

Classic Poetry Series

Mary Hannay Foott

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Happy Days

A fringe of rushes -- one green line
Upon a faded plain;
A silver streak of water-shine --
Above, tree-watchers twain.
It was our resting-place awhile,
And still, with backward gaze,
We say: "'Tis many a weary mile --
But there were happy days."

And shall no ripple break the sand
Upon our farther way?
Or reedy ranks all knee-deep stand?
Or leafy tree-tops sway?
The gold of dawn is surely met
In sunset's lavish blaze;
And -- in horizons hidden yet --
There shall be happy days.

Mary Hannay Foott

New Country

Conde had come with us all the way --
Eight hundred miles -- but the fortnight's rest
Made him fresh as a youngster, the sturdy bay!
And Lurline was looking her very best.

Weary and footsore, the cattle strayed
'Mid the silvery saltbush well content;
Where the creeks lay cool 'neath the gidya's shade
The stock-horses clustered, travel-spent.

In the bright spring morning we left them all --
Camp, and cattle, and white, and black --
And rode for the Range's westward fall,
Where the dingo's trail was the only track.

Slow through the clay-pans, wet to the knee,
With the cane-grass rustling overhead;
Swift o'er the plains with never a tree;
Up the cliffs by a torrent's bed.

Bridle on arm for a mile or more
We toiled, ere we reached Bindanna's verge
And saw -- as one sees a far-off shore --
The blue hills bounding the forest surge.

An ocean of trees, by the west wind stirred,
Rolled, ever rolled, to the great cliff's base;
And its sound like the noise of waves was heard
'Mid the rocks and the caves of that lonely place.

We recked not of wealth in stream or soil
As we heard on the heights the breezes sing;
We felt no longer our travel-toil;
We feared no more what the years might bring.

Mary Hannay Foott

No Message

She heard the story of the end,
Each message, too, she heard;
And there was one for every friend;
For her alone -- no word.

And shall she bear a heavier heart,
And deem his love was fled;
Because his soul from earth could part
Leaving her name unsaid?

No -- No! -- Though neither sign nor sound
A parting thought expressed --
Not heedless passed the Homeward-Bound
Of her he loved the best.

Of voyage-perils, bravely borne,
He would not tell the tale;
Of shattered planks and canvas torn,
And war with wind and gale.

He waited till the light-house star
Should rise against the sky;
And from the mainland, looming far,
The forest scents blow by.

He hoped to tell -- assurance sweet! --
That pain and grief were o'er --
What blessings haste the soul to meet,
Ere yet within the door.

Then one farewell he thought to speak
When all the rest were past --
As in the parting-hour we seek
The dearest hand the last.

And while for this delaying but
To see Heaven's opening Gate --
Lo, it received him -- and was shut --
Ere he could say "I wait."

Mary Hannay Foott

The Fate of Bass

On the snow-line of the summit stood the Spaniard's English slave;
And the frightened condor westward flew afar---
Where the torch of Cotopaxi lit the wide Pacific wave,
And the tender moon embraced a new-born star.
Blanched the cheek that Austral breezes off Van Diemen's coast had tanned,
Bent the form that on the deck stood stalwart there;
Slim and pallid as a woman's was the sailor's sunburnt hand,
And untimely silver streaked the strong man's hair.
From the forest far beneath him came the baffled bloodhound's bay,
From the gusty slope the camp-fire's fitful glow;
But the pass the Indian told of o'er the cliff beside him lay,
And beyond---The Mighty River's easward flow.
"Mine the secret of the Incas; to the tyrants never told;
Mine the Cloven Rock; the league long Sculptured Way!
Ere the weary scouts awaken, ere the embers are grown cold---
Ere the dogs in dreams their quarry seize and slay!"
Freedom's threshold!---yet he tarries---gazes seaward, southward still,
Past the gulfs where fainting chain-gangs toil entombed,
And the furnace of the smelter taints the winds of every hill
With the fumes that swathe the dying and the doomed.
Never, never, gallant seaman, may the land that lit thy dreams
In the starless drive make glad thine eyes again---
Where through tropic heavens at midnight the Antarctic glory streams
And a sea of blossom floods the wintry plain.
Never more the settler's welcome, at the sinking of the sun,
Nor his godspeed; mid the fragrant Austral morn!
Shattered, spent, and broken-hearted---yet a guerdon thou hast won,
And where brave souls meet thou shalt not stand forlorn.

Mary Hannay Foott

Where the Pelican Builds

The horses were ready, the rails were down,
But the riders lingered still --
One had a parting word to say,
And one had his pipe to fill.
Then they mounted, one with a granted prayer,
And one with a grief unguessed.
"We are going," they said, as they rode away --
"Where the pelican builds her nest!"

They had told us of pastures wide and green,
To be sought past the sunset's glow;
Of rifts in the ranges by opal lit;
And gold 'neath the river's flow.
And thirst and hunger were banished words
When they spoke of that unknown West;
No drought they dreaded, no flood they feared,
Where the pelican builds her nest!

The creek at the ford was but fetlock deep
When we watched them crossing there;
The rains have replenished it thrice since then,
And thrice has the rock lain bare.
But the waters of Hope have flowed and fled,
And never from blue hill's breast
Come back -- by the sun and the sands devoured --
Where the pelican builds her nest.

Mary Hannay Foott