

Henry

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It's hard to comprehend these days the infinite poetic maze,  
but one man stands alone on any list.  
As one of many of his time he wrote his words in metred rhyme,  
with eloquence in verse so sorely missed.

His birthplace and his childhood days gave rise to his poetic ways,  
from Grenfell to the digs at Pipeclay Creek.  
The true son of a Norway man, his mother saying yes you can,  
just take the path that finds the life you seek.

His words in *Golden Gully* told of days gone-by in search of gold,  
where childhood memories reflect the dread.  
*The Roaring Days* were over for the multitudes who came no more,  
to places so engraved inside his head.

Those visions of *Mt Bukaroo* remind us that young Henry knew,  
how rural life was challenging and tough.  
He chose to wander far and wide to places where the swaggies hide,  
a *Vagabond*, a gypsy living rough.

He wrote in melancholy verse and how the bush was always worse,  
with hardship, deprivation, discontent.  
He told about *The Shearing Shed* and how *The Cattle-Dog* was dead,  
reflecting on the places where he went.

He was a wordsmith in those times of literary prose and rhymes,  
and torn between the bush and city life.  
He wrote of *Faces in the Street* and where *The Teams* of bullocks meet,  
and how it was to be *The Drover's Wife*.

So much is told of Henry's mind and what it was he hoped to find,  
in search of *Something Better* in the end.  
He walked beside *The Ghost* that came to grapple with his mother's shame,  
whose gilded aspirations would not bend.

His words reflect a tortured soul who felt he had a special role,  
to write about the underdog in need.  
And as his years trudged slowly by he found his muse to rectify,  
inequities of birthright, caste and creed.

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*Eureka* claimed a digger's right which saw them gather to the fight,  
and Lalor's men, *to arms, to arms* they cried.  
And like his haunting dreams at night according to *The Wander-Light*,  
the demon drink was always by his side.

He left his readers in no doubt that characters he wrote about  
had lives beset by tragedy and pain.  
*Past Carin*' were so many folk, *The Babies of Walloon* just broke,  
the hearts of all his readers yet again.

And when we read of Joe's demise beyond *The Shanty on the Rise*,  
we heard of Mary Carey's grave as well.  
The story of young Harry Dale describes another sorry tale,  
the likes of which our Henry lived to tell.

From *Talbragar* Jack Denver died, Ben Duggan was the man to ride,  
to spread the word in honour of his mate.  
But like a never-ending curse so prominent in Henry's verse,  
Ben Duggan was to meet an ugly fate.

When Henry took the train to *Bourke* to find the subjects for his work,  
he wrote of men and places with disdain.  
*The Sweeney* was a drunken man, *The Paroo River* rarely ran,  
and pity those who rode *The Great Grey Plain*.

We heard of Harry's brand three-star and of *The Glass* left on the bar,  
belonging to that bushman who had died.  
*The Lights of Cobb and Co* were seen before *The Men We Might Have Been*  
exposed remorse and sadness deep inside.

And like his peer that Banjo bloke and other literary folk,  
he used the *Bulletin* to great effect.  
That paper spurred a rhyming feud which in their thousands readers viewed,  
as words to which so many could connect.

We heard of shearers and their dreams, of bullock drivers and their teams,  
and drovers of *The Never Never Land*.  
Those people he identified could drink and shear and fight and ride,  
where grit and broken hearts go hand in hand.

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The womenfolk in Henry's life; his mother, sister and his wife,  
reflected how relations with him were.

We saw another side of him beyond the world he saw as grim,  
as tender as *The Slip Rails and the Spur*.

*The Days when we went Swimming* told, of times when boys were free and bold,  
and Kutz the farmer chased them from his pond.

It was a tale of lighter note that Henry rarely ever wrote,  
to which we can now laughingly respond.

And so it was with verse and prose in words that Henry Lawson chose,  
we understand our past and what it meant.

Despite what critics write or say, his words are valued to this day,  
in honour of the times they represent.

**David Judge**

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