

**GIBSON
GEORGE
HERBERT**

SOUTHERLY BUSTERS

George Gibson
Southerly Busters

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G. H. Gibson

Southerly Busters

NOTES

- a. "Billy," a tin pot for making tea in.
- b. Young gentlemen getting their "colonial experience" in the bush are called "jackeroos" by the station-hands. The term is seldom heard except in the remote "back-blocks" of the interior.
- c. It was formerly the practice of squatters to give a ration of flour, mutton, and, occasionally, tea and sugar, to all persons travelling ostensibly in search of work. The custom, however, as might have been expected, became frightfully abused by loafers, and has of late fallen into disuse, to the intense disgust of the tramping fraternity in general.
- d. The Yanko is a noted sheep-station in the Murrumbidge district (the Paradise of loafers), where travellers were, and, I believe, still are, feasted at the expense of the owners, on a scale of great magnificence, and somewhat mistaken liberality.
- e. The utterly refined and unsophisticated reader is informed that to "whip the cat" signifies, in nautical parlance, to weep or lament.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I AM assured that something in the way of an apologetic preface is always expected from a "new-chum" author who has had the hardihood to jump his Pegasus over the paddock fence (so to speak), and drop, uninvited, into the field of letters; and so, having induced a publisher, in a moment of weakness, to bring me before the public, it behoves me to conciliate that long-suffering body by conforming to all established rules. I am aware that my excuse for inflicting this work on mankind is somewhat "thin" but, such as it is, I will proceed to state it, as a "plea in bar" against all active and offensive expressions of indignation on the part of outraged humanity.

Having "got me some ideas," as Mr Emmett says in the character of "Fritz," and feeling the necessity for inflicting them on somebody imminent, I tried their effect on my own immediate circle of friends. It was not satisfactory. They listened, indeed, for a while, thinking that I was suffering from a slight mental derangement which would be best treated by judicious humouring. Some even affected to be entertained, and laughed (what a hollow mockery of merriment it was!) at atrocious puns; but I could see the look of hate steal over countenances which had hitherto beamed on me with interest and affection, and was not deceived.

I saw that friendship would not long survive such a test and desisted; but it was too late. They perceived I had what Artemus Ward calls the "poetry disease;" feared that it might be infectious; knew that it was an insufferable bore to the afflicted party's circle of acquaintances; and – forgot to visit me.

When their familiar knocks no longer resounded on the door of my lodging in – street, and their familiar footsteps ceased to crush the cockroaches on the dark and winding staircase leading to my apartment, I bethought me of that institution which I had always heard alluded to as the "kind and generous public." Here, I thought (for I was unsophisticated), is the very friend I am in need of, which will receive me with its thousand arms, laugh with me with its thousand mouths, weep with me with its thousand eyes, and whose thousand hearts will beat in unison with mine whether my mood be one of sadness or of joy; behave itself, in fact, like a species of benevolent and sympathetic Hydra, shorn of its terrors, and fit to take part in the innocent and arcadian recreations of the millenium, when the (literary) lion shall lie down with the critic, and newspapers shall not lie any more – even for money.

During my hunt for that all essential auxiliary, a publisher, without whom the first step on the road to literary distinction (or extinction) cannot be taken, I learnt a few plain truths about my hydra-headed friend; amongst others that he was not to be hoodwinked, and would neither laugh, weep, nor sympathise unless he saw good and sufficient cause. I am in consequence not quite so sanguine as I was. However, I have gone too far to recede, and have concluded to throw myself on the bosom or bosoms of that animal and take my chances of annihilation.

One of my unsympathising friends assured me the other day that my book would certainly send anyone to sleep who should attempt its perusal. I gave him a ballad to read, and watched him anxiously while he skimmed a page or two. *He* did not sleep – not he, but a raging thirst overcame him at the fourteenth verse, and he begged me to send for a jug of "half-and-half" with such earnestness that a new and dreadful apprehension filled my breast. If this was to be the effect of my work on the Public at large, I should empty the Temperance Hall, and fill the Inebriate Asylum in six months! As I had hitherto prided myself that my work was entirely free from any immoral tendency, I earnestly hoped that his organization was a peculiar one, and that its effect on him was exceptional, and not; likely to happen again.

Sleep, indeed! Would that these pages might be found to possess the subtle power of inducing "tired Nature's sweet restorer" to visit the weary eyelids of knocked-up humanity; that they might become a domestic necessity, like Winslows "soothing-syrup," and "a blessing to mothers;" that the critic – pausing midway in a burst of scathing invective against their literary and metrical deficiencies

– overcome by their drowsy influence – might sink in dreamless slumber, and wake to sing in praise of their narcotic properties, and chaunt their merits as a soporific.

In conclusion, I would fain ask thee, gentlest of gentle readers, to look with leniency on the many defects and shortcomings of this volume, and to remember that the writer was long, if not an outcast, a homeless wanderer among the saltbush plains and sandhills of Australia, and the kauri and pouriri forests of New Zealand; that, for seven years, the prototypes of "Ancient Bill," hereinafter mentioned, were his associates; and that, if these experiences have enabled him to touch with some degree of accuracy on matters relating to the Bush, they have at the same time militated against the cultivation of those refinements of style and language which commend the modern author to his reader, and which are Only to be acquired in the civilized atmosphere of a city.

N.B. – I desire here to thank my friend, Mr. Henry Wise, of Sydney, to whom I am indebted for the design which adorns the cover of the book.

I beheld a shadow dodging, on the pavement 'neath my
lodging,
'Neath my unpretending lodging – opposite the very door:
"'Tis that prodigal," I muttered, "who enjoys the second
floor —
He it is, and nothing more."

Answering my thoughts, I stated, "'Tis the artist that's located
Here, returning home belated, seeking entrance at the door —
Coming back from where he's revelled, and, like me, with locks
dishevelled,
Wits besotted and bedevilled, oft I've seen him so before;
'Tis no rare unknown occurrence, but a customed thing of
yore —
Jones it is, and nothing more."

Certain then 'twas no illusion, "Sir," I said, in some
confusion,
"Pardon my abrupt intrusion – Mr. Jones, we've met before;
Potent drinks have o'er me bubbled, and the fact is I was
troubled,
For your form seemed strangely doubled, and my brain is sick
and sore —
Let us seek my room and cupboard, and its mystery explore —
There is gin, if nothing more."

Deep into the darkness glaring, I beheld a radiance flaring,
And a pair of eyes were staring – eyes I'd never seen before —
And, my fear and dread enhancing, towards me came a form
advancing,
And the rays of light were dancing from a lantern which it
bore —
'Twas a regulation bull's-eye – "'Tis a (something) Trap," I
swore —
"'Tis a Trap, and nothing more."

Glittering with the P. C. button, redolent of recent mutton,
(Fitting raiment for a glutton) was the garment which he
wore;
And his vast colossal figure, in the pride of manly vigour,
Looming larger, looming bigger, came betwixt me and the
door —
Cutting off my hopes of entrance to my home at number four —
Stood, and stared, and nothing more.

And his features, grimly smiling, calm, unmoved, (intensely
riling)
I betake me to reviling, and a stream of chaff outpour —
"Say, thou grim and stately brother, has thy fond and doting
mother
Got at home like thee another? Art thou really one of four?
Did she, did she sell the mangle? Tell me truly, I implore!"
Quoth the Peeler, "Hold your jawr!"

Long I stood there fiercely glaring, most profanely cursing,
swearing — .
And my right arm I was baring, meaning thus the Trap to
floor —
Straight he grabbed me by the collar, said 'twas worse than
vain to holler,
That his person I must foller to the gloomy prison door;
"Tell me, Robert," said I sadly, "must I go the Bench
before?"
Quoth the Peeler, "'Tis the lawr!"

"Shall I be with felons banded, by the 'beak' be reprimanded,
And with infamy be branded? — thou art versed in prison
lore —
Say not, Robert, that my bread will 'ere be earned upon the
tread-mill,
That a filthy prison bed will echo to my fevered snore —
Ever echo to the music of my wild unearthly snore!"
Quoth the Peeler, "'Tis the lawr!"

Thought on thought of bitter sadness, dissipating hope and
gladness,
Goading me to worse than madness, crowded on me by the
score;
Ne'er before incarcerated, how that Peeler's form I hated,
Cries for freedom, unabated — 'wrenched from out my bosom's
core' —
Broke upon the midnight stillness, "Robert, set me free
once more!"
Quoth the Peeler, "Never more!"

Never since the days of Julian was there such a mass herculean
Clad in garments so cerulean, with so little brains in store;
And I cursed his name, and number, and his form as useless
lumber
Only fit to snore and slumber on a greasy kitchen floor —
On the slime bespattered boarding of a greasy kitchen floor —
Fit for this and nothing more!

And my heart was heavy loaded with a sorrow which
corroded,
And my expletives exploded with a deep and muffled roar;
But a sudden inspiration checked the clammy perspiration
That 'till now, without cessation, streaming ran from every pore,
And what checked the perspiration that ran streaming from
each pore
Was a thought, and nothing more.

In my pocket was a shilling! Could that giant form be
willing,
Tempted by the hope of swilling beer, to set me free once
more?
Tempted by the lust of riches, and the silver shilling
which is
In the pocket in my breeches, and my liberty restore?
Hastily that garment searching, from its depths I fiercely tore
But a 'Bob,' and nothing more.

Wrenched it from my trousers' pocket,
While his eye within the socket gleamed and sparkled like a
rocket,
Grimly rolled, and gloated o'er,
Glared upon me – vainly mining in my pockets' depths —
repinning
That its worn and threadbare lining
IT should press, ah! never more.

Said I, while the coin revealing, "Robert, I've a tender
feeling
For the Force there's no concealing, and thy manly form
adore;
Thee I ne'er to hurt or slay meant; take, oh! take this
humble payment —
Take thy grasp from off my raiment, and thy person from
my door;
Though I like thee past expression, though I venerate the
corps,
Fain I'd bid thee '*Au revoir!*'

And I view with approbation that official's hesitation,

For his carnal inclination with his duty was at war;
But that Peeler, though he muttered, knew which side his
bread was buttered,
But a word or two he uttered, and his choking grasp fore-
bore —
And he, when his clutching fingers from their choking grasp
forebore,
Vanished, and was seen no more.

Oft at night when I'm returning, and the foot-path scarce
discerning —
Whiskey-fumes within me burning like a molten reservoir —
In imagination kneeling, oft in fancy I'm appealing
To the kind and manly feeling of that giant Trap once more —
To the tender kindly feeling of the Trap I saw before —
Vanished now for ever more!

LINES BY A (PAWN)BROKEN-HEARTED YOUTH

Oh! take back the ticket thou gavest,
And give me my watch and my ring,
And may every sixpence thou savest
Be armed with a centipede's sting!

O! uncle, I never expected
Such grief would result from my calls,
When, hard-up, depressed, and dejected,
I came to the Three Golden Balls.

I noticed thy free invitation —
Enticing (though brief) – "Money Lent
I came to thee, oh, my relation,
For succour, for mine was all spent.

Thine int'rest in me was affecting —
I noticed a tear in thine eye,
Without for a moment suspecting
How *int'rest* would tell by and bye.

It's true I'd been doing the heavy,
And going a trifle too fast;
I've been a most dutiful 'nevy,' —
But, uncle, I know thee at last;

I brought thee a gun, and a pistol,
And borrowed a couple of pound,
Then exit, and cheerfully whistle
In time to my heart's happy bound.

I thought thee a regular "trimmer,"
I thought thee a generous man;
I drank to thy health in a brimmer,
And pretty nigh emptied the can.

I went with a mob "to do evil,"
I laughed, and I danced, and I sang;
Bid sorrow fly off to the Devil,
And care and depression go hang.

I looked on the vintage that's ruby,
I "looked on the wine" that "is red,"
But 'twasn't mere looking o'erthrew me,
Or made it get into my head.

In spite of the Israelite's warning,
In spite of what Solomon said,
You may *look* from the dusk to the dawning,
And still toddle sober to bed.

Away with such hollow pretences!
It wasn't from *watching* the cup
I lost the control of my senses,
Or, falling, I couldn't get up.

Destruction again was before me,
And empty once more was my purse,
But thoughts of mine uncle came o'er me,
And withered my half-uttered curse.

I thought that the mines of Australia
I'd found in the meanest of men,
And, smoking a fearful "regalia,"
I sought thine iniquitous den.

My walk, though a little unsteady,
Was dignity tempered with grace;
I playfully asked for the "ready,"
And smiled in thy villainous face.

I brought thee my best Sunday beaver,
And gorgeous habiliments new;
My watch – such a fine English lever! —
I left, *unbeliever*, with you.

I brought thee a coat – such a vestment!
'Twas newly constructed by Poole;
I've found it a losing *investment*—
Oh! how could I be such a fool?

I told thee I hadn't a "stiver;"
I said I'd been "cutting it fat,"
And coolly demanded a "fiver," —
How thou must have chuckled at that!

Thou wee can'st remember the morning
Succeeding thy Sabbath, thou Jew!
When cursing the year I was born in,
I felt the first turn of the screw.

And, hope from my bosom departing,
Like dew from the rays of the sun,
My wits the sad news were imparting
How I'd been deluded and done.

And, borne on the telegraph wire,
A message came swiftly to me;
It said that my grey-headed sire
Was pining his offspring to see.

How face my infuriate father —
My property mortgaged and gone?
For darkly his anger will gather;
I've hardly a rag to put on.

Thine int'rest I cannot repay thee,
And gone are my coat and my hat;
Thou hast all my duds – I could slay thee!
Oh! how could I be such a flat?

I brought thee each gift of my mother,
Each gift of my generous aunt;
The pistol belonged to my brother —
I'd like to restore it, but can't:

For, uncle, thy fingers are sticky,
And, if the sad truth be confessed,
Thy heart is as false as the "dicky,"
Which covers my sorrowful breast.

I've managed the needful to borrow,
My watch and my ring to redeem;
I hope that the sight of my sorrow
May cause thee a horrible dream.

'Twere joy should I hear that the pistol
Had burst in thy villainous hand —
While smoking the "bird's eye" of Bristol,
My breast would dilate and expand.

I leave thee, for vain is resistance,
And little thou heedest my slang,
But I'd barter ten years of existence
For power to cause thee a pang.

O! had I the wand of a wizard,
A Nemesis cruel I'd bribe
To torture that Israelite's gizzard,
And caution the rest of his tribe.

O! ye who are fond of excitement,
Ye students of Med'cine and Law,
Be warned by this awful indictment,

And never give Moses your paw!

From Moses who spoiled the Egyptian,
To Moses who buys your old clo',
They're all of the self-same description —
They take, but they never let go.

Ye sons of the Man on the Barrel
(That's Bacchus) – ye "Monks of the Screw!"
Don't mortgage your wearing apparel,
Or have any truck with a Jew;

But take to cold water and virtue,
And never, whatever befalls,
Let any false logic convert you
To visit the "Three Golden Balls."

THE ANCIENT SHEPHERD

The shadows of the River Gums
Were stretching long and black,
As, far from Sydney's busy hum,
I trod the narrow track.

I watched the coming twilight spread,
And thought on many a plan;
I saw an object on ahead —
It seemed to be a man.

A venerable party sat
Upon a fallen log;
Upon him was a battered hat,
And near him was a dog.

The look that o'er his features hung
Was anything but sweet;
His swag and "billy" lay among
The grass beneath his feet.

And white and withered was his hair,
And white and wan his face;
I'd rather not have ipet the pair
In such a lonely place.

I thought misfortune's heavy hand
Had done what it could do;
Despair seemed branded on the man,
And on the dingo too.

A hungry look that dingo wore —
He must have wanted prog —
I think I never saw before
So lean and lank a dog.

I said – "Old man, I fear that you
Are down upon your luck;
You very much resemble, too,
A pig that has been stuck."

His answer wasn't quite distinct —
(I'm sure it wasn't true):
He said I was (at least, I think,) —
"A" – something – "jackeroo!"

He said he didn't want my chaff,
And (with an angry stamp)
Declared I made too free by half
"A-rushing of his camp."

I begged him to be calm, and not
Apologise to me;
He told me I might "go to pot"
(Wherever that may be);

And growled a muttered curse or two
Expressive of his views
Of men and things, and squatters too,
New chums and jackeroos.

But economical he was
With his melodious voice;
I think the reason was because
His epithets were choice.

I said – "Old man, I fain would know
The cause of thy distress;
What sorrows cloud thine aged brow
I cannot even guess.

"There's anguish on thy wrinkled face,
And passion in thine eye,
Expressing anything but grace,
But why, old man, oh! why?

"A sympathising friend you'll find
In me, old man, d'ye see?
So if you've aught upon your mind
Just pour it into me."

He gravely shook his grizzled head
I rather touched him there —
And something indistinct he said
(I think he meant to swear).

He made a gesture with his hand,
He saw I meant him well;
He said he was a shepherd, and
"A takin' of a spell."

He said he was an ill-used bird,
And squatters they might be —
(He used a very naughty word
Commencing with a D.)

I'd read of shepherds in the lore
Of Thessaly and Greece,
And had a china one at home
Upon the mantelpiece.

I'd read about their loves and hates,
As hot as Yankee stoves,
And how they broke each other's pates
In fair Arcadian groves;

But nothing in my ancient friend
Was like Arcadian types:
No fleecy flocks had he to tend,
No crook or shepherds' pipes.

No shepherdess was near at hand,
And, if there were, I guessed
She'd never suffer that old man
To take her to his breast!

No raven locks had he to fall,
And didn't seem to me
To be the sort of thing at all
A shepherd ought to be.

I thought of all the history.
I'd studied when a boy —
Of Paris and Ænone, and
The siege of ancient Troy.

I thought, could Helen contemplate
This party on the log,
She would the race of shepherds' hate
Like Brahmins hate a dog.

It seemed a very certain thing
That, since the world began,
No shepherd ever was like him,
From Paris down to Pan.

I said – "Old man, you've settled now
Another dream of youth;
I always understood, I vow,
Mythology was truth

"Until I saw thy bandy legs
And sorrow-laden brow,
But, sure as ever eggs is eggs,

I cannot think so now.

"For, an a shepherd thou should'st be,
Then very sure am I
The man who wrote mythology
Was guilty of a lie.

"But never mind, old man," I said,
"To sorrow we are born,
So tell us why thine aged head
Is bended and forlorn?"

With face as hard as Silas Wegg's
He said, "Young man, here goes."
He lit his pipe, and crossed his legs,
And told me all his woes.

He said he'd just been "lammin'-down"
A flock of maiden-ewes,
And then he'd had a trip to town
To gather up the news;

But while in Bathurst's busy streets
He got upon the spree,
And publicans was awful cheats
For soon "lamm'd down" was he.

He said he'd "busted up his cheque"
(What's that, I'd like to know?)
And now his happiness was wrecked,
To work he'd got to go.

He'd known the time, not long ago,
When half the year he'd spend
In idleness, and comfort too,
A-camping in a "bend."

No need to tread the weary track,
Or work his strength away;
He lay extended on his back
Each happy summer day.

When sun-set comes and day-light flags,
And dusky looms the scrub,
He'd bundle up his ration-bags
And toddle for his grub,

And to some station-store he'd go
And get the traveller's dower —

"A pint o' dust" – that was his low
Expression meaning flour;

But now he couldn't cadge about,
For squatters wasn't game
To give their tea and sugar out
To every tramp that came.

The country's strength, he thought, was gone,
Or going very fast,
And feeding tramps now ranked among
The glories of the past.

He'd seen the "Yanko" in its pride,
When every night a host
Of hungry tramps at supper tried
For who could eat the most.

A squatter then had feelin's strong
And tender in his breast,
And if a trav'ler came along
He'd ask him in to rest.

"But squatters now!" – he stamped the soil,
And muttered in his beard,
He wished they'd got a whopping boil
For every sheep they sheared!

His language got so very bad —
It couldn't well be worse,
For every second word he had
Now seemed to be a curse.

And shaking was his withered hand
With passion, not with age —
I never thought so old a man
Could get in such a rage.

His eyes seemed starting from his head,
They glared in such a way;
And half the wicked words he said
I shouldn't like to say;

But from his language I inferred
There wasn't one in three,
Of squatters worth that little word
Commencing with a "D."

Alas! for my poetic lore,

I fear it was astray,
It never said that shepherds swore,
Or talked in such a way.

The knotted cordage of his brow
Was tightened in a frown —
He seemed the sort of party, now,
To burn a wool-shed down.

He told me, further, and his voice
Grew very plaintive here,
That now he'd got to make the choice
And *work*, or give up beer!

From heavy toil he'd always found
'Twas healthiest to keep,
And mostly stuck to cadgin' round,
And lookin' after sheep.

But shepherdin' was nearly "cooked" —
I think he meant to say
That shepherds' prospects didn't look
In quite a hopeful way.

A new career he must begin,
(And fresh it roused his ire)
For squatters they was fencin' in
With that infernal wire;

And sheep was paddocked everywhere —
'Twas like them squatters' cheek! —
And shepherds now, for all they'd care,
Might go to Cooper's Creek.

He said he couldn't use an axe,
And wouldn't if he could;
He'd see 'em blistered on their backs
'Fore he'd go choppin' wood;

That nappin' stones, or shovellin',
Warn't good enough for he,
And work it was a cussed thing
As didn't ought to be.

He'd known the Lachlan, man and boy,
For close on forty year,
But now they'd pisoned every joy,
He thought it time to clear.

They gave him sorrow's bitter cup,
And filled his heart with woe,
And now at last his back was up,
He felt he ought to go.

He'd heard of regions far away
Across the barren plains,
Where shepherds might be blythe and gay
And bust the squatters' chains.

To reach that land he meant to try,
He didn't care a cuss,
If 'twasn't any better, why,
It couldn't be much wuss.

Amongst the blacks, though old and grey,
Existence he'd begin,
And give his ancient hand away
In marriage to a "gin."

He really was so old and grim,
The thought was in my mind,
That any gin to marry him
Would have to be stone blind.

'Twould make an undertaker smile:
What tickled me was this,
The thought of such an ancient file
Indulging in a kiss!

And, if it's true, as Shakespeare said,
That equal justice whirls,
He ought to think of Nick instead
Of thinking of the girls.

Then drooped his grim and aged head,
And closed that glaring eye,
And not another word he said
.Except a grunt or sigh.

More lean he looks and still more lank
Such changes o'er him pass,
And down his ancient body sank
In slumber on the grass.

I thought, old chap, you're wearing out,
And not the sort of coon
To lead a blushing bride about,
Or spend a honeymoon;

Or if, indeed, there were a bride
For such a withered stick,
With such a tough and wrinkled hide,
That bride should be old Nick.

As streaks of faintish light began
To mark the coming day,
I left that grim and aged man
And slowly stole away.

And when the winter nights are rough,
And shrieking is the wind,
Or when I've eaten too much duff
And dreams afflict my mind,

I see that lean and withered hand,
And, 'mid the gloom of night,
I see the face of that old man,
And horrid is the sight:

While on my head in agony
Up rises every hair,
I see again his glaring eye —
In fancy hear him swear.

At breakfast time, when I come down
To take that pleasant meal,
With pallid face, and haggard frown,
Into my place I steal;

And when they say I'm far from bright,
The truth I dare not tell:
I say I've passed a sleepless night,
And don't feel very well.

WHERE IS FREEDOM?

Oh! Mother, say, for I long to know,
Where doth the tree of Freedom grow,
And strike its roots in the heart of man
As deep and far as the famed banyan?
Is it 'mid those groups in the Southern Seas,
In the Coral Isles, or the far Fijis,
Where the restless billows seeth and toss
'Neath the gleaming light of the Southern Cross?
"Not there – not there, my child."

Then tell me, mother, can it be where
The cry of "Liberty" rends the air?
Where grow the maize and the maple tree,
In the fertile "bottoms" of Tennessee?
Or is it up where the north winds roar,
Away by the fair Canadian shore,
Where the Indians shriek with insane halloos —
As drunk as owls in their bark canoes?
"Not there – not there, my child."

Or is it back in the Western States,
Where Colt's revolver rules the fates,
And Judges lounge in a liquor shop
While Dean and Adams's pistols pop?
Where Justice is but a shrivelled ghost
As deaf and blind as a stockyard post,
And License sits upon Freedom's chair —
Oh, say, dear mother, can it be there?
"Not there – not there, my child."

Is it on the banks of the wild Paroo,
Where the emu stalks, and the kangaroo
Bounds o'er the sand-hills free and light,
And the dingo howls through the sultry night;
Where the native gathers the nardoo-seed
For his frugal meal; and the centipede —
While the worn-out traveller lies inert,
Invades the folds of his flannel shirt?
"Not there – not there, my child."

Is it where yon death-like stillness reigns
O'er the vast expanse of the salt-bush plains,
Where the shepherd leaveth his Leicester ewes
For the firm embrace of his noon-tide snooze,
And the most enchanting visions come

To his thirsty spirit of Queensland rum,
While the sun rays strike through his garments scant —
Is it there, dear mother, this wond'rous plant?
"Not there – not there, my child."

Or Southward, down where our brethren hold
Those keys of power, rich mines of gold —
That land of rumour and vague reports,
Alluvial diggings, and reefs of quartz —
Where brokers give you the straightest "tip,"
And let in in the way of "scrip;"
Where all men vapour, and vaunt, and boast,
And manhood suffrage rules the roast?
"Not there – not there, my child."

Is it where the blasts of the simoom fan,
The blazing valleys of Hindustan;
Where the Dervish howls, and their dupes are fleeced
By the swarth Parsee, and the Brahmin priest;
Where men believe in their toddy-bowls,
And the transmigration of human souls,
And the monkeys battle with countless fleas
On the twisted boughs of the tamarind trees?
"Not there – not there, my child."

Or is it more to the northward, more
Toward the ice-bound rivers of Labrador,
Where the glittering curtain of gleaming snow
Enshrouds the home of the Esquimaux;
Or further still to the north, away
Where the bones of the Artic heroes lay
Long, long on the icy surface bare,
To bleach and dry in the frosty air?
"Not there – not there, my child."

Then is it, mother, among the trees
That shade the paths in the Tuilleries,
Where the students walk with the pale grisettes,
And scent the air with their cigarettes?
Or doth it bloom in that atmosphere
Of mild tobacco and lager beer,
Where guttural curses mingle too
With the croupiers patter of "*faites votre jeu?*"
"Not there – not there, my child."

"Boy, 'tis a plant that loves to blow
Where the fading rays of the sunset go;
Up where the sun-light never sets,
And angels tootle their flageolets;

Up through the fleecy clouds, and far
Beyond the track of the farthest star,
Where the silvery echoes catch no tone
Of a simmering sinner's stifling groan:
'Tis there – 'tis there, my child!"

Countless sheep and countless cattle
O'er his vast enclosures roam;
But you heard no children prattle
'Round that squatter's hearth and home.

Older grew that squatter, older,
Solitary and alone,
And they said his heart was colder
Than a granite pavin'-stone.

Other squatters livin' handy,
Wot had daughters in their prime.
For that squatter "shouted" brandy
In the Township many a time;

And those gals kept introdoocin'
In their toilets every art
With the object of sedoocin'
That old sinner's stony heart.

Thus they often made exposures
Of their ankles, I'll be bound,
When they, in his vast enclosures,
Met that squatter ridin' round.

Their advances he rejected,
Scornin' both their hands and hearts,
'Till one day a cove selected
Forty acres in those parts.

And that stalwart free-selector
Had the handsomest of gals;
Conduct couldn't be correcter
Than his youngest daughter Sal's.

Prettily her head she tosses —
Loves a thing she don't regard;
Rides the most owdacious hosses
Wot was ever in a yard.

She was lithe and she was limber —
Farmers daughter every inch —
Not averse to sawin' timber

With her father at a pinch.

In remotest dells and dingles,
Where most gals would be afraid,
There she went a-splittin shingles,
Pretty tidy work she made.

And that free selector's daughter,
Driving of her father's cart,
Made the very wildest slaughter
In that wealthy squatter's heart.

He proposed, and wasn't blighted,
Took her to his residence,
With his bride he was delighted
For she saved him much expense.

Older grew that aged squatter,
White and grizzly grew his pate,
'Till his weak rheumatic trotters
Couldn't bear their owner's weight.

Then he grew more helpless, 'till he
Couldn't wash and couldn't shave,
And one evening cold and chilly
He was carried to his grave.

Then that free selector's daughter
Came right slap "out of her shell;"
Calm and grave as folks had thought her,
She becomes a howling swell.

To the neighb'ring township drove she
In her chariot and pair,
Splendid dreams and visions wove she
While she braided up her hair.

She peruses Sydney papers,
Sees a paragraph which tells
Her benighted soul the capers
Cut down there by nobs and swells;

Then she couldn't stop contented
In a region such as this,
While the atmosphere she scented
Of the great metropolis.

Her intention she imparted
To the neighbours round about;

Packed her duds, farewell'd, and started,
And for Sydney she set out.

Now her pantin' bosom hankers
Spicily her form to deck,
So she sought her husband's bankers
And she drew a heavy cheque.

She, of course, in dress a part spent,
Satins, sables, silk and grebe,
And she took some swell apartments
Situated near the Glebe.

With the very highest classes
In her heart she longed to jine —
Her opinion placed the masses
Lower in the scale than swine.

But she found it wasn't easy
Climbin' up ambition's slope;
Slippy was the road, and greasy,
To the summit of her hope.

If into a "set" she wriggled,
She'd capsize some social rule,
Then those parties mostly giggled,
Loadin' her with ridicule.

Many an awkward solecism —
Many a breach of etiquette,
(Though she knew her catechism)
Often made her eyelids wet.

Her plebeian early trainin'
Was a precious pull-back then,
Which prevented her from gainin'
Footin' with the "upper ten."

Strugglin' after social fame was
Simply killin' her out-right,
So she settled that the game was
Hardly worth the candle-light.

Things got worse and things got worsen,
'Till she had a vision strange,
The forerunner and precursor
Of a most decided change.

In a dream she saw the station

Where her father now was boss,
And his usual occupation
Was to ride a spavined hoss.

Round inspectin' every shepherd
With his penetratin' sight,
And those underlings got peppered
If he found things wasn't right.

When she saw her grey-haired sire
"Knockin' round" among the sheep,
For her home a strong desire
Made her yell out in her sleep.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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