Down,  
The firelight flecks the window pane—  
In Hampshire now !

The wind comes screaming from the sea,  
The wild sea-horses champ and roar,  
And every oak on Dudman's Lea  
Echoes the tumult of the shore—  
In Hampshire now !

The 'Wight lies wrapt in cloud and mist,  
Scarce once a week they'll see it clear,  
And then it glows like amethyst—  
And Oh, I would that I were there,  
In Hampshire now !

Amidst the desert sand and heat,  
I hear the wheeling seabirds scream,  
Scent the good smoke of burning peat,  
Then wake and find it but a dream—  
Ah, Hampshire dear !



FLOOD TIME.



THE floods are out at Welborough : ✕  
The encroaching waters creep and  
moan ;  
One gaunt old willow stands alone,  
Reflected in a steely glass ;  
And lanes, where we were wont to pass,  
And fields where children used to play,  
Are water, water all the way.

The floods are out at Welborough : ✕  
The house is hushed, the curtain drawn ;  
The women watch from dusk to dawn,  
Because a little child has gone  
To walk the meadows all alone.  
I search alway, but find him not ;  
Only a drowned forget-me-not  
Mimicks the azure of his eyes ;  
Beyond the mist, a curlew cries.  
O, tell me, sad bird, where he lies !



HEATHER.



YOU talk of pale primroses,  
Of frail and fragrant posies,  
The cowslip and the cuckoo-  
flower, that scent the spring-time lea.  
But give to me the heather,  
The honey-scented heather,  
The glowing gypsy heather—  
That is the flower for me !

You love the garden alleys,  
Smooth-shaven lawns and valleys,  
The cornfield, and the shady lane, and  
fisher-sails at sea.  
But give to me the moorland,  
The noble purple moorland,  
The free, far-stretching moorland—  
That is the land for me !



MAY MOONLIGHT.



BIRCH trees dip their boughs to slake  
Day's green fires in the enchanted  
lake.

Along the shore, beneath the trees,  
A drift of wan anemones  
Bow their heads, and shiver and swoon,  
Mourning for the drownéd moon.  
Stark acacias cast a dim  
Net of shade to rescue him.  
Captive in its shadowy bars,  
Glimmering, multitudinous stars  
Burn to orange; pale, and die,  
As dawn-light steals across the sky;  
Skylark shrills into the grey,  
And moonlight magic melts away.



## BOG-MYRTLE AND PEAT.

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### CUCKOO.



HE cuckoo has come back again,  
And all day long, in sun and rain,  
Over the wet meads' cowslip gold  
Floats that clear call; so new,  
so old:—

‘Cuckoo!’

‘Come out! Come out!’ it seems to say,

‘O, cast your work and books away;

‘For this one day forget the pain

‘Of life and be a child again—

Cuckoo! Cuckoo!’

### APRIL.



OW that April is here,  
With her blackthorn ablow,  
I will say to my dear:—

‘Now that April is here,

‘With her smile and her tear,

‘To the greenwood we’ll go!’

Now that April is here,

With her blackthorn ablow!



OCEAN MALIGNANT.



WHEN the first cave-man, wearied from the chase, a  
 Flung himself down on her gold-fretted shore, b  
 And heard her gentle waves lap o'er and o'er, b  
 And felt her soft, sweet breath upon his face; a  
 Enamoured of her sinuous azure grace— a  
 And dreaming not of tempests' crash and roar, b  
 When storm-winds rage and yeasty billows pour— b  
 He fondly named her 'Mother of our Race.' a  
  
 No Mother, but a Mistress; crafty, vain, c  
 She loves to lure man down to caverns dim, d  
 And there for nine days hold high sport with him, d  
 Entwining with dank weeds his sodden hair, e  
 Then fling his carrion back to Earth again, d  
 So cruel false! But fair—Ah, God, how fair! e



THE EGOIST.



I AM a rose, a dragon's wing,  
The flame-clad Autumn and the  
Spring.  
I am an aloe tree in bloom;  
A cypress waving o'er a tomb;  
A pond with lilies at the brink;  
A well where thirsty Arabs drink;  
A snow-peak on a mountain high;  
A rainbow in an April sky;  
A vintage ere the grapes are trod,  
I am the sun, and stars, and God!

IF WE WERE YOUNG TOGETHER.



I F we were young together, ✕  
And the year was at its Spring. y  
I'd woo you and pursue you,  
If we were young together, ✕  
In the shining April weather—  
And on a bright May morning,  
I'd wed you with a ring:  
If we were young together, ✕  
And the year was at its Spring! y



FLIGHT AT SUNSET.



T eve I saw man's aerial steed, a  
     celestial dragon-fly,  
 Slough off its tetherings of earth, a  
     and mount into the sky,  
 Beyond the spires, beyond the hills, beyond the b  
     purpling sea,  
 As one who sought the Throne of Grace, charged b  
     with high ambassy;  
 Pardon to plead for all the sins our age must c  
     answer for—  
 For Love made desolate by Hate, Beauty laid c  
     waste by War.  
 One instant, at the Golden Gate, before Heaven's d  
     topaz wall,  
 Hung Man, immeasurably great, yet infinitely d  
     small !

PAPER BOATS.



'LL shape you rhymes like little paper a  
     boats,  
 To sail on fancy's sea, frail, b  
     transient things;  
 And when you tire I'll pipe you linnet notes; a  
 And if I win the guerdon of your smile; c  
     I'll envy not the bay-crowned bard of kings. b  
 Better your tedious moment to beguile, c  
     Than soar Parnassus' peak on eagle wings. b



SHALLOWS.



E tattle on without a break, <sup>a</sup>  
Of things we saw in Town: <sup>b</sup>  
'How stuffy were the carriages, <sup>c</sup>  
In which you travelled down. <sup>b</sup>  
The carnival was really good, <sup>d</sup>  
Maud wore a charming gown!' <sup>b</sup>

'Come out and smell the sweetbriar hedge! <sup>c</sup>  
The lilac's budding too; <sup>d</sup>  
Were ever cherry-trees so white <sup>e</sup>  
Against a cloudless blue! <sup>d</sup>  
The strawberries are doing well, <sup>f</sup>  
That lower bed is new—' <sup>d</sup>

And so the shallows ripple on,  
Until it's time to part;  
And all the while, deep unto deep,  
My heart cries to your heart.  
Cries like a lost and frightened child,  
A whole world's-breadth apart!



THE LAND GIRL'S SONG.



HE bound the sheaves the tractor  
threw,  
A sun-bright maid with eyes of  
blue,  
Then reaped the hollow by the spring,  
And this is the song I heard her sing:—

‘O, come ye soon, or the corn will be mown,  
Corn will be mown, corn will be mown,  
And only stubble lie bare and lone,  
And grey mist rise from the river!’

‘O, come ye soon, or the leaves will be shed,  
Leaves will be shed, leaves will be shed,  
Leaves all russet and yellow and red,  
And we shall not hear them shiver!’

‘O, come to-day, and poppies will spring,  
Poppies will spring, poppies will spring.  
With their blood-red blossoms I’ll crown  
thee king,  
And the spell that I weave and the song  
that I sing  
Shall hold thee captive for ever!’



## BOG-MYRTLE AND PEAT.

### MOMENTS OF VISION.



READ last night the words of one—<sup>a</sup>

That master among men <sup>b</sup>

Who holds this life a cramping  
cage, <sup>c</sup>

The grave our goal. And then <sup>b</sup>

O'er my hushed senses stole the scent <sup>d</sup>

Of hedgerows sweet with rain, <sup>e</sup>

And children's happy laughter rent <sup>d</sup>

The soft Spring dusk in twain. <sup>e</sup>

### WHEN SWALLOWS FLY.



WHEN swallows fly beyond the sea, <sup>a</sup>

They bear fond messages from me <sup>a</sup>

Upon each tiny wing, to greet <sup>b</sup>

One midst the desert sands and heat, <sup>b</sup>

Ah, Love, the days seem dark and drear, <sup>c</sup>

The glorious pageant of the year—<sup>c</sup>

Spring's primrose, glimmering in the rain; <sup>d</sup>

June's crimson rose; the oldworld pain <sup>d</sup>

Of nightingales—all naught to me, <sup>a</sup>

If you still fare beyond the sea <sup>a</sup>

When swallows fly! <sup>e</sup>



YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN OUR  
CAVE.



YOU have forgotten our cave !<sup>1</sup>

Forgotten the long, desert waste of  
the ravening foam ;<sup>2</sup>

The seabird's cry in the misty noon,<sup>3</sup>  
The screech of the shingle, the deep, landward  
lunge of the wave.<sup>4</sup>

You have forgotten our cave !<sup>5</sup>

Forgotten the nook where we crouched on our  
dry bracken bed,<sup>6</sup>

And laughed aloud at the thought of our tribe<sup>7</sup>  
Seeking us, day by day, in inland valleys close-set<sup>8</sup>  
With elder, scrub, and briar ; inland and very far.<sup>9</sup>

You have forgotten the day<sup>10</sup>

When the sun-god burst from his cloud, and the  
leaping wave turned blue.<sup>11</sup>

Forgotten the spouting whale, and the seal on the  
rocks at play.<sup>12</sup>

You have forgotten the day<sup>13</sup>

When, your lynx-skin cast aside, and your  
mountainous shoulders bare ;<sup>14</sup>

Your eyes a violet flame, your hair a torch on<sup>15</sup>  
the wind,

You chased the fat elk to its lair, and slew it<sup>16</sup>  
with joyous cry,

While tremulous, tiny and brown, I fearfully  
followed behind.<sup>17</sup>



## BOG-MYRTLE AND PEAT.

---

Forgotten the night in our cave, 18  
When we cooked, and we feasted, and then, 19  
You pillowed your head on my knee, in the  
fitful firelight glow, 20  
And, guttural, slow, and uncouth, I shaped our 21  
wild speech into song;  
Of Gurth and the Thunderer's wrath; of Edda 22  
the Fair and Goddell;  
And of two who escaped from their tribe, and 23  
lived on the seashore alone.

Forgotten the long winter rains, 24  
When the drops pelted down on the sea, and  
the woods were a quaking morass; 25  
And there in our cave warm and dry, you  
shaped the flint spear while I sang, 26  
Or we gazed in each other's eyes, moment by  
moment, until 27  
Something there, stirred and awoke: Terrible;  
beautiful; new. 28  
Something, we know now, was Soul. 29

You have forgotten our cave! 30  
But I shall never forget! Nor would, though  
the knowledge is pain!— 31  
Shall remember when aeons have gone, and  
the million lives have flown, 32  
And we come to our cave again, 33  
And you are once more my own. 34  
For ever and ever my own! 35



AUGUST AGAIN.



HE heather flings her purple robe  
Once more upon the hill;  
Beneath a shivering aspen-tree  
My Love lies cold and still;  
Ah, very deep my Love must sleep,  
On that far Flemish plain,  
If he does not know that the heath-  
bells blow  
On the Hampshire hills again!

O, other maids take other men,  
And just a passing sigh  
Will not disturb the lightest dream;  
But my poor heart would die  
If so very deep my Love should sleep  
Beneath his foreign tree,  
That he did not stir at the thought of  
her  
Who could love so faithfully!



GARDEN FIRES.



DRIFT of wood and weed-smoke a 7  
 Floats o'er the garden spaces, b 7  
 Circling the orchard tree-tops; ? 7  
 They're burning up the traces b 7  
 Of Winter from the earth, c 6  
 Now Spring has birth. c 4

Soft showers of snowy petals d 8(7)  
 Bestrew the bright, lush green; e 7  
 Blue smokewreaths wheel and thicken 7  
 As warm winds stir between, e 7  
 And living tongues of flame f 6  
 Put daffodils to shame. f 6

And men shall make such fires, g 7  
 And warm Spring winds blow free, h 6  
 When all the great desires g 7  
 Which rend the heart of me h 6  
 Shall dwindle into dust, i 6  
 For Time is just! j 4



WILD - THYME.



SCENT of wild-thyme on the air <sup>a</sup>  
Can bear one back to days afar <sup>b</sup>  
(What matters it the when or  
where ?) <sup>a</sup>

A scent of wild-thyme on the air—  
Unbidden springs the blinding tear, <sup>a</sup>  
Or gates of Paradise unbar. <sup>a?</sup>  
A scent of wild-thyme on the air <sup>b</sup>  
Can bear one back to days afar ! <sup>a</sup>  
<sup>b</sup>

THE AIRMAN.



HE watched him fluttering against the  
sky :  
So far, so high.  
Soaring and wheeling in tumultuous  
flight ;  
So frail, so light.  
Shooting vast spaces like a bolt of gold ;  
So swift, so bold.  
'Till men's cold hearts kindled to pride to view,  
What Man dared do !



A VILLANELLE OF SPRING.



SING a villanelle of Spring,  
Of long, lush hedgerows, white  
with may,  
And primrose dells where throstles  
sing.

Of woods, where tawny squirrels swing  
From bough to bough the livelong day;  
I sing a villanelle of Spring.

Of brooding bird, with downy wing;  
(O, tread you gently here I pray!)  
In primrose dells where throstles sing.

Lo, from the wood our spoils we bring;  
Bluebell, and pink crab-apple spray;  
I sing a villanelle of Spring.

The orchard trees their petals fling,  
To greet us on our homeward way,  
From primrose dells, where throstles sing.

Hark to the swallows twittering!  
*They're* mending their old nests with clay;  
I sing a villanelle of Spring,  
Of primrose dells where throstles sing!



THE EARTHLY PARADISE.



DESIRE no heaven of gold harps,  
Give me the harps of earth—  
Pine trees with red gold on their  
stems,

The music of the west wind in their branches !

When I am old,  
Give me for heaven a little house set on a  
heath ;  
The blue hills behind ; the blue sea before.  
The brick floors scoured crimson, the flagstones  
like snow ;  
The brass taps and candlesticks like gold,  
And there, in my soft grey gown between the  
holly-hocks,  
Upon a day of days I would welcome an old  
poet ;  
And pour him tea, and walk on the heath, and  
talk the sun down ;  
And then by the wood fire he should read me  
the poems of his passionate youth,  
And make new ones praising friendship above  
love !

TO ONE IN PRISON.



AD I the power to match my love, <sup>a</sup>  
Not Beatrice herself should be <sup>b</sup>  
Hymned higher unto heaven than  
thee ! <sup>b</sup>

And were mine but a poet's fate, <sup>c</sup>  
The body lorn and desolate, <sup>c</sup>  
The soul a white-heat of desire, <sup>d</sup>  
The lips aflame with holy fire ; <sup>d</sup>  
To endless time, thy praise should ring, <sup>e</sup>  
My poet-hero, poet-king ! <sup>e</sup>



UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

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