

POEMS

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Poems by W. B. Yeats

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W. B. YEATS

POEMS

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BY

W. B. YEATS

LONDON
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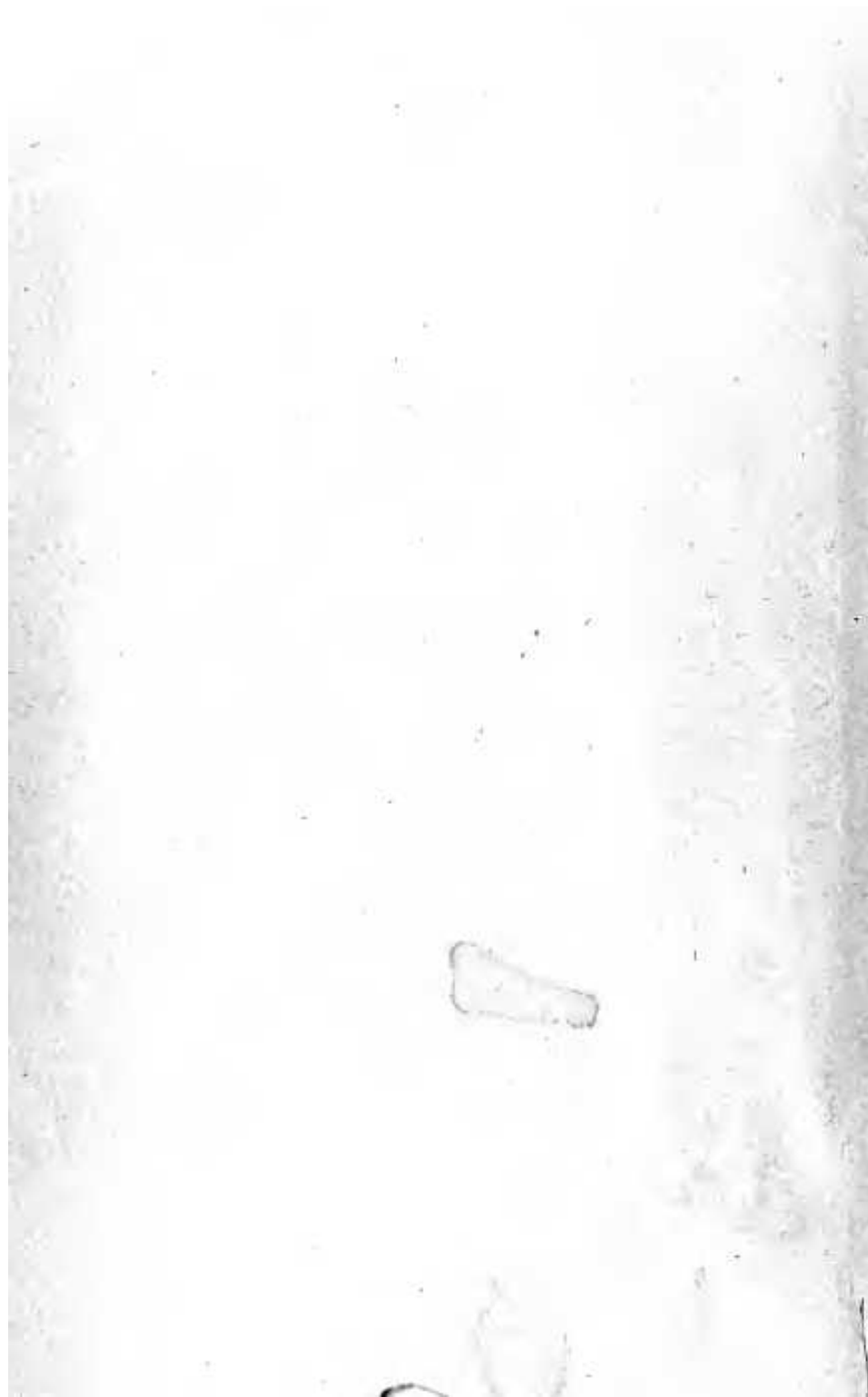
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"The Wanderings of Oisín" was published with the lyrics now collected under the title "Crossways" in 1888, "The Countess Cathleen" with the lyrics now collected under the title "The Rose" in 1892, and "The Land of Heart's Desire" by itself in 1894. They were revised and reprinted in one volume in 1895, again revised and reprinted in 1899, and again reprinted in 1901, 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1913.

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*"He who tastes a crust of bread tastes all the stars
and all the heavens."*—THEOPHRASTUS PARACELSUS.



PREFACE

DURING the last year I have spent much time altering "The Countess Cathleen" and "The Land of Heart's Desire" that they might be a part of the repertory of the Abbey Theatre. I had written them before I had any practical experience, and I knew from the performance of the one in Dublin in 1899 and of the other in London in 1894 that they were full of defects. But in their new shape—and each play has been twice played during the winter—they have given me some pleasure, and are, I think, easier to play effectively than my later plays, depending less upon the players and more upon the producer, both having been imagined more for variety of stage-picture than variety of mood in the player. It was, indeed, the first performance of "The Countess Cathleen," when our stage-pictures were made out of poor conventional scenery and hired costumes, that set me

writing plays where all would depend upon the player. The first two scenes are wholly new, and though I have left the old end in the body of this book I have given in the notes an end less difficult to producer and audience, and there are slight alterations elsewhere in the poem. "The Land of Heart's Desire," besides some mending in the details, has been thrown back in time because the metrical speech would have sounded unreal if spoken in a country cottage now that we have so many dialect comedies. The shades of Mrs. Fallan and Mrs. Dillane and of Dan Bourke and the Tramp would have seemed too boisterous or too vivid for shades made cold and distant with the artifice of verse.

I have not again retouched the lyric poems of my youth, fearing some stupidity in my middle years, but have changed two or three pages that I always knew to be wrong in "The Wanderings of Usheen."

W. B. YEATS.

June, 1912.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

I HAVE added some passages to "The Land of Heart's Desire," and a new scene of some little length, besides passages here and there, to "The Countess Cathleen." The goddess has never come to me with her hands so full that I have not found many waste places after I had planted all that she had brought me. The present version of "The Countess Cathleen" is not quite the version adopted by the Irish Literary Theatre a couple of years ago, for our stage and scenery were capable of little; and it may differ more from any stage version I make in future, for it seems that my people of the waters and my unhappy dead, in the third act, cannot keep their supernatural essence, but must put on too much of our mortality, in any ordinary theatre. I am told that I must abandon a meaning or two and make my merchants carry away the treasure themselves.