

*A. B. Paterson*

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# B·R·U·M·B·Y'S · R·U·N

A · N · D · O · T · H · E · R · V · E · R · S · E · S





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## INTRODUCTION

ANDREW BARTON PATERSON, eldest of a family of two sons and five daughters, was born on 17th February 1864 at Narambla, near Orange, New South Wales. His father, Andrew Bogle Paterson, came of an old Scotch family, and his mother was Rose, daughter of Robert Johnstone Barton, of Boree Station. Their home was Illalong, a station in the Yass district. Andrew Bogle Paterson had lost heavily in two previous grazing ventures in north-west New South Wales and Queensland, and now, a few years after the birth of his son, Illalong passed into the hands of a mortgagee, but he remained as manager.

There Andrew Barton Paterson lived until he was about ten years of age. Then, after some preparatory education, he attended Sydney Grammar School. He spent his vacations at the station, a good rider, enjoying the activities and associations which later provided material for his writings. Indoors, though without means to be lavish, there was comfort and also books and the cultivated interests that go with them. Literary inclinations in the family are indicated by the fact that Paterson's father preceded him as a contributor of verse to the *Bulletin*, and afterwards a sister, Jessie, also had verses published in its columns. During schooldays in Sydney Paterson lived congenially at Gladesville with his grandmother, Mrs Robert Barton. She, too, wrote verse, and circulated it privately among her friends, some of whom were prominent in Sydney cultural life of the time. At the age of sixteen he matriculated, and was articled to a firm of solicitors. After being himself enrolled as a solicitor, he became managing clerk for another law firm, and later practised in a partnership with the name of Street and Paterson.

When "Clancy of the Overflow", by "The Banjo", appeared in the 1889 Christmas number of the *Bulletin*, Rolf Boldrewood hailed it as "the best bush ballad since Gordon". Further verses with the same pen-name aroused considerable interest, as well as curiosity concerning the identity of the author, which was not revealed until the publication in 1895 of *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses*. The success of this book was described in the *London Literary Yearbook* as "without parallel in colonial literary annals" and as giving its author a public wider than that of any other living writer in the language except Kipling. The first edition sold out in a fortnight, the tenth thousand was reached within a year, and altogether sales exceeded 100,000. At the beginning of 1895, while visiting Dagworth, a Queensland sheep station, he wrote the now famous "Waltzing Matilda" verses to a tune



which, though an inherent part of a band march published in 1893, seems to be that of an old marching song of Marlborough's soldiers. Back again in Sydney, he fraternized with authors and artists of the time, wrote for the press, then, for the purpose of some descriptive articles for a tourist publication, took ship to Darwin, experiencing the life of that region ashore and afloat.

Towards the end of 1899, having returned to Sydney, he gave up legal practice, and sailed for South Africa as war correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* in the Boer War. Returning to Australia in the latter part of 1900, he almost immediately departed, by way of the Philippines, to China, expecting an opportunity as a war correspondent again; but the fighting connected with the Boxer Rebellion had ended in the meantime, so he went on to London. In 1902, in Sydney once more, he delivered a series of lectures on the Boer War, and repeated them in country towns as well as in Tasmania and New Zealand. In 1903 he married Alice Walker, of Tenterfield, whom he had met during his lecture tour. From 1904 to 1906 he was editor of the *Sydney Evening News*, and in 1907 and 1908 edited the *Town and Country Journal*. In the latter year he acquired an interest in a station, Coodra Vale, on the Upper Murrumbidgee, in country he knew and loved, and made his home there with his wife and their son and daughter. Soon after the 1914-18 war broke out, he sold this property and went to London, hoping for an appointment as a war correspondent. He was disappointed in this, but anxious for war service, though he was now fifty years of age, he became an ambulance driver in France for the Australian hospital at Wimereux. In 1916 he was appointed Remount Officer to the A.I.F. in Egypt, with the rank of Major. There his wife joined him and worked for the British Red Cross. They returned to Australia in 1919 and settled with their two children in Sydney; and he continued to work as a freelance writer. In the New Year honours of 1939 he was made C.B.E. He died at Sydney on 5th February, 1941.

The success of his first book of poems, *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses* (1895) has already been mentioned. *Rio Grande's Last Race and Other Verses* (1902) was reprinted several times. It contained at the end a number of poems of the Boer War, inevitably suggestive of Kipling, whose influence is rather too plain in a few poems in the other two books. *Saltbush Bill, J.P., and Other Verses* (1917) included some of Paterson's earliest work. The three volumes were in 1921 combined in one as *The Collected Verse of A. B. Paterson*, which has been reprinted many times. He was the author of three books of fiction, namely, a novel, *An Outback Marriage* (1906), *Three Elephant Power and Other Stories* (1917), and another novel, *The Shearer's Colt* (1936). His *Happy Dispatches* (1934) records impressions of notabilities he met while abroad. *The Animals Noah Forgot* (1933) is a collection of verses mostly descriptive of Australian fauna, for juvenile reading. Paterson



also compiled a book of *Old Bush Songs, Composed and Sung in the Bush-ranging, Digging and Overlanding Days* (1905). His earliest publication was *Australia for the Australians* (1888), suggesting land reforms as a remedy for the prevalent unemployment and the drift to the cities.

Paterson's poetry has a special connexion with the time when it was written. The *Sydney Bulletin* had been founded in 1880, and, by encouraging Australians to write about life outback, it set bushmen rhyming. This was not entirely new. There were already some bush songs, sung around camp-fires, in huts and shearing-sheds, and on the track. The tunes were mainly those of oversea songs. The words, of unknown authorship, were often similarly imitative, but with more originality because of the Australian themes. It was a local folklore so far as this was possible in a land with so short a history as that of the white man in Australia. The verse of the *Bulletin* bards had a similar but wider significance in a multitude of rhymes of droving and boundary riding and shearing and other station activities, of bushrangers, life on farms and in remote townships, with horse racing and other diversions, often alcoholic. Of the many who wrote them, a score are represented by collections in book form, but the two outstanding names are Paterson and Henry Lawson.

They had different points of view which they aired in the *Bulletin* in a kind of verse debate. A poem like Paterson's "Clancy of the Overflow" was to Lawson a false idealization of bush life, which he accordingly attacked in "Up the Country"; Paterson's reply, "In Defence of the Bush", was just as forceful; Lawson then satirized Paterson as "The City Bushman" in a poem with that title; and Paterson dealt with Lawson and other detractors of the bush in "An Answer to Various Bards". The question of their respective merits as poets does not arise here, and Lawson certainly wrote some excellent bush ballads; but his unfortunate personal experience led him to stress unduly the harsh aspects of the outback, and a corollary of this was the recurring note of social protest in his verse. Neither of these traits, though both had foundation enough, was typical of bush life, with its acceptance of the bad with the good, often sardonic, but not much concerned with any social problems involved. Thus Paterson's simple approach is truer, and his range makes him, as compared with the others besides Lawson, pre-eminent among the balladists.

Allowing for the difference of time, his verses are like the ballads which chronicled common life and doughty deeds in medieval times, and which are now enhanced by the romantic atmosphere of a distant past and its archaic manner. Oral transmission through generations obscured their origin and, in the best of them, distilled the diction finely. More generally, faults are not hard to find, but are accepted as having the common tang of the time. It is somewhat the same with the verbal defects in Paterson's verse. His work has enough quality and resource to show that he could have overcome them, but they are



often so much the natural expression of the life he writes about that they help to reveal it, almost as if he were its passive instrument. The gleams of authentic poetry — say, for instance, the opening of “The Travelling Post Office” or passages in “The Man from Snowy River” — occur as casually as the lapses. The worst of these consist of sentimentality in a few detached instances like “Only a Jockey” and “A Bunch of Roses”, or when though rarely, as in “Lost”, a bush poem emphasizes a sentiment disproportionately. The comic element, on the other hand, is wholesome, and Paterson revels in it. Sometimes it helps to typify a place, as with the two “Dandaloo” poems and “Hay and Hell and Booligal”; or it gives colour to a character such as “Saltbush Bill” or “The Man from Ironbark”; or it may divert incredibility, as in “Father Riley’s Horse” and “The City of Dreadful Thirst”, with their approach to the supernatural or eerie — for this is perhaps the only phase of balladry that Paterson fails to make convincing, even when he is wholly serious about it in “Rio Grande’s Last Race”. His comic ballads are outright fun, but they nevertheless vitalize the circumstances and people portrayed.

His verse belongs to the true ballad tradition of tales musically told and heightened with simple glamour. This may consist of some special prowess, as of “The Man from Snowy River”; or heroism like that of the bushranger giving his life to save a comrade in “How Gilbert Died”; or even the exploit of a less romanticized outlaw as in “Conroy’s Gap”; or the outcome of a horse race in more than a dozen of Paterson’s poems; or it may be concerned with bush life apart from any special event, as in “Clancy of the Overflow” and “A Bushman’s Song”; but always there is the tone of period and place and the manner of the people in the telling. He writes as bush folk themselves would if they were able, and it is this that has made his poetry popular with them and with city people to whom it is on that account just as interesting. It is not likely to be less so. Time, with the changes of a mechanical age, has already given a legendary attraction to some of the old bush ways. When the future looks back to the past as we look back to the middle ages, Paterson’s poetry will probably have the aura of old minstrelsy. He best of all has sung the action of bush life in that natural music of rhythm and rhyme which has a perpetual general appeal.

FREDERICK T. MACARTNEY

## PRELUDE

I have gathered these stories afar,  
In the wind and the rain,  
In the land where the cattle camps are,  
On the edge of the plain.  
On the overland routes of the West,  
When the watches were long,  
I have fashioned in earnest and jest  
These fragments of song.

They are just the rude stories one hears  
In sadness and mirth,  
The records of wandering years,  
And scant is their worth.  
Though their merits indeed are but slight,  
I shall not repine,  
If they give you one moment's delight,  
Old comrades of mine.



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# THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER

There was movement at the station, for the word had passed  
around  
That the colt from old Regret had got away,  
And had joined the wild bush horses — he was worth a thousand  
pound,

So all the cracks had gathered to the fray.  
All the tried and noted riders from the stations near and far  
Had mustered at the homestead overnight,  
For the bushmen love hard riding where the wild bush horses are,  
And the stockhorse snuffs the battle with delight.

There was Harrison, who made his pile when Pardon won the cup,  
The old man with his hair as white as snow;  
But few could ride beside him when his blood was fairly up —  
He would go wherever horse and man could go.  
And Clancy of the Overflow came down to lend a hand,  
No better horseman ever held the reins;  
For never horse could throw him while the saddle girths would  
stand,  
He learnt to ride while droving on the plains.

And one was there, a stripling on a small and weedy beast,  
He was something like a racehorse undersized,  
With a touch of Timor pony — three parts thoroughbred at least —  
And such as are by mountain horsemen prized.  
He was hard and tough and wiry — just the sort that won't say  
die —

There was courage in his quick impatient tread;  
And he bore the badge of gameness in his bright and fiery eye,  
And the proud and lofty carriage of his head.

But still so slight and weedy, one would doubt his power to stay,  
And the old man said, "That horse will never do  
For a long and tiring gallop — lad, you'd better stop away,  
Those hills are far too rough for such as you."  
So he waited sad and wistful — only Clancy stood his friend —  
"I think we ought to let him come," he said;  
"I warrant he'll be with us when he's wanted at the end,  
For both his horse and he are mountain bred.

"He hails from Snowy River, up by Kosciusko's side,  
Where the hills are twice as steep and twice as rough,  
Where a horse's hoofs strike firelight from the flint stones every  
stride,  
The man that holds his own is good enough.



And the Snowy River riders on the mountains make their home,  
Where the river runs those giant hills between;  
I have seen full many horsemen since I first commenced to roam,  
But nowhere yet such horsemen have I seen."

So he went — they found the horses by the big mimosa clump —  
They raced away towards the mountain's brow,  
And the old man gave his orders, "Boys, go at them from the  
jump,

No use to try for fancy riding now.

And, Clancy, you must wheel them, try and wheel them to the  
right.

Ride boldly, lad, and never fear the spills,  
For never yet was rider that could keep the mob in sight,  
If once they gain the shelter of those hills."

So Clancy rode to wheel them — he was racing on the wing  
Where the best and boldest riders take their place,  
And he raced his stockhorse past them, and he made the ranges  
ring

With the stockwhip, as he met them face to face.

Then they halted for a moment, while he swung the dreaded lash,  
But they saw their well-loved mountain full in view,

And they charged beneath the stockwhip with a sharp and sudden  
dash,

And off into the mountain scrub they flew.

Then fast the horsemen followed, where the gorges deep and black  
Resounded to the thunder of their tread,

And the stockwhips woke the echoes, and they fiercely answered  
back

From cliffs and crags that beetled overhead.

And upward, ever upward, the wild horses held their way,

Where mountain ash and kurrajong grew wide;

And the old man muttered fiercely, "We may bid the mob good  
day,

No man can hold them down the other side."

When they reached the mountain's summit, even Clancy took a  
pull,

It well might make the boldest hold their breath,

The wild hop scrub grew thickly, and the hidden ground was full  
Of wombat holes, and any slip was death.

But the man from Snowy River let the pony have his head,

And he swung his stockwhip round and gave a cheer,

And he raced him down the mountain like a torrent down its bed,  
While the others stood and watched in very fear.



He sent the flint stones flying, but the pony kept his feet,  
He cleared the fallen timber in his stride,  
And the man from Snowy River never shifted in his seat —  
It was grand to see that mountain horseman ride.  
Through the stringybarks and saplings, on the rough and broken  
ground,

Down the hillside at a racing pace he went;  
And he never drew the bridle till he landed safe and sound,  
At the bottom of that terrible descent.

He was right among the horses as they climbed the further hill,  
And the watchers on the mountain standing mute,  
Saw him ply the stockwhip fiercely, he was right among them still,  
As he raced across the clearing in pursuit.  
Then they lost him for a moment, where two mountain gullies met  
In the ranges, but a final glimpse reveals  
On a dim and distant hillside the wild horses racing yet,  
With the man from Snowy River at their heels.

And he ran them single-handed till their sides were white with  
foam.  
He followed like a bloodhound on their track,  
Till they halted cowed and beaten, then he turned their heads for  
home,  
And alone and unassisted brought them back.  
But his hardy mountain pony he could scarcely raise a trot,  
He was blood from hip to shoulder from the spur;  
But his pluck was still undaunted, and his courage fiery hot,  
For never yet was mountain horse a cur.

And down by Kosciusko, where the pine-clad ridges raise  
Their torn and rugged battlements on high,  
Where the air is clear as crystal, and the white stars fairly blaze  
At midnight in the cold and frosty sky,  
And where around The Overflow the reed beds sweep and sway  
To the breezes, and the rolling plains are wide,  
The man from Snowy River is a household word today,  
And the stockmen tell the story of his ride.



# OLD PARDON, THE SON OF REPRIEVE

You never heard tell of the story?

Well, now, I can hardly believe!  
Never heard of the honour and glory  
Of Pardon, the son of Reprieve?  
But maybe you're only a Johnnie  
And don't know a horse from a hoe?  
Well, well, don't get angry, my sonny,  
But, really, a young 'un should know.

They bred him out back on the "Never",  
His mother was Mameluke breed.  
To the front — and then stay there — was ever  
The root of the Mameluke creed.  
He seemed to inherit their wiry  
Strong frames — and their pluck to receive —  
As hard as a flint and as fiery  
Was Pardon, the son of Reprieve.

We ran him at many a meeting  
At crossing and gully and town,  
And nothing could give him a beating —  
At least when our money was down.  
For weight wouldn't stop him, nor distance,  
Nor odds, though the others were fast,  
He'd race with a dogged persistence,  
And wear them all down at the last.

At the Turon the Yattendon filly  
Led by lengths at the mile and a half,  
And we all began to look silly,  
While *her* crowd were starting to laugh;  
But the old horse came faster and faster,  
His pluck told its tale, and his strength,  
He gained on her, caught her, and passed her,  
And won it, hands down, by a length.

And then we swooped down on Menindie  
To run for the President's Cup —  
Oh! that's a sweet township — a shindy  
To them is board, lodging, and sup.  
Eye-openers they are, and their system  
Is never to suffer defeat;  
It's "win, tie, or wrangle" — to best 'em  
You must lose 'em, or else it's "dead heat".



We strolled down the township and found 'em  
At drinking and gaming and play;  
If sorrows they had, why they drowned 'em,  
And betting was soon under way.  
Their horses were good 'uns and fit 'uns,  
There was plenty of cash in the town;  
They backed their own horses like Britons,  
And Lord! how *we* rattled it down!

With gladness we thought of the morrow,  
We counted our wagers with glee,  
A simile homely to borrow —  
“There was plenty of milk in our tea”.  
You see we were green; and we never  
Had even a thought of foul play,  
Though we well might have known that the clever  
Division would “put us away”.

Experience “*docet*”, they tell us,  
At least so I've frequently heard,  
But, “dosing” or “stuffing”, those fellows  
Were up to each move on the board;  
They got to his stall — it is sinful  
To think what such villains would do —  
And they gave him a regular skinful  
Of barley — green barley — to chew.

He munched it all night, and we found him  
Next morning as full as a hog —  
The girths wouldn't nearly meet round him;  
He looked like an overfed frog.  
We saw we were done like a dinner —  
The odds were a thousand to one  
Against Pardon turning up winner,  
'Twas cruel to ask him to run.

We got to the course with our troubles,  
A crestfallen couple were we;  
And we heard the “books” calling the doubles —  
A roar like the surf of the sea;  
And over the tumult and louder  
Rang, “Any price Pardon, I lay!”  
Says Jimmy, “The children of Judah  
Are out on the warpath to-day.”

Three miles in three heats: Ah, my sonny  
The horses in those days were stout,  
They had to run well to win money;  
I don't see such horses about.



Your six-furlong vermin that scamper  
Half a mile with their featherweight up;  
They wouldn't earn much of their damper  
In a race like the President's Cup.

The first heat was soon set a-going;  
The Dancer went off to the front;  
The Don on his quarters was showing,  
With Pardon right out of the hunt.  
He rolled and he weltered and wallowed —  
You'd kick your hat faster, I'll bet;  
They finished all bunched, and he followed  
All lathered and dripping with sweat.

But troubles came thicker upon us,  
For while we were rubbing him dry  
The stewards came over to warn us:  
"We hear you are running a bye!  
If Pardon don't spiel like tarnation  
And win the next heat — if he can —  
He'll earn a disqualification;  
Just think over *that*, now, my man!"

Our money all gone and our credit,  
Our horse couldn't gallop a yard;  
And then people thought that *we* did it!  
It really was terribly hard.  
We were objects of mirth and derision  
To folk in the lawn and the stand,  
And the yells of the clever division  
Of "Any price, Pardon!" were grand.

We still had a chance for the money,  
Two heats still remained to be run;  
If both fell to us — why, my sonny,  
The clever division were done.  
And Pardon was better, we reckoned,  
His sickness was passing away,  
So he went to the post for the second  
And principal heat of the day.

They're off and away with a rattle,  
Like dogs from the leashes let slip,  
And right at the back of the battle  
He followed them under the whip.  
They gained ten good lengths on him quickly,  
He dropped right away from the pack;  
I tell you it made me feel sickly  
To see the blue jacket fall back.