

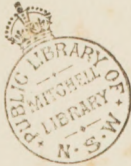
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W. P. Stehly.

Fair Girls and Gray Horses.



To my Friend.

HUGH GORDON.

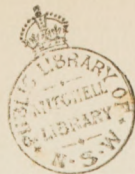
FAIR GIRLS AND GRAY
HORSES : WITH OTHER
VERSES BY WILL H.
OGILVIE.



SYDNEY
THE BULLETIN NEWSPAPER COMPANY, LTD.
1898

Of the following verses "The Old Boat" (p. 23), "Life has wreaths of each hue" (p. 29), "The World Beyond" (p. 92) and "To the Overlanders" (p. 161), are now first published. No. XLIV. originally appeared in THE SYDNEY MAIL; Nos. III. and XIX. in THE WESTERN CHAMPION, Parkes, N.S.W.; Nos. XVIII., XLVI., XLVII., and L. in THE INDEPENDENT, Parkes, N.S.W.; Nos. IX., XV., XL., LI., and LIV. in THE AUSTRALASIAN, Melbourne; Nos. XXVII., XXVIII., XXXI., XLI., LVI., and LVIII. in THE BORDER WATCH, Mount Gambier, S.A. The remainder, fifty-two pieces, were printed in THE BULLETIN.

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Fair Girls and Gray Horses!

FAIR Girls and Gray Horses! A toast for you
Who never went wide of a fence or a kiss:
While horses are horses and eyes are blue
There is never a toast in the world like this!

To all Fair Girls! For the sake of one
Whose bright blue eyes were awhile my star,
Whose hair had the rich red gold of the Sun
When his kisses fall where the leaf lips are!
To all Fair Girls! How the red wine gleams
To the glass's rim as it gleamed that night
In the jewelled hand of my Dame of Dreams—
O, jewelled fingers so soft and white!
To all Fair Girls! Turn your glasses down.
Here's "Blissful bridals and long to live!"
And if I am slighting your eyes of brown,
O, Gipsies Horn of the Night, forgive!

To all Gray Horses! Fill up again
For the sake of a gray horse dear to me;
For a foam-fed bit and a snatching rein
And a reaching galloper fast and free!
To all Gray Horses! For one steed's sake
Who has carried me many a journey tall
In the dawn-mists dim when the magpies wake,
In the starry haze when the night-dews fall!
To all Gray Horses! Now drink you deep,
For red wine ruins no rider's nerves:
"Light work and a long, long after-sleep!"
As each gray horse in the world deserves.

Fair Girls and Gray Horses! To each his way,
But golden and gray are the loves to hold;
And if gold tresses must turn to gray
Gray horses need never be turned into gold!



FAIR GIRLS.



LEILA.

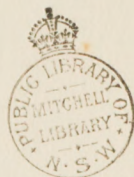
THE nodding plumes steal slowly by ;
 Fair women turn their heads aside ;
 And yet the purest there must die
 As poor Love-Leila died.

In town, a boy who never knew
 Of better love than this
 Is mourning Leila's eyes of blue,
 And lone for Leila's kiss.

A horseman on the burning plains
 A hundred miles north-west
 Bends gently o'er his bridle-reins
 And prays for Leila, *Rest!*

A man who buried all his dreams
 Of Love long years ago,
 Has dropped one other tear where gleams
 Love-Leila's breast of snow.

All virtuous the world appears ;
 But those who turn aside
 May never win such honest tears
 As fell when Leila died.



DRAY - DREAMS.

O THE mountains speak of sadness !
 There is gloom on ridge and spur ;
 But they cannot dim the gladness
 In my heart because of her.
 All day long I feel her near me ;
 To my soul her presence steals ;
 When I whisper she can hear me
 Through the rolling of the wheels.

I can see my gold-haired Freda
 (By the dull world undescried)
 As I steer the old brown leader
 Deftly down the mountain side ;
 As I chide the lazy shafter
 Through the pine-spears on the grass,
 I can hear her gentle laughter
 In the green boughs as I pass.

And at times I hear her singing
 Softly when the west winds blow,
 And the feathered pines are swinging
 On the range-top to and fro :
 Dreamily I drive my cattle,
 Lulled to sleep above their reins
 By the wheels' eternal rattle
 And the clinking of the chains.

And her songs of love have stirred me,
 And I 've answered from the shaft,
 Till the wondering 'possums heard me
 And the kookaburras laughed !

DRAY-DREAMS

Passion reigns the wide world over :
Prince and pauper own his sway ;
And a lover is a lover
Though he drive a two-horse dray !

Days are long and wheat 's to carry
Now ; but when the Summer 's by,
Fate allowing, we shall marry,
Gold-haired Freda, you and I :
When in stress of winter weather
Flowers are dead and skies are gray,
We 'll go jogging home together,
Loved and lover in the dray.

Life is dull and toil unending ;
But the voice of Love is sweet,
And the tide is always tending
To the tryst where lovers meet :
Life is commonplace and real,
Yet along its rock-strewn way
Each man sees his own ideal
As he dreams upon his dray !

"POUR PASSER . . ."

NO sweep of hill or valley,
 No meadows daisy-pearled,
 To break the line of mallee
 That bounds our little world.
 The sun begins his bondage
 Behind the mallee tops,
 And through their soft green frondage
 The sun at evening drops . . .

*So day by day is given :
 And night by night we pray,
 " Help, Lord of Hell or Heaven,
 To pass the time away ! "*

A canter through the clearing
 To where a white roof gleams ;
 A vow, a passionate hearing,
 A mockery of Love's dreams ;
 Clasped hands and burning kisses,
 And whispers soft to say :
 " There 's no such way as this is
 To pass the time away ! "

A gleam of snow-white shoulder,
 A clasp of rounded arms ;
 A month . . . and Love grown colder
 Has lost his luring charms.
 A careless farewell spoken
 For ever and a day—
*And one more brave heart broken
 To pass the time away !*

TO A MISOGYNIST.

YOU damn all women as wantons or worse
 For a lover proved false in the days gone by :
 There are women to worship as well as to curse—
 And vows will break while the sun rides high !

Had you never a sister who held your hand
 As you loitered together in Babyland,
 Who guided your steps to the brightest bowers
 Where the life-dawn flushed on the fairest flowers ?
 Had you never a mother who heard you lisp
 Your baby prayers at her dear old knee,
 Before Love's flame like a will-o'-the-wisp
 Had lured you away to the storm-tossed sea ?
 Had you never a lover—before this last—
 True to the dream ere the dream had passed ;
 Never a token, a tress or a curl,
 To bind your life to one true-heart girl ?

*You damn all women as wantons or worse
 For a lover proved false in the days gone by :
 Say, was the blame of it—all of it—hers ?
 We are not so immaculate, you and I.*

WHEN HORSES ARE SADDLED FOR LOVE.

THE saddle-slaves of Love are we
 Who mount by sun and moon,
 No matter what the season be
 So long as it be soon !
 The golden and the gray light
 Have seen the girth-straps drawn
 For Love that rules the daylight,
 The dark and dusk and dawn.

What hoof-beat on the gravel !
 What haste with Love to be !
 What snatching at the snaffle !
 What reefing, head to knee !
 Now faster still and faster !
 The white Moon laughs above :
 She knows we have no master
 Except the Lord of Love.

The low road keeps the river,
 The high road skirts the hill—
 No road so short but ever
 We find a shorter still ;
 And if the floods run blindly
 Where Love, not Life, 's the loss,
 Dame Fortune treats us kindly
 And holds our hands across.

The Bush-Wind blows to meet us
 As though she understands ;
 The hop-bush holds to greet us
 A hundred clasping hands ;

WHEN HORSES ARE SADDLED FOR LOVE.

There 's not a bird but sings us
A welcome in the grove :
They know 't is Love that brings us—
And all the world loves Love !

Be skies alight or leaden
Long miles bring no regret,
And if the white spurs redden
Our horses soon forget :
So toss the bars, my beauty !
And cream the reins with foam ;
It 's ten moon-miles to duty,
And ten more dawn-miles home !

Gleam lights in the verandah ;
Flash lamps across the lawn ;
But soft the shadows yonder
Where reins are tightly drawn.
Out there the dews are glistening ;
The leaves are scarcely stirred,
So close the Night-Wind 's listening
To every whispered word !

The Moon she dips to morning ;
The lamps are burning low,
Our love belated scorning . . .
" One kiss before I go ! "
Now slowly through the starlight . . .
Slow, slow, in dreams away . . .
Till eastward gleams the far light
That leads the breaking Day.

STAR AND STAR.

YOU have crossed my life with your fair sweet
 face ;
 You are filling my lone heart's vacant place ;
 Your whispered words and your arms that cling
 Are a link in Love's remembering ;
 For your forms are alike as the angels are,
 Your faces are moulded as star and star.

I have taken your hand that is soft to take,
 I have held it long for an old love's sake ;
 I have played with the curls of your golden head
 As I played with gold curls in a day long dead ;
 And your rose-red lips I have tasted seem
 Like the red-rose lips of a fading dream.

I held her once in my arms of old ;
 I kissed her twice, but her lips were cold :
 I clasped you close to my heart to-night,
 A heaving bosom of snowdrift white ;
 But there 's never a snow could quench the fire
 That burned in your passionate lips' desire !

With the pleading words 't is a wrong to name
 You are holding your brow for the brand of
 shame ;
 There is never a pleasure I could not prove
 In the name of the passion you think is Love ;
 There is never a freedom I might not take,
 But . . . I spare you, girl, for an old love's sake !

STAR AND STAR.

I could blacken the fame you hold so cheap
While moonbeams sorrow and white stars weep;
But I drop your hand, though it give you pain—
I dream no dream on your lips again . . .
What reck if your heart, like mine, shall break?
I will spare your soul for Her white soul's sake!

TO-DAY!

HEAR me now! for Time is flying,
 And the beating of his wings
 Drowns the vows of Love undying,
 Dims the light where Memory clings!
 All the saddest songs of Sorrow
 Are the dirges of Delay,
 And our hearts may lose to-morrow
 What our hands may hold to-day.

When a grave beside the river
 Claims the last of Love and you,
 And Death's hand has dried for ever
 All our wreaths of rose and rue;
 When the winding grass above you
 Hides Hope's brightest lamp away,
 How are you to know I love you
 If I must not speak to-day?

When above your silent sleeping
 Pitying pine-boughs moan and toss,
 And the moonbeams pale with weeping
 Fling their snow-white arms across;
 When the one star that was nearest
 Dims and dies a world away,
 How am I to tell you, Dearest? . . .
Let me speak my love to-day!

HIS GIPPSLAND GIRL.

NOW, money was scarce and work was slack
 And Love to his heart crept in,
 And he rode away on the Northern track
 To war with the World and win ;
 And he vowed by the locket upon his breast
 And its treasure, one red-gold curl,
 To work with a will in the farthest West
 For the sake of his Gippsland girl.

The hot wind blows on the dusty plain
 And the red sun burns above,
 But he sees her face at his side again,
 And he strikes each blow for Love :
 He toils by the light of one far-off star
 For the winning of one white pearl,
 And the swinging pick and the driving bar
 Strike home for the Gippsland girl.

With aching wrist and a back that 's bent,
 With salt sweat blinding his eyes,
 'Tis little he 'd reck if his life were spent
 In winning so grand a prize ;
 And his shear-blades flash and over his hand
 The folds of the white fleece curl,
 And all day long he sticks to his stand
 For the love of his Gippsland girl.

When the shearing 's done and the sheds cut out
 On Barwon and Narran and Bree ;
 When the shearer mates with the rouseabout
 And the Union man with the free ;

HIS GIPPSLAND GIRL.

When the doors of the shanty, open wide,
An uproarious welcome hurl,
He passes by on the other side
For the sake of his Gippsland girl.

When Summer lay brown on the Western Land
He rode once more to the South,
Athirst for the touch of a lily hand
And the kiss of a rosebud mouth ;
And he sang the songs that shorten the way,
And he envied not king or earl,
And he spared not the spur in his dappled gray
For the sake of his Gippsland girl.

At the garden gate when the shadows fell
His hopes in the dusk lay dead ;
"Nellie ? Oh ! Surely you heard that Nell
Is married a month ! " they said.
He spoke no word ; with a dull, dumb pain
At his heart, and his brain awhirl,
He turned his gray to the North again
For the sake of his Gippsland girl.

And he rung the board in a Paroo shed
By the sweat of his aching brow,
And he blued his cheque, for he grimly said :
"There is nothing to live for now."
And out and away where the big floods start
And the Darling dust-showers swirl,
There 's a drunken shearer that broke his heart
Over a Gippsland girl !

WHISPER LOW.

WE have rowed together at even-fall
 Down the creek in the sunset glow,
 Under the vines and the box-trees tall
 That fringe the shores.

Dip soft the oars !

Dip soft the oars and whisper low.

We have ridden away in the golden noon
 Over the range where the sandals grow,
 To wander home by a summer moon
 On silver plains.

Draw tight the reins !

Draw tight the reins and whisper low.

We have sat in the garden at close of day
 Watching the light from the blossoms go,
 And the darkling branches melt away
 To Shadow Land.

Love, hold my hand !

Love, hold my hand and whisper low.

And now we two, though the years have passed,
 Live in the Love of the long ago,
 Love that endured, and Love that will last
 As long as life.

Kiss me, my wife !

Kiss me, my wife, and whisper low.

WHISPER LOW.

And when the hour that we dread is nigh,
And one shall stay and one must go,
I pray God's angel will pass you by
In charity

And come to me!

And come to me and whisper low.

A TELL-TALE TRYST.

O WHO was it saddled White Star last night,
 And who was it saddled White Star ?
 You can read his track to the rails and back
 And down the creek ever so far.
 O, moonlight is lovers' light, Somebody knows,
 And witch-time the season to woo,
 And down in the bend where the kurrajong grows
 The tracks have been trodden by two !

O, who was it galloped White Star last night,
 When gold stars jewelled the sky ?
 You can see the brand of saddle and band
 In sweat that is clotted and dry.
 O, Somebody raced, with the world asleep,
 To a tryst that Somebody knew,
 And over the blue-grass fetlock-deep
 The white hoofs scattered the dew !

O, who was it fastened White Star last night
 To a bough of the kurrajong-tree ?
 The deep-set grooves of his restless hooves
 Are there for the World to see.
 O, Somebody left him for True Love's sake,
 And Somebody left him long,
 For horses may hunger and bridles break
 When True Love fashions her song !

O, who was it fondled White Star last night
 When Somebody whispered adieu,
 And plaited the gray of his mane in a way
 That never those gray locks grew ?

A TELL-TALE TRYST.

And who was it bent from his saddle-bow
To the plea of an upturned face,
While down in the bend where the kurrajongs grow
The World stood still for a space ?

O, the lover who saddled White Star last night
It is very easy to guess,
For his face is bright with a new-found light
And a joy that his eyes confess.
O, Somebody met in the moonlight snow
Someone that cared to be kissed,
And the veriest dolt in the world may know
Who rode to the moonlight tryst !

GOOD-BYE, LYNETTE !

I HAVE worked for you—toil made sweet, love !
 And never I grudged an hour ;
 Now the dead leaves drift at our feet, love,
 That trod by the trees in flower !
 The scent of the rose blows over—
 Dead roses of all regret ;
 And you were my only lover,
 So give me your hand, Lynette !

O, Love-Star loyally leading,
 You fade in the gathering gray !
 O, Hopes that have long lain bleeding,
 I bury you deep to-day !
 If Time has left never a token
 The easier, love, to forget :
 So over the old spells broken
 Give me your hand, Lynette !

I have sounded the deeps of sorrow ;
 I have drunk to the dregs of tears ;
 I shall suffer no more to-morrow,
 No more than in dead past years ;
 And what is our life but greeting
 And parting and long regret ?—
 So here 's to our first mad meeting !
 And here 's to our last, Lynette !

IN MULGA TOWN.

WE played at love in Mulga town,
 And O, her eyes were blue !
 We played at love in Mulga town,
 And love 's a game for two.
 If three should play, alack-a-day !
 There 's one of them will rue,
 Dear Heart !
 There 's one of them will rue.

Three played at love in Mulga town,
 True love they could not hide ;
 Three played at love in Mulga town,
 Two laughed : the other sighed ;
 Though two may woo the wide world through,
 But one may kiss the bride,
 Dear Heart !
 But one may kiss the bride.

Three played at love in Mulga town,
 And one 's too sad to weep ;
 Three played at love in Mulga town—
 The creek runs dark and deep ;
 So warm she flows no mortal knows
 How cold her dead may sleep,
 Dear Heart !
 How cold her dead may sleep.

THE OLD BOAT.

THE Old Boat lies in the sand and slime
 And the sun is springing her planks ;
 She is drifting away on the river of Time
 Between Eternity's banks :

We have buried the low-toned laughter
 And the whispers the Old Boat heard,
 But the splash of the oars comes after
 And the deeps of the years are stirred.

She has sailed with a burden of Love and Hope
 From under these same old shores,
 With white hands holding her tiller-rope
 And brown arms bent to her oars . . .
 In channels too deep for charting
 Lies buried the freight of our ship,
 And we go no more sweet-hearing
 Where Life was a pleasure trip.

A new boat rocks at our feet to-day,
 A picture in crimson and gold,
 The daintiest craft on the creek, they say,
 But she carries no freight like the Old ;
 She swings in her painted splendour
 The flood and the fall between,
 But there 's never a blade can send her
 The way that the Old Boat 's been.

You are sport of the sunlight and weather :
 See, I drag you, Old Boat, to the shade !
 We were comrades so often together
 For love of the one little maid . . .

THE OLD BOAT.

Should she come to the wilgas, I wonder
Would ever it cost her a tear
To see the new boat rocking under
And you in the dead leaves up here !

LOVE'S MOLOCH.

HOW long shall we hear the sobbing ?
 How long shall our hearts beat slow
 To the wail of a ceaseless sorrow
 That follows us to and fro,
 Who watch from our safe rock-ramparts
 The wreck of the ringless brides
 On the flow of the crimson sunsets,
 On the ebb of the white moon-tides ?

They walk in the weeping darkness,
 They hold on a wasted arm
 What Love cannot guard from hunger
 Or Passion itself keep warm ;
 They walk in the weeping darkness,
 They clasp to their breasts of shame
 The pitiful white-faced burdens
 The World will refuse to name.

They bend to the wee wan faces,
 And scald with their burning tears
 The tiny lips that will curse them
 When knowledge has come with years ;
 They weep to their rocking cradles
 Whose labor should prove so sweet,
 And the wealth of their white girl-garlands
 Lies crushed at the gray World's feet.

They creep to our curtained windows ;
 They stand at our doors thrice-barred ;
 And their feet are torn and bleeding
 Who found that their path was hard.

LOVE'S MOLOCH.

Their hands that we held may touch us ;
Their lips that we loved may plead ;
But never an ear will hearken,
And never a heart will heed.

They shrink from the glaring sunlight,
But down where the lamps are lit
They stretch a hand to their Sorrow
And drink to the deeps of it ;
There are sins that the Night will pardon,
And smiles for the roses red . . .
O, Woe to the maiden-mothers !
And Woe to the bonds unsaid !

How long shall we lead the victims ?
How long in a crimson flood
Shall the gates of our great Gomorrah
Be washed in our sisters' blood ?
How long shall they heap the altars ?
How long shall their cry be heard
Ere the fire and the brimstone teach us
That the anger of God is stirred !

GOOD-BYE.

HERE, on the broken strings of Love's mute
 harp,
 Across the withered flowers of all dead dreams,
 Give me your hand and take my last farewell!
 One glance of love!—the last from those dear
 eyes!—

For out against the reddening sky, cut sharp
 Rigging and spar, her head to the ocean swell,
 Cruel as Death the great ship waiting lies.

One dear Good-bye!

Hush! say not, "As a friend"—
 The old, old phrase 't were bitterness to hear
 Only that every word you say is sweet;
 For I have fifty friends, but not one love,
 And only ask for *you* here at the end
 As in those days when first we loved to meet
 With all God's world our own, His arm above.

One prayer for me!

Nay! not "That you forget!"—
 For why should I forget the sweets of Life
 Who launch into its bitterness to-day?
 But pray you rather that I keep your face
 Before me always, with its blue eyes wet
 With tears denying those cold words you say;
 Your clinging hands almost a mute embrace.

The light of Day is growing as we stand;
 The light of Love is dying in your eyes;
 Before yon sun has drifted to his rest

GOOD - BYE.

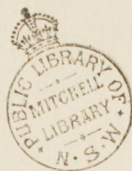
In crimson splendour down the western sky
For me will fall the dark.

Dear nestling hand,
And soft white arms, and lips still unconfessed,
The white sails fill!

Heart of my Heart, *Good-bye!*

Life has wreaths of each hue
But the Cypress binds all of them ;
Wreaths of Rose and of Rue,
Life has wreaths of each hue,
Laurel wreaths for a few,
Hemlock wreaths and the gall of them ;
Life has wreaths of each hue
But the Cypress binds all of them.

GRAY HORSES.



FROM THE GULF.

STORE cattle from Nelanjie! The mob goes
 feeding past,
 With half-a-mile of sandhill 'twixt the leaders
 and the last;
 The nags that move behind them are the good old
 Queensland stamp—
 Short backs and perfect shoulders that are priceless
 on a camp;
 And these are *Men* that ride them, broad-chested,
 tanned and tall,
 The bravest hearts amongst us and the lightest
 hands of all:
 Oh, let them wade in Wonga grass and taste the
 Wonga dew,
 And let them spread, those thousand head—for
 we've been droving too!

Store cattle from Nelanjie! By half-a-hundred
 towns,
 By Northern ranges rough and red, by rolling open
 downs,
 By stock-routes brown and burnt and bare, by
 flood-wrapped river-bends,
 They've hunted them from gate to gate—the
 drover has no friends!
 But idly they may ride to-day beneath the scorching
 sun
 And let the hungry bullocks try the grass on Wonga
 run;
 No overseer will dog them here to "see the cattle
 through,"
 But they may spread their thousand head—for
 we've been droving too!

FROM THE GULF.

Store cattle from Nelanjie ! They 've a naked track
to steer ;
The stockyards at Wodonga are a long way down
from here ;
The creeks won't run till God knows when, and
half the holes are dry ;
The tanks are few and far between and water 's
dear to buy :
There 's plenty at the Brolga bore for all his stock
and mine—
We 'll pass him with a brave God-speed across the
Border line ;
And if he goes a five-mile stage and loiters slowly
through,
We 'll only think the more of him—for we 've been
droving too !

Store cattle from Nelanjie ! They 're mute as
milkers now ;
But yonder grizzled drover, with the care-lines on
his brow,
Could tell of merry musters on the big Nelanjie
plains,
With blood upon the chestnut's flanks and foam
upon the reins ;
Could tell of nights upon the road when those same
mild-eyed steers
Went ringing round the river bend and through the
scrub like spears ;
And if his words are rude and rough, we know his
words are true,
We know what wild Nelanjies are—and we 've been
droving too !

Store cattle from Nelanjie ! Around the fire at night
They 've watched the pine-tree shadows lift before
the dancing light ;
They 've lain awake to listen when the weird bush-
voices speak,
And heard the lilting bells go by along the empty
creek ;
They 've spun the yarns of hut and camp, the tales
of play and work,
The wondrous tales that gild the road from Nor-
manton to Bourke ;
They 've told of fortune foul and fair, of women
false and true,
And well we know the songs they 've sung—for
we 've been droving too !

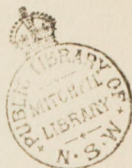
Store cattle from Nelanjie ! Their breath is on the
breeze ;
You hear them tread, a thousand head, in blue-grass
to the knees ;
The lead is on the netting-fence, the wings are
spreading wide,
The lame and laggard scarcely move—so slow the
drovers ride !
But let them stay and feed to-day for sake of Auld
Lang Syne ;
They 'll never get a chance like this below the
Border Line ;
And if they tread our frontage down, what 's that to
me or you ?
*What 's ours to fare, by God they 'll share ! for we 've
been droving too !*

THE RIDING OF THE REBEL.

HE was the Red Creek overseer, a trusted man
 and true,
 Whose shoulder never left the wheel when
 there was work to do ;
 Through all the day he rode the run, and when the
 lights grew dim
 The sweetest wife that ever loved would wait and
 watch for him.
 She brought him dower of golden hair and eyes of
 laughing blue,
 Stout heart and cunning bridle-hand to guide the
 mulga through ;
 And when the mob was mustered from the box flats
 far and wide
 She loved to mount the wildest colts that no one
 else would ride.
 And once it chanced a wayward steed, half-mouthed
 and roughly broke,
 Denied the touch of gentle hand and gentler words
 she spoke,
 And, plunging forward like the ship that feels the
 autumn gales,
 He reared and lost his footing and fell backwards
 on the rails.
 Her husband bent above her with cold terror at his
 heart—
 The form was still he loved so well, the wan lips
 would not part ;
 And all the day in trance she lay, but when the
 stars smiled down
 He heard his name low-whispered and he claimed
 her still his own.

THE RIDING OF THE REBEL.

And afterward he spoke his fear: "Heart's Love,
if you should die! . . .
Unless you take your orders from some other man
than I,
You shall never finger bridle, never mount on
horse's back,
Till the outlaw on Glenidol is a broken lady's
hack!"



There's an outlaw on Glenidol that is known
through all the West,
And three men's lives are on his head, bold riders
of the best;
The station lads had heard the sneer that travelled
far and wide
And flung the answering challenge: "Come and
teach us how to ride!
Roll up, ye merry riders all, whose honour is to
guard!
We've mustered up the ranges and The Rebel's in
the yard;
His open mouth and stamping foot and keen eye
flashing fire
Repeat the temper of his dam, the mettle of his sire.
Roll up, ye merry riders all, from hut and camp
and town!
You'll have to stick like plaster when the stock-
yard rails go down,
But the boss will come down handsome, as the boss
is wont to come,
To the first who brings The Rebel under spurs and
greenhide home."
And the stockmen heard the challenge from the
Cooper to the Bree,

THE RIDING OF THE REBEL.

And rode from hut and cattle-camp by one and
two and three
To keep their horseman's honour clean and play a
hero's part,
To best the bold Glenidol boys and break The
Rebel's heart,

And Ruddy Neil, the breaker, from the Riverine
came through
With all the latest breaking-gear and all the wiles
he knew,
But ere the saddle was secured, before a girth was
drawn,
The Rebel's forefoot split his skull—they buried
him at dawn!
Marora Mick, the half-caste, from the Flinders
River came
To give the South-the-Border boys a lesson at the
game;
But he got a roguish welcome when he entered
New South Wales,
For The Rebel used his blood and brains to paint
the stockyard rails!
And Mulga Jack came over from the Yuinburra
side—
The horse was never foaled, they say, that Mulga
could not ride :
With a mouth as hard as a miser's heart, a will like
the Devil's own,
The Rebel made for the Stony Range with the man
who wouldn't be thrown ;
The Rebel made for the Stony Range, where the
plain and the scrub-land meet,

THE RIDING OF THE REBEL.

And the dead boughs cracked at his shoulder-blade,
the stones leapt under his feet,
And the ragged stems of the gidyas cut and tore
as they blundered past . . .
And Jack lay cold in the sunset gold—he had met
with his match at last.

And once again the challenge rang, the bitterer for
scorn,
And spoke the bold Glenidol boys, their jackets
mulga-torn :
“A week have we been hunting him and riding fast
and hard
To give you all another chance—The Rebel’s in
the yard.”
And the stockmen heard the challenge from the
Cooper to the Bree ;
But “I’m getting old!” “I’m getting stiff!” or
“I’ve a wife, you see!”
Came whispered to the border ; and the horse they
could not tame
Had saved Glenidol from disgrace and cleansed a
sullied name.
But ere the reddening sun went down and night on
the ranges broke
A stranger youth to the slip-rails rode, and fastened
his horse and spoke
Softly and low, yet none so low but that every man
there heard :
“I’ve come to tackle your outlaw colt,”—and
he looked as good as his word.
He bridled The Rebel in failing light, and saddled
the colt and drew

THE RIDING OF THE REBEL.

The straps of his gearing doubly tight and looked
that his "length" was true.
He mounted The Rebel and gave the word, and the
clattering rails went down,
And the outlaw leapt at the open gate and into the
shadows brown ;
But he settled himself to the soothing voice and the
touch of the fondling hand,
As it followed the curve of his arching neck from
wither to forehead-band ;
His flanks were wet with the fresh-sprung sweat,
his shoulders lathered with foam,
And he bent to the bridle and played with the bit as
he came at a canter home.
And the boys were dumb with wonder, and sat, and
the Red Creek overseer
Was first to drop from the stockyard fence and give
him a hearty cheer.
He raised his hat in answer and . . . the gold hair
floated free !
And the blue eyes lit with laughter as she shouted
merrily :
" You can reach me down my bridle, give my girths
and saddle back,
For the outlaw of Glenidol is a broken lady's
hack ! "

FOUR-IN-HAND.

O SOME prefer a single,
 Or double not too free ;
 But let the lead-bars jingle—
 It 's Four-in-Hand for me ;
 With a level road and a lively load,
 Whose chorus songs shall beat
 To the hoof-struck stars, and the rattling bars,
 And the ring of the red roans' feet !

We 'll meet some risks as we move along—
 And maybe more than we dream ;
 But we only ask for harness strong,
 And room to handle the team.
 I 'll give the rein, and give again,
 And whirl the whip-lash free,
 Till every place shall know by pace
 My four red roans and me !

Our Life 's too short for dreaming,
 And Life 's too swift for tears,
 With all the wide world gleaming
 Beyond our leaders' ears ;
 The white dust whirls to blind us,
 The coach top rocks and reels,
 But trouble 's flung behind us
 Beneath our roaring wheels !

By day the sun shall light us,
 The peaks of pleasure guide ;
 No storms have power to smite us,
 So fast we race and ride !

FOUR - IN - HAND.

By night, through moon-wash spinning,
We 'll mock the million stars,
With all Luck's goblins grinning
Astride our swingle-bars !

So lift the loin-cloths from the reds
And hand me up the whip ;
Let go the plunging leaders' heads
And let the beauties rip !
Here 's luck to shoulders foam-impearled,
And eyes where wild-fires gleam !
We 'll swing the red roans round the world
Till Death reins up the team !

THE STOCKYARD LIAR.

IF ever you 're handling a rough one
 There 's bound to be perched on the rails
 Of the Stockyard some grizzled old tough one
 Whose flow of advice never fails ;
 There are plenty, of course, who aspire
 To make plain that you 're only a dunce,
 But the most insupportable liar
 Is the man who has ridden 'em once.

He will tell you a tale and a rum one,
 With never a smile on his face,
 How he broke for old Somebody Some-one
 At some unapproachable place ;
 How they bucked and they snorted and squealed,
 How he spurred 'em and flogged 'em, and how
 He would gallop 'em round till they reeled—
 But he 's " getting too old for it now."

How you 're standing too far from her shoulder,
 Or too jolly close to the same,
 How *he* could have taught you to hold her
 In the days when he " followed the game ;"
 He will bustle, annoy and un-nerve us
 Till even our confidence fails—
 O Shade of old Nimrod ! preserve us
 From the beggar that sits on the rails !

How your reins you are holding too tightly,
 Your girths might as well be unloosed ;
 How " young chaps " don't handle them rightly,
 And horses don't buck " like they used ;"

THE STOCKYARD LIAR.

Till at last, in a bit of a passion,
You ask him in choicest "Barcoo"
To go and be hanged, in a fashion
That turns the whole atmosphere blue!

And the chances are strong the old buffer
Has been talking for something to say,
And never rode anything rougher
Than the shaft of old Somebody's dray;
And the horses he thinks he has broken
Are clothes-horses sawn out of pine,
And his yarns to us simply betoken
The start of a senile decline.

There are laws for our proper protection
From murder and theft and the rest,
But the criminal wanting inspection
Is riding a rail in the West;
And the law that the country requires
At the hands of her statesmen of sense
Is a law to make meat of the liars
That can sit a rough buck—on the fence!

THE BORDER GATE.

DAWN gilds the spiders' bridges ;
 Morn mocks the shadows' rout ;
 A mile back on the ridges
 They put the head-lights out ;
 A red-topped coach from Nor'ward
 Comes down with clacking bars :
 The waking Day lies forward,
 Behind—the drowsy stars !
 A foe no floods can ruin,
 A force no droughts abate,
 The night mail from the Tuen
 Swings through the Border Gate !

A still world, faint and swooning
 Beneath a fevered sky ;
 Before the great wheels' groaning
 Slow bullocks snailing by ;
 With dusty, cursing drivers,
 And roaring fall of whips
 Comes rocking from red rivers
 The cream of Queensland clips.
 “ *Gee off there ! Clown and Drover !* ”
 The brown loads creak and grate.
 “ *Stand over, there ! STAND OVER !* ”
 She clears the Border Gate !

A sunset-fired horizon
 Beyond the dust-wrack dense,
 A draft from Jimmy Tyson
 Slow-feeding to the fence ;

THE BORDER GATE.

A rush of long-horned leaders,
A tramp of feet below,
A ripping of red "bleeders"
And "Woh, there! Woh, boys! WOH-H!"
The posts are strong—with reason,
Which stand to such a weight;
The finest stores this season
Crowd through the Border Gate!

The old gay life is over;
We've left the great North Road;
The red dust wraps the drover,
The gray dust hides the load;
Though no more I'll go through you,
Old Gate of Memories mine!
I wave a brown hand to you
From long leagues down the line . . .
Wherever Time shall speed me
Before the winds of Fate
I know my dreams will lead me
Back to the Border Gate!

OUTLAWS BOTH.

STEADY! steady, my pearl! from the crest of
the range

One last look behind us: the roofs of the town
Are lit with red fires that quiver and change

Where the sun in the westward goes royally down!
Yonder light will return to the township again,

But we are cast out from the dwellings of men.

You—the pride of the paddock, the pick of the yard,
The bold one that scorned to be bridled and
bound,

Whose mettle and swiftness shall now be my guard,

Whose courage and confidence girdle me round!

I—who struck for my honour, as others can tell,

The blow that was given too straightly and well!

Outlaws both, you and I! Through the night and
the day,

From red flush of dawning till rise of the moon,

The sound of your hoof-beat shall echo away

By rock-ragged ranges and reedy lagoon;

And their steeds will be swift and their trackers be
keen

If we stand to their challenge, "In name of the
Queen!"

With our bed in the bluegrass, our tower on the
ridge,

Our kingdom the scrub-land from centre to sea,

The wild-fowl that sweep from the billabong edge

Are never so curbless of pinion as we—

OUTLAWS BOTH.

With only the coast-line for bolts and for bars,
With our roof-beam the sky and our lamp-light
the stars!

Ay! they feared you of old time, the cravens that
passed

From the rails of the yard when the danger began!
And now, should they follow, they 'll find at the last
There is more to be feared from a desperate man;
And they 'll know by red spurs and by foam-covered
reins

They are riding the tracks of the Pride of the Plains!

From the roofs of the township the sun-fire has fled,
And the Night Queen will reign in her majesty
soon:

Shall life be less dear for the sunlight that 's dead?
When the shadows are falling we 'll ride by the
moon;

And the limitless bush where the wild cattle roam
Shall lend to the outlaws a refuge and home.

THE COACH OF DEATH.

THERE 'S a phantom-coach runs nightly along
 the Western creeks ;
 Her four black steeds step lightly, her driver
 never speaks ;
 The horses keep their places across the flood-worn
 plains
 Yet no man sees their traces, their bits or bridle-
 reins ;
 For welcome or for warning she shows no lamp or
 light,
 A shadow till the morning she steals across the
 night.

She never wants for passengers, the back-creek
 settlers say,
 A price so moderate as hers the poorest purse can
 pay ;
 The lost one, missed by measure of days or maybe
 weeks,
 Pays lightly for the pleasure of coaching down the
 creeks ;
 And station-hands and squatters, alike in ease
 reclined,
 May praise the whirling trotters whose hoofs out-
 strip the wind.

You hear no lead-bars creaking, no footfall on the
 ground ;
 In silence past all speaking the flying wheels go
 round ;
 The horses have no breeders, their driver has no
 name,

THE COACH OF DEATH.

But he swings his reefing leaders like a man that
knows the game ;
And through the stony ranges where swift hoofs
strike no fire
They want no wayside changes, these steeds that
never tire.

They're fit to "stay" for ever, and are never
short of work ;
They run the Darling River from Menindie Lake to
Bourke,
Where a thousand watercourses, bank-full or bound
with drought,
Have seen the silent horses go gliding in and out,
Where the stars in red battalions are marshalled in
the sky
To watch the black-maned stallions with the
muffled hoofs go by.

They fear him on the Barwon and curse him on
the Bree,
And wish his goal a far one, where 'er that goal
may be ;
But ever back and forward, in silence, source to
mouth,
He runs the rivers Nor'ward and runs the rivers
South ;
When winds the wavelets feather between the flood
and fall
He holds the blacks together and hears the dead
men call.

In drifted flood-wrack sailing on every swirling
stream

THE COACH OF DEATH.

He hears his patrons hailing, and checks his noise-
less team ;
In belts of timber shady, when all the holes are dry,
His guests are waiting ready when the phantom
wheels go by,
For every man in good time must book for Further
Out :
It may be in the Flood-time—it may be in the
Drought !

Her load of clay-cold faces she never carries back ;
The dim wheels leave no traces, the shoeless hoofs
no track ;
But all along the river in the bends that she has
passed
The giant gum-trees shiver in a strange and icy
blast ;
The clumps of scented sandal are tainted with her
breath,
And teams are hard to handle behind the Coach of
Death.

She lifts no mud in winter, and stirs no summer
dust,
Her pole-bars never splinter, her lock-bolts never
rust ;
Her parts are stout for wearing and strong her
simple gear,
She'll run without repairing from year to deathful
year,
When every coach is rotten on the Western water-
shed,
And Cobb and Co. forgotten and all their drivers
dead !



DARRELL.

SO I've taken his hundred notes in the end,
 And now, as I turn them over,
 I feel like a man who's been false to a friend,
 Or has broken his troth to a lover.
 And what will they purchase, when all is said,
 For me with the world's wealth laden?
 A barrel or two of Kaludah red,
 Or the favor of some light maiden!

Our wine turns gall at the gray day's birth
 When the lamp of the revel paleth;
 We know what the kiss of a woman is worth—
 But a good horse never faileth.
 Your white arms clinging, my ringless bride,
 Are bonds that the years will sever;
 But the brave hoof-thunder of Darrell's stride
 Will beat in my heart for ever!

You know how little of truth there lies
 In the heart of your hot caresses;
 There is danger hid in your dreamful eyes,
 There is death in your winding tresses;
 And, since you would turn for a fairer face
 Or a stronger arm's enfolding,
 You will never hold in my heart the place
 That one honest horse is holding.

The stars are fading by one and one
 And the fires of the dawn are lightening
 The web that a pitiless Fate has spun,
 And my own cursed hand is tightening;

DARRELL.

Oh! better this arm had lost its force,
This brain in the dust lain idle,
Before I bartered the grandest horse
That ever carried a bridle!

OFF THE GRASS.

THEY were boasting on the Greenhide of their
 nags of fancy breed,
 And stuffing them with bran and oats to run in
 Gumleaf Town,
 But we hadn't got a racehorse that was worth a
 dish of feed,
 So didn't have a Buckley's show to take the
 boasters down.

For old Midnight was in Sydney and we couldn't
 get him up
 In time for Gumleaf Races if it *had* been worth
 our while ;
 The Chorus colt was far too light to win the Gum-
 leaf Cup,
 And we did n't own a hackney that could finish
 out the mile.

But we could n't watch them win it while we never
 had a say,
 So we mustered up the horses, and we caught
 old Myall King ;
 He 's as brave as ever galloped, but he 's twelve if
 he 's a day,
 And we couldn't help but chuckle at the humour
 of the thing.

But, though shaky in the shoulders, he 's the daddy
 of them all ;
 He 's the gamest bit of horseflesh from the
 Snowy to the Bree ;

OFF THE GRASS.

One of those that's never beaten, coming every
time you call :

One of those you sometimes read about but very
seldom see.

He 's the don at every muster and the king of every
camp ;

He 's the lad to stop the pikers when they take
you on the rush ;

And he loves the merry rattle of the stockwhip and
the tramp

Of the cockhorned mulga scrubbers when they 're
breaking in the brush.

He can foot the Greenhide brumbies if they take
a mile of start,

And if they get him winded in a gallop on the
plain

He 's as game as any lion, and he carries such a
heart

You can never say he 's beaten, for he 'll always
come again !

So we put up Jack the Stockman with his ten
pounds overweight,

And he lengthened out the leathers half-a-foot
and gave a smile :

"I don't suppose you 'll see us when they 're fairly
in the straight,

But we 'll make the beggars travel, take my oath,
for half-a-mile ! "

And they started, and the old horse jumped away
a length in front,

OFF THE GRASS.

And every post they came to gave the brown a
longer lead,
Till it seemed that there was nothing else but Myall
in the hunt,
With his load of station honour and his weight of
mulga feed !

Then the bay mare, Bogan Lily, started out to cut
him down ;
She had travelled out five hundred miles to win
the Gumleaf Cup,
And she could n't well get beaten by a hack in
Gumleaf Town
When she had to pay expenses for her owner's
journey up.

So she started out to catch the old brown camp-
horse from the Bush,
And a furlong from the finish she could nose his
rider's knee,
Then you should have heard the shouting of the
Bogan Lily push,
And the flinging of their hats up was a sight for
you to see !

But old Myall King had often been as nearly beat
before,
And he steadied off a little, while the mare shot
out ahead,
Then he shook his ears and gripped the bit—you
should have heard us roar
As he came at Bogan Lily with his flanks a
streak of red !

OFF THE GRASS.

And the little bay mare, beaten, gave him best and
threw it up,
And we heard her rider murmur as he saw the
brown horse pass
And Jack the Stockman drop his hands and win the
Gumleaf Cup—
“Beat by a hungry cripple of a camp-horse, off
the grass!”

Then we led him in a winner, and they cheered
him from the stand,
With the black sweat running channels from his
forearm to his foot,
And the white foam on his shoulder till you couldn't
see the brand,
And the crimson bloodstains scattered over spur
and flank and boot.

So we carried off the honours of the meeting—and
the notes;
And the men on Greenhide River, when they see
our fellows pass,
Will tell you this in whispers, “You can train your
nags on oats,
But be careful when you're racing those dashed
scrubbers off the grass!”

HIS EPITAPH.

ON a little old bush-racecourse at the back
 of No Man's Land,
 Where the mulgas mark the furlongs and a
 dead log marks the stand,
 There 's a square of painted railing showing white
 against the loam
 Where they fight for inside running as they round
 the bend for home ;
 Just a lonely grave and graveyard that are left to
 Nature's care,
 For the wild bush-flowers that brighten it were
 never planted there ;
 No monument or marble that will speak his praise
 or blame,
 No verse to tell his story and no mark to prove his
 name,
 But carved upon the white rail that is weather-worn
 and thin
 Is the simple, rough-hewn legend: HE ALWAS ROD
 TO WIN!

Some poor, uncared-for jockey-boy, who never
 earned a name—
 It's the boys who "ride to orders" who can find
 the road to Fame ;
 And the flowers and marble head-stones and the
 wealth of gear and gold
 Are the prizes of the riders who will "stop them"
 when they're told!
 Just a whisper at the saddling: "He's the only
 danger, Dan,

HIS EPITAPH.

That 's the boy will try to beat you—stop him, *any way you can!* ”
Just a crowding at the corner and a crossing in the straight
And a plucky little horseman who is “pulling out” too late ;
A heavy fall, a loose horse—and a lightweight carried in—
A shallow grave, a railing, and : HE ALWAS ROD TO WIN!

Some brave, brown-handed comrade who has learned the rider's worth
Has carved those rough words o'er him for the eyes of all the earth ;
And though few may chance to pass him as he lies in simple state
Those few will hold him honoured by the friendship of his mate.
And when, in Life's keen struggle, we shall fight for inside place,
When they crowd us at the corner and we drop from out the race,
When the ringing hoofs go forward and the cheering greets the best,
And the prize is for the winner and the red spurs for the rest,
May we find some true-heart comrade, when they 've filled the last clods in,
Who will carve these words above us : HE ALWAS ROD TO WIN!

THE DINGO OF BRIGALOW GAP.

FOR K.G. or coronet, kingdom or crown,
 The boys on Kalangada care not a rap ;
 But the honour they ask for is galloping down
 The red and white dingo of Brigalow Gap.
 He has beaten us fairly at every exchange ;
 He is hard to keep up with and harder to track ;
 He knows every stone on the Brigalow Range—
 The fastest and wildest and worst of the pack.
 Good horses behind him with rowels we 've raked :
 On Bogan the bushcrows are feasting their fill,
 And Footstep is foundered and Starlight is staked,
 But the red and white dingo makes light of us
 still.

For him a fast gallop is nothing but fun—
 Too cunning to poison, too wary to trap,
 You can 't get the sight of a rifle or gun
 On the red and white dingo of Brigalow Gap.

He has tasted the Lincolns and fancies the breed,
 He has tried the Kalangada culls for a change.
 And we know that he 'll never go short of a feed
 As long as our wethers run under the range.
 He 's the scourge of the country, the plague of the
 spot,
 The curse of the owner, the bane of the boss ;
 For he 's got to be reckoned with, like it or not,
 When the latter is squaring his profit and loss.
 On the walls of the stable are trophies galore,
 The goal and the guerdon of many a ride ;
 And a place is reserved at the top of the door
 For the honor of holding his red and white hide ;

THE DINGO OF BRIGALOW GAP.

But the days and the weeks they go merrily by,
The skins on the stable-wall flutter and flap,
They have plenty of time to get shrivelled and dry
While they wait for the dingo of Brigalow Gap.

There are yellows and brindles and crossbreds of
black,

The pride of the station, the talk of the town,
But we'd gladly give all to be out on his track,
With his stride getting short and the crows
coming down.

His life may be safe, but, believe me! for that
He has n't Kalangada kindness to thank :
We tracked him two days ago over the flat,
We heard him last night at the Marathon tank ;
And we saw him to-day as he skirted the brush
A mile from the corner of Halliday's fence.
We took to him then with a cavalry rush,
And charged the thick scrub with more spirit
than sense ;

For, whenever that devil's limb leads us a dance,
We gallop to glory, whatever may hap ;
But down in the gully we got our last glance
At the red-and-white dingo of Brigalow Gap.

He has conquered us fairly, we're bound to confess
(We claim to be sportsmen, and know when
we're beat) ;

His triumph the greater, our credit the less
That we ride fairly well, and our horses are fleet.
Perhaps, when the days of the dingo are done,
And the race, barring him, is extinct in the land,

THE DINGO OF BRIGALOW GAP.

When cocky-selectors have swallowed the run,
And various fortunes have scattered our band ;
Perhaps, when with sorrow that scarce can be
borne

He watches the last of his foemen depart ;
When the sheep-walks are furrowed and planted
with corn,

And the want of a gallop is breaking his heart ;
When his life is a burden bereft of its joys,

That old age embitters and sicknesses sap,
He'll suffer the greybeards that once were " the
boys "

To catch him on foot in the Brigalow Gap !

HOW THE CHESTNUT HORSE CAME HOME.

TWENTY miles across the ranges there's a
 patch of cane-grass clears
 Half a mile of tangled mulga ; hides a score of
 native spears,
 While the horseman sings a love-song, with no
 shadow of his fate
 Till the stock-horse swerves and plunges from the
 cane-grass swamp—too late !
 Heavy from his glossy shoulder falls a dead weight
 to the ground,
 And the dark blood splashes upward as the big
 horse makes the bound ;
 With his wild eyes great with terror and his scarlet
 nostrils spread
 Leaps he madly to the mulga from the dark form
 of the dead ;
 Laden with the purple bloodstains, for the words he
 cannot speak,
 Thunders down the crimson sunset to the home-
 stead by the creek ;
 Loudly over range and roadway ring the hoofs their
 notes of doom,
 Straight as arrow to the gateway . . . So the
 chestnut horse came home !

What 's the dustcloud down the plain, Jack ? Yours
 are younger eyes than mine ;
 Comes too fast for team or buggy, and the coach
 ain't due till nine.

HOW THE CHESTNUT HORSE CAME HOME.

Harry Olden ? How he 's riding ? Well, we need n't
wonder, Jack ;
When a man is newly-married he don't linger on
the track.
There 's his little woman waiting over by the cottage
door :
By the Powers of Earth and Heaven ! What the
smoke 's he racing for ?
I would rather lose a tenner—he must stop this
blessed game—
I would rather lose a hundred than he ride old
Khyber lame.
Not a horse upon the river . . . What is that
you 're saying, Jack ?
Khyber making for the gateway with no rider on
his back !
Bridle broken, breastplate flying, chest and shoulder
white with foam !
Stand away there ! Take the rails down ! . . . So
the chestnut horse came home !

She is standing in the garden, and the gleam of
sunset falls
Through the pepper trees and blue gums on the
white-washed cottage walls ;
She is watching through the sunset till her eyes
their guerdon meet ;
In the still air she is listening for the stroke of
Khyber's feet ;
Now she whispers, " I can see him ; he is riding
fast to-night ! "
Eagerly her heart is beating, and her eyes have
Love 's own light.

HOW THE CHESTNUT HORSE CAME HOME.

“Khyber's fond of racing homewards! Dear old
Harry lets him go,
For he knows that I am waiting; anxious when the
sun gets low.
What's the big crowd at the slip-rails? Harry's
coming home in state!
If I run across the garden I shall meet him at the
gate!” . . .

*In the silent awe-struck circle, speechless lips and brows
of gloom,
Not one man the man to tell her how the chestnut horse
came home!*

A DRAFT FROM TRINGADEE.

LEAD me down to the stockyard, Jim, to the
butt of the old box-tree!

I would like to be there when they're yarding
the bullocks from Tringadee.

They were always beggars to rush and ring and
rattle the gidya spars,

And gave us our work to get them safe at the back
of the twelve-foot bars.

I can hear them crashing the blue grass through,
away in the river bend,

And I hear their thousand voices in one splendid
challenge blend.

Listen! the music of stockwhips! Nearer and nearer
they come!

How I wish I were out in the daylight fetching the
scrubbers home!

Yesterday there has been riding, Jim! on sandhill
and ridge and plain,

From pines into twisted mulga, from mulga to
pines again;

Galloping over the deadwood, Jim, and dodging the
swinging boughs;

Wheeling the Tringa bullocks and tailing the Tringa
cows.

Yesterday, out on the camp, Jim, there has been
work, I'll swear!

Charge to be met with the stockwhip, or maybe a
flank laid bare;

A DRAFT FROM TRINGADEE.

And all last night in the moonlight what drowsing
and dropping of reins !
As they dozed with the tiring cattle over the salt-
bush plains.

Now they are close to the yard, Jim ! the leaders
are steadying :
Hark ! there 's a horseman galloping past to wheel
them into the wing !
That 's Mick, by the roar of his stockwhip ; and
Wilga Boy by his stride ;
I can almost *see* the foam on his neck and the blood
on his rowelled side.

Come a little bit closer, Jim ! you may laugh at a
blind man's fear ;
But it 's one thing riding old Tempest, another
thing crouching here.
I never knew fear on the chestnut, and loved the
thick of the fight ;
But somehow it chills the heart of a man, this
living in endless night.

That 's an outlaw broke from the mob, Jim ! I
know by his angry roar ;
And somebody 's dropping the whip so quick he
hasn 't got time to gore.
They 've wheeled him back to the others : my God !
if I could but see !
It is hard to be standing idle when they 're yarding
from Tringadee.

A DRAFT FROM TRINGADEE.

Their breath is laden with trefoil, and under their
trampling feet
At every turn of the battle the smell of the dust is
sweet ;
Odours more dear than these to me the winds can
never bring,
Or waft me grander music than the march when
cattle ring.

The last of the mob is yarded, rails up, and the
stockwhip's dumb ;
It's cold and the fun is over—we may as well
shuffle home.
Give me your arm again, Jim! a kind mate you
must be,
To miss, for a blind old cripple, a muster at
Tringadee!

TAKEN OVER.

THE Banks are taking charge, old man!—I knew
 how it would be ;
 The flags are flying half-mast high for death of
 Tringadee ;
 The Boss has left ; the boys are spread to all the winds—
 and so
 I think we 'd better get the nags and sling the packs and
 go !

It's been a dear old home to us, a home we 'll not
 forget ;
 And we 've been loyal to the brand and would be
 loyal yet ;
 But there is strife among the crew whose captain
 leaves the ship—
 The team won't pull together when a new hand
 takes the whip.
 We 've had for Boss the best of men—they know
 him far and wide ;
 From Sydney out to Normanton they speak his
 name with pride.
 And though we search from now till doom in every
 clime and land,
 We 'll never find a truer heart or defter bridle-hand.

They 've got some new-chum manager, and sent
 him up from town
 To spoil the mouth of Myall King and break old
 Vanguard down ;
 The horses that the Boss was proud to steer in
 scrub and plain

TAKEN OVER.

Will never toss the bridle-bars beneath his hand
again.

They've picked their would-be stockmen from the
raw, rough Sydney push,

That never saw a bucking colt or smelt a sandal-
bush ;

And when they muster through the scrub for fats in
Hawthornden,

They'll have to let the cattle rip and muster up the
men.

They'll take our places in the hut, the bunks where
we have lain,

And smoke in the verandah where we'll never
smoke again ;

They'll take our saddles from their pegs, our
bridles from the wall,

And catch our favorite horses—ah! we'll miss
them most of all.

They'll have no banjo-music in the station-hut at
night—

They'll put the good old songs aside to swear and
drink and fight ;

They'll have no merry dancing when the off-camp
stockmen meet,

And the old boards creak and rattle to the tramp of
spur-decked feet.

There'll be races in the township just the same when
we're away,

But they'll miss young Harden's pony and your
finish on the gray ;

TAKEN OVER.

And when they meet at settling-time, above the din
and noise
They 'll be listening for our laughter, and they 'll
miss the Tringa boys.
And when the new-chum Tringa band goes riding
into town
To take the place of that old band the Banks have
broken down,
The girls will turn their backs on them and never
smile to greet
The men who spur our fancy hacks to prance along
the street.

*The Banks are taking charge, old man!—I knew how it
would be ;
The flags may fly at half-mast high for death of
Tringadee ;
It's another home in ashes, and a name dust-wrapped—
and so
We'll run the horses in to-night and sling the packs and
go !*

THE STATION BRAND.

HO! you in the boots and the long-necked spurs,
 You've a nice little hackney there!
 I rather fancy that brand of hers—
 Now, what will you take for the mare?
 You need not go off on too wide a tack—
 I'm hardly in want of a horse;
 And I'm only pricing your chestnut hack
 For the sake of the brand, of course.
 I don't know where you were born or bred,
 But I'll give you a stranger's hand
 For love of that lean, game, fiery head,
 And the sake of the Tringa brand.

No, thanks; I don't fancy exchanges,
 Besides, she's a bit of a screw,
 As old as the Barrier Ranges,
 And shook in the shoulders, too!
 Now, what is the use of denial?
 Much better have let things stand—
 No, thank you, I want no trial:
 I'm buying the Tringa brand!
 I know that she'll carry me fast and far
 In waterless waste or wet,
 For never the *TR I and a Bar*
 Was burnt on a bad one yet.

Do I know the brand? Yes, I think I do;
 I've carried it, hell-fire hot,
 To the stockyard fence and passed it through
 For many a cleanskin lot;
 I've heard it hiss on the burning hide,
 And the short, sharp whinny of pain

THE STATION BRAND.

As they lifted it off to thrust aside
Or lay to the lines again.
Do I know the brand? I have watched it streak
To the front in the mustering days—
But why do I tell you—you've heard it speak,
And you know what the old brand says!

For ask of the drovers from North of Bourke,
The Kings of the Overland,
Which are the horses to stand the work:
They will tell you—the Tringa brand!
And question the mailmen in flood-stress met,
Flogging, down in the mud,
Which are the pearls when the plains are wet:
They will tell you—the Tringa blood!
And ask the men of the Furthest Back
What their favorite campers are
In the whirling dust when the stockwhips crack;
And it's *TR I and a Bar*.

You can have your price!—it's a lot too much
As horses are selling to-day!
But a man is a fool and acts as such
When sentiment shows the way;
She's spavined and aged and shoulder-shook,
Yet I'm not regretting the deal,
For the old brand shows like an open book
What nothing else can reveal—
The far-off life with its witching charms
And the glamour of sun and star
In the happy days when our coat-of-arms
Was *TR I and a Bar!*

OUT OF THE CHAINS.

HE has toiled in his place since the break of day,
 And the collar has left its gall ;
 When others were faint in the holding clay
 And heavy the burden and steep the way
 He has taken the weight from all.

Where the sun falls red on the burning plains
 From the breast of a quivering sky,
 As a poor reward for his honest pains
 They have loosed the collar and dropped the chains
 And turned him adrift to die.

Though the brown grass waves by his weary feet,
 Though the river runs at his side,
 He has little desire to drink or eat ;
 And he crawls away in the scorching heat
 With torture at every stride.

And the waggons pass in the whirling dust,
 And the ring of the whip is gone,
 And his hope with the human voice is lost,
 And the crows come down in an eager host
 With wings that blacken the sun.

Ere the whip-scored hide has ceased to smart
 Or the aching limbs grown numb,
 Ere pulses slacken and sense depart,
 Ere the hammer stops in the broken heart
 And sobs in the throat are dumb,

OUT OF THE CHAINS.

Will his thoughts return to the pastures green,
Of the bygone hours of ease?—
To a golden noon in a summer sheen,
To a river laughing its banks between,
And the shadow of blackwood trees?—

To the mouthfuls of dewy grass, the rolls
On the petals of painted flowers?—
To the races run with his comrade foals,
With straggling starts and indefinite goals,
To shorten the idle hours?

Will he cherish the memory, even now
Of the touch of a loving hand
That ribboned the lock on his open brow
And fondled the neck that was proud to bow
With a rose in the forehead-band?

Will he yearn one moment to catch the tone
Of the voice he loved long since?—
“I never lift whip to my gallant roan;
He works for the voice and the voice alone;
And he draws till he drops, old Prince!”

“Till he drops!”—the shadows are gathering fast
To curtain his bed on the plain,
And out of the darkness void and vast
The carrion birds to their foul repast
Are flying in endless train.

THE MAN WHO STEADIES THE LEAD.

HE was born in the light of red oaths
 And nursed by the drought and the flood,
 And swaddled in sweat-lined saddle-cloths
 And christened in spur-drawn blood ;
 He never was burdened with learning,
 And many would think him a fool,
 But he 's mastered a method of " turning "
 That never was taught in a school.
 His manners are rugged and vulgar,
 But he 's nuggets of gold in our need,
 And a lightning flash in the mulga
 Is the Man who Steadies the Lead !

When the stockwhips are ringing behind him
 And the brumbies are racing abreast,
 It 's fifty to one you will find him
 A furlong or two from the rest
 With the coils of his whip hanging idle,
 His eyes on the mob at his side,
 And the daintiest touch on the bridle—
 For this is the man who can ride !
 And the stallions that break for the mallee
 Will find he has courage and speed,
 For he rides the best horse in the valley—
 This stockman that steadies the lead.

When they 're fetching in " stores " to the station
 Through tangles of broken belar,
 And the road is a rough calculation
 That 's based on the blaze of a star ;

THE MAN WHO STEADIES THE LEAD.

When they 're quickening through sand-ridge and
hollow

And rowels are spattered with red,
And sometimes you 've only to follow
The sound of the hoof-beat ahead ;
Then we know that he 's holding them nor'ward—
We trust in the man and his steed,
As we hear the old brown crashing forward
And his rider's " Wo-up ! " to the lead.

And again in a journey that 's longer,
In a different phase of the game,
Dropping down the long trail to Wodonga
With a thousand or so of the same ;
When the blue grass is over our rollers,
And each one contentedly rides,
And even the worst of the crawlers
Are stuffing green grass in their hides ;
He is ready to spread them or ring them
Or steady them back on the feed,
And he knows when to stop them or string them,
This stockman that rides in the lead.

But when from the bend of the river
The cattle break camp in the night—
O, then is the season, if ever,
We value his service aright !
For we know that if some should be tardy,
And some should be left in the race,
Yet the spurs will be red on " Coolgardie "
As Someone swings out to his place.

THE MAN WHO STEADIES THE LEAD.

The mulga boughs—hark to them breaking
In front of the maddened stampede!
A horse and a rider are taking
Their time-honored place in the lead!

As an honest, impartial recorder
I'd fain have you all recollect
There are other brave men on the Border
Entitled to every respect;
There's the man who thinks bucking a tame thing,
And rides 'em with lighted cigars;
And the man who will drive any blamed thing
That ever was hooked to the bars . . .
Their pluck and their prowess are granted,
But, all said and done, we're agreed
That the king of 'em all when he's wanted
Is the Man who Steadies the Lead!

HOW THE FIRE QUEEN CROSSED THE SWAMP.

THE flood was down in the Wilga swamps,
 three feet over the mud,
 And the teamsters camped on the Wilga range
 and swore at the rising flood;
 For one by one they had tried the trip, double and
 treble teams,
 And one after one each desert-ship had dropped to
 her axle-beams;
 So they thonged their leaders and pulled them
 round to the camp on the sandhill's crown,
 And swore by the bond of a blood-red oath to wait
 till the floods went down.

There were side-rail tubs and table-tops, coaches
 and bullock-drays,
 Brown with the Barcoo Wonders, and Speed with
 the dapple grays
 Who pulled the front of his waggon out and left the
 rest in the mud
 At the Cuttaburra crossing in the grip of the Ninety
 flood.
 There was Burt with his sixteen bullocks, and never
 a bullock to shirk,
 Who twice came over the Border line with twelve-
 ten-ten to Bourke;
 There was Long Dick damning an agent's eyes for
 his ton of extra weight,
 And Whistling Jim, for Cobb and Co., cursing that
 mails were late;

HOW THE FIRE QUEEN CROSSED THE SWAMP.

And one blasphemed at a broken chain and howled
for a blacksmith's blood,
And most of them cursed their crimson luck, and all
of them cursed the flood.

The last of the baffled had struggled back and the
sun was low in the sky,
And the first of the stars was creeping out when
Dareaway Dan came by.
There 's never a teamster draws to Bourke but has
taken the help of Dan ;
There 's never a team on the Great North Road can
lift as the big roans can :
Broad-hipped beauties that nothing can stop, leaders
that swing to a cough ;
Eight blue-roans on the near-side yoked, and eight
red-roans on the off.
And Long Dick called from his pine-rail bunk :
" Where are you bound so quick ? "
And Dareaway Dan spoke low to the roans, and
aloud, " To the Swagman's, Dick ! "
" There 's five good miles, " said the giant, " lie to
the front of you, holding mud ;
If you never were stopped before, old man, you are
stopped by the Wilga flood.
The dark will be down in an hour or so, there is n't
the ghost of a moon ;
So leave your nags in the station grass instead of
the long lagoon ! "

But Dan stood up to his leader's head and fondled
the big brown nose :

“There 's many a mile in the roan team yet before
they are feed for the crows;
Now listen, Dick-with-the-woman's-heart, a word
to you and the rest:
I've sixteen horses collared and chained, the pick
of the whole wide West,
And I'll cut their throats and leave them here to
rot if they have n't the power
To carry me through to the gates of Hell—with
seventy bags of flour!
The light of the stars is light enough; they have
nothing to do but *plough!*
There's never a swamp has held them yet, and a
swamp won't stop them now.
They're waiting for flour at the Swagman's Bend;
I'll steer for the lifting light;
There's nothing to fear with a team like mine, and
—I camp in the bend to-night!”

So they stood aside and they watched them pass in
the glow of the sinking sun,
With straining muscles and tightened chains—
sixteen pulling like one;
With jingling harness and droning wheels and bare
hoofs' rhythmic tramp,
With creaking timbers and lurching load the Fire
Queen faced the swamp!
She dipped her red shafts low in the slush as a
spoonbill dips her beak,
The black mud clung to the wheels and fell in the
wash of the Wilga creek;
And the big roans fought for footing, and the
spreaders threshed like flails,

HOW THE FIRE QUEEN CROSSED THE SWAMP.

And the great wheels lifted the muddy spume to
the bend of the red float-rails ;
And they cheered him out to the westward with the
last of the failing light
And the splashing hoofs and the driver's voice died
softly away in the night ;
But some of them prate of a shadowy form that
guided the leader's reins,
And some of them speak of a shod black horse that
pulled in the off-side chains—
How every time that he lifted his feet the waggon
would groan and swing,
And every time that he dropped his head you could
hear the tug-chains ring !

And Dan to the Swagman's Bend came through
mud-spattered from foot to head,
And they could n't tell which of the roans were blue
and which of the roans were red.
Now this is the tale as I heard it told, and many
believe it true
When the teamsters say in their off-hand way—
“ 'T was the Devil that pulled him through! ”

THE NEAR-SIDE LEADER.

WHEN the gear is on the horses and the
 knotted trace-chains hooked ;
 When the last bale 's on the waggon and
 the ropes are twitched and tied ;
 When the brakes are off the big wheels and the
 waybills safely booked,
 You can see the old gray leader with his wise head
 turned aside.
 Does a memory come o'er him
 Of the long stiff road before him,
 With the lead-chains never slackened as he holds
 his team to work,
 Through the box-flats and the gidyas,
 Ninety miles of plain and ridges,
 To the white-railed Darling bridges and the silver
 roofs of Bourke ?

Just a whisper from his master and he leans upon
 the weight,
 And the twenty browns behind him touch the collar
 when he moves,
 Then the whip rings out a warning, and the under-
 carriage grates,
 And they bend their backs and lift her from the
 well-worn loading grooves.
 So they open up the tourney,
 And she starts her long, rough journey
 Over ninety miles of noonday and the evenings in
 between,

THE NEAR-SIDE LEADER.

And the station gates have freed her,
With the station men to speed her,
And it's "Buckle down my leader, on the road
you've often been!"

Now the red dust curls behind her, and the red
dust rolls before,
And from shafter up to leader they are sweat from
head to hip,
And the good ones take the collar, and the bad ones
balk and bore,
But the gray horse strains the harder every time he
hears the whip;
So, by lash and lurid order,
They will swing her through the Border,
With the dust upon her loading making extra
weight to pull,
And the drunken township loafer
Staggers blindly from his sofa
Just to see the first team over with the Thurul-
goona wool.

O, the camping by the river when the sun is riding
low!
O, the shifting of the collars and the dropping of
the chains!
And the music of the big bells, as they let the
horses go
To their drinking in the river and their feeding on
the plains!
So, from camp to camp-fire, daily,
They will battle through Belalie,

THE NEAR-SIDE LEADER.

Till they leave the plains behind them and the river
at their back,
Where the stony hills are showing
There is panting now, and blowing,
But the gray horse keeps them going with the
chains that never slack.

So the toe-clips cut the roadway where a thousand
hoofs have trod,
While above the gold sun glistens and to West the
red sun flames
To the creaking of the waggon and the lurching of
the load
And the grinding of the tug-chains in the hooks
upon the hames ;
And the leader's heart thumps loudly,
But he bends his old neck proudly
As he swings them through the bridges, sticking
staunchly to his work ;
And I wish the gray could hear him
When a stranger says, " I 'd spare him,
For there's not a horse comes near him in the
teams that draw to Bourke ! "

O, it's grand to bring the largest loads from
Thurulgoona side !
And it's grand to have a leader that the smallest
child knows well ;
But, if you love an honest horse, when next the
ropes are tied
You 'll leave him in the bluegrass, for the gray has
earned a spell.

THE NEAR-SIDE LEADER.

He has borne the brunt of battle ;
He has led your lagging cattle
With the red galls on his shoulder, yet he never
shirked a start ;
And 't were better you should brain him
Ere you burst him up and strain him,
*For, just think, each trip you chain him helps to break a
willing heart!*

Some take no heed of any future day
But kiss Time's hand while wearing yet his bonds,
Dreaming their young full-blooded life away
Among Life's lotus-ponds.

And some there are who gird them shield and sword,
War dawn and noon, fight the red sunset down
To fall when night falls, with the same reward
Death's dark-hued cypress crown.

Ah! when Death's hand our own warm hand hath ta'en
Down the dark isles his sceptre rules supreme,
God grant the fighters leave to fight again
And let the dreamers dream!

OTHER VERSES.



HABET !

DOWN! And the World's war-squadrons splashes
 Past, loose-reined, in the blood and the mire ;
 Brown arms sweep and the bared steel flashes
 On to the goal of the World's desire.

Down! By the war-steed's hot hoofs cowering,
 Broken the sword-arm, bent the sword,
 And away to the front leap the sabres showering
 Blows for the Hell-hearth, blows for the Lord!

Did he clutch at the moon for jewel
 To bind on his bosom and wear ?
 Did he fight with a Fate too cruel
 Or follow a face too fair ?
 What does it matter the reason why !
 He is down ; and it 's little the World will care
 As it sweeps in a foam-fret by.

Down! Weeps the moon, and he never wore it.
 Down! And the stars mourn into the mist.
 Fate's red weal is across his forehead ;
 Somebody's face has never been kissed !
 Flushes the dawn, and one vulture-speck
 Spires and spins in a reeling sky ;—
 Down! And it 's little the World will reck
 As it rides red-rowelled by.

THE WORLD BEYOND.

A POET stood in the red day-dawn,
 And the dawn was more to his gifted eyes
 Than a songbird's call and a flush on the lawn
 When the night winds drop and the last star dies ;
 For he saw the Goddess of all sweet song
 Clothed in a vesture of infinite light,
 He heard the challenge of Right to Wrong,
 The trumpet blast of the world-old fight.

A Painter stood in the golden noon,
 And to him the world was something more
 Than a sea of light in a slumbrous swoon
 On the golden sands of a splendid shore ;
 For out and beyond the gold and gray,
 The silver cloud and the sweep of blue,
 He could see the bright lights quiver and play—
 The wonder of Italy, known and new.

A Lover watched in the evening light,
 And the world was something greater to him
 Than a day-death grand and a sunset bright,
 A sweeping of shadows, a twilight dim ;
 For he saw far over the drifting years
 A maiden form in the sunset stand,
 And his grey eyes filled with a mist of tears
 For the soft white sake of an unclasped hand.

And so for the wide world never in vain
 Blossoms a day-dawn, a noon, or a night,
 For somewhere out farther than these again
 There reddens the gleam of a Hope-born light ;

THE WORLD BEYOND

And the meanest man on the round world's rim—
Poet or Painter though never he be—
Has seen for a moment with eyes grown dim
The light that was never on land or sea!

NORTHWARD TO THE SHEDS.

THERE'S a whisper from the regions out
 beyond the Barwon banks ;
 There's a gathering of the legions and a
 forming of the ranks ;
 There's a murmur coming nearer with the signs
 that never fail,
 And it's time for every shearer to be out upon the
 trail.
 They must leave their girls behind them and their
 empty glasses, too,
 For there's plenty left to mind them when they
 cross the dry Barcoo ;
 There'll be kissing, there'll be sorrow such as only
 sweethearts know,
 But before the noon to-morrow they'll be singing
 as they go—

*For the Western creeks are calling,
 And the idle days are done,
 With the snowy fleeces falling
 And the Queensland sheds begun!*

There is shortening of the bridle, there is tightening
 of the girth,
 There is fondling of the idol that they love the best
 on earth ;
 Northward from the Lachlan River and the sun-
 dried Castlereagh,
 Outward to the Never-Never ride the ringers on
 their way.
 From the green bends of the Murray they have run
 their horses in,

NORTHWARD TO THE SHEDS.

For there's haste and there is hurry when the
Queensland sheds begin ;
On the Bogan they are bridling, they are saddling
on the Bland,
There is plunging and there 's sidling—for the colts
don't understand

*That the Western creeks are calling,
And the idle days are done,
With the snowy fleeces falling
And the Queensland sheds begun !*

They will camp below the station, they 'll be cutting
peg and pole,
Rearing tents for occupation till the calling of the
roll ;
And it's time the nags were driven, and it's time
to strap the pack,
For there 's never license given to the laggards on
the track.
Hark the music of the battle! it is time to bare
our swords :
Do you hear the rush and rattle as they tramp along
the boards ?
They are past the pen-doors picking light-wooled
weaners one by one ;
I can hear the shear-blades clicking, and I know
the fight 's begun !

LIFE 'S OVERLAND.

GREY-LYING miles to the nor'ward of
 Nor'ward,
 Red-leaping leagues to the westward of West,
 Further than keenest of sight follows forward,
 Further than boldest of hearts ever guessed ;
 Still with its secret to Man unimparted,
 Still with its beckoning wealth unattained,
 Lies the dim goal that has Never been Charted,
 Down the long Road that has Never been Chained.

Day after day, and from morrow to morrow,
 Pointing the way where the wide road begins,
 Sweep the red scorpion-scourges of Sorrow,
 Lashing her children out West for their sins ;
 Beefwood and whitewood, and redgum and wilga,
 Lead them and goad them, and guide them and
 guard,
 Till hidden in tangle of sandal and mulga,
 The gates to the East and the Southward are
 barred.

Westward and Nor'ward! and fainter behind them
 The roll of the waggons, the roar of the whips,
 The towering red dust-storms that waltz down and
 wind them,
 The blue mocking mirage that lies to their lips ;
 Beyond the last camp of the furthest-west drover,
 Beyond the last team-track, the last rotting steer,
 Beyond the last foot-pad the camels crossed over,
 Beyond the lone grave of the last pioneer.

Westward and Westward! Out past the last horror
Of thirst and starvation, of lorn lives and lost,
The bleaching white bones of the boldest explorer,
The scrubs and the plains that have never been
crossed,—
Where the heat haze no longer in mockery dances,
Where no more the sand-drift whirls brown on
the blue,
Where the pitying Sun lays at rest his red lances,
With white flags of truce where his war banner
flew.

The last birds have waked them—they sleep now
no longer!
The last dark has lifted—they take no more rest!
For the aching feet heal and the tired heart grows
stronger
As every league bears them a league to the West.
Gold! Did they hear her sweet voice as they
started?
Now she is dumb to them, scorned and disdained,
And their goal is a Goal that has Never been
Charted;
Their route is a Road that has Never been
Chained.

Westward and—Homeward! Brown hands at the
back of them;
Far in the distance white hands—and the rest;
One by one, outward, we lose the last track of
them,
All the world wending its way to the West;

LIFE'S OVERLAND.

One after one, till the last shall have started,
Yet no more the last than the first shall have
gained
In the lore of the Goal that has Never been Charted,
Down the long Road that has Never been
Chained.

AT THE BACK O' BOURKE!

WHERE the mulga paddocks are wild and
wide,
That's where the pick of the stockmen ride—
At the Back o' Bourke!

Under the dust-clouds dense and brown,
Moving Southward by tank and town,
That's where the Queensland mobs come down—
Out at the Back o' Bourke!

Over the Border to and fro,
That's where the footsore swagmen go—
At the Back o' Bourke!
Sick and tired of the endless strife,
Nursing the bones of a wasted life
Where all the sorrows of Earth are rife—
Out at the Back o' Bourke!

Whether the plains are deep or dry,
That's where the struggling teams go by—
At the Back o' Bourke!
North and Southward, in twos and threes,
Bullocks and horses down to the knees,
Waggons dipped to the axle-trees—
Out at the Back o' Bourke!

That's the land of the lying light
And the cruel mirage dancing bright—
At the Back o' Bourke!
That's where the shambling camel train
Crosses the Western ridge and plain,
Loading the Paroo clips again—
Out at the Back o' Bourke!

AT THE BACK O' BOURKE!

That 's the land of the wildest nights,
The longest speers and the fiercest fights—

At the Back o' Bourke!

That 's where the skies are brightest blue,
That 's where the heaviest work 's to do,
That 's where the fires of Hell burn through—

Out at the Back o' Bourke!

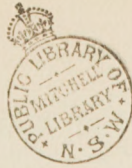
That 's where the wildest floods have birth
Out of the nakedest ends of Earth—

At the Back o' Bourke!

Where poor men lend and the rich ones borrow ;
It 's the bitterest land of sweat and sorrow—

But if I were free I 'd be off to-morrow,

Out at the Back o' Bourke!



THE SONG OF SONGS.

LET others chant of battle and such wreaths as
 Glory gave ;
 I would rather sing the praises of the dew that
 dips the daisies,
 Of the wind that stirs the wattle and the foam that
 flecks the wave.

When others sing the Nation and the Flag that
 sweeps the seas,
 Let them leave me to deliver the old message of
 the river
 And the true interpretation of the wind's voice in
 the trees.

For when the drums are calling men to Honour
 and Renown,
 Turning in their dreamy slumbers they are
 swayed by softer numbers,
 Music of a dewdrop falling or a dead leaf drifting
 down.

And when the battle rages and the grey smoke dims
 the skies,
 There's a Voice that makes them listen till the
 gathering teardrops glisten
 And the Love that lit the ages brings the roselight to
 their eyes.

AT THE BEND O' THE CREEK.

HERE is roaring flood in Winter
 When the storm-flag flies,
 And the quick-fire lightnings splinter
 Gold from night-black skies,
 And the rain-clouds gather, breaking
 Close upon the box-tree shaking
 Like a lost soul shivering, quaking
 With a fear that never dies.

Here is sandy waste in Summer
 Where the Drought has lain,
 Stifling hope for every comer
 From the hell-hot plain ;
 When the footsore cattle quicken
 At the scent where last drops thicken,
 Turning back to faint and sicken
 In the dust-dry grass again.

Where the river bends to Nor'ward,
 With the dark floods done,
 And the Spring flower 's flaunting forward
 In the first Spring sun,—
 Where the angry Winter torrent
 Laden with some tree's death-warrant
 Left the brown stem 'thwart the current
 In the dead-branch arms lay One

Cold and still, without a motion
 Save that in the tide
 Rocked he as a wreck in ocean
 Rocks from side to side ;

AT THE BEND O' THE CREEK.

Silent as the trunk above him,
Resting where the ripples drove him
In the bed the flood-wash wove him,
 With a naked bough for bride.

Halts the brown hawk for a moment
 At the corpse's head,
Shakes the pearl drops from his raiment,
 Heedless of the dead ;
Down the river westward winging,
Pinions broad to sunbeams flinging,
Gone! . . . the birds take up their singing
 Where they left the song unsaid.

Stoops the snowy crane to listen
 On the sombre tree,
And her drooping feathers glisten
 White as white can be ;
Down the wind the wild fowl streaming
Catch a glimpse of whiter gleaming,
Wheel aside with frightened screaming
 From the horror that they see.

Life and Death, the dead and living !—
 None the woe to speak ;
And the sun drops westward giving
 Bloodstains to the creek ;
And the sun-fires gleam and glower
As the life-fires leap and lower,
And the river runs no slower
 Though a waiting heart should break !

WEST OF THE WORLD.

WEST of the World all red suns sleep
 On a fleecy carpet of crimson cloud,
 And the weary winds from the eastward
 creep
 To their shining goal on the western steep
 In the golden arms of the starry crowd—
 West of the World!

West of the World all true hearts ride
 To a further bourne than the best have trod,
 Till they cross the last creek gleaming wide
 And wave their hands from the last divide
 Ere they drop their load at the feet of God—
 West of the World!

West of the World all dead hopes drift
 On the heaving heart of the hiding Day
 To the clinging shadows that show no rift,
 With a lingering step that is all too swift
 For the eyes that follow their trackless way—
 West of the World!

A SCOTCH NIGHT.

IF you chance to strike a gathering of half-a-dozen
 friends
 When the drink is Highland whusky or some
 chosen Border blends,
 And the room is full of speirin and the gruppin' of
 brown han's,
 And the talk is all of tartans and of plaidies and of
 clans,—
 You can take things douce and easy, you can judge
 you're going right,
 For you've had the luck to stumble on a wee
 Scotch night!

When you're pitchforked in among them in a
 sweeping sort of way
 As "anither mon an' brither" from the Tweed or
 from the Tay;
 When you're taken by the oxtar and you're couped
 into a chair
 While someone slips a whusky in your tumbler
 unaware,—
 Then the present seems less dismal and the future
 fair and bricht,
 For you've struck Earth's grandest treasure in a
 guid Scots nicht!

When you hear a short name shouted and the same
 name shouted back
 Till you think in the confusion that they've *all* been
 christened Mac;

A SCOTCH NIGHT.

When you see a red beard flashing in the corner by
the fire,
And a giant on the sofa who is six-foot three or
higher,—
Before you 've guessed the colour and before you 've
gauged the height
You 'll have jumped at the conclusion it 's a braw
Scotch night!

When the red man in the corner puts his strong
voice to the proof
As he gives *The Hundred Pipers*, and the chorus lifts
the roof ;
When a chiel sings *Annie Laurie* with its tender,
sweet refrain
Till the tears are on their eyelids and—the drinks
come round again ;
When they chant the stirring war-songs that would
make the coward fight,—
Then you 're fairly in the middle of a wee Scotch
night!

When the plot begins to thicken and the band begins
to play ;
When every tin-pot chieftain has a word or two to
say ;
When they 'd sell a Queensland station for a sprig
of native heath ;
When there 's one Mac on the table and a couple
underneath ;
When half of them are sleeping and the whole of
them are tight,—
You will know that you 're assisting at a (*hic!*)
Scotch night!

A SCOTCH NIGHT.

When the last big bottle's empty and the dawn
creeps gray and cold,
And the last clan-tartan 's folded and the last d——d
lie is told ;
When they totter down the footpath in a brave,
unbroken line,
To the peril of the passers and the tune of *Auld
Lang Syne* ;
You can tell the folk at breakfast as they watch the
fearsome sicht,
“They have only been assisting at a braw Scots
nicht !”

"ABSENT FRIENDS!"

"**A**BSENT Friends!" There are brought to
 our mind again
 The scent of the buddah-bush after the
 rain;

The dawn in the eastward, the death of the stars,
 The wet grass that reaches the cold stirrup bars;
 The beat of the horse-hoofs that waken the day;
 The jest and the laughter that shorten the way!

*So Past with Present gaily blends,
 And merrily, with three times three,
 We drink to "Absent Friends!"*

"Absent Friends!" How those words in a won-
 drous wise

Can conjure the lovelight in beautiful eyes;
 The sound of her voice that was tender and sweet,
 The trail of her robes and the fall of her feet;
 The moods that could move us to joy or to tears
 In the Love of our youth in the long-ago years!

*And each one now his greeting sends,
 As earnestly, with three times three,
 We toast our "Absent Friends!"*

"Absent Friends!"—And a home that is over the
 sea;

White snow on the uplands, white rime on the tree;
 The faces we cherish, whate'er be our lot;
 The clasp of the hands will be never forgot;
 The friends of our boyhood who gather and pass
 In the misty reflection of Memory's glass!

" ABSENT FRIENDS ! "

*Our heart across the ocean wends,
And loyally, with three times three,
We toast our " Absent Friends ! "*

" Absent Friends ! "—The lost legion that lies in the
grave ;
The friends who were false and the friends we
forgave,—
Whose words had the edge of the enemy's knife.
To torture the heart and to poison the life ;—
The friends who lay dying and never could know
That we loved at the last as we loved long ago !

*So each across his wine-cup bends,
And silently, and tearfully,
We pledge our " Absent Friends ! "*

THE MARCH OF THE FLOOD.

THERE'S a whisper away on the Queensland
 side
 Of the Barwon a banker, the Warrego wide
 Spread from range to red range; of the siege of a
 town,
 Of farms that are wasted and cattle that drown,
 Of a trackless road and a bridgeless sea,
 And grey miles measured from tree to tree—
 And the people gather at gate and rail
 For the latest news by the Darling mail.

Through all the merry daylight
 Long leagues behind her fall
 Till golden turns to grey light
 And wedding-robe to pall;
 Above her rolling thunder
 The shrieking parrots fly,
 And the bush-world waits to wonder
 When the Darling mail goes by!

Through all the night she spurns the ground,
 Her headlights shame the stars,
 The rolling dust-cloud wraps her round
 From ledge to leading bars;
 And like some half-roused sleeper
 Stands each gaunt-armed gum aghast,
 And the shadows gather deeper
 When the Darling mail goes past!

She takes the fearsome message down
 By reach and point and bend,

THE MARCH OF THE FLOOD.

And camp and farm and river town
Will hail her as a friend;
For comes she not as horsemen ride
Who ride a race to win?
What wonder if they crowd beside
When the Darling mail comes in!

And close behind is the fierce Flood King:
In the pride of his strength he comes
Where the tangled masses of drift-weed swing
Like dead men up in the gums;
He sings the pæan of curbless might,
The song of a broken chain,
And he rides himself in the foremost fight
With the scourge of a loose-held rain.

He throws an arm to the Southward now,
Now an arm to the golden West,
And the circled lives to the bidding bow
And are lost on his tawny breast;
And day by day as he thunders by
There is ground to be captive led,
And night by night where the lowlands lie
Are the wings of his army spread.

There's never the stem of a bank-fed tree
For the touch of his hand too tall,
And he leaves his brand for the world to see
On the hut and the homestead wall;
There's never a star in the midnight sky
Or a sunbeam crossing the morn
But has heard the boast of his battle-cry
And the threat of his bugle-horn.

THE MARCH OF THE FLOOD.

And down where the Queen of the River lies girt
with her garland of green
The toilers have heard it and tremble, whose wealth
is the life of the Queen ;
In the hush of the evening they hear his low beat
on the shield of the shore
And stand to the dam and the earthwork: they
know it his challenge of yore!

And the stockmen ride out in the dawnlight by
billabong, runner and creek
To gather the sheep and the cattle wherever his
war-notes speak ;
And the blood will be red on the rowel, the sun will
be low in the west
Before they have left them in safety to camp on
the red hill's crest.

And so we shall live and suffer so long as the big
rains come
With their ruin and wreck for many, their danger
and death for some,
Till we go from the Culgoa and Darling to camp on
a drier shore
Where the Warrego out in his warpaint shall harry
our homes no more!

"GOD - SPEED!"

BECAUSE we've waked the morning-stars
 Together, June to June;
 Because our spurs and stirrup-bars
 Have clashed the same old tune;
 Because we've drawn one honour-line
 And held one cross and creed:
 You will not lay your hand in mine
 Without a last "God-speed!"

Because we've ridden knee to knee
 In lists against the world,
 And followed up one destiny
 Beneath one flag unfurled;
 Because we've lived, a little space,
 One life in word and deed:
 You will not meet me face to face
 Without a last "God-speed!"

Because one woman came between—
 As women often will—
 Because we thought one girl a queen;
 Because we think so still;
 Because no mortal power can say
 How far may True Love lead:
 You will not say "Good-bye!" to-day—
 "Good-bye!" without "God-speed!"

Because we've watched the shadows fall,
 Together on the plains—
 When all the night was musical
 With bells and hobble-chains;

" GOD - SPEED ! "

Because we 've gossiped round one blaze,
Agreed and disagreed :
Old Comrade, for the olden days,
You 'll wish your mate " God-speed ! "

A WIND FROM THE WEST.

THE Wind that fires the blood
 Came leaping in from Westward
 Over stone and stake and stud,
 With the roar of reeling dust-wrack
 And the moan of lifting flood.

The Wind that knows no chains
 Came in from Westward laden
 With the incense of the plains,
 With the breath of furnace-portals,
 And the reek of camel-trains—

Brought the promise of the West ;
 And they hailed her through the mountains
 With the honours of a guest,
 For the gold that clasped her girdle
 And the gold that crossed her breast.

*Oh, a Wind came in from Westward, blowing fetterless
 and free
 With a wail of weeping women and their children at
 their knee,
 With a dirge of empty saddles from the Lachlan to the
 Sea.
 And the naked West Wind shivered, "I have passed
 them on the way—
 The white bones all uncovered to the scornful gaze of
 Day—
 And I wrapped the red sands round them, and I kissed
 them as they lay."*

ABANDONED SELECTIONS.

O N the crimson breast of the sunset
 The Gray Selections lie,
 And their lonely, grief-stained faces
 Are turned to a pitiless sky ;
 They are wrinkled and seamed with drought-fire
 And wound at the throat with weeds,
 They sob in the aching loneliness
 But never a passer heeds.

I pity you, Gray Selections,
 As I pass you by in the light,
 And I turn again with the shadows
 To take your hand in the night ;
 In homesteads and yards deserted
 'Tis little the world can see,
 But the wail of your endless sorrow
 Throbs under the moon to me.

I come to you, Gray Selections,
 When the crickets gather and croon,
 An hour at the back of the sunset,
 An hour in advance of the moon ;
 How eager they are to whisper
 Their tale, as they hear me pass !
 Twenty at once in the oak trees ;
 Ten at a time in the grass.

The night-winds are chanting above you
 A dirge in the cedar trees
 Whose green boughs groan at your shoulder,
 Whose dead leaves drift to your knees ;

ABANDONED SELECTIONS.

You cry, and the curlews answer ;
You call, and the wild-dogs hear ;
Through gaps in the old log-fences
They creep when the night is near.

I stand by your fenceless gardens
And weep for the splintered staves ;
I watch by your empty ingles
And mourn by your white-railed graves ;
I see from your crumbling doorways
The whispering white forms pass,
And shiver to hear dead horses
Crop-cropping the long gray grass.

Where paddocks are dumb and fallow
And wild weeds waste to the stars
I can hear the voice of the driver,
The thresh of the swingle-bars ;
I can hear the hum of the stripper
That follows the golden lanes,
The snort of the tiring horses,
The clink of the bucking chains.

It is night ; but I see the smoke-wreaths
Float over the dancing haze ;
I can hear the jackass laughing
When South winds rustle the maize ;
I can catch the axes' ringing,
And out on the range's crown
I can hear the red fires roaring
And the great trees thundering down.

I pity you, Gray Selections,
Your hearths as cold as a stone,

ABANDONED SELECTIONS.

The days you must pass unaided
The nights you must brave alone ;
But most when the wailing curlews
Call over the drear lagoon,
And out of the ring-barked timber
Comes blazing the red, red moon.

They fought for you, Gray Selections,
The battle of long dry years,
Through seedtimes of sweat and sorrow
To harvests of hunger and tears ;
You turned from the lips that wooed you,
And Justice, awake on her throne,
For sake of those brave hearts broken,
Is watching you break your own!

“THE MEN WHO BLAZED THE
TRACK!”

SINCE the toasts for the Absent are over,
 And duly we 've pledged in our wine
 Our Land, and our Friends, and our Lover,
 Here 's a toast for you, comrades o' mine!
*To the fighting band that won the land
 From the bitterest wastes out-back!
 From hut and hall to the kings of all—
 “The Men Who Blazed The Track!”*

They rode away into the forest
 In mornings gold-studded with stars,
 And the song of the leaders was chorused
 To the clinking of rowel and bars;
 They fought for the fame of the Islands,
 And struck for the Width of the World,
 They fashioned new roads in the silence,
 And flags in the fastness unfurled.

Their tents in the evening would whiten
 The scrub, and the flash of their fires
 Leap over the shadows to brighten
 The way of Ambition's desires;
 By the axe-marks we followed their courses,
 For scarcely the ashes remain,
 And the tracks of the men and the horses
 Are hidden by dust-storm and rain.

The seasons from June to December
 Are buried and born as of old,
 But the peoples have ceased to remember
 Who won them the laurels they hold;

"THE MEN WHO BLAZED THE TRACK!"

Yet sometimes the North winds come bringing
Those keener of hearing and sight
The music of lost axes ringing,
The beat of lost hoofs in the night.

Our pride is the path of our fathers,
Our hope 's in the sons of our home,
And wherever our nation foregathers
Our nation is foremost to roam ;
But the valleys that smile to our tillage,
The hills where our banners unfold,
Were won by the men of the village,
And bought with their axes of old.

*And we only ride with the flowing tide
As we follow the blazed line back,
So we 'll drink the toast of the vanguard host,
And " The Men Who Blazed The Track ! "*

VITA BREVIS.

OUR Life is but a moment :
 One sheen of silk and pearls,
 One dance between the daylights,
 With a certain girl of girls ;
 One feast of burning kisses,
 One blast of Passion's breath—
 And Life is but a moment
 That cheats the hand of Death !

Our Life is but a moment :
 One sweep of silken wings,
 One thunder on the greensward,
 One snatch of bridle rings ;
 One struggle for the pride of place,
 One crash of splintered rails—
 And Life is but a moment
 Before the sunlight fails !

O, Life is but a moment
 For holding soft white hands,
 Or flying four-foot fences
 While the cheering rocks the stands ;
 So take Love's gift of kisses—
 Or Sport's, in Love's despite—
 For Life is but a moment
 And after it the Night !

THE TRUEST FRIEND.

I HAD a comrade tried and true,
 Shoulder to shoulder we fought life through;
 And whoever spoke light of his name to me
 Had a foe to face and a sword to flee;
 I'd have staked my life on the grip of his hand—
 But swords get broken and troops disband!

I had a lover to fondle and prize,
 With the kindest heart and the truest eyes:
 I wore her scarf on the tourney ground;
 I pledged her name when the toasts went round;
 I'd have sworn to her honour before them all—
 But snowdrifts tarnish and bright stars fall!

I have a mother, God bless the name!
 All beauty wedded to all fair fame:
 I have lined her brow with the wish unheard;
 I have wounded her heart with the careless word;
 But I know that her love to the last is sure—
 For hills are steadfast and seas endure!

AULD LANG SYNE.

O IT'S southward from Southampton! and she
 takes the Channel gay,
 But many a heart is bleeding as she stands
 across the bay ;
 And it may be just a parting where we've known a
 hundred more,
 Yet many a heart is breaking as the tender swings
 ashore ;
 And the handkerchiefs are waving, ship to steamer,
 line to line,
 And a wail 's upon the water in the words of *Auld
 Lang Syne*.

O, it 's misty in the Channel and it 's stormy in the
 Bay,
 And the lights are dropping backward as she leaves
 them east away ;
 And she steadies in blue water where the sunny
 islands swoon,
 With the sailors singing forward, and the guests in
 the saloon ;
 And they 'll sing the old songs over from the Gib
 Rock to the Line,
 But they cannot drown the music of *The Days of
 Auld Lang Syne!*

O, she 's round the Austral headlands and she 's
 rocking through the Rip,
 While all her throbbing engines drum the triumph
 of the trip ;

AULD LANG SYNE.

And it's gently through the shipping, and it's slowly
to the Quay,
And the band has started playing this, the dearest
tune to me ;
And they're streaming down the gangway with a
farewell to the brine,
And we leave her as we joined her, to the strains of
Auld Lang Syne.

We have heard the ringing chorus shake the iron
on the roofs,
While outside the bridles jingled to the stamp of
restless hoofs ;
We have sped—how many comrades?—from the
homestead and the hall,
Watched them fading in the Unknown to the
grandest march of all ;
While some hearts were beating proudly to the lilt
of every line,
And some others nearly breaking for the sake of
Auld Lang Syne.

We have sung it o'er the last glass when the morn
was breaking gray,
Hands crossed and double chorus in the old time-
honoured way ;
We have sung it in our exile till the heartleap and
the croon
Brought us back the brown hills' whisper and the
nodding blue-bells' tune ;
And the old, old loves are toasted in our cups of
brimming wine
While our hearts beat out the music to the words of
Auld Lang Syne.

AULD LANG SYNE.

It has marked us many partings, it has cost us
countless tears,

It has brought us hopes unanswered from the dim-
ness of the years;

It is shaded with Life's sorrow, it is crossed with
broken bands,

And the bitterness of kisses and the grief of parting
hands—

*But so long as Earth has music, and so long as red
stars shine,*

*We shall gather and go outward to the tune of Auld Lang
Syne!*

IN TOWN.

WHERE the smoke-clouds scarcely drift
 And the breezes seem to sleep,
 Where the sunbeams never lift
 Half the gloom of alleys deep,
 Comrades! must we languish ever,
 Beat our hearts against the bars
 While the vine-trees kiss the river
 And the ranges greet the stars?
 There are stormy tints and tender
 In the pictures that we pass—
 But it's O, for day-dawn's splendour
 And the dewdrops in the grass!

Though the old life fades behind us,
 Though the new life leaps before,
 Old-time spells are strong to bind us
 Yearning for our yokes of yore;
 In the whirl of toil and duty,
 In the pride of pomp and power,
 We can find no grander beauty
 Than the red West's bridal dower;
 There is music in the rattle
 Of the horse-hoofs down the street—
 But it's O, for ringing cattle
 And the thunder of their feet!

Wanton Pleasure laughs beside us
 Where the life-streams ebb and flow,
 Folly's cap and bells deride us,
 Nodding close to Want and Woe;
 Lordly pageants round us glisten,
 At our feet Life's joys are cast,

IN TOWN.

But we have no heart to listen
With the Bush-wind whispering past;
Silver nights of love may hold us
Till we half forget the stars—
But it 's O, for foam-white shoulders
And the clink of snaffle-bars!

BEYOND COOLGARDIE.

THEY are fighting beyond Coolgardie, dusty and worn and brown,
 Leading the outward legion from dawn till the sun goes down :
 Under their blue sky-banner, standing true to their guns,
 Singly and shoulder to shoulder, brothers and sires and sons.

They are faint in the burning noonday, and weary when day is dead ;
 They have never a thought of resting till Hope from their hearts has fled ;
 They are toiling—some for a sweetheart, and some for a home and wife ;
 And many are striving for riches, and some are fighting for life !

They are dying beyond Coolgardie in sight of their untouched prize,
 With no one to break Death's tidings, and no one to close their eyes ;
 They lie in the scrub and the sand-wreath, with never a stone to mark
 The grave where the bush-crows gather and the dingo crosses at dark.

*They are reading the news by the slush-lamps and under the chandeliers,
 And the words of the dazzling message are blurred with the readers' tears ;*

BEYOND COOLGARDIE.

*They are praying, away to the Eastward—mothers and
daughters and wives—
Asking no golden harvest, but only their loved ones'
lives!*

DESERTED.

THIS is the homestead—the still lagoon
 Kisses the foot of the garden fence,
 Shimmering under a silver moon
 In a midnight silence, cold and tense ;
 Vines run wild on the old verandah
 Holding their arms to us standing by ;
 Garden paths where we used to wander
 Carry the bush-grass rank and high.

Here and there has a blossom stayed
 Out of the wreck of the passing years.
 But these will wither, for flowers must fade
 Whose only water is sea-salt tears.
 There are ghosts in the garden wildernesses
 And gliding wraiths at the water-side,
 Murmur of voices and rustle of dresses—
 Shadow-life that has never died.

The stockyard is empty and dim and drear ;
 Here and there is a gap in the rails,
 But I can see as we stand anear
 Moving steeds when the daylight fails—
 I see as I stand at the slip-rails dreaming
 Merry riders that mount and meet,
 Sun on the saddles gleaming, gleaming,
 Red dust wrapping the horses' feet.

The world is silent under the stars,
 And yet there comes to my ear alone
 The tiny clink of the snaffle-bars
 As the eager heads are upward thrown ;

DESERTED.

And the sound of the muffled hoof-beat after
Strikes like a hammer on heart and brain,
And the faint, far echo of drifting laughter
Wakens the strength of a sleeping pain.

Come, come away from the lonely home
Softly, softly as mourners tread ;
The world is wide : there is space to roam
Without awaking the sleeping dead.
Till the last of the scattered flowers shall wither,
The last of the stockyard rails decay,
Till the old walls crumble and fall together
The ghosts will move in the moonlight gray

THE FILLING OF THE SWAMPS.

HURRAH for the storm-clouds sweeping!
 Hurrah for the driving rain!
 The dull Earth out of her sleeping
 Is wakened to life again.

There are mirrors of crystal shining
 Whenever the cloud-wrack breaks,
 And grass-clad banks are twining
 A wreath for the fairy lakes—
 Lakes that are links in an endless chain,
 For the water is out in the swamps again!

Hurrah for the red-gums standing
 So high on the range above!
 Hurrah for the she-oaks bending
 So low to the wave they love!
 Hurrah for the reed-stems slender!
 Hurrah for the shade they fling
 For the curve of the cygnet's splendour,
 The sheen of the black duck's wing!
 Hurrah for the clouds and the glorious rain—
 The water is out in the swamps again!

Hurrah for the laughing water,
 The songs that the streamlets sing!
Whish! the teal duck's mate has sought her
 With a stroke of his mottled wing!
 Hurrah for the deepening shallows,
 The ibises eagle-eyed,
 The dash of the purple swallows
 To bury their breasts in the tide!
 Woe! it is woe to the Drought-King's reign!
 The water is out in the swamps again!

BLACK SHEEP.

THEY shepherd their Black Sheep down to the
 ships,
 Society's banned and cursed ;
 And the boys look back as the old land dips—
 Some with a reckless laugh on their lips,
 And some with a prayer reversed.

*And it's Goodbye, England! and Goodbye, Love!
 And maybe 't is just as well
 When a man fall short of his Heaven above
 That he drop to the uttermost Hell.*

And the anchor lifts and the sails are set :
 Now God to your help, Black Sheep !
 For the gay world laughs " They will soon forget !"
 But fired in the embers of old regret
 The brand of the world bites deep.

They turn their Black Sheep over the side
 To land on a stranger's shores ;
 To drift with the cities' human tide,
 Or wander away where the rovers ride
 And the flagless legion wars.

And Hope for some is a broken staff
 And for others a golden stair,
 Who live for the echo of Love's low laugh
 Or Somebody's face in a photograph,
 Or a coil of Somebody's hair.

BLACK SHEEP.

And some that have carried a parting gift
 May kiss it and fling it away
Far over the clouds that no winds lift
To follow where our dead hopes drift
 And rest where dead hopes may.

They bury the Black Sheep out in the Bush,
 And bury them none too deep
On the cattle camps and the last gold rush,
And the grasses grow over them green and lush
 And the bush-winds sing them to sleep.

*And it's Goodbye, Struggle! and Goodbye, Strife!
 And maybe 't is just as well
When a man goes down in the Battle of Life
 That he shorten his road to Hell!*

THE COMING HOME.

THE light we follow through a mist of tears
 Is lost when close at hand. O ye who roam!
 There is no pity in the passing years,
 And only sadness in the coming home.

When winter storms have broke a father's strength
 And Age his stamp upon the shoulders set,
 When light in those dear eyes has failed at length
 That meet our own so true and kindly yet,
 There is but sadness in the coming home.

When Care has followed his relentless plough
 To mark the furrows that will last for aye
 Over the softness of a mother's brow,
 When Time has withered all the brown locks gray,
 There is but sadness in the coming home.

When trees have taller grown and gardens changed
 And meadows are not as they used to be,
 When woods seem smaller where our boy feet
 ranged,
 Slower the streams that ripple to the sea,
 There is but sadness in the coming home.

When childish laughter is for ever stilled
 And childish tears by touch of Time are dried,
 When vacant chairs that never can be filled
 Give bitter welcome to the old fireside,
 There is but sadness in the coming home.

THE COMING HOME.

*O exile Lives, with the dead days entwined,
O exile Hearts, aweary while ye roam,
Earth has no keener pain than this—to find
Your crown of sorrow in the coming home.*

THE WALLABY TRACK.

O a weird, wild road is the Wallaby Track
That is known to the bushmen only,
Stretching away to the plains out back
And the big scrubs lorn and lonely !
Dawn till dark they are passing there,
Over the hot sand thronging,
Shouldering burdens of Doubt and Despair,
Passion and Love and Longing.

There are pearls of dew on the Wallaby Track
For the maiden Day's adorning,
And bush-clouds beating the night-shades back
In the van of the golden morning ;
There are glories born of the sinking sun
In the splendid Eve's lap dying,
A glitter of stars lit one by one,
And a rustle of night-wings flying.

There are long bright days on the Wallaby Track,
With a blue vault arching over,
And long, long thoughts that are drifting back
To the waiting wife and lover ;
There are horse-bells tinkling down the wind
With a thousand rippling changes,
And the boom of the team-bells intertwined
From the far-off mulga ranges.

There are stars of gold on the Wallaby Track,
And silver the moonbeams glisten ;
The great Bush sings to us, out and back,
And we lie in her arms and listen ;

THE WALLABY TRACK.

Our dull hearts quicken their rhythmic beat
For a wild swan's southward flying,
And gather old memories sadly sweet
From a wind-swept pine-bough's sighing.

There are lone graves left on the Wallaby Track,
And the bush-grass bends above them ;
They had no white hands to wave them back,
Perhaps—no hearts to love them !
But none the less will their sleep be sound
For the Hope and the Love denied them,
Or the ceaseless tramp on the thirsty ground
Till all men sleep beside them.

BEYOND THE BARRIER.

ARE you tired of the South Land, comrade—
 Of the smoke and the city's din,
 And the roar of the chiding ocean
 When the sobbing tide comes in ?
 Would you ride to the Northward, rather,
 To the skirmish posts of Earth,
 Where the darkest dust-storms gather
 And the wildest floods have birth ?
Are you tired of the long days idle—
 The days you would fling behind
 For the clasp of the tugging bridle,
 The kiss of the racing wind,
 Where the best camp-horse that ever drew
 A hoof-slide on the plain,
 Is waiting by the creek for you
 Beyond the Barrier Chain ?

Are you tired of the revel, comrade—
 The life of folly and wine,
 With its one-half lived in the shadow
 And one-half lived in the shine ?
Are you tired of the poison-glasses,
 The lawless love and the kiss ?
 Out East where the brown range passes
 Do you hope for dearer than this—
For a handkerchief waved in greeting
 Far off, where it waved farewell,
For the joy of a dreamed-of meeting
 And the glow of an old love-spell,
Where the sweetest maid that ever knew
 Love's bliss or parting's pain

BEYOND THE BARRIER.

Is waiting open-armed for you
Beyond the Barrier Chain ?

Let us steer to the Northward, comrades!
To the Bush with her witching spells;
To the sun-bright days and the camp-fire blaze
And the chime of the bullock bells!
Down the long, long leagues behind us
The rain shall cover our track,
And the dust of the North shall blind us
Or ever we follow it back
Away from the old friends, comrades!
The grasp of the strong brown hand!
The love and the life and the laughter
That brighten the brave North Land!
So long as the sunlight fills it,
So long as the white moons shine,
So long as the Master wills it
The North is your home and mine !

RAINBOWS AND WITCHES.

I REMEMBER, ever so long ago,
 At the other side of the world away
 When rain would cease on an April day,
 When the mountain mists would roll and rise
 And the rainbow ride in the purple skies—
 How they would say to us, "Run, dear heart,
 Out where you see the bright bow start,
 And there you will gather a heap of gold,
 As much as ever your hands can hold;
 Out of the wood and beyond the gate,
 Run for your fortune or you 'll be late!"
 How we would run! I remember still
 The dangerous dash down the garden hill?
 And many a stumble and many a slip,
 Our eager eyes on the rainbow-dip;
 Limbs a-weary but never a rest,
 Beating hearts on the hopeless quest—
 For the further we raced the further passed
 The rainbow goal, till we tired at last.

*O golden years! ye are past and gone
 With the far-off flash of a distant dream;
 But still we are striving and struggling on
 Chasing the gold and the rainbow gleam!*

I remember, ever so long ago,
 At the other side of the world away
 As we in our tiny white cots lay
 Half in slumber and half-awake,
 Watching the nesting swallow take
 (A moving shade on the blind so white)
 His last trip home to his nest at night—

RAINBOWS AND WITCHES.

How they would say at our bedsides : " Soon,
Dear little heart, the great red moon
Will climb the sky to her fleecy seat,
Stars at her shoulder and stars at her feet :
And if you should wake to-night, dear heart,
When the night and morning meet and part,
And open your window ever so wide,
You 'll see where the brave broom-witches ride
Low to the fir-tops and high to the moon
With their peaky hats and their pointed shoon ;
And first of them all your lover so fair,
The moon-wind tossing her red-gold hair ! "

*Our childish hopes they are dead lang syne ;
But I wait at night with my window wide,
And many a lonely watch is mine
To see my love when the witches ride !*

HANDICAPPED !

" Maybe Fate's weight-cloths are breaking his heart."

—RUDYARD KIPLING.

LIFE'S race for all is even-lapped
To watching eyes it seems ;
But how we may be handicapped
The wide world never dreams.

Ah ! well for those whose lot is cast
Where open war demands ;
But brave men fighting down the Past
Are fighting with chained hands.

The girls who loved us long ago,
Whose love has changed to scorn,
Will watching think, " How weak and slow ! "
But never, " How forlorn ! "
Yet by the bitterness of Fate
The night we chose to part,
It was their soft hands laid the weight
Above our throbbing heart.

The memory of dark deeds done
That blot a family page ;
The father leaving to his son
Sin's ghastly heritage ;
The treason of a friend untrue,
The wild dreams better dead,
The hopes 't is madness to renew—
These are our weights of lead.

Life's race for all is even-lapped
To watching eyes it seems ;

HANDICAPPED'

But how we may be handicapped
The wide world never dreams.
Remember, when you cheer the best,
It was no equal start,
And some who toil behind the rest
Have leaden weights at heart!

MEMORY TOWN.

FROM dawning to dusk moves the crowd in her
street
With eyes looking upward, quick pulses that
beat,

And slow feet that loiter, and dumb lips that call
Where sunshine and shadow are crossed for them all.

In mystic mosaic her pavements are set !
A stone for Sweet Thoughts, then a stone for Regret.

The walls of her houses are handsome and high,
Whose balconies break the blue line of the sky.

On one side the sun fires the columns with light,
On one side the shadow lies blacker than night.

On one side Youth's Joys from their windows look
down
To watch the wayfarers in Memory Town.

They laugh with low music that each understands,
And wave their white kerchiefs and kiss their white
hands.

They fling their gay garlands, white roses and red ;
But Care gallops past us and tramples them dead !

On the other side stand the Gray Grievs of the years,
The hands on the railings are wet with their tears.

MEMORY TOWN.

With sad eyes and wistful they lean and look down
On the lone hearts that loiter in Memory Town.

They bind no white garland, and weave no red
wreath,
But strew the dark cypress that whispers of Death.

So sunlight and shadow are crossed in the crown
That the old years have wrought us in Memory
Town.

TO A BUNCH OF HEATHER.

WAS it early in the autumn, was it sunny
 summer weather?
 Were the white mists on the Carter when
 they plucked you on the moor?
 Were the mountain dews upon you in the morning,
 Sprig of Heather,
 When they took you from your sisters for the
 long lone Southern tour?

Did you hide from those who sought you? Did
 you think the white hand cruel
 That could choose you from a thousand as the
 brightest and the best,
 That could bind you as a token, richer far than any
 jewel,
 For a love-word to the Southland from the old
 home in the west?

Did you hear the Nor' winds singing in the white
 sails—you so tightly
 Stringed and covered, pressed and withered, little
 exile from the blue?
 Did you hear the throbbing engines, and the sirens
 hooting nightly?
 Did you hear the crashing water and the bow-
 blade breaking through?

Did you feel the home-love tremble when I took
 you in my fingers?
 Did you wonder any longer why they plucked
 you from the moors?

TO A BUNCH OF HEATHER.

Did you know you brought the music of a million
wild-bee singers ?

Did you guess that for the mountains yearned
another heart than yours ?

Did you know that you were laden with a lost year's
joy and sorrow ?

Did you know that you were royal with the rain-
bow and the rain ?

Lying—oh! so worn and withered—in my brown
hand, did you borrow

For a moment from the touching all I felt of
pride—and pain ?

You are fading, little love-word, as the morning
stars are paling :

Will it bring you back the purple of the hill-side
where you grew

If I lay you in the window ? Can it be like me
you're ailing

For a sight of mountain moorland, little exile
from the blue ?

THE FRONT RANK.

WE fight on far tracks unknown ;
We ride the way of the rover
Each with a line of his own :
Our banner the blue sky over,
Our bugle the bushwind's tone.

We charge where no red squares kneel,
We ride with no helmets glitt'ring,
We carry no gleaming steel ;
But our reins are foam to the bit-ring,
Our spurs are red to the heel.

We war by the watching stars,
No women look to our wounded,
No white hands bandage our scars ;
For us no medals are rounded—
No ribbons or clasps or bars.

Swordless and swift we go ;
Our brown arms bared to the slaughter,
Our hearts with the quest aglow ;
We battle and ask no quarter,
Our faces turned to the foe.

At last in the smoke of the years
Far from where camp and tent lie,
From clashing of shields and spears,
We slip to the earth so gently
That scarcely a comrade hears.

THE FRONT RANK.

We slip to the earth and lie
Clay-cold in the golden grasses,
White faces turned to the sky ;
And the last of our longings passes,
The last of our dreams goes by.

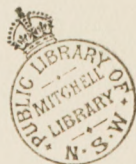
But the drums beat, year to year,
And men from the wings close round us,
And men ride up from the rear
To win—where no smile has crowned us,
Or lose—where it costs no tear !

THE NEW MOON.

“ **N**EW Moon to-night ! ” you will hear them say,
 Turning their eyes to the glint of gold ;
 But this, as you know, is their quaint little way—
 For the Moon she is centuries old !

She swings like a boat in the darkening sky,
 A boat that is gilded from stem to stern,
 And “ Turn your money ! ” the old wives cry—
 But every moon we have less to turn.

Yet saint and sinner and baron and boor,
 In log-built cabin or marble hall,
 Happy-go-lucky and rich and poor—
 The brave little Moon has a smile for all.



Her cargo has listed astern, this trip,
 And her bows are above the foam,
 But she ploughs away down in the mists, a ship
 That is eager enough for home.

Alone in the drift of the leagueless heights
 Her course to the west she steers,
 Rail-high with the lore of a million nights
 And the legends of all the years.

“ New Moon to-night ! ” So the people say ;
 But the winds that cross her and croon
 They have sung in her silvery sails all day,
 And they know her the old, old Moon.

THE NEW MOON.

And the pine-trees listen and toss their heads
And laugh in a splendid scorn,
For the old Moon sailed by their cradle-beds
Before the speakers were born.

*“ New Moon to-night ! ” So the people say,
Lifting their eyes to the curve of gold ;
But this, as you know, is their quaint little way—
For the Moon she is centuries old !*

BOWMONT WATER.

O WE think we 're happy roving !
 But the stars that crown the night,
 They are only ours for loving
 When the moon is lost to sight !
 And my hopes are fleeting forward
 With the ships that sail the sea,
 And my eyes are to the Nor'ward
 As an exile's well may be,
 And my heart a shrine has sought her
 Where the lights and shadows play,
 At the foot of Bowmont Water,
 Bowmont Water—far away.

O, it's fair in summer weather
 When the red sun dropping low
 Sets a lustre on the heather
 And the Cheviot peaks aglow ;
 When the hares come down the meadows
 In the gloaming clear and still,
 And the flirting lights and shadows
 Play at hidies on the hill ;
 When the wild duck's mate has sought her
 And the speckled hill-trout play
 At the foot of Bowmont Water,
 Bowmont Water—far away.

O, it's grand when Winter 's creeping
 And the rime is on the trees,
 And the giant hills are sleeping
 With the gray clouds on their knees ;

BOWMONT WATER.

When the autumn days are ended
And the glens are deep with snow.
And the grips are dark and splendid
Where the mountain eagles go :
Then the strath is a king's daughter,
In her purple robes and gray,
At the foot of Bowmont Water,
Bowmont Water—far away.

We have wandered down the valley
In the days of buried time,
Seen the foxgloves dip and dally,
Heard the fairy blue-bells chime ;
Seen the brier-roses quiver
When the West-wind crossed the dell,
Heard the music of the river
And the tale it had to tell,
Where the melody Love taught her
Is the laverock's only lay,
At the foot of Bowmont Water,
Bowmont Water—far away.

I have tried the spots, in order,
Where the brightest sunbeams fall,
But the land upon the Border
Is my own land after all,
And I would not take the glory
Of the whole world's golden sheen
For the white mists down the corrie
And the naked scaurs between ;
And my heart a shrine has sought her
That will last her little day—
At the foot of Bowmont Water,
Bowmont Water—far away.

THE ROSE OUT OF REACH.

A RED rose grew on a southward wall,
 There was never a rose on the tree so tall;
 Though roses twined at my lingering feet
 Roses and roses, scented sweet,
 And roses bent to my love-lit eyes,
 Roses flaming in wanton guise,
 And roses swung at my shoulder height,
 Damask and crimson and golden and white,
 With a curse for all and a frown for each
 I longed for the rose beyond my reach.

The gold sun shone in the summer days,
 The wee buds opened a hundred ways;
 Winds of the morning, whispering sweet,
 Tossed the blown roses down at my feet,
 Dainty petals for lover's tread,
 Ruby and ivory—brown and dead!
 But morning to nooning, noon to night,
 One rose only glowed in my sight—
 Silently, all too rapt for speech,
 I worshipped the rose beyond my reach.

I stormed her tower on the southward wall
 To drop fatigued from the bastions tall;
 Thorns made sport of me, red as the rose
 A hundred wounds ran blood at their blows;
 The soft little roses red and white
 Changed to the bitterest foes in spite,
 Scourged my face with their stinging wands,
 Mocked my toil and my bleeding hands
 Till I learned at last what they strove to teach:
 The great red rose was beyond my reach.

THE ROSE OUT OF REACH.

And so I watched in the autumn days :
"Summer is dead," so I mused agaze ;
"The cold mists creep when the night is nigh,
Day after day the roses die,
Storms of winter will gather soon,
Frosts will follow the coming moon—
Here if I wait where the blooms are cast
My love will drop to my arms at last ! " . . .
But wild winds laden with death for each
Blew the red petals beyond my reach.

"SORRY TO GO!"

I WATCHED by the homestead where moon-
beam and star
Made a glory of night-time and danced with the
dew,

And the bush-wind that whispered from ranges afar
Set a-tremble the kurrajong leaves as it blew :

And down by the river,
With white waves aflow,

I bade a farewell to the homestead for ever,
And sighed to the night-world, "I'm sorry to go,"

"*Sorry to go*"—

And echo came answering, "Sorry to go!"

I saddled old Dauntless at grey of the dawn
For a last swinging gallop on Moondarra plain;
He circled and plunged till the girth-straps were
drawn,

And snatched at the snaffle and reached at the
rein;

And swiftly behind us
We left the red glow

Of the sunrise that spread her pink mantle to wind us,
And magpies awaking sang, "Sorry to go,"

"*Sorry to go*"—

The bush-birds came mocking me, "Sorry to go!"

I called to my lover, a chain from her gate;
She came to the vine-tree to bid me goodbye,
With white arms to weave me a necklet of state
And red lips to smother the sound of a sigh;
Oh, kisses rained warmly!
Oh, tears that must flow!

" SORRY TO GO."

To-morrow the sorrow where head and white arm lie,
To-night the low whisper—" I'm sorry to go,"
 " *Sorry to go* "—
Heart to heart answering, " Sorry to go ! "

I held for a moment an old comrade's hand
 Burnt brown with the sun-fire and roughened and
 scarred ;
I saw at the touching the whips and the brand,
 The camp and the muster, the steers in the yard ;
 And since I have clasped them
 In weal and in woe,
To the toil of the world that has roughened and
 rasped them
I leave the brown hands ; crying " Sorry to go,"
 " *Sorry to go* "—
" Good-bye ! " and " God-speed ! " and . . . " Sor-
ry to go ! "

THE LAND OF DUMB DESPAIR.

BEYOND where farthest drought-fires burn,
 By hand of Fate it once befell,
 I reached the realm of No-Return
 That meets the March of Hell.

A silence crueller than Death
 Laid fetters on the fateful air ;
 She holds no hope : she fights for breath,
 The Land of Dumb Despair !

Here fill their glasses, red as blood,
 The victims of fell Fortune's frown ;
 They drink their wine as brave men should
 And fling the goblets down.

They crowd the board, red wreaths of rose
 Across their foreheads drooped and curled,
 But in their eyes the gloom that knows
 The grief of all the world.

The poison lies behind their wine
 So close, the trembling hands that take
 Might well be doubted to divine
 Which draught such thirst would slake.

The bows beside their hands are strung ;
 The blue steel glitters, bare of sheath ;
 'Tis wonder tired Life drags among
 So many ways to Death !

THE LAND OF DUMB DESPAIR.

They may not whisper, one to one,
The stories of their fancied fall :
The words that ring beneath the sun
Would faint in such a pall.

In silence, man by man, they reach
For cup, for arrow, or for sword,
And still the grey World fills the breach
Each leaves beside the board.

L'Envoi.

TO THE OVERLANDERS.

TAKE this farewell from one must leave
The rowel and the rein
Before the blue Canoblas weave
Their snow-white hoods again ;
Before the winter suns have kissed
The lips of Autumn dead,
Before they call the next year's list
At Nocoleche shed ;
Before the pines on Lightning Ridge
Have bowed to six new moons,
Before the floods to Tarrion Bridge
Back up the dry lagoons.
In vain the luring West-wind sighs—
For Home 's across the sea,
And Northward round the Leuwin lies
The next long trip for me !

*In leisure and in labour
We've faced the world afield,
With saddle for a sabre
And brave heart for a shield ;
We've fought the long dry weather,
We've heard the wild floods wake,
We've battled through together
For the old game's royal sake.*

We have heard the tug-chains ring in the swamps
When the thundering whipstrokes fall ;
We have watched the stars on the droving camps
Come out by the gum-trees tall ;
We have lingered long by the low slip-rails
Where maybe a light love waits,

TO THE OVERLANDERS.

When shadows creep and the red sun sails
Low down by the stockyard gates ;
We have stirred perhaps by the lone watch-fires
The ashes of old regret,
The loves unwon and the lost desires,
And the hopes that are hard to forget.

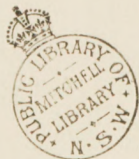
*The tracks we've travelled over
Were hungry tracks and hard ;
Long days we've played the rover,
Dark nights we've kept our guard ;
But chained in silver glories
The Bush our hearts has stirred,
And told the starlight stories
That no one else has heard.*

The gray-white dawns will wake you and the gold
noons watch you pass
Behind the roving Queensland mobs knee-deep in
Nebine grass ;
You will cross the old tracks Nor'ward, you will run
the old roads West,
And I shall follow with my heart dream-droving
with the rest,
And often in the sleepless nights I'll listen, as I lie,
To the hobble-chains clink-clinking, and the horse-
bells rippling by.
I shall hear the brave hoofs beating, I shall see the
moving steers
And the red glow of the camp-fires as they flame
across the years.
And my heart will fill with longing just to ride for
once again

TO THE OVERLANDERS.

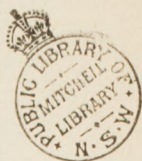
In the forefront of the battle where the men who
fight are Men ;
And when beyond the Ocean we are pledging toasts
in wine,
I shall give "The Overlanders!" in that far-off
land of mine.

The Brave West! Here's toward her!
The "plant 's" gone out before;
Their heads are to the Border
But I'll go out no more;
We've fought the long dry weather;
We've faced the blinding wet;
And we were mates together
And I shall not forget!



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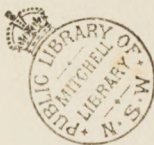
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