

Classic Poetry Series

Edwin James Brady

- 9 poems -

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Edwin James Brady (7 August 1869 – 22 August 1952)

Early Life

Edwin James Brady (1869-1952), journalist and writer, was born on 7 August 1869 at Carcoar, New South Wales, son of Irish parents, Edward John Brady, mounted police constable, and his wife Hannah, née Kenny. His father had migrated first to the United States of America where he had fought in the civil war. Brady was educated at Oberon Public School, then in Washington D.C. where his family settled in 1881. Homesick they returned to Sydney next year, and Brady went to two Catholic schools, then in 1884 passed the junior public examination from St Patrick's Boys' School. He worked on the Ben Buckler sewer and matriculated, but only attended a few evening lectures at the University of Sydney.

Brady became interested in sailing-ships while a timekeeper for Dalgety & Co. Ltd on the Sydney wharves; he refused to be sworn in as a special constable during the maritime strike of 1890 and was dismissed. He became secretary of the Australian Socialist League, a member of the Labor Electoral League, editing its newspaper, the Australian Workman, and joined a clerks' union. He was narrowly defeated for Labor pre-selection in West Sydney in 1890. Through these activities he became friendly with many early socialists and Labor supporters. Between attempts at farming Brady worked as a dramatic reporter for Truth, wrote features for the Sunday Times, the Freeman's Journal, and the Bird O'Freedom, and edited the Arrow from 1896. On 30 October 1890 at Paddington he had married Marion Cecilia Walsh, whom he divorced for adultery on 28 May 1895. At Smithfield on 12 June he married a divorcee Annie Creo Dooley (d.1940), née Stanley, but they soon separated and she, reputedly, refused him a divorce. From about 1902 he lived with Norma Linda Dalby (d.1936).

Poetry

Brady's verse appeared in the Bulletin from May 1891. The publication of his first volume, *The Ways of Many Waters*, in 1899, reinforced his many literary friendships with Henry Lawson, A. G. Stephens, J. F. Archibald, and others. After a wagon journey from Sydney to Townsville in 1899-1900, Brady bought a half-share in the Grafton Grip, and edited it until 1903. Wearying of country life, he sold out, set up the Commonwealth Press Agency in Sydney and briefly edited the Labor paper, *Australian Worker*, until he moved his press agency to Melbourne in 1906. He edited there a short-lived literary monthly, the *Native Companion*, in which he published Katherine Mansfield's first short stories and contributions from Katharine Susannah Prichard. 1911 was a prolific year for Brady: he published an account of his wagon trip as *The King's Caravan* (London); a book, *River Rovers* (Melbourne), about a trip

in an open boat down the Murray from Albury; another volume of collected verse, *Bells and Hobbles* (Melbourne); and *Tom Padgin, Pirate* (Sydney), illustrated by Lionel Lindsay. Next year he visited parts of south-east Asia, and soon after set up camp at Mallacoota, Victoria, to write free of distractions. His only very profitable book was *Australia Unlimited* (Melbourne, 1918), a comprehensive survey of Australia's primary industries.

Later Life

Brady spent the rest of his life at Mallacoota, with intervals in Melbourne. His interests were wide-ranging: he attempted to establish a south-coast railway, timber-mills, and gold-mines; to grow medicinal plants; to sell a mechanical voting machine; to set up a commercial publishing venture with Randolph Bedford, and a co-operative for some of Melbourne's unemployed; but he continually reverted to publicity work and journalism. He wrote *The Land of the Sun* (London, 1924) after a visit to Queensland, and contributed weekly to *Labor Call* (Melbourne) in the early 1930s under the pseudonym 'Scrutator'. He ghosted several books on economics, compiled a biography, *Doctor Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne* (1934), and wrote many unpublished short stories and poems. Brady received Commonwealth literary fellowships, in 1941 to write *Two Frontiers* (Sydney, 1944), an account of his father's adventures, and, in 1944, for a biography of Archibald which was not published. His most substantial literary achievement is as a balladist of the sea—John Masefield, for one, keenly appreciated his energy and enthusiasm.

Brady died in hospital at Pambula, New South Wales, on 22 July 1952 and was buried with Anglican rites in Mallacoota West cemetery. He was survived by three sons and three daughters, and by his third wife Florence Jane, née Bourke, an artist, whom he had married on 10 June 1942 at St Augustine's Church of England, Mentone, Victoria, and by their daughter.

Works:

Poetry

The Ways of Many Waters (1899)
The Earthen Floor (1902)
The Ways of Many Waters (1909)
Bushland ballads (1910)
Bells and Hobbles (1911)
The House of the Winds (1919)
Wardens of the Seas (1933)

Prose

Sydney Harbour (1903)

Dross and Gold

****Life is dross, but Love is gold***
So, throughout the numbered days.

Mine to keep and thine to hold.
Be it as the Master says.

Clean-intentioned ; each to each
Shall a Staff of Travel be,

Down the Roadway to the Beach
Of the tideless, timeless Sea,

Down the Roadway of the years
Till our Web of Life is spun.

Ours the laughter and the tears;
Ours the cream of cloud and sun.

Some there be who place and gain

Reckon over and above;
Some there be who joy and pain

Weigh in equal scales — of Love:

Those shall be as they were not.
At the Road-end by the Shore;

These, who lost and who forgot
Shall have triumphed evermore.

Edwin James Brady

Lost and Given Over

A Mermaid's not a human thing,
An' courtin' such is folly;
Of flesh an' blood I'd rather sing,
What ain't so melancholy.
Oh, Berta! Loo! Jaunita! Sue!
Here's good luck to me and you—
Sing rally! ri-a-rally!
The seas is deep; the seas is wide;
But this I'll prove whate'er betide,
I'm bully in the alley!
I'm bull-ee in our al-lee!

The Hooghli gal'er face is brown;
The Hilo gal is lazy;
The gal that lives by 'Obart town
She'd drive a dead man crazy;
Come, wet your lip, and let it slip!
The Gretna Green's a tidy ship—
Sing rally!
The seas is deep; the seas is blue;
But 'ere's good 'ealth to me and you,
Ho, rally!

The Lord may drop us off our pins
To feed 'is bloomin' fishes;
But Lord forgive us for our sins—
Our sins is most delicious!
Come, drink it up and fill yer cup!
The world it owes us bite and sup,
And Mimi, Ju-Ju, Sally;
The seas is long; the winds is strong;
The best of men they will go wrong—
Hi, rally! ri-a-rally!

The Bowery gal she knows 'er know;
The Frisco gal is silly;
The Hayti gal ain't white as snow—
They're whiter down in Chili.
Now what's the use to shun the booze?
They'll flop your bones among the ooze
Sou'-west-by-Sou' the galley.
The seas is green; the seas is cold;
The best of men they must grow old—
Sing rally! ri-a-rally!

All round the world where'er I roam,
This lesson I am learnin':
If you've got sense you'll stop at home
And save the bit yer earnin'.
So hang the odds! It's little odds,
When every 'eathen 'as 'is gods,
And neither two will tally:

When black and white drink, wimmin, fight—
In these three things they're all alright—
Sing rally! ri-a-rally!

When double bunks, Fo'castle end,
Is all the kind that's carried,
Our manners they will likely mend—
Most likely we'll be married.
But till sich time as that be done,
We'll take our fun as we've begun—
Sing rally!
The flesh is weak; the world is wide;
The dead man 'e goes overside—
Sing rally! rally!

We're given and lost to the girls that wait
From Trinity to Whitsund'y,
From Sunda Strait to the Golden Gate
An' back to the Bay o' Fundy;
Oh, it's Mabel, Loo, an' it's Nancy-Poo,
An' 'ere's good luck, an' I love you—
Sing rally!
Oh, it's cents an' dollars an' somebody hollers—
The sun comes up an' the mornin' follers—
Sing rally!

We're given an' lost to the octoroon,
The Portugee cruiser painty,
The Chinkie gal with 'er eyes 'arf-moon,
An' the Japanee darlin' dainty.
Oh, it's Tokio-town when the sun goes down,
It's 'arf-a-pint and it's 'arf-a-crown—
Sing rally!
'Er spars may lift an' 'er keel can shift,
When a man is done 'e 's got to drift—
Sing rally! Ho, rally!

The Hooghli gal 'er face is brown,
The Hilo gal's a daisy,
The gal that lives by 'Obart town
She'd drive a dead man crazy.
So, pretty an' plain, it's Sarah Jane
'Uggin' an' kissin' an' 'Come again!
Sing rally! ri-a-rally!
The seas is deep; the seas is wide;
But this I'll prove what else betide,
I'm bully in the alley,
Ho! Bullee in the Al-lee!

Edwin James Brady

Roderic Quinn

No more will Rod his lyrics sing,
As tuneful as the thrush when Spring
With minstrel voice is calling;
As joyous as the gentle chime
Of bellbirds in the Summertime
From sylvan spires down-falling.

The harp is mute from which he drew
The magic of a music new
Of woods and golden beaches;
Its silent strings tell ne'er again
Enraptured tales of hill and plain
And gleaming river reaches.

But this fair land shall ever be
Indebted to his minstrelsy,
So, written on the portal
Of Art's proud temple, will his name
Go down forevermore in fame
Untarnished and immortal.

Edwin James Brady

Shadows

Beside the Narrow Crossing-Place
(And night was falling gray),

Two Shadows met, the legends tell. .
Each Shadow went its way.

But there was anguish in their eyes,
And tears in both their hearts.

Beside the Narrow Crossing-Place,
Where Shade from Shadow parts.

For they had seen the Rising Sun

In opal and in rose,
For they had seen the Rising Sun,

Who saw the long day close.

And had they met at Morn or Noon
Who met the shades between?

Ay! had they met at Morn or Noon
And so — the Might-Have-Been !

Edwin James Brady

The 'Bulletin' Stairs

The Mecca of Bohemian men
Was Archibald's untidy den.
Firm-footed near the portals there
Uprose, as now, a spacious stair
That carried nearer to the sky
Their inky hopes in days forebye.

This ladder to Parnassus, they
Expectant climbed - as still one may.
Oft-times upon its steps appeared
The wiry brush of Daley's beard,
Of Henry Lawson's drooped moustache
Would upward glide and downward dash.

Betimes - a gem his pocket in -
Meandered upward Ronald Quinn,
Or Bayldon bore a sonnet new,
Or Broomfield occupied the view
Insistent, in a manner vain,
On making passes with his cane.

These might encounter on the way
The 'Banjo' glum, or Hugh McCrae
Or Souter with a leering cat
Or Bedford in a Queensland hat;
And other penmen debonair
Familiar with that famous stair.

The Red Tressed Maiden, all aglow,
And Clancy of the Overflow
And Dad and Dave, in company
With Ginger Mick and Jock MacFee,
From time to time, in singles, pairs,
By hand or post went up those stairs!

Awaiting by McMahan's door
For silver, little, less, or more,
Met jesting genius to abuse
The landlords and the lending Jews.
Anon with cash in hand such drear
Considerations - drowned in beer -

Would pass as pass the clouds of morn;
And from their ready wits, reborn
As from a fount in Arcady,
Would flow fair dreams of Days-to-Be,
When, in this Southland, shore to shore,
Art was enthroned for evermore.

That noble vision yet I hold
More precious is than all the gold
That men have dug from southern earth.

In loyal hearts it had its birth;
In loyal minds it will become
A trumpet-note, a calling drum

To lead this nation onward, and
To glorify and grace the land.
And through that fellowship may ne'er,
As then it was, re-climb the Stair
Its voices echo down the years -
The voices of the pioneers!

Edwin James Brady

The Great Grey Water

Now two have met, now two have met,
Who may not meet again—
Two grains of sand, two blades of grass,
Two threads within the skein—
Beside the Great Grey Water.

Two hands to touch, two hearts to touch;
And, here forgathered, we
Will not forget, may not forget,
Where last forgathered three—
Beyond the Great Grey Water.

Two glasses filled, two pipes to fill—
'To all our fortunes, brother!'
And as they clink—like so—we drink
Fair passage to the other
Across the Great Grey Water.

For three have sailed, and one has sailed,
His sins, like ours, still on him,
God sleep his soul! five oceans roll
Their long weight all upon him.
O God! thy Great Grey Water!

But I am still, and you are still,
And here our chance has flung us;
True comrades we, but...there were three
And one is not among us
Beside the Great Grey Water.

A breathing space, a biding place,
Soft lights and beakers beaded,
Then out again and on again,
Unminded and unheeded,
Across the Great Grey Water.

Now two have met where three have met
With curses or with laughter;
And so our Day shall pass away,
And so our Night come after—
But, ah! the Great Grey Water

Edwin James Brady

The Wardens of the Seas

Like star points in the ether to guide a homing soul
Towards God's Eternal Haven; above the wash and roll,
Across and o'er the oceans, on all the coasts they stand
Tall seneschals of commerce, High Wardens of the Strand --
 The white lights slowly turning
 Their kind eyes far and wide,
 The red and green lights burning
 Along the waterside.

When Night with breath of aloes, magnolia, spice, and balm
Creeps down the darkened jungles and mantles reef and palm,
By velvet waters making soft music as they surge
The shore lights of dark Asia will one by one emerge --
 Oh, Ras Marshig by Aden
 Shows dull on hazy nights;
 And Bombay Channel's laid in
 Its "In" and "Outer" lights.

When Night, in rain-wet garments comes sobbing cold and grey
Across the German Ocean and South from Stornoway,
Thro' snarling darkness slowly, some fixed and some a-turn,
The bright shore-lights of Europe like welcome tapers burn, --
 From fierce Fruholmen streaming
 O'er Northern ice and snow,
 To Cape St. Vincent gleaming, --
 These lamps of danger glow.

The dark Etruscan tending his watchfires by the shore,
On sacred altars burning, the world shall know no more;
His temple's column standing against the ancient stars
Is gone; Now bright catoptrics flash out electric bars, --
 Slow swung his stately Argos
 Unto the Tiber's mouth;
 But now the Tuscan cargoes
 Screw-driven, stagger South.

The lantern of Genoa guides home no Eastern fleets
As when the boy Columbus played in its narrow streets:
No more the Keltic `dolmens' their fitful warnings throw
Across the lone Atlantic, so long, so long ago --
 No more the beaked prows dashing
 Shall dare a shoreward foam;
 No more will great oars threshing
 Sweep Dorian galleys home.

No more the Vikings roaring their sagas wild and weird
Proclaim that Rome has fallen; no more a consul feared
Shall quench the Roman pharos lest Northern pirates free
Be pointed to their plunder on coasts of Italy --
 Nor shall unwilling lovers,
 From Lethean pleasures torn,
 Fare nor'ward with those rovers,

To frozen lands forlorn.

The bale-fires and the watch-fires, the wrecker's foul false lure
No more shall vex the shipmen; and on their course secure
Past Pharos in the starlight the tow'ring hulls of Trade
Race in and out from Suez in iron cavalcade, --
 So rode one sunset olden
 Across the dark'ning sea,
 With banners silk and golden,
 The Barge of Antony!

They loom along the foreshores; they gleam across the Straits;
They guide the feet of Commerce unto the harbor gates.
In nights of storm and thunder, thro' fog and sleet and rain,
Like stars on angels' foreheads, they give man heart again, --
 Oh, hear the high waves smashing
 On Patagonia's shore!
 Oh, hear the black waves threshing
 Their weight on Skerryvore!

He searches night's grim chances upon his bridge alone
And seeks the distant glimmer of hopeful Eddystone:
And thro' a thick fog creeping, with chart and book and lead,
The homeward skipper follows their green and white and red --
 By day his lighthouse wardens
 In sunlit quiet stand,
 But in the night the burdens
 Are theirs of Sea and Land.

They fill that night with Knowledge. A thousand ships go by,
A thousand captains bless them, so bright and proud and high:
The world's dark capes they glamour; or low on sand banks dread,
They, crouching, mark a pathway between the Quick and Dead --
 Like star points in the ether
 They bring the seamen ease,
 These Lords of Wind and Weather
 These Wardens of the Seas!

Edwin James Brady

Twilight

When a heavy surf is droning
In the twilight on the bar;
When our Mother Sea is crooning
Her quaint cradle-song afar;
When the wild black swans are lining
To some still, remote lagoon;
And above the headland, shining,
Hangs a quiet, crescent moon;
When the panoply, the splendor
Of the tropic sunset dies, —
Then my Fancy turns to tender
Dreams beneath the queenly skies.
Dear-loved Loadstone of my longing.
Fair, fond Woman of my heart!
When the twilight thoughts are thronging.
Art thou dreaming, too, apart?
Yes, my Spirit echoes truly;
'Circling seas shall, with the tide.
Pulse on either shore of Thule,
In the Dream Beatified.
'Surely as the mystic Crescent
Sillvers now a garden fair,
Will the shining, white, liquescent
Light of Love burn also there!**
So I mourn not that the splendor
Of the dead Day lies in pall.
When the Night her brooding, tender
Wings of fantasy lets fall.
In the dusk Tm sitting, building
Tall cloud-castles by the sea ;
In the dusk my Love is gilding
Castles fair for her and me.
Edwin James Brady

Vive Anarchy

With the lifting of the curtain,
Distance, dim, but grimly certain,
Breaks my vision of a city, populous and great,
To my senses, sorrow-sated,
Senses sad and satiated, Faintly comes the thunder peal of treasured wrong and hate
 Broken down,
 Beaten down,
By awakened people and the iron arm of Fate.
Pallid forms, by famine shrunken,
Helots, harlots, ribald, drunken,
Wine and blood-wet, onward thro' the torchlit highways sweep,
Through a city disunited,
Through a city flame ignited,
To the sound of song and trumpet and the cannon's deep
 Distant boom,
 Through the gloom,
While the fire fiends madly leaps from tower to temple steep.

Reinforced from slum and alley,
By this wild and weird reveille,
Pours the army of the people where their banners drape,
In a city barricaded,
In a city fusilladed
By the deadly rifle and the Gatling and the grape,
 Crashing down,
 Smashing down
Lanes and alleys filthy, and the foul abode of rape.

Tyrants flee and cowards falter-,
For a lamp-post and a halter
Wait for every tyrant at the corner of the street,
In the hour of retribution,
In the night of revolution,
When on common ground the tyrant and the helot meet,
 Endless wrongs,
 Countless wrongs,
Burning in the helot's bosom - fanned to fever heat.

Let the tyrant beg no pity-
His the palace, his the city,
His the silken raiment and the costly food and wine;
Ours the forms emaciated,
Of the women violated,
Ours the endless torture in the workshop and the mine;
 Hunted down,
 Hounded down
To the level of the felon and the concubine.

By our women fever-stricken,
Where the foetid odours thicken
In the homes of hunger, where the children cry for bread;
By your soulless apathetic,

Scorning of our wrongs pathetic,
By the seas of blood and tears by generations shed,
 Stealing down,
 Streaming down-
Now we ask, with smoking rifle, "vengeance on your head."

Marching on with footsteps steady,
Shotted guns and bayonets ready,
Goes the army of the people, in the days to be,
Through a city barricaded,
Through a city fusilladed,
Where the discontented masses struggle to be free,
 Breaking down,
 Beating down
Wrongs of ages to the song of "Long Live Anarchy."

Edwin James Brady