

# In Answer to Various Bards

Banjo Paterson

Well, I've waited mighty patient while they all came rolling in,  
Mister Lawson, Mister Dyson, and the others of their kin,  
With their dreadful, dismal stories of the Overlander's camp,  
How his fire is always smoky, and his boots are always damp;  
And they paint it so terrific it would fill one's soul with gloom—  
But you know they're fond of writing about "corpses" and "the tomb".  
So, before they curse the bushland, they should let their fancy range,  
And take something for their livers, and be cheerful for a change.  
Now, for instance, Mr Lawson—well, of course, we almost cried  
At the sorrowful description how his "little 'Arvie" died,  
And we lachrymosed in silence when "His Father's mate" was slain;  
Then he went and killed the father, and we had to weep again.  
Ben Duggan and Jack Denver, too, he caused them to expire,  
After which he cooked the gander of Jack Dunn, of Nevertire;  
And, no doubt, the bush is wretched if you judge it by the groan  
Of the sad and soulful poet with a graveyard of his own.  
  
And he spoke in terms prophetic of a revolution's heat,  
When the world should hear the clamour of those people in the street;

But the shearers chaps who start it—why, he rounds on them the blame,

And he calls 'em “agitators who are living on the game”.

Bur I “over-write” the bushmen! Well, I own without a doubt

That I always see the hero in the “man from furthest out”.

I could never contemplate him through an atmosphere of gloom,

And a bushman never struck me as a subject for “the tomb”.

If it ain't all “golden sunshine” where the “wattle branches wave”,

Well, it ain't all damp and dismal, and it ain't all “lonely grave”.

And, of course, there's no denying that the bushman's life is rough,

But a man can easy stand it if he's built of sterling stuff;

Though it's seldom that the drover gets a bed of eiderdown,

Yet the man who's born a bushman, he gets mighty sick of town,

For he's jotting down the figures, and he's adding up the bills

While his heart is simply aching for a sight of Southern hills.

Then he hears a wool-team passing with a rumble and a lurch,

And, although the work is pressing, yet it brings him off his perch,

For it stirs him like a message from his station friends afar

And he seems to sniff the ranges in the scent of wool and tar;

And it takes him back in fancy, half in laughter, half in tears,

to a sound of other voices and a thought of other years,  
When the woolshed rang with bustle from the dawning of the day,  
And the shear-blades were a-clicking to the cry of “Wool away!”

Then his face was somewhat browner, and his frame was firmer set—  
And he feels his flabby muscles with a feeling of regret.

But the wool-team slowly passes, and his eyes go slowly back  
To the dusty little table and the papers in the rack,  
And his thoughts go to the terrace where his sickly children squall,  
And he thinks there’s something healthy in the bush-life after all.

But we’ll go no more a-droving in the wind or in the sun,  
For our fathers’ hearts have failed us, and the droving days are done.

There’s a nasty dash of danger where the long-horned bullock wheels,  
And we like to live in comfort and to get our reg’lar meals.

For to hang around the township suits us better, you’ll agree,  
And a job at washing bottles is the job for such as we.

Let us herd into the cities, let us crush and crowd and push  
Till we lose the love of roving, and we learn to hate the bush;  
And we’ll turn our aspirations to a city life and beer,  
And we’ll slip across to England—it’s a nicer place than here;

For there's not much risk of hardship where all comforts are in store,  
And the theatres are in plenty, and the pubs are more and more.  
But that ends it, Mr Lawson, and it's time to say good-bye,  
So we must agree to differ in all friendship, you and I.  
Yes, we'll work our own salvation with the stoutest hearts we may,  
And if fortune only favours we will take the road some day,  
And go droving down the river 'neath the sunshine and the stars,  
And then return to Sydney and vermilionize the bars.

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