

# Ambition and Art

Banjo Paterson

## AMBITION

I am the maid of the lustrous eyes

Of great fruition,

Whom the sons of men that are over-wise

Have called Ambition.

And the world's success is the only goal

I have within me;

The meanest man with the smallest soul

May woo and win me.

For the lust of power and the pride of place

To all I proffer.

Wilt thou take thy part in the crowded race

For what I offer?

The choice is thine, and the world is wide—

Thy path is lonely.

I may not lead and I may not guide—

I urge thee only.

I am just a whip and a spur that smites

To fierce endeavour.

In the restless days and the sleepless nights  
I urge thee ever.  
Thou shalt wake from sleep with a startled cry,  
In fright upleaping  
At a rival's step as it passes by  
Whilst thou art sleeping.  
Honour and truth shall be overthrown  
In fierce desire;  
Thou shalt use thy friend as a stepping-stone  
To mount thee higher.  
When the curtain falls on the sordid strife  
That seemed so splendid,  
Thou shalt look with pain on the wasted life  
That thou hast ended.  
Thou hast sold thy life for a guerdon small  
In fitful flashes;  
There has been reward—but the end of all  
Is dust and ashes.  
For the night has come and it brings to naught  
Thy projects cherished,  
And thine epitaph shall in brass be wrought—

‘He lived and perished.’

ART

I wait for thee at the outer gate,

My love, mine only;

Wherefore tarriest thou so late

While I am lonely.

Thou shalt seek my side with a footstep swift,

In thee implanted

Is the love of Art and the greatest gift

That God has granted.

And the world’s concerns with its rights and wrongs

Shall seem but small things—

Poet or painter, a singer of songs,

Thine art is all things.

For the wine of life is a woman’s love

To keep beside thee;

But the love of Art is a thing above—

A star to guide thee.

As the years go by with thy love of Art

All undiminished,

Thou shalt end thy days with a quiet heart—

Thy work is finished.

So the painter fashions a picture strong

That fadeth never,

And the singer singeth a wond'rous song

That lives for ever.

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