

Rain in the Mountains

The valley's full of misty cloud,
Its tinted beauty drowning,
The Eucalypti roar aloud,
The mountain fronts are frowning.

The mist is hanging like a pall
From many granite ledges,
And many a little waterfall
Starts o'er the valley's edges.

The sky is of a leaden grey,
Save where the north is surly,
The driven daylight speeds away,
And night comes o'er us early.

But, love, the rain will pass full soon,
Far sooner than my sorrow,
And in a golden afternoon
The sun may set to-morrow.

Henry Lawson
originally in "Dawn" magazine, Sydney
December 5th 1889

Gipsies

All the roads about us free to our desire,
All the hedgerow banks to lie on at our ease,
All the heights to look from, all the bents for fire,
All the winds to bring us word from all the trees-

And still as we go, we greet our kin,
We, the Tree People, we of the Pack,
And still, as we pass, above the din
The call of the Gypsy echoes back,
Good Hunting!

All the roads behind us bent to bring us here;
All the days we travelled sum themselves to-day;
Every hope that spurred us, every dragging fear
Was for this - and this for all the latter way.

Everywhere and always children of the mood,
Born to take the weather all the seasons through,
Out across the moorland, deep within the wood,
And all the life of all the lands is our life too.

So we camp together, Gipsies of the Pack;
So we tramp together, while the days are ours;
So we scout together, blazing out the track-
We, the comrades of the sun behind the showers-

And still, as we go, we greet our kin
That have wandered free since time began;
And across the world and above the din
We give the call, the call of the clan,
Good Hunting!

Arthur Jose
from "Two Awheel and Some Others Afoot in Australia" 1903



Comrades of the Road

(composed by the Members of the Warragamba Club 1906)

Up and away, comrades! up and away!
Red streamers herald the new coming day.
Prepare for the road,
Let each take his load
Out upon the high road at break of day.

Under a blue sky, in sight of the sea,
In the keen, crisp air, with step firm and free;
Ready to travel
On the red gravel,
Over the sandstone and over the lea.

Along by the river, down past the mill;
Down through the valley and over the hill.
Pace true and steady,
Comrades be ready
To "foot it" all day with a right good will.

Climbing the mountain, through scrub and briar.
Up among the granite rocks, higher and higher;
Then camp, as the sun
And the clock strike one,
Camp, while the billy boils over the fire.

When the sun looms low, and the day draws in,
Thoughts wander homeward to kith and to kin,
On yonder hill crest
Stands the "Traveller's Rest,"
Where each one's sure of "one's ease at one's inn."

So, let the world jog along as it will,
Tramping on the road, we'll keep walking still.
Long miles before us,
All sing in chorus -
Comrades of the road! sing with right good will!

(Read by Mr Hamlet at the dinner of the Club 17-9-1906)



Home

"Where shall we dwell?" say you.
Wandering winds reply:
"In a temple with roof of blue -
Under the splendid sky."

Never a nobler home
We'll find tho'an age we try
Than is arched by the azure dome
Of the all-unfolding sky.

Here we are wed, and here
We live under God's own eye.
"Where shall we dwell", my dear?
Under the splendid sky.

J Le Gay Brereton
c.1900 - 1907

Memories

Turn back the measureless scroll!
Moments, hours, a year unroll!
Back o'er many a memory,
Chords in life's sweet melody.
Past still echoes with their soft refrain;
Happy memories! call them once again.

Joyous, happy we were then;
Summer's days seemed all too short,
Golden fragrant wattle grew,
Where the deep pool, glist'ning, caught
Golden specks that fleck'd its light,
Round the edge a girdle wrought.

Ling'ring on the western hills,
Under trees that cleft the light,
Halo'd in the twilight glow,
Thou and I would watch, till, right
Across the plain, the shadows,
Length'ning, softly stole to night.

Wand'ring thro the moon-lit bush,
'Neath the tall, grey, gum trees' shade
O'er the white track casting down
Shadows, dancing thro' the glade
Like a troop of gliding elves
Wind-chas'd, we have watched them fade

Song of the Wild

Where the gully winds about,
O'er the ledges many a stream
Many a cascade murmuring low,
Makes light-threads of quiv'ring sheen,
Tracks of silv'ry rippling light,
With many a shadow between.

Days passing swift as shadows,
Ling'ring strains sound each day close
Back o'er many a memory!
Chords in life's sweet melody.
Past still echoes with their soft refrain
Happy memories! Call them once again!

H Duncan Hall
1909



Moonlight Shadows

Far from the plain and mid-day's burning sun,
When night was silent 'neath the lonely moon,
Threading the glancing shadows maze, that soon
The night wind stirs beneath the trees, as one
That fears lest one false step might rudely break
That wondrous tracery, soft I have stolen by.
The sun has set, the stars grow pale, and nigh
Those eastern hills the moon doth now forsake
Her shelter, and moves out into the deep
Of heav'n. Up the still moon'lit track, soft past
White silent gums, agleam 'neath leaves that cast
Soft shadows o'er the trunks, shadows that sleep.
But hark! Wide as the span of heaven the wind
Stoops o'er the bush, and breaks the wonted still
Of night with myriad rustling leaves, that fill
The air with whispering; soon he will bind
The ferns, (which sleep in shadow far below
The swaying gums) in his soft spell, and set
Them all aquivering with expectant joy.
They tremble so softly that e'en the net,
Which spiders wove at dusk to catch the dew,
Scarce spills a silv'ry drop the whole night through.

H Duncan Hall
1910

Song of the Foot-Track

Come away, come away from the straightness of the road;
I will lead you into delicate recesses
Where peals of ripples ring through the maidenhair's abode
In the heart of little water wildernesses.

I will show you pleasant places; tawny hills the sun has kissed,
Where the giant trees the wind is always swinging
Rise from clouds of pearly saplings tipped with rose and amethyst, -
Fairy boughs where fairy butterflies are clinging.

Come away from the road; I will lead you through shade and sheen,
Changing brightly as the year of colour passes
Through each tint the opal knows, from the flaming winter green
To the summer gold and silver of the grasses.

Here is riot of leaf and blossom, ferny mosses in the glade
Pressing round the wattle's stem of dappled splendour;
Even the pathway that you tread smiles with daisies unafraid, -
Laden branches lean to breath a welcome tender.

Come away from the road; let wild petals cool your eyes
Dim and hardened with the arid light of duty;
Lose awhile your weary purpose, leave the highway of the wise
For the little reckless track of joy and beauty.

I am fairer still to follow where the Bush is lonelier grown
And the purple vines fling tendrils out to bind me;
For the secret of my lure is the call of the Unknown,
Hidden Loveliness that laughs: "Come and find me!"

Follow on, ah, come with me! Though the way is fainter shown
Where the restless waves of green have splashed and crossed me;
In the temple of the trees you have met delight alone;
Winning happiness, what matter though you lost me?

In this dreamy fane of sunshine, where wood violets are rife,
Though I leave you, — path and bracken surges blended, —
Would you say I led you vainly? I have sung the joy of life,
I have set you in the way; my song has ended.

Elsie Cole
from "*Holiday Songs*"
1912



Let all his friends in Sydney town, Honour this herring of renown,
Eat him with sauce and slip him down, In Nattai he's worth half a crown,
And when at night you go to sleep, Lay on your back and wag your feet,
And dream you're plodding down Blue Gum Creek, with this 'erring
for a week.

Save his home for a souvenir, and don't treat it with a doubtful sneer,
Tack it out on the "foul" house tier, where you can see it year by year.
And when holidays come and you're on the track, your thoughts some
times may wander back
When Little Mary gets the cramp, You'll think of the 'Erring of Echo Camp.

*Alfred and Herbert Gallop
April 1914*

Note by M J Dunphy: Some time after our return from this trip Bert sent along a tin of herrings to me with his compliments and this piece of doggerel. It appears that this tin was the solo survivor of the tucker taken out on the trip. Alf (Bert's brother) lugged it back to the city. Then the idea of perpetuating its memory struck them both. Hence the accompanying lines.

(Little Mary was Mary O'Brien, daughter of Charles O'Brien of Nattai – CPG)

The Time to Travel

When the Gippsland grass is dewy, as ye waken wi' yer bluey,
An' the honey-eatin' parrots peck the blossoms on the tree,
When yer tent begins to shimmer wi' the dawn's first rosy glimmer,
Oh, that's the time to travel, to hump yer swag and travel -
Oh, that's the time to travel, when the sun lifts o'er the sea.

When the mountain stars have whitened, and the bush is dimly brightened,
And the moon, a lazy swaggie, drifts across the summer sky,
When yer feel there's no resistin' where the old bush track is twistin',
Oh, that's the time to travel, to fill yer pipe and travel -
Oh, that's the time to travel, when the moon goes slippin' by.

And it's when yer heart is weary o' the noise o' cities dreary,
As ye wander o'er the pavements, an' confused wi' cares ye be,
And it's when yer head groes thicker, and' ye're done wi' love an' liquor,
Oh, that's the time to travel, and tangled thought unravel -
Oh, that's the time to travel, and take the track wi' me.

Louis Esson (1879-1943)
c. 1917 (refer pages 10 & 13)



The Pommy Tenderfoot

He was born in dear old England, - not so very long ago -
And was what we called a "Pommy" - Bally doodah, dontcha know!
Said that he'd been educated in a Military School
Which had made him tough and hardy, - intellectually cool.
When he heard us speak of tramping from the "western" to the "south",
He affixed his rimless glasses and then puckered up his mouth; -
"May I go with you young chappies; I would love to see the blue
Of those distant mountain ridges, and camp out as you folks do.
I would love to hear the dingoes' mournful wailing in the night
While we sit a-telling stories by the camp-fire's cheery light;
Or follow winding bridle tracks where "overlanders" go
Guided by a map and compass through a land that one does not know,
Oh, the scented bushland flowers, oh the songs of bush-birds too,
How I'd love to go out camping, may I go along with you?"
So we fitted him with "bloochers", put a bluey on his back,
And then started on a ramble down Kanangra Plateau track.

Now, a "pommy" is a pommy! just a creeping, crawling thing,
From the slave who cuts the wages to their parasitic king!
They are pretty good at boasting of their pedigree, I know,
But at camping or at bushcraft, well they haven't got a show!
Over mountain, range and ridges; over plateau, swamp and swale;
Over roadways hot and dusty; over hillside and o'er dale;
Down by pleasant watercourses where the river sings a song,
With this educated "Pommy" tramped we all day long.
But he failed to see the colour that is present everywhere, -
For exquisite colourations doth my mountain lady wear!

Song of the Wild

And he didn't hear the music of the river on it's bars,
Or notice mountain daisies sprinkled o'er the grass, like stars.
And he didn't like the sougning of the pine trees in the wind,
And the lizards and gohannas played upon his fearless mind.
Oh, he sweated and perspired, and by all the gods he swore
That he'd never leave his mammie and his daddy anymore.
He would rather play at croquet, or at tennis, or at bowls, -
Oh! I'm sorry for these "pommies" and their little shrivelled souls.

Roy Davies
December 1918



The Laggard

The way was long, the pace red hot,
The brother not in form, I wot;
His muddy boots, pants grimed with clay,
Bore witness of a better day,
His flask, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried as an empty toy.

The last of all the troop was he
To call this outing revelry.
The spryer folk had forged ahead,
He dragged along with feet of lead.
Of comforts reft, by aches distressed
He mused on blissful hours of rest.

Saw self on prancing palfrey borne,
Or honking loud his motor horn.
The watchful Sec. soon marked his case,
His downcast mien and halting pace,
And cheered him on with vision fair
Of tea and scones and easy chair.

The footsore wretch saw through his bluff,
Yet forced a pace that made him puff.
For fifty yards he stumbled on,
Then sagged again, his courage gone.
So passed his day of toil and pain,
Until he reached his goal - the train.

Song of the Wild

There he settled, he with jocund smiles
Began to boast of vanquished miles.
Who was this wight whom all deride?
Why, just our average Sunday guide.

Anon c. 1920

This originally appeared on the dinner-card at the Annual Meeting of the Wallaby Club (Victoria) 1920 and was reproduced in "History of the Wallaby Club" by Alfred Hart, 1944.



Erskine

A singing voice is in my dream
- The voice of Erskine, on his boulders,
Babbling and shouting till he shoulders
Stoutly against the heavier stream.

No longer now my curtained sight,
On serried books and pictures dwelling,
Of long-neglected work is telling,
But looks beyond the travelling night.

And here no longer is my home,
For you and I are far asunder:
I hear again the cascade thunder
And watch the little pool of foam.

And where the water, pouring sleek,
In sudden whiteness flings his treasure,
I see you sitting, Queen of Pleasure,
Clad only by the glittering creek.

I hold my arms to you once more,
For O my longing flesh is aching,
And you, your rocky throne forsaking,
Come cool and radiant to the shore.

I see my girl of girls recline
On smooth rock sloping to the water;
Then savagely have leapt and caught her,
And limpid eyes look up at mine.

Song of the Wild

Love, Love, O Love, the embracing sun,
The trees, the creek, the earth our mother,
Who made that hour, give such another,
And make us - see us - know us one.

J Le Gay Brereton
from "Swags Up"
J M Dent and Son 1928



A Fantasy

Oh, the joy of the sprite, disembodied and free
No mortal may know, howe'er wise he be;
Yet the spider swings out the wide world to see,
By a gossamer thread still attached to a tree.

So come with me now and in bushland we'll roam –
Our bodies left snugly and safely at home.
Come, drink of the sights, and the sounds, and the sun,
Then, meeting some campers, we'll join in their fun.

In an instant we'll traverse the miles they have tramped,
Then enter the meadow in which they're encamped
With bracken for pillow and moon for a lamp –
Who wouldn't, forsooth, be a gay gypsy camp?

The birds are in bed, and the Frost King's abroad,
But the blaze of their campfire withstands that great Lord;
And they sing and they laugh as beside it they lie
Like the clustering larvae of the gumtree saw-fly.

'Tis daylight again, and the world's clad in white;
Lo, here are the saw-flies, emerging to sight!
Pupation now over, they're covered with down,
And white, like the earth, right from toe unto crown!

They set foot on the road – See the change that takes place!
They are humans again – now of sawflies no trace!
To that field of enchantment the spell is confined;
There only with magic the woods-witch may bind.

Song of the Wild

Now, over the road lies a mighty domain
That is owned by an Ogre of grisly ill-fame,
Where for mile upon mile virgin forests surround
The stronghold where, helpless, his captives lie bound.

This the goal these adventurers mean to attain
Whatever the cost be in labour, or pain,
And they're armed with a hair that their leader had pulled
From the beard of the Ogre when in sleep he was lulled,

In his lair by the city where lurketh the brutes
Enslaving his captives, collecting much loot;
Browbeating and cheating those timorous folk,
Who depend on his slaves and submit to his yolk....

Our adventurers enter the Ogre's preserves,
See a magical thread, guess the purpose it serves,
Then traverse the maze with the greatest of ease,
By the help of that filament fixed to dead trees.

So reached they at even the prisoning dam,
Where the waters reflected the sky's oriflame;
Yet, wotted they not 'twas the calm of despair,
And the glory of death, it was mirroring there.

So peaceful and placid the surface appeared,
Their thoughts to it's beauty were drawn - and adhered.
Forgotten the captives, their wrongs and their pain!
Forgotten the danger throughout this domain!

They're seen from the watch-tower; a gaoler draws near,
On his swart visage "Anger" is writ, large and clear -
Those daring intruders he'll capture and rend -
But they hold up The Hair, and his stiff knee must bend.

He bows to that charm and the party leads on,
Away from the prisoners pallid and wan,
Across by the battlements, watchtowers and keep,
With only a glance at the water so deep,

Where the myriads of raindrops are prisoned and crushed,
Before to the city through pipes they are rushed,
Compressed in great pumps, and then forced through the taps,
To work for mankind in all manner of traps,

Be sullied, and boiled, or drunk, frozen, or soaped,
Before to the ocean their way can be groped.
A pitiful plight is that of the rain
Which falls to the earth in this Ogre's domain!

Our wanderers admit that the task is too great,
They cannot release the poor drops from their fate,
So sadly go on, passing out of our sight,
As we return home, without effort, like light.

Dorothy Lawry
1921 (amended 1932)



Down Along the Kowmung

Down along the Kowmung
Campfires gleaming red
All along the Kowmung
Keep Trailers out of bed,
Oh happy Mountain Trailers.

Down along the Kowmung
Rocks and rushing water
All along the Kowmung
Smiles and joyous laughter,
Oh happy Mountain Trailers.

Down along the Kowmung
Black snakes and soaring hawks,
All along the Kowmung
Cockatoos with many squawks
Keep alert the Mountain Trailers.

Down along the Kowmung
If you wish to clear your head
Up and down the Kowmung
Hump your tucker and your bed
With the happy Mountain Trailers.

*Kowmung! Kowmung! tough old Kowmung!
Trailers love old Kowmung!
The Kowmung land for me.*

Down along the Kowmung
My heart feels free,
All along the Kowmung
Birdies sing to me
A happy Mountain Trailer.

Down along the Kowmung
Ranges blue rise up high
All along the Kowmung
Beckoning me nigh,
A happy Mountain Trailer.

Down along the Kowmung
Happy Trailers roam
Up and down the Kowmung
Far from any home,
Oh a happy Mountain Trailer.

Down along the Kowmung
Little tents gleam white
All along the Kowmung
In the morning light
Oh happy Mountain Trailers.

*Kowmung! Kowmung! tough old Kowmung!
Trailers love old Kowmung!
The Kowmung land for me.*

*Myles Dunphy
Undated (possibly c. 1919)*

Rhyme of the Hardy He-Men

Tough, tough, tough,
Indomitably tough -
They waver not, nor wilt,
They never cry enough.

They take what's coming to them
They brag not, no, nor bluff -
No praise they ask or give
But this; He did his stuff.

A chosen tribe are they,
And tested every one,
The chattering orange-sucking
Munching mobs they shun.

Despising huts and tents,
Jerseys, scarves and vests,
Men of the shorter shorts
And blizzard-beaten chests.

Men of the trackless bush,
Men of the hard-won peak,
Men of the long day's trail
Who very seldom speak.

So great the deeds, as great
The feeds of He-men true -
Billies of stodgy rice
Kerosene tins of stew.

No festive feeding theirs,
But purposeful and dumb,
Till tight, tight, tight,
Is the tum, tum, tum.

Song of the Wild

Tough, tough, tough,
Grumpy, grim and gruff -
Hardy hefty He-men,
Diamonds rare though rough.

Of deeds and feeds of He-men
We ne'er can hear enough,
We who can never hope
To be tough, tough, tough.

Joyce Haslem

*"Tararua Trumper" Vol 8 No 4 February 1936
(Journal of the Tararua Tramping Club Wellington NZ)
Reprinted in "The Sydney Bushwalker"
No 32 January 1937
and in "Tararua Story" Tararua Tramping Club 1946*



Tramping

O it's great to tramp o'er hill and dale
When the sun is shining down,
For it's grand to know you're far away
From the bustling crowded town;
And it's good to feel so fresh and free,
And to breath the pure sweet air
As you tramp along beneath the sun
Inhaling the fragrance rare.

O it's great to tramp across the cliff
When the wind is blowing high,
And to see the foaming waves come in,
And the clouds scud through the sky;
For there's music in the roaring wind
As it rages down the vale,
And you love to bow your head
And to battle with the gale.

O it's great to tramp along the track,
And to hear the teeming rain,
And it's fine to feel it sting your face
As it pours with might and main,
So you stride along with a happy grin,
And you're not a bit dismayed,
For it rains a song into your heart
As you tramp down through the glade.

O it's great to tramp by mount and sea
In the sun and wind and rain,
For it thrills to tramp at any time
Over hill and gorge and plain;
For the bush is always beautiful,
Though the skies be blue or grey,
And the bush is ever calling us
To be out there day by day.

Beryl Heather "Into the Blue" December 1936

Bushland Memories

I long to sing the songs I heard
The lilting songs of leaf and bird
And water falling;
Of laughing rivers gliding by,
Beneath the wide Australian sky,
And magpies calling;

Of beauty that I cannot tell,
Of moss and fern and quiet dell
And sunbeams glancing
O'er lonely, tree-fringed waterways,
Of magic dawns and blue gold days
And fairies dancing;

Of bush and valley, hill and plain,
The smell of gum leaves after rain,
A curlew crying
When ebon night comes swiftly down
And drifting mists enshroud the town,
The west wind sighing;

Of forest splendour far unrolled,
Of leafy spires, the living gold
Of wattles growing
In valley depths and wild things shy
Where lone peaks lean against the sky,
With brave winds blowing.

At times I pause and fain would speak
Of windless vale and winding creek,
And often in the wind and rain
I hear those wordless songs again -