

# Borderland

Henry Lawson

I am back from up the country—very sorry that I went—  
Seeking for the Southern poets' land whereon to pitch my tent;  
I have lost a lot of idols, which were broken on the track,  
Burnt a lot of fancy verses, and I'm glad that I am back.  
Further out may be the pleasant scenes of which our poets boast,  
But I think the country's rather more inviting round the coast.  
Anyway, I'll stay at present at a boarding-house in town,  
Drinking beer and lemon-squashes, taking baths and cooling down.

'Sunny plains'! Great Scott!—those burning wastes of barren soil and sand  
With their everlasting fences stretching out across the land!  
Desolation where the crow is! Desert where the eagle flies,  
Paddocks where the lunny bullock starts and stares with reddened eyes;  
Where, in clouds of dust enveloped, roasted bullock-drivers creep  
Slowly past the sun-dried shepherd dragged behind his crawling sheep.  
Stunted peak of granite gleaming, glaring like a molten mass  
Turned from some infernal furnace on a plain devoid of grass.

Miles and miles of thirsty gutters—strings of muddy water-holes

In the place of 'shining rivers'—'walled by cliffs and forest boles.'  
Barren ridges, gullies, ridges! where the ever-madd'ning flies—  
Fiercer than the plagues of Egypt—swarm about your blighted eyes!  
Bush! where there is no horizon! where the buried bushman sees  
Nothing—Nothing! but the sameness of the ragged, stunted trees!  
Lonely hut where drought's eternal, suffocating atmosphere  
Where the God-forgotten hatter dreams of city life and beer.

Treacherous tracks that trap the stranger, endless roads that gleam and glare,  
Dark and evil-looking gullies, hiding secrets here and there!  
Dull dumb flats and stony rises, where the toiling bullocks bake,  
And the sinister 'gohanna', and the lizard, and the snake.  
Land of day and night—no morning freshness, and no afternoon,  
When the great white sun in rising bringeth summer heat in June.  
Dismal country for the exile, when the shades begin to fall  
From the sad heart-breaking sunset, to the new-chum worst of all.

Dreary land in rainy weather, with the endless clouds that drift  
O'er the bushman like a blanket that the Lord will never lift—  
Dismal land when it is raining—growl of floods, and, oh! the woosh  
Of the rain and wind together on the dark bed of the bush—

Ghastly fires in lonely humpies where the granite rocks are piled  
In the rain-swept wildernesses that are wildest of the wild.

Land where gaunt and haggard women live alone and work like men,  
Till their husbands, gone a-droving, will return to them again:  
Homes of men! if home had ever such a God-forgotten place,  
Where the wild selector's children fly before a stranger's face.  
Home of tragedy applauded by the dingoes' dismal yell,  
Heaven of the shanty-keeper—fitting fiend for such a hell—  
And the wallaroos and wombats, and, of course, the curlew's call—  
And the lone sundowner tramping ever onward through it all!

I am back from up the country, up the country where I went  
Seeking for the Southern poets' land whereon to pitch my tent;  
I have shattered many idols out along the dusty track,  
Burnt a lot of fancy verses—and I'm glad that I am back.  
I believe the Southern poets' dream will not be realised  
Till the plains are irrigated and the land is humanised.  
I intend to stay at present, as I said before, in town  
Drinking beer and lemon-squashes, taking baths and cooling down.

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