

A. B. Paterson



*Saltbush Bill,
J.P., and
Other Verses*

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Song of the Pen

*Not for the love of women toil we, we of the craft,
Not for the people's praise;
Only because our goddess made us her own and laughed,
Claiming us all our days,*

*Claiming our best endeavour—body and heart and brain
Given with no reserve—
Niggard is she towards us, granting us little gain;
Still, we are proud to serve.*

*Not unto us is given choice of the tasks we try,
Gathering grain or chaff;
One of her favoured servants toils at an epic high,
One, that a child may laugh.*

*Yet if we serve her truly in our appointed place,
Freely she doth accord
Unto her faithful servants always this saving grace,
Work is its own reward!*

Song of the Wheat

We have sung the song of the droving days,
Of the march of the travelling sheep;
By silent stages and lonely ways
Thin, white battalions creep.
But the man who now by the land would thrive
Must his spurs to a plough-share beat.
Is there ever a man in the world alive
To sing the song of the Wheat!

It's west by south of the Great Divide
The grim grey plains run out,
Where the old flock-masters lived and died
In a ceaseless fight with drought.
Weary with waiting and hope deferred
They were ready to own defeat,
Till at last they heard the master-word—
And the master-word was Wheat.

Yarran and Myall and Box and Pine—

'Twas axe and fire for all;
They scarce could tarry to blaze the line
Or wait for the trees to fall,
Ere the team was yoked, and the gates flung wide,
And the dust of the horses' feet
Rose up like a pillar of smoke to guide
The wonderful march of Wheat.

Furrow by furrow, and fold by fold,
The soil is turned on the plain;
Better than silver and better than gold
Is the surface-mine of the grain;
Better than cattle and better than sheep
In the fight with drought and heat;
For a streak of stubbornness, wide and deep,
Lies hid in a grain of Wheat.

When the stock is swept by the hand of fate,
Deep down in his bed of clay
The brave brown Wheat will lie and wait
For the resurrection day:
Lie hid while the whole world thinks him dead;
But the Spring-rain, soft and sweet,
Will over the steaming paddocks spread
The first green flush of the Wheat.

Green and amber and gold it grows
When the sun sinks late in the West;
And the breeze sweeps over the rippling rows
Where the quail and the skylark nest.
Mountain or river or shining star,
There's never a sight can beat—
Away to the sky-line stretching far—
A sea of the ripening Wheat.

When the burning harvest sun sinks low,
And the shadows stretch on the plain,
The roaring strippers come and go
Like ships on a sea of grain;
Till the lurching, groaning waggons bear
Their tale of the load complete.
Of the world's great work he has done his share
Who has gathered a crop of wheat.

Princes and Potentates and Czars,

They travel in regal state,
But old King Wheat has a thousand cars
For his trip to the water-gate;
And his thousand steamships breast the tide
And plough thro' the wind and sleet
To the lands where the teeming millions bide
That say: "Thank God for Wheat!"

Brumby's Run

Brumby is the Aboriginal word for a wild horse. At a recent trial
a N.S.W. Supreme Court Judge, hearing of Brumby horses,
asked:

"Who is Brumby, and where is his Run?"

It lies beyond the Western Pines
Towards the sinking sun,
And not a survey mark defines
The bounds of "Brumby's Run".

On odds and ends of mountain land,
On tracks of range and rock
Where no one else can make a stand,
Old Brumby rears his stock.

A wild, unhandled lot they are
Of every shape and breed.
They venture out 'neath moon and star
Along the flats to feed;

But when the dawn makes pink the sky
And steals along the plain,
The Brumby horses turn and fly
Towards the hills again.

The traveller by the mountain-track
May hear their hoof-beats pass,
And catch a glimpse of brown and black
Dim shadows on the grass.

The eager stockhorse pricks his ears
And lifts his head on high
In wild excitement when he hears
The Brumby mob go by.

Old Brumby asks no price or fee
O'er all his wide domains:
The man who yards his stock is free
To keep them for his pains.

So, off to scour the mountain-side
With eager eyes aglow,
To strongholds where the wild mobs hide
The gully-rakers go.

A rush of horses through the trees,
A red shirt making play;
A sound of stockwhips on the breeze,
They vanish far away!

.

Ah, me! before our day is done
We long with bitter pain
To ride once more on Brumby's Run
And yard his mob again.

Saltbush Bill on the Patriarchs

Come all you little rouseabouts and climb upon my knee;
To-day, you see, is Christmas Day, and so it's up to me
To give you some instruction like—a kind of Christmas tale—
So name your yarn, and off she goes. What, "Jonah and the
Whale"?

Well, whales is sheep I've never shore; I've never been to sea,
So all them great Leviathans is mysteries to me;
But there's a tale the Bible tells I fully understand,
About the time the Patriarchs were settling on the land.

Those Patriarchs of olden time, when all is said and done,
They lived the same as far-out men on many a Queensland run—
A lot of roving, droving men who drifted to and fro,
The same we did out Queensland way a score of years ago.

Now Isaac was a squatter man, and Jacob was his son,
And when the boy grew up, you see, he wearied of the run.
You know the way that boys grow up—there's some that stick at
home;