Classic Poetry Series

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- poems -

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Boomerang

This piece of hardwood, cunningly shaped, was curved so evenly while piccaninnies gaped at a Warrior who chipped at it with pieces of flint, and formed it by meticulous dint upon dint. Outside his wurly he sat beside a tree, and chipped at it patiently for hours - not for me, but to kill the Wallaby in the rocky pass, to kill the fat wild Turkey hiding in the grass.

Macquarie Harbour

Macquarie Harbour jailers lock the sullen gates no more..... but lash-strokes sound in every shock of ocean on the dismal rocks along that barren shore.

No more the bolters hear the hound that bays upon the wind, and terror-spurred kepp onward-bound until they drop upon the ground starved and terror-pinned....

But gales that whine among the hills sniff at the savage tracks the hopeless took. The snowfall fills bleak ranges; then the moonlight spills broad arows on their backs.

Ship from the Thames

Stay, ship from Thames with fettered sails in Sydney Cove, this ebb of tide; your gear untangled from the gales, imprisoned at your anchor ride.

The portly gentleman who are the pillars of the land come down and greet the Newcomes voyaged far to make a name in Sydney town.

The Recoats, too with shouldered arms, marshal pale wretches from the hold, who, cramped in tempest and in calms have learned to do as they are told.

Flash phaetons fill the streets to-day; inn-tables rock to sailor fists; the Governor, while the town is gay, checks over new assignment lists.

Aloof, the slandered and abhorred behold from of a quarried rise, the cause of all the stir aboard a fiercer glitter in their eyes.

The Camp Fires of the Past

A thousand, thousand camp fires every night, in ages gone, would twinkle to the dark from crest and valley in the rolling bush, from mulga scrub and mallee scrub, from dunes of Central sand, from gaps in straggling ranges, from gibber plains and plains of iron-wood, through leaves and in the open, from the mangroves by shore of Carpenteria, from rocks and beaches of the Bight.....for countless aeons, a thousand, thousand camp fires burned each night, and, by the fires, the Old Men told their tales which held their listeners spellbound.... Every night among the fires men chanted to the beat of stick and boomerangs and clap of hands, or drone-and-boom of didgeridoo, the songs rising and falling, trailing, quickening, while eyes gleamed bright, through smoke drift, bodies shone and dusked in fitful glow amid the shadows......