

A Voice from the Town

Banjo Paterson

A sequel to 'A Voice from the Bush'

I thought, in the days of the droving,
Of steps I might hope to retrace,
To be done with the bush and the roving
And settle once more in my place.
With a heart that was well nigh to breaking,
In the long, lonely rides on the plain,
I thought of the pleasure of taking
The hand of a lady again.

I am back into civilisation,
Once more in the stir and the strife,
But the old joys have lost their sensation—
The light has gone out of my life;
The men of my time they have married,
Made fortunes or gone to the wall;
Too long from the scene I have tarried,
And, somehow, I'm out of it all.

For I go to the balls and the races
A lonely companionless elf,
And the ladies bestow all their graces
On others less grey than myself;
While the talk goes around I'm a dumb one
'Midst youngsters that chatter and prate,
And they call me 'the Man who was Someone
Way back in the year Sixty-eight.'

And I look, sour and old, at the dancers
That swing to the strains of the band,
And the ladies all give me the Lancers,
No waltzes—I quite understand.
For matrons intent upon matching
Their daughters with infinite push,
Would scarce think him worthy the catching,
The broken-down man from the bush.

New partners have come and new faces,
And I, of the bygone brigade,

Sharply feel that oblivion my place is—

I must lie with the rest in the shade.

And the youngsters, fresh-featured and pleasant,

They live as we lived—fairly fast;

But I doubt if the men of the present

Are as good as the men of the past.

Of excitement and praise they are chary,

There is nothing much good upon earth;

Their watchword is NIL ADMIRARI,

They are bored from the days of their birth.

Where the life that we led was a revel

They 'wince and relent and refrain'—

I could show them the road—to the devil,

Were I only a youngster again.

I could show them the road where the stumps are

The pleasures that end in remorse,

And the game where the Devil's three trumps are,

The woman, the card, and the horse.

Shall the blind lead the blind—shall the sower

Of wind reap the storm as of yore?

Though they get to their goal somewhat slower,

They march where we hurried before.

For the world never learns—just as we did,

They gallantly go to their fate,

Unheeded all warnings, unheeded

The maxims of elders sedate.

As the husbandman, patiently toiling,

Draws a harvest each year from the soil,

So the fools grow afresh for the spoiling,

And a new crop of thieves for the spoil.

But a truce to this dull moralising,

Let them drink while the drops are of gold,

I have tasted the dregs—'twere surprising

Were the new wine to me like the old;

And I weary for lack of employment

In idleness day after day,

For the key to the door of enjoyment

Is Youth—and I've thrown it away.

Downloaded from www.libraryofshortstories.com

This work is in the public domain of Australia. Please check your local copyright laws if you live elsewhere.