

Classic Poetry Series

Harry Breaker Morant

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

A Song

The sun may shine, the rain may fall,
And the world roll round about, -
The king's men and king's horses all
Can never rub one thing out.

Skies may darken - clouds will flit -
Troubles may gather and go:
For my sweetheart loves me "just a bit!"
And, oh! I love her so.

The vapour vanishes in the sun!
So pass cures, doubts, and pains -
For I'm "loved a bit" by the dearest one,
And the best the world contains.

Harry Breaker Morant

A-Shelling Peas

Now, all the world is green and bright
Outside the latticed pane;
The fields are decked with gold and white,
And Spring has come again.
But though the world be fair without,
With flow'rs and waving trees,
'Tis pleasanter to be about
Where Nell's a-shelling peas.

Her eyes are blue as cloudless skies,
And dimples deck her cheeks;
Whilst soft lights loiter in her eyes
Whene'er she smiles or speaks.
So all the sunlit morning-tide
I dally at mine ease,
To loaf at slender Nelly's side
When Nell's a-shelling peas.

This bard, who sits a-watching Nell,
With fingers white and slim,
Owns up that, as she breaks each shell,
She also "breaks up" him;
And could devoutly drop upon
Submissive, bended knees
To worship Nell with apron on -
A saint a-shelling peas.

The tucked-up muslin sleeves disclose
Her round arms white and bare -
'Tis only "shelling peas" that shows
Those dainty dimples there.
Old earth owns many sights to see
That captivate and please; -
The most bewitching sight for me
Is Nell a-shelling peas.

Harry Breaker Morant

His Masterpiece

Never before was daughter of Eve endow'd with a face so fair,
There be none of God's holy angels with a beauty half so rare
As thine, nor dreamer has ever dreamed the loveliness you wear.
There's a gleam in your golden tress, Lieb! a light in your melting eye!
There is witchery in your smile, Lieb! and a magic in your sigh
That may lure the strong ones to your shrine to worship and - to die.
And I - when you whispered softly, Lieb - perchance would have worshipped, too,
Had bowed to the spell of your beauty-an' it were not that I knew
The Devil had wrought his masterpiece what time he fashioned you.

Harry Breaker Morant

Love Outlasteth All

Could I borrow the laverock's lifting note,
Or the silvery song from the blackbird's throat,
Then would I warble the whole day long,
Telling, in floods of passionate song,
How worlds might tremble, or skies might fall.
But Love, true Love, outlasteth all.

Or, with picturesque words, in phrases neat,
With ringing rhymes, and in sonnets sweet,
Had I the skill of the schoolman's craft
My song the murmurous breeze should waft,
And tell to her whom my heart loves best,
How Love outlasteth all the rest.

Harry Breaker Morant

Night Thought

The world around is sleeping,
The stars are bright o'erhead,
The shades of myalls weeping
Upon the sward are spread;
Among the gloomy pinetops
The fitful breezes blow,
And their murmurs seem the music
Of a song of long ago;
Soft, passionate, and wailing
Is the tender old refrain -
With a yearning unavailing -
"Will he no come back again?"

The camp-fire sparks are flying
Up from the pine-log's glow,
The wandering wind is sighing
That ballad sweet and low;
The drooping branches gleaming
In the firelight, sway and stir;
And the bushman's brain is dreaming
Of the song she sang, and her.
And the murmurs of the forest
Ring home to heart and brain,
As in the pine is chorused
"Will he no come back again?"

Harry Breaker Morant

Summer Midnight

Athwart the star-lit midnight sky
Luminous fleecy clouds drift by,
As the mysterious, pallid moon
Sinks in the waveless still lagoon.
Now that the queen of night is dead,
The starry commonwealth o'erhead
(Softer and fairer than gaudy day)
Sheds lustrous light from the Milky Way;
While the Dog-star gleams, and the Sisters Seven,
Float tremulously in the misty heaven.
Faintly, afar the horse-bells ring;
Myriads of wakened crickets sing;
And the spirit voices of the night
Sing snatches of fairy music bright,
Old-world melodies - lang syne sung -
Recalling days when the heart was young,
Whose wonderful cadences fall and rise,
As the wind in the casuarina sighs;
And the world seems 'gulfed, this summer night,
In a flood of delicious, dreamy light.

Harry Breaker Morant

To a Silent Girl

When the skill'd fashioner of female faces
Designed your mask, he wrought with cunning fist,
And made a mouth expressly to be kiss'd -
Not for shrill utterance nor pert grimaces.

The curved, ripe lips-above the rounded chin -
He dyed the hue of summer's reddest rose,
Then placed a smile upon them to disclose
A glimpse of white and even pearls within.

Those lips are silent, sweetheart! - but your eyes
Are eloquent, and they love's lesson teach
Better than other woman's aptest speech -
In their soft light the tend'rest language lies.

In womankind - the world has long confess'd -
A silent mouth and speaking eyes are best.

Harry Breaker Morant

Two Gossips

One fox-faced virgin, word for word,
Repeats each sland'rous thing she's heard,
And sourly smiles as scandal slips
With gusto from her thin white lips.

She's bad enough! but list a minute.
Beside her mate she isn't in it.
This latter lady, 'pon my word,
Repeats things . . . she has never heard.

Harry Breaker Morant

West by North Again

We've drunk our wine, we've kissed our girls, and funds are sinking low,
The horses must be thinking it's a fair thing now to go;
Sling the swags on Condamine and strap the billies fast,
And stuff a bottle in the bags and let's be off at last.
What matter if the creeks are up - the cash, alas, runs down!
A very sure and certain sign we're long enough in town.
The black fella rides the boko, and you'd better take the bay,
Quart Pot will do to carry me the stage we go today.

No grass this side the Border fence! and all the mulga's dead!
The horses for a day or two will have to spiel ahead;
Man never yet from Queensland brought a bullock or a back
But lost condition on that God-abandoned Border track.

When once we're through the rabbit-proof - it's certain since the rain -
There's whips o' grass and water, so, it's West by North again!
There's feed on Tyson's country - we can "spell" the mokes a week
Where Billy Stevens last year trapped his brumbies on Bough Creek.

The Paroo may be quickly crossed - the Eulo Common's bare;
And, anyhow, it isn't wise, old man! to dally there.
Alack-a-day! far wiser men than you and I succumb
To woman's wiles, and potency of Queensland wayside rum.

Then over sand and spinifex and on, o'er ridge and plain!
The nags are fresh - besides, they know they're westward-bound again.
The brand upon old Darkie's thigh is that upon the hide
Of bullocks we must muster on the Diamantina side.

We'll light our camp-fires where we may, and yarn beside their blaze;
The jingling hobble-chains shall make a music through the days.
And while the tucker-bags are right, and we've a stick of weed,
A swagman shall be welcome to a pipe-full and a feed.

So, fill your pipe! and, ere we mount, we'll drink another nip -
Here's how that West by North again may prove a lucky trip;
Then back again - I trust you'll find your best girl's merry face,
Or, if she jilts you, may you get a better in her place.

Harry Breaker Morant

Westward Ho!

There's a damper in the ashes, tea and sugar in the bags,
There's whips of feed and shelter on the sandridge for the nags,
There's gidya wood about us and water close at hand,
And just one bottle left yet of the good Glenlivet brand.

There are chops upon the embers, which same are close-up done,
From as fine a four-tooth wether as there is on Crossbred's run;
'Twas a proverb on the Darling, the truth of which I hold:
"That mutton's aye the sweetest which was never bought nor sold."

Out of fifty thousand wethers surely Crossbred shouldn't miss
A sheep or so to travellers-faith, 'tis dainty mutton, this -
Let's drink a nip to Crossbred; ah, you drain it with a grin,
Then shove along the billy, mate, and, squatted, let's wade in.

The night's a trifle chilly, and the stars are very bright,
A heavy dew is falling, but the fly is rigged aright;
You may rest your bones till morning, then if you chance to wake,
Give me a call about the time that daylight starts to break.

We may not camp to-morrow, for we've many a mile to go,
Ere we turn our horses' heads round to make tracks for down below.
There's many a water-course to cross, and many a black-soil plain,
And many a mile of mulga ridge ere we get back again.

That time five moons shall wax and wane we'll finish up the work,
Have the bullocks o'er the border and truck 'em down from Bourke,
And when they're sold at Homebush, and the agents settle up,
Sing hey! a spell in Sydney town and Melbourne for the "Cup".

Harry Breaker Morant

Who's Riding Old Harlequin Now?

They are mustering cattle on Brigalow Vale
Where the stock-horses whinny and stamp,
And where long Andy Ferguson, you may go bail,
Is yet boss on a cutting-out camp.
Half the duffers I met would not know a fat steer
From a blessed old Alderney cow.
Whilst they're mustering there I am wondering here -
Who is riding brown Harlequin now?

Are the pikers as wild and the scrubs just as dense
In the brigalow country as when
There was never a homestead and never a fence
Between Brigalow Vale and The Glen?
Do they yard the big micks 'neath the light of the moon?
Do the yard-wings re-echo the row
Of stockwhips and hoof-beats? And what sort of coon
Is there riding old Harlequin now?

There was buckjumping blood in the brown gelding's veins,
But, lean-headed, with iron-like pins,
Of Pyrrhus and Panic he'd plentiful strains,
All their virtues, and some of their sins.
'Twas the pity, some said, that so shapely a colt
Fate should with such temper endow;
He would kick and would strike, he would buck and would bolt -
Ah! who's riding brown Harlequin now?

A demon to handle! a devil to ride!
Small wonder the surcingle burst;
You'd have thought that he'd buck himself out of his hide
On the morning we saddled him first.
I can mind how he cow-kicked the spur on my boot,
And though that's long ago, still I vow
If they're wheeling a piker no new-chum galoot
Is a-riding old Harlequin now!

I remember the boss - how he chuckled and laughed
When they yarded the brown colt for me:
"He'll be steady enough when we finish the graft
And have cleaned up the scrubs of Glen Leigh!"
I am wondering today if the brown horse yet live,
For the fellow who broke him, I trow,
A long lease of soul-ease would willingly give
To be riding brown Harlequin now!

'Do you think you can hold him?' old Ferguson said -
He was mounted on Homet, the grey;
I think Harlequin heard him - he shook his lean head,
And he needed no holding that day.
Not a prick from a spur, nor a sting from a whip
As he raced among deadwood and bough
While I sat fairly quiet and just let him rip -

But who's riding old Harlequin now?

I could hear 'em a-crashing the gidgee in front
As the Bryan colt streaked to the lead
Whilst the boss and the niggers were out of the hunt.
For their horses lacked Harlequin's speed;
The pikers were yarded and skies growing dim
When old Fergie was fain to allow:
'The colt's track through the scrub was a knocker' to him -
But who's riding brown Harlequin now?

From starlight to starlight - all day in between
The foam-flakes might fly from his bit,
But whatever the pace of the day's work had been,
The brown gelding was eager and fit.
On the packhorse's back they are fixing a load
Where the path climbs the hill's gloomy brow;
They are mustering bullocks to send on the road,
But - who's riding old Harlequin now?

Harry Breaker Morant