

In the Days When the World was Wide

Dec. — 1894

[Henry Lawson](#)

THE WORLD is narrow and ways are short, and our lives are dull and slow,
For little is new where the crowds resort, and less where the wanderers go;
Greater, or smaller, the same old things we see by the dull road-side —
And tired of all is the spirit that sings of the days when the world was wide.

When the North was hale in the march of Time, and the South and the West were new,
And the gorgeous East was a pantomime, as it seemed in our boyhood's view;
When Spain was first on the waves of change, and proud in the ranks of pride,
And all was wonderful, new and strange in the days when the world was wide.

Then a man could fight if his heart were bold, and win if his faith were true —
Were it love, or honour, or power, or gold, or all that our hearts pursue;
Could live to the world for the family name, or die for the family pride,
Could fly from sorrow, and wrong, and shame in the days when the world was wide.

They sailed away in the ships that sailed ere science controlled the main,
When the strong, brave heart of a man prevailed as 'twill never prevail again;
They knew not whither, nor much they cared — let Fate or the winds decide —
The worst of the Great Unknown they dared in the days when the world was wide.

They raised new stars on the silent sea that filled their hearts with awe;
They came to many a strange countree and marvellous sights they saw.
The villagers gaped at the tales they told, and old eyes glistened with pride —
When barbarous cities were paved with gold in the days when the world was wide.

'Twas honest metal and honest wood, in the days of the Outward Bound,
When men were gallant and ships were good — roaming the wide world round.
The gods could envy a leader then when 'Follow me, lads!' he cried —
They faced each other and fought like men in the days when the world was wide.

They tried to live as a freeman should — they were happier men than we,
In the glorious days of wine and blood, when Liberty crossed the sea;
'Twas a comrade true or a foeman then, and a trusty sword well tried —
They faced each other and fought like men in the days when the world was wide.

The good ship bound for the Southern seas when the beacon was Ballarat,
With a 'Ship ahoy!' on the freshening breeze, 'Where bound?' and 'What ship's that?' —
The emigrant train to New Mexico — the rush to the Lachlan Side —
Ah! faint is the echo of Westward Ho! from the days when the world was wide.

South, East, and West in advance of Time — and, ay! in advance of Thought
Those brave men rose to a height sublime — and is it for this they fought?
And is it for this damned life we praise the god-like spirit that died
At Eureka Stockade in the Roaring Days with the days when the world was wide?

We fight like women, and feel as much; the thoughts of our hearts we guard;
Where scarcely the scorn of a god could touch, the sneer of a sneak hits hard;
The treacherous tongue and cowardly pen, the weapons of curs, decide —
They faced each other and fought like men in the days when the world was wide.

Think of it all — of the life that is! Study your friends and foes!
Study the past! And answer this: ‘Are these times better than those?’
The life-long quarrel, the paltry spite, the sting of your poisoned pride!
No matter who fell it were better to fight as they did when the world was wide.

Boast as you will of your mateship now — crippled and mean and sly —
The lines of suspicion on friendship’s brow were traced since the days gone by.
There was room in the long, free lines of the van to fight for it side by side —
There was beating-room for the heart of a man in the days when the world was wide.

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With its dull, brown days of a-shilling-an-hour the dreary year drags round:
Is this the result of Old England’s power? — the bourne of the Outward Bound?
Is this the sequel of Westward Ho! — of the days of Whate’er Betide?
The heart of the rebel makes answer ‘No! We’ll fight till the world grows wide!’

The world shall yet be a wider world — for the tokens are manifest;
East and North shall the wrongs be hurled that followed us South and West.
The march of Freedom is North by the Dawn! Follow, whate’er betide!
Sons of the Exiles, march! March on! March till the world grows wide!

The Ballad of the Drover

Mar. — 1889

Henry Lawson

ACROSS the stony ridges,
Across the rolling plain,
Young Harry Dale, the drover,
Comes riding home again.
And well his stock-horse bears him,
And light of heart is he,
And stoutly his old pack-horse
Is trotting by his knee.

Up Queensland way with cattle
He travelled regions vast;
And many months have vanished
Since home-folk saw him last.
He hums a song of someone
He hopes to marry soon;
And hobble-chains and camp-ware
Keep jingling to the tune.

Beyond the hazy dado
Against the lower skies
And yon blue line of ranges
The homestead station lies.
And thitherward the drover
Jogs through the lazy noon,
While hobble-chains and camp-ware
Are jingling to a tune.

An hour has filled the heavens
With storm-clouds inky black;
At times the lightning trickles
Around the drover's track;
But Harry pushes onward,
His horses' strength he tries,
In hope to reach the river
Before the flood shall rise.

The thunder from above him
Goes rolling o'er the plain;
And down on thirsty pastures
In torrents falls the rain.
And every creek and gully

Sends forth its little flood,
Till the river runs a banker,
All stained with yellow mud.

Now Harry speaks to Rover,
The best dog on the plains,
And to his hardy horses,
And strokes their shaggy manes;
'We've breasted bigger rivers
When floods were at their height
Nor shall this gutter stop us
From getting home to-night!'

The thunder growls a warning,
The ghastly lightnings gleam,
As the drover turns his horses
To swim the fatal stream.
But, oh! the flood runs stronger
Than e'er it ran before;
The saddle-horse is failing,
And only half-way o'er!

When flashes next the lightning,
The flood's grey breast is blank,
And a cattle dog and pack-horse
Are struggling up the bank.
But in the lonely homestead
The girl will wait in vain —
He'll never pass the stations
In charge of stock again.

The faithful dog a moment
Sits panting on the bank,
And then swims through the current
To where his master sank.
And round and round in circles
He fights with failing strength,
Till, borne down by the waters,
The old dog sinks at length.

Across the flooded lowlands
And slopes of sodden loam
The pack-horse struggles onward,
To take dumb tidings home.
And mud-stained, wet, and weary,
Through ranges dark goes he;
While hobble-chains and tinware
Are sounding eerily.

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The floods are in the ocean,
The stream is clear again,
And now a verdant carpet
Is stretched across the plain.
But someone's eyes are saddened,
And someone's heart still bleeds
In sorrow for the drover
Who sleeps among the reeds.

SONG OF THE OLD BULLOCK DRIVER by Henry Lawson (1867 - 1922)

Far back in the days when the blacks used to ramble
In long single file 'neath the evergreen tree,
The wool-teams in season came down from Coonamble,
And journeyed for weeks on their way to the sea.
'Twas then that our hearts and our sinews were stronger,
For those were the days when the bushmen was bred.
We journeyed on roads that were rougher and longer
Than roads where the feet of our grandchildren tread.

With mates who have gone to the great Never-Never,
And mates whom I've not seen for many a day,
I camped on the banks of the Cudgegong River
And yarned at the fire by the old bullock-dray.
I would summon them back from the far Riverina,
From days that shall be from all others distinct.
And sing to the sound of an old concertina
Their rugged old songs where strange fancies were linked.

We never were lonely, for, camping together,
We yarned and we smoked the long evenings away,
And little I cared for the signs of the weather
When snug in my hammock slung under the dray.
We rose with the dawn, were it ever so chilly,
When yokes and tarpaulins were covered with frost,
And toasted the bacon and boiled the black billy,
Where high on the camp-fire the branches were tossed.

On flats where the air was suggestive of 'possums,
And homesteads and fences were hinting of change,
We saw the faint glimmer of appletree blossoms,
And far in the distance the blue of the range;
And here in the rain, there was small use in flogging
The poor, tortured bullocks that tugged at the load,
When down to the axles the waggons were bogging
And traffic was making a marsh of the road.

'Twas hard on the beasts on the terrible pinches,
Where two teams of bullocks were yoked to a load,
And tugging and slipping, and moving by inches,
Half-way to the summit they clung to the road.
And then, when the last of the pinches was bested,
(You'll surely not say that a glass was a sin?)
The bullocks lay down 'neath the gum trees and rested -
The bullockies steered for the bar of the inn.

Then slowly we crawled by the trees that kept tally
Of miles that were passed on the long journey down.
We saw the wild beauty of Capertee Valley,
As slowly we rounded the base of the Crown.
But, ah! the poor bullocks were cruelly goaded
While climbing the hills from the flats and the vales;
'Twas here that the teams were so often unloaded
That all knew the meaning of "counting your bales".

And, oh! but the best-paying load that I carried
Was one to the run where my sweetheart was nurse.
We courted awhile, and agreed to get married,
And couple our futures for better or worse.
And as my old feet grew too weary to drag on
The miles of rough metal they met by the way,
My eldest grew up and I gave him the waggon -
He's plodding along by the bullocks to-day.