

The Old Australian Ways

Banjo Paterson

The London lights are far abeam
Behind a bank of cloud,
Along the shore the gaslights gleam,
The gale is piping loud;
And down the Channel, groping blind,
We drive her through the haze
Towards the land we left behind—
The good old land of 'never mind',
And old Australian ways.

The narrow ways of English folk
Are not for such as we;
They bear the long-accustomed yoke
Of staid conservancy:
But all our roads are new and strange,
And through our blood there runs
The vagabonding love of change
That drove us westward of the range
And westward of the suns.

The city folk go to and fro
Behind a prison's bars,
They never feel the breezes blow
And never see the stars;
They never hear in blossomed trees
The music low and sweet
Of wild birds making melodies,
Nor catch the little laughing breeze
That whispers in the wheat.

Our fathers came of roving stock
That could not fixed abide:
And we have followed field and flock
Since e'er we learnt to ride;
By miner's camp and shearing shed,
In land of heat and drought,
We followed where our fortunes led,
With fortune always on ahead
And always further out.

The wind is in the barley-grass,
The wattles are in bloom;
The breezes greet us as they pass
With honey-sweet perfume;
The parakeets go screaming by
With flash of golden wing,
And from the swamp the wild-ducks cry
Their long-drawn note of revelry,
Rejoicing at the Spring.

So throw the weary pen aside
And let the papers rest,
For we must saddle up and ride
Towards the blue hill's breast;
And we must travel far and fast
Across their rugged maze,
To find the Spring of Youth at last,
And call back from the buried past
The old Australian ways.

When Clancy took the drover's track

In years of long ago,
He drifted to the outer back
Beyond the Overflow;
By rolling plain and rocky shelf,
With stockwhip in his hand,
He reached at last, oh lucky elf,
The Town of Come-and-help-yourself
In Rough-and-ready Land.

And if it be that you would know
The tracks he used to ride,
Then you must saddle up and go
Beyond the Queensland side—
Beyond the reach of rule or law,
To ride the long day through,
In Nature's homestead— filled with awe
You then might see what Clancy saw
And know what Clancy knew.

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