

Reedy River

Chris Kempster (1949)

VERSES 1,2,4,5,7.

Ten miles down Ree-dy Riv-er a pool of wat-er lies,
 And all the year it mir-rors the chan-ges in the skies,
 And in that pool's broad bos-om is room for all the stars;
 Its bed of sand has drift-ed o'er count-less rock-y bars.

VERSES 3,6,8.

Be-neath the gran-ite rid-ges the eye may just dis-cern
 Where Rock-y Creek em-erg-es from deep green banks of fern;
 And stand-ing tall be-tween them, the gras-sy she-oaks cool
 The hard, blue-tint-ed wat-ers be-fore they reach the pool.

Poem Henry Lawson
 Music Chris Kempster

Ten miles down Reedy River a pool of water lies,
 And all the year it mirrors the changes in the skies,
 Within that pool's broad bosom is room for all the stars;
 Its bed of sand has drifted o'er countless rocky bars.

Around the lower edges there waves a bed of reeds,
 Where water rats are hidden and where the wild duck breeds;
 And grassy slopes rise gently to ridges long and low,
 Where groves of wattle flourish and native bluebells grow.

Beneath the granite ridges the eye may just discern
 Where Rocky Creek emerges from deep green banks of fern;
 And standing tall between them, the drooping sheoaks cool
 The hard, blue-tinted waters before they reach the pool.

Ten miles down Reedy River one Sunday afternoon,
 I rode with Mary Campbell to that broad bright lagoon;
 We left our horses grazing till shadows climbed the peak,
 And strolled beneath the sheoaks on the banks of Rocky Creek

Then home along the river that night we rode a race,
 And the moonlight lent a glory to Mary Campbell's face;
 I pleaded for my future all through that moonlight ride,
 Until our weary horses drew closer side by side.

Ten miles from Ryan's crossing and five below the peak,
 I built a little homestead on the banks of Rocky Creek;
 I cleared the land and fenced it and ploughed the rich red loam,
 And my first crop was golden when I brought Mary home.

Now still down Reedy River the grassy sheoaks sigh,
 The waterholes still mirror the pictures in the sky;
 The golden sand is drifting across the rocky bars;
 And over all for ever go sun and moon and stars.

But of the hut I builded there are no traces now,
 And many rains have levelled the furrows of my plough;
 The glad bright days have vanished; for sombre branches wave
 Their wattle-blossom golden above my Mary's grave.

Chris Kempster



Songbook

National Folk Festival • Concert for Chris Kempster • 2004

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Dame Mary Gilmore and The Bushwhackers:

2 Alex Hood, Harry Kay, Chris Kempster, Alan Scott, John Meredith, Cecil Grivas, Jack Barrie

Clancy and Dooley and Don McLeod

Poem Dorothy Hewett
Music Chris Kempster

Clancy and Dooley and Don McLeod
Walked by the wurlies when the wind was loud,
And their voice was new as the fresh sap running,
And we keep on fighting and we keep on coming.

Don McLeod beat at a mulga bush
And a lot of queer things came out in a rush.
Like mongrel dogs with their flattened tail
They sneaked him off to the Hedland jail.

In the big black jail where the moonlight fell
Clancy and Dooley sat in the cell.
In the big white court crammed full with hate
They said, "We wouldn't scab on a mate."

In the great hot quiet they said it loud
And smiled in the eyes of Don McLeod,
And the working-men all over the land
Heard what they shouted and shook their hand.

The sheep's wool dragged and the squatters swore
And talked nice words till their tongues got sore
And their bellies swelled with so much lies
But the blackfellers shooed them off like flies.

The sheep got lost on the squatters' run.
The shearing season was nearly done.
Said the squatters eaten up with greed,
"We'll pay good wages and give good feed."

The blackfellers sheared the wool and then
Got their wages like working-men.
The squatters' words were stiff and sore,
"We won't pay wages like that no more."

The white boss said - STAY OUT OF TOWN,
And they ground with their boots to keep us down.
"We'll starve them out until they crawl
Back on their bellies, we'll starve 'em all!"

The sun was blood on the bare sheep-runs,
The women whispered, "They'll come with guns."
But we marched to our camp, and our step was proud,
And we sat down there and we laughed out loud.

Clancy and Dooley and Don McLeod,
Walked by the wurlies when the wind was loud.
And their voice was new as the fresh sap running,
And we keep on fighting and we keep on coming.

Don McLeod beat at a mulga bush
And a lot of queer things came out in a rush.
Like mongrel dogs with their flattened tail
They sneaked him off to the Hedland jail.

The young men marched down the road like thunder
Kicked up the dust and padded it under:
They marched into town like a whirlwind cloud
OPEN UP THE JAIL AND LET OUT DON McLEOD.

The squatters are riding round in the night
Crying, "Load up your guns and creep out quiet.
Let's teach these niggers that they can't rob
The big white bosses of thirty bob."

Our young men are hunters, our old men make songs
And the words of our people are whiplashed with wrongs.
In the tribes of our country they sing, and are proud
Of the Pilbarra men and the white man, McLeod.

Our voice is lightning all over the land
And we clench up our fists on the sweat of our hands
For the voice of the workers is thundering loud
FIGHT WITH CLANCY AND DOOLEY AND DON
McLEOD.

Don McLeod beat at a mulga bush
And a lot of queer things came out in a rush.
Like mangy dogs with their flattened tail
They sneaked him off to the Hedland jail.

But Clancy and Dooley and Don McLeod
Walk by the wurlies when the wind is loud.
And their voice is new as the fresh sap running,
And we keep on fighting and we keep on coming.

[On May Day, 1946, in the Pilbarra District in the North West of Western Australia, 800 Aboriginal station hands struck for 30 bob a week and the right to organise. Their leaders, the white man Don McLeod, and two Aborigines, Clancy McKenna and Dooley, were arrested and convicted. But pressure through the Labour Movement and the United Nations brought their release. The Aborigines formed their own co-operative which endures to this day. (e.g. See Donald Stuart's novel, "Yandy'.")]

On the night train

Chris Kempster (1995)



Poem Henry Lawson
Music Chris Kempster

Have you seen the bush by moonlight, from the train, go running by?
Blackened log and stump and sapling, ghostly trees all dead and dry;
Here a patch of glassy water; there a glimpse of mystic sky?
Have you heard the still voice calling - yet so warm, and yet so cold:
'I'm the Mother-Bush that bore you! Come to me when you are old'?

Did you see the Bush below you sweeping darkly to the Range,
All unchanged and all unchanging, yet so very old and strange!
While you thought in softened anger of the things that did estrange?
(Did you hear the Bush a-calling, when your heart was young and bold:
'I'm the Mother-Bush that nursed you; come to me when you are old'?)

In the cutting, in the tunnel, out of sight of stack or shed,
Have you heard the grey Bush calling from the pine-ridge overhead:
'You have seen the seas and cities; all is cold to you, or dead
All seems done and all seems told - but the grey-light turns to gold!
I'm the Mother-Bush that loves you; come to me now you are old'?



Nursery rhyme

Poem Frank Wilmot
Music Chris Kempster

One year, two year, three year, four,
Comes a khaki gentleman knocking at the door.
"Any little boys at home, send them out to me
To train them and brain them in battles yet to be."

When a little boy is born feed him, train him so.
Put him in a cattle pen and wait for him to grow.
When he's nice and plump and dear, and sensible and sweet,
Throw him in the trenches for the great grey rats to eat.
Toss him in the cannon's mouth, cannons fancy best
Tender little boys' flesh that's easy to digest.

Mother rears her family on two pounds ten a week.
Teaches them to wash themselves, teaches them to speak.
Rears them with a heart's love, rears them to be men.
Grinds her fingers to the bone, and then... what then?

But parents who must rear the boys the cannons love to slay,
Also pay for cannons that blow other boys away.
Parsons tell them that their sons have just been blown to bits.
Patriotic parents must all laugh like fits.

Rear the boys for honest men and send them out to die!
Where's the coward father who would dare raise a cry?
Any gentleman's aware folk rear their children for
Blunderers and plunderers to mangle in a war!

Five year, six year, seven year, eight.
"Hurry up you little chaps, the captain's at the gate!"



In 1916 during the First World War a poet named Frank Wilmot (who wrote under the name Furnley Maurice) turned his revulsion at the conscription of young people into this poem.

It was set to music in the mid 1950s by Chris Kempster, and when he sang it at a folk session thirty years later, this led to Miguel Heatwole writing an arrangement of it for the Solidarity Choir. This version is on the choir's CD "Ten Years Strong".

Cane killed Abel

Solo F C7 E F Chorus F

I was a cane - cut - ter, but now I'm at sea. Stool it and

top it, and load it, my boys. Once cane killed A - bel but

it won't kill me. Stool it, and top it, and load it, my boys.

C7 Chorus C7 F

Words Merv Lilley
Music Chris Kempster

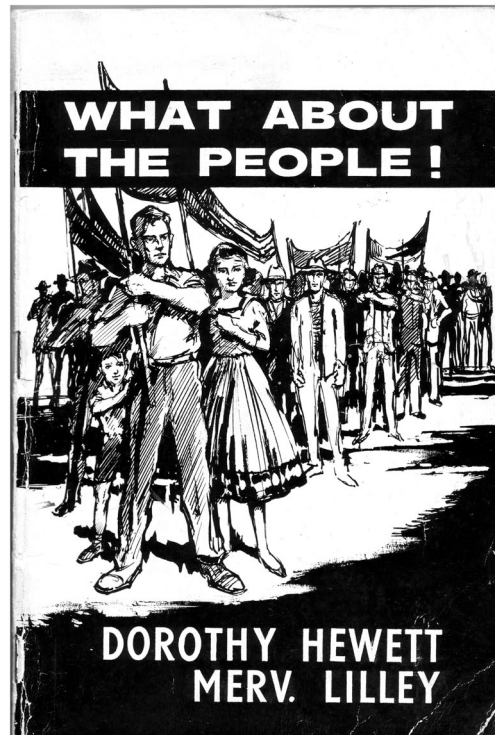
I was a cane cutter, but now I'm at sea,
Stool it and top it and load it up high.
Once cane killed Abel, but it won't kill me,
Cut cane in the wet, cut cane in the dry.

There was an old seaman who sang this refrain,
Stool it and top it and load it up high.
He stood to the bar and he filled up again.
Cut cane in the wet, cut cane in the dry.

I rose every morning about half past three,
Stool it and top it and load it up high.
To cook me my breakfast, my dinner and tea.
Cut cane in the wet, cut cane in the dry.

I worked very hard until I went to sea,
Stool it and top it and load it up high.
Once cane killed Abel, and it almost killed me.
Cut cane in the wet, cut cane in the dry.

I was a cane cutter, but now I'm at sea,
Stool it and top it and load it up high.
Once cane killed Abel, but it won't kill me,
Cut cane in the wet, cut cane in the dry.



Published in 1962 this book was an inspiration to singers like Bill Berry, Mike Leyden and Chris Kempster.

Once I cried: 'O God Almighty! if Thy might doth still endure,
Now show me in a vision for the wrongs of Earth a cure.'
And, lo! with shops all shuttered I beheld a city's street,
And in the warning distance heard the tramp of many feet,
Coming near, coming near, to a drum's dull distant beat,
And soon I saw the army that was marching down the street.

Then, like a swollen river that has broken bank and wall,
The human flood came pouring with the red flags over all,
And kindled eyes all blazing bright with revolution's heat,
And flashing swords reflecting rigid faces in the street
Pouring on, pouring on, to a drum's loud threatening beat,
And the war-hymns and the cheering of the people in the street.

And so it must be while the world goes rolling round its course,
The warning pen shall write in vain, the warning voice grow hoarse,
But not until a city feels Red Revolution's feet
Shall its sad people miss awhile the terrors of the street -
The dreadful everlasting strife for scarcely clothes and meat
In that pent track of living death - the city's cruel street.

Rain in the mountains

Chris Kempster (1985)

Verse A D A D

The val-ley's full of mist-y cloud, its tint-ed beaut-y drown-ing,

The Eu-ca-lyp-ti roar a-loud, the moun-tain fronts are frown-ing.

Chorus A

But love, the rain will pass full soon, far soon-er than my sorrow,

And in a gold-en af-ter-noon the sun may set to-mor-row.

Poem Henry Lawson
Music Chris Kempster

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.

Faces in the street

Chris Kempster (1985)

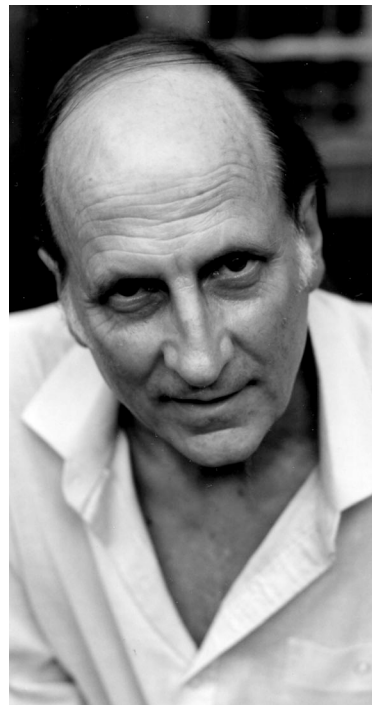
Poem Henry Lawson
Music Chris Kempster

They lie, the men who tell us for reasons of their own
That want is here a stranger, and that misery's unknown;
For where the nearest suburb and the city proper meet
My window-sill is level with the faces in the street
Drifting past, drifting past, to the beat of weary feet
While I sorrow for the owners of those faces in the street.

In hours before the dawning dims the starlight in the sky
The wan and weary faces first begin to trickle by,
Increasing as the moments hurry on with morning feet,
Till like a pallid river flow the faces in the street
Flowing in, flowing in, to the beat of hurried feet
Ah! I sorrow for the owners of those faces in the street.

And when the hours on lagging feet have slowly dragged away,
And sickly yellow gaslights rise to mock the going day,
Then flowing past my window like a tide in its retreat,
Again I see the pallid stream of faces in the street
Ebbing out, ebbing out, to the drag of tired feet,
While my heart is aching dumbly for the faces in the street.

I left the dreadful corner where the steps are never still,
And sought another window overlooking gorge and hill;
But when the night came dreary with the driving rain and sleet,
They haunted me - the shadows of those faces in the street,
Flitting by, flitting by, flitting by with noiseless feet,
And with cheeks but little paler than the real ones in the street.



The sailor home from the sea

Poem Dorothy Hewett
Music Chris Kempster

O cock of the morning
With a dream in his hand,
My love has come home
To the wonderful land.

And deep in our bed
We'll love and we'll lie,
We'll kiss and we'll listen
To the rain in the sky.

He bursts through the door,
With his eyes like the sun,
And his kitbag crammed full
Of the treasures he's won.

Warm as the summer
We've hived winter long,
My love has come home
Like King Solomon's song.

There's pearl shell from Broome,
And a tall Darwin tale,
And coral and clam,
And the jaws of a whale.

And my kitchen is full
Of the smell of the sea,
And the leaping green fishes
My love brings to me.

O tumble your treasures
From Darwin to Broome,
And fill with your glory
This straight little room.

With the sun in the morning
Ablaze on his chest
My love has come home
From the North of Nor'West.



Equal pay song

EQUAL PAY SONG

Calypso Rhythm

Words by Denis Kevans
Music by Chris Kempster

Chorus
The wage is fixed by arbitration
Greatest intellects of the nation,
All for one but none for all,
That is the gospel industrial.

In the good old day the darling dear,
Have only to plough and to fence and shear.
There never was any other way,
The man's affection her pay.

But today is a changing pattern,
Women no longer is a kitchen slattern,
She is able to earn a wage,
Get her photo in the fashion page.

So in between her attempts to mate us
She sometimes achieves the professional status,
But the smartest of the weaker sex,
Are eating of a different wage index.

If some of the seniority,
Were given the appropriate salary,
A new disease would come to blight us-
Flabbergastero-enteritis.

You bet on the GGs and the lottery,
But you are barking up the wrong money tree,
Get behind your Union Organisers,
Try for the big industrial prizes.

This song was released on one of the early union campaign EP records in the 1960s. Along with a swag of Chris' early repertoire it also formed the basis of a songbook published by Sydney University Folk Music Society in 1964. This songbook, "songs of our times", contained many new songs from Gary Shearston, Mike Leyden, Don Henderson, Denis Kevans and others. Also included were protest songs from Ireland, Britain and Scotland as well as the USA, providing a snapshot of the songs current in the folk movement at that time.



My love-burst came, like an English Spring, in days when our hair was brown
And the hem of her skirt was a sacred thing and her hair was an angel's crown;
The shock when another man touched her arm, where the dancers sat in a row;
The hope, the despair, and the false alarm - do you think that I do not know?

By the arbour lights on the western farms, you remember the question put,
While you held her warm in your quivering arms and you trembled from head to foot;
The electric shock from her finger-tips, and the murmuring answer low
The soft, shy yielding of warm red lips - do you think that I do not know?

She was buried at Brighton, where Gordon sleeps, when I was a world away;
And the sad old garden its secret keeps, for nobody knows to-day,
She left a message for me to read, where the wild wide oceans flow;
Do you know how the heart of a man can bleed - do you think that I do not know?

I stood by the grave where the dead girl lies, when the sunlit scenes were fair,
'Neath white clouds high in the autumn skies, and I answered the message there.
But the haunting words of the dead to me shall go wherever I go,
She lives in the Marriage that Might Have Been - do you think that I do not know?

In his book "The Songs of Henry Lawson" Chris wrote:

This version is taken from Poetical Works of Henry Lawson, 1925.

Two final verses are printed below. They are from the original version of the poem and were later omitted, but the more I read them and understand their meaning, the more I am drawn to them.

They sneer or scoff, and they pray or groan, and the false friend plays his part.
Do you think that the blackguard who drinks alone knows aught of a pure girl's heart?
Knows aught of the first pure love of a boy with his warm young blood aglow,
Knows aught of the thrill of the world-old-joy - do you think that I do not know?

They say that I never have written of love, they say that my heart is such
That finer feelings are far above; but a writer may know too much.
There are darkest depths in the brightest nights, when the clustering stars hang low;
There are things it would break his strong heart to write - do you think that I do not know?



Maurie, Chris and Alison

They double-lock at four o'clock; the warders leave their keys,
 And the Governor strolls with a friend at eve through his stone conservatories;
 Their window-slits are like idiot mouths, with square stone chins adrop,
 And the weatherstains for the dribble, and the dead flat foreheads atop.

The press is printing its smug, smug lies, and paying its shameful debt -
 It speaks of the comforts that prisoners have, and 'holidays' prisoners get.
 The visitors come with their smug, smug smiles through the gaol on a working day,
 And the public hears with its large, large ears what 'Authorities' have to say.

The champagne lady comes home from the course in charge of the criminal swell -
 They carry her in from the motor-car to the lift in the Grand Hotel;
 But armed with the savage 'Habituals Act' they are waiting for you and me -
 And drunkards in judgement on drunkards sit (Keep step, One-Hundred-and-Three!)

The clever scoundrels are all outside, and the moneyless mugs in gaol -
 Men do twelve months for a mad wife's lies or Life for a strumpet's tale.
 If the people knew what the warders know, and felt as the prisoners feel -
 If the people knew, they would storm their gools as they stormed the old Bastille.

Ay! clang the spoon on the iron floor, and shove in the bread with your toe,
 And shut with a bang the iron door, and clank the bolt-just so;
 But One-Hundred-and-Three is near the End when the clonking gaol-bell sounds -
 He cannot swallow the milk they send when the doctor has gone his rounds.

They have smuggled him out to the hospital, with no one to tell the tale,
 But it's little that doctor or nurses can do for the patient from Starvinghurst Gaol.
 The blanket and screen are ready to draw... there are footsteps light and free -
 And the angels are whispering over his bed: 'Keep step-One-Hundred-and-Three.'

Do you think that I do not know?

Chris Kempster (1984)

Musical score for 'Do you think that I do not know?' in 3/4 time, key of D major. The score consists of four staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated above the notes.

They say that I never have writ-ten of love, as a writ-er of songs should do;
 They say that I never could touch the strings with a touch that is firm and true;
 They say I know noth-ing of wom-en and men in the fields where Love's ros-es grow,
 I must write, they say, with a halt-ing pen - do you think that I do not know?

Poem Henry Lawson
 Music Chris Kempster

They say that I never have written of love, as a writer of songs should do;
 They say that I never could touch the strings with a touch that is firm and true;
 They say I know nothing of women and men in the fields where Love's roses grow,
 I must write, they say, with a halting pen - do you think that I do not know?

BUSH LULLABY

Words; Louis Esson. Music: Chris Kempster. Copyright: Authors.

Musical score for 'BUSH LULLABY' in 2/4 time, key of D major. The score consists of four staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated above the notes.

1st Verse - Ba - by, oh ba - by, fain you are for bed, Mag pie to
 2nd " Ba by, oh ba - by, rest your drow-sy head, The one man who
 no poke bus-y as the bee, The lit-tle red calf's in the
 works here tired you must be, The lit-tle red calf's in the
 snug cow-shed, And the lit-tle brown bird's in the tree.
 snug cow-shed, And the lit-tle brown bird's in the tree.
 1st Ch: Dadd-y's gone a - shear - ing down the Castle - reagh, So we're all a -
 lone now, on-ly you and me, All a-mong the wool - o,
 keep your wide blades full o Dadd-y loves his bab - y
 part-ed though he be
 2nd Chorus: The lit-tle red
 calf's in the snug cow-shed & the lit-tle brown bird's in the tree.

"Australian Tradition", April, 1967

The teams

Chris Kempster (1965)

(Repeat for the second half of the verse)

Poem Henry Lawson
Music Chris Kempster

A cloud of dust on the long white road, and the teams go creeping on
Inch by inch with the weary load; and by the power of the green-hide goad
The distant goal is won.

With eyes half-shut to the blinding dust, and necks to the yokes bent low,
The beasts are pulling as bullocks must; and the shining tires might almost rust
While the spokes are turning slow.

With face half-hid 'neath a broad-brimmed hat that shades from the heat's white waves,
And shouldered whip with its green-hide plait, the driver plods with a gait like that
Of his weary, patient slaves.

He wipes his brow, for the day is hot, and spits to the left with spite;
He shouts at Bally, and flicks at Scot, and raises dust from the back of Spot,
And spits to the dusty right.

He'll sometimes pause as a thing of form in front of a settler's door,
And ask for a drink, and remark, 'It's warm,' or say, 'There's signs of a thunderstorm,'
But he seldom utters more.

The rains are heavy on roads like these; and, fronting his lonely home,
For days together the settler sees the waggons bogged to the axletrees,
Or ploughing the sodden loam.

And then when the roads are at their worst, the bushman's children hear
The cruel blows of the whips reversed while bullocks pull as their hearts would burst,
And bellow with pain and fear.

And thus - with glimpses of home and rest - are the long, long journeys done;
And thus - 'tis a thankless life at the best - is distance fought in the mighty West,
And the lonely battles won.

There's the Red, White and Blue of the Frenchmen, where soldiers of Freedom are true,
But lo! from the rear comes a banner, whose skirts lack the white and the blue!
There's the flag of a boastful republic, a country where freedom is dear:
But still, in the States there's an army that waits 'neath the Old Rebel Flag in the Rear.
There's a new mongrel flag in Australia, and the 'Banner of Britain' is here,
But, to break from the past, we are gathering fast 'neath the Old Rebel Flag in the Rear.

There's the Tsar's cruel Eagle of Russia, where thousands are sunk in despair,
And the hand of the tyrant is mighty, but the flag of rebellion is there!
There's the bloodthirsty flag of the Kaiser, a monarch whom nations can fear,
But William will pause ere he marches because of the Old Rebel Flag in the Rear.
We sing of the Queen of England, her banner that flaunts in the van:
Yet out from the slums of her capital comes that vengeful red banner of man!

One hundred and three

Chris Kempster (1984)

Poem Henry Lawson
Music Chris Kempster

With the frame of a man and the face of a boy, and a manner strangely wild,
and the great, wide, wondering, innocent eyes of a silent-suffering child;
With his hideous dress and his heavy boots, he drags to Eternity -
And the Warder says, in a softened tone: 'Catch step, One-Hundred-and-Three.'

Where five men do the work of a boy, with warders not to see -
It is sad and bad and uselessly mad, it is ugly as it can be,
From the flower-beds shaped to fit the gaol, in circle and line absurd,
To the gilded weathercock on the church, agape like a strangled bird -

The great, round church with its volume of sound, where we dare not turn our eyes -
They take us there from our separate hells to sing of Paradise;
The High Church service swells and swells where the tinted Christs look down -
It is easy to see who is weary and faint and weareth the thorny crown.

The old rebel flag in the rear

Chris Kempster (1984)

When-ev-er the march of op-pres-sion re-duc-es a land to des-pair,
 No mat-ter how might-y the vic-tors, the flag of Re-bel-lion is there.
 A spir-it calls out of the fut-ure, and bids us to strike in our youth
 and the voice of to-day is ap-peal - ing for Lib-er-ty, Jus-tice and truth;
 * There are some in the ranks who are trait-ors and some who will fal-ter and fear,
 Yet on the arch of the morning we march, the Old Re-bel flag in the Rear.
 * Chorus
 'Twill ne-ver be furled there's in the world, it nev-er will fall till there's just-ice for all.
 That old Re-bel flag, that old Re-bel flag, that old Re-bel flag in the Rear.

* Chris Kempster sings "some" in place of "men", & has added the chorus.

Poem Henry Lawson
 Music Chris Kempster

Whenever the march of oppression reduces a land to despair,
 No matter how mighty the victors, the flag of Rebellion is there.
 A spirit calls out of the future, and bids us to strike in our youth -
 And the voice of to-day is appealing for Liberty, Justice, and Truth;
 There are men in the ranks who are traitors. And men who will falter and fear,
 Yet on through the arch of the morning we march 'neath the Old Rebel Flag in the Rear.

Chorus
 'Twill never be furled while there's wrong in the world, it never will fall till there's justice for all,
 That Old Rebel Flag, that Old Rebel Flag, that Old Rebel Flag in the Rear.

The water-lily

Chris Kempster (1966)

Verse
 Come mamma come quick etc.
 Chorus
 Come mamma come quick etc. (Chorus repeated)

Poem Henry Lawson
 Music Chris Kempster

A lonely young wife in her dreaming discerns a lily-decked pool with a border of ferns.
 And a beautiful child, with butterfly wings, trips down to the edge of the water and sings:

Chorus
 'Come, mamma! come! quick! follow me - step out on the leaves of the water-lily!'

And the lonely young wife, her heart beating wild, cries, 'Wait till I come, till I reach you, my child!'
 But the beautiful child with butterfly wings steps out on the leaves of the lily and sings:

And the wife in her dreaming steps out on the stream, but the lily leaves sink and she wakes from her dream.
 Ah, the waking is sad, for the tears that it brings, and she knows 'tis her dead baby's spirit that sings:



Chris was a member of many choirs, groups and bands. Unity Singers, The Bushwhackers, Ramblers, Radiation Quartet.

Pictured here are the Larrikins:
 Warren Fahey, Dave De Hugard, Chris Kempster and Bob McInnes

The days when we went swimming

Chris Kempster (1966)

The breezes waved the sil-ver grass, waist-high a-long the sid-ing,
 And to the creek we ne'er could pass three boys on bare-back rid-ing;
 Be-neath the she-oaks in the bend the wat-er-hole was brim-ming -
 Do you re-mem-ber yet old friend, the times we "went in swim-ming"?

Poem Henry Lawson
 Music Chris Kempster

The breezes waved the silver grass, waist-high along the siding,
 And to the creek we ne'er could pass three boys on bare-back riding;
 Beneath the sheoaks in the bend the waterhole was brimming
 Do you remember yet, old friend, the times we 'went in swimming'?

The days we 'played the wag' from school - joys shared - and paid for singly
 The air was hot, the water cool - and naked boys are kingly!
 With mud for soap the sun to dry - a well-planned lie to stay us,
 And dust well rubbed on neck and face lest cleanliness betray us.

And you'll remember farmer Kutz - though scarcely for his bounty
 He leased a forty-acre block, and thought he owned the county;
 A farmer of the old world school, that men grew hard and grim in,
 He drew his water from the pool that we preferred to swim in.

And do you mind when down the creek his angry way he wended,
 A green-hide cartwhip in his hand for our young backs intended?
 Three naked boys upon the sand - half buried and half sunning
 Three startled boys without their clothes across the paddocks running.

We've had some scares, but we looked blank when, resting there and chumming,
 We glanced by chance along the bank and saw the farmer coming!
 Some home impressions linger yet of cups of sorrow brimming;
 I hardly think that we'll forget the last day we went swimming.

Then Freedom couldn't stand the glare of Royalty's regalia,
 She left the loafers where they were an' came out to Australia.
 But now across the mighty main the chains have come to bind her,
 She little thought to see again the wrongs she left behind her.

Our parents toiled to make a home, hard grubbin' 'twas and clearin',
 They wasn't troubled much with lords when they was pioneerin'.
 But now that we have made the land a garden full of promise,
 Old Greed must crook 'is dirty hand an' come to take it from us.

So we must fly a rebel flag as others did before us,
 And we must sing a rebel song, and join in rebel chorus.
 We'll make the tyrants feel the sting o' those that they would throttle;
 They needn't say the fault is ours if blood should stain the wattle.

Bertha

Chris Kempster (1984)

Wide sol- emn eyes that ques-tion me, wee hand that pats my head -
 Where on- ly two have stroked be-fore, and both of them are dead.
 "Ah, poo-ah Dad-dy mine," she says, with won-drous sym-path-y -
 O bab- y girl, you don't know how you break the heart in me!

Poem Henry Lawson
 Music Chris Kempster

Wide, solemn eyes that question me, wee hand that pats my head -
 Where only two have stroked before, and both of them are dead.
 'Ah, poo-ah Daddy mine,' she says, with wondrous sympathy -
 Oh, baby girl, you don't know how you break the heart in me.

Let friends and kinsfolk work their worst, let all say what they will,
 Your baby arms go round my neck - I'm your own Daddy still!
 And you kiss me and I kiss you, fresh kisses, frank and free -
 Ah, baby girl, you don't know how you break the heart in me!

When I was good I dreamed that when the snow showed in my hair
 A household angel in her teens would flit about my chair,
 To comfort me as I grew old; but that shall never be -
 Ah, baby girl, you don't know how you break the heart in me!

But one shall love me while I live, and soothe my troubled head,
 And never brook an unkind word of me when I am dead.
 Her eyes shall light to hear my name howe'er disgraced it be -
 Ah, baby girl, you don't know how you help the heart in me!

Freedom on the wallaby

Verse, Chris Kempster (1984); Chorus, trad.

Chorus

Aus-tral-ia's a big coun-try an' Free-dom's hump-ing blu-ey,
So we must fly a reb-el flag (etc, final chorus)

An' Free-dom's on the wall-a-by, oh don't you hear 'er coo-ey.
She's just be-gun to boom-er-gang, she'll knock the ty-rants sil-ly.
She's going to light a-noth-er fire and boil a-noth-er bil-ly.

Verse

Our fath-ers toiled for bit-ter bread while loaf-ers thrived be-side 'em
But food to eat and clothes to wear, their nat-ive land den-ied 'em.
An' so they left their nat-ive land in spite of their de-vot-ion,
An' so they came, or if they stole were sent, a-cross the o-ccean.

Poem Henry Lawson
Music Chris Kempster

Australia's a big country an' Freedom's humping bluey,
An' Freedom's on the wallaby, oh don't you hear 'er cooeey.
She's just begun to boomerang, she'll knock the tyrants silly.
She's going to light another fire and boil another billy.

Our fathers toiled for bitter bread while loafers thrived beside 'em.
But food to eat and clothes to wear, their native land denied 'em.
An' so they left their native land in spite of their devotion,
An' so they came, or if they stole were sent, across the ocean.



The drover's sweetheart

Chris Kempster (1981)

An hour be-fore the sun goes down be-hind the rag-ged boughs,
I go a-cross the lit-tle run and bring the dust-y cows;
And once I used to sit and rest be-neath the fact-ing dome,
For there was one that I loved best who'd bring the cat-tle home.

Poem Henry Lawson
Music Chris Kempster

An hour before the sun goes down behind the ragged boughs,
I go across the little run to bring the dusty cows;
And once I used to sit and rest beneath the fading dome,
For there was one that I loved best who'd bring the cattle home.

Our yard is fixed with double bails; round one the grass is green,
The Bush is growing through the rails, the spike is rusted in;
It was from there his freckled face would turn and smile at me;
For he'd milk seven in a race while I was milking three.

He kissed me twice and once again and rode across the hill;
The pint-pots and the hobble-chain I hear them jingling still
About the hut the sunlight fails, the fire shines through the cracks -
I climb the broken stockyard rails and watch the bridle-tracks.

And he is coming back again - he wrote from Evatt's Rock;
A flood was in the Darling then and foot-rot in the flock.
The sheep were falling thick and fast a hundred miles from town,
And when he reached the line at last he trucked the remnant down.

And so he'll have to stand the cost; his luck was always bad,
Instead of making more, he lost the money that he had;
And how he'll manage, Heaven knows (My eyes are getting dim)
He says - he says - he don't suppose I'll want - to - marry - him.

As if I wouldn't take his hand without a golden glove -
Oh! Jack, you men won't understand how much a girl can love.
I long to see his face once more - Jack's dog! thank God, it's Jack! -
(I never thought I'd faint before) he's coming - up - the track.

Down the river

Chris Kempster (1983)

(Freely)

I've done with joys an' mis-er-y, an' why should I re-pine?
 There's no-one knows the past but me an' that ole dog o' mine.
 We camp an' walk an' camp an' walk, an' find it fair-ly good;
 He can do an-y-thing but talk, an' he would'n't if he could.

Poem Henry Lawson
 Music Chris Kempster

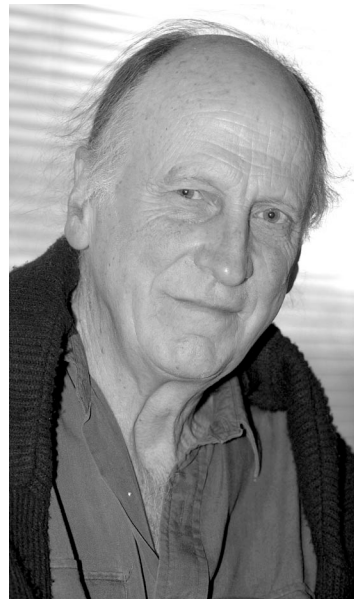
I've done with joys an' misery, an' why should I repine?
 There's no one knows the past but me an' that ole dog o' mine.
 We camp an' walk an' camp an' walk, an' find it fairly good;
 He can do anything but talk, an' he wouldn't if he could.

We sits an' thinks beside the fire, with all the stars a-shine,
 An' no one knows our thoughts but me an' that there dog o' mine.
 We has our Johnny-cake an' 'scrag', an' find 'em fairly good;
 He can do anything but talk, an' he wouldn't if he could.

He gets a 'possum now an' then, I cooks it on the fire;
 He has his water, me me tea - what more could we desire?
 He gets a rabbit when he likes, we finds it pretty good;
 He can do anything but talk, an' he wouldn't if he could.

I has me smoke, he has his rest, when sunset's gettin' dim;
 An' if I do get drunk at times, it's all the same to him.
 So long's he's got me swag to mind, he thinks that times is good.
 (He can do anything but talk, an' he wouldn't if he could.)

He gets his tucker from the cook, for cook is good to him,
 An' when I sobers up a bit, he goes and has a swim.
 He likes the rivers where I fish, an' all the world is good;
 He can do anything but talk, an' he wouldn't if he could.



The roaring days

Chris Kempster (1983)

The night too quickly passes and we are growing old,
 So let us fill our glasses and toast the Days of Gold;
 When finds of wondrous treasure set all the South ablaze,
 And you and I were faithful mates all through the roaring days!

Then stately ships came sailing from every harbour's mouth,
 And sought the land of promise that beacons in the South:
 The brooding bush, awakened, was stirred in wild unrest,
 And all the year a human stream went pouring to the West.

And when the cheery camp-fire explored the bush with gleams,
 The camping-grounds were crowded with caravans of teams;
 Then home the jests were driven, and good old songs were sung,
 And choruses were given the strength of heart and lung.

Off when the camps were dreaming, and fires began to pale,
 Through rugged ranges gleaming swept on the Royal Mail.
 Behind six foaming horses, and lit by flashing lamps,
 Old Cobb and Co., in royal state, went dashing past the camps.

O who would paint a goldfield, and paint the picture right,
 As we have often seen it in early morning's light;
 The yellow mounds of mullock with spots of red and white,
 The scattered quartz that glistened like diamonds in light;

But golden days are vanished, and altered is the scene;
 The diggings are deserted, the camping-grounds are green;
 The flaunting flag of progress is in the West unfurled,
 The mighty Bush with iron rails is tethered to the world.

Poem Henry Lawson
 Music Chris Kempster

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