

Classic Poetry Series

William Charles Wentworth

- poems -

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William Charles Wentworth(1790 - 1872)

Explorer and barrister, born on Norfolk Island on 26th October, 1790 and educated in England.

In 1813 Wentworth, accompanied by Lawson and Blaxland, made the first recorded crossing of that part of the Great Dividing Range known as the Blue Mountains.

Wentworth was probably the original Republican, advocating self-government for Australia. He drafted the constitution which gave NSW self-government in 1855.

Wentworth rebuilt Vaucluse House which had began as a humble cottage in 1803. He, and his wife Sarah and their 10 children, lived in the house from 1827-53 and again from 1861-62. Some of the original family belongings and furniture are on display in Vaucluse house today.

The Blue Mountains town of Wentworth Falls and the western Sydney suburb of Wentworthville are named for him.

Wentworth died in England in 1872.

Career Highlights

Acting provost-marshall, New South Wales 1811, granted 1750 acres in the Nepean (Vermont estate), studied law in England 1817-21, published A statistical, Historical, and Political description of the Colony of New South Wales ... 1819 (revised and enlarged editions 1820 and 1824), returned to Sydney 1824, joint publisher of the Australian 1824-28, was responsible for the system of military juries being abolished 1829 and the introduction of trial by jury 1830, fought for self-government, foundation vice-president, Australian Patriotic Association 1835, Legislative Council 1843-54, played a leading part in establishing in 1848-49 the first real system of state primary education in New South Wales, led the movement resulting in the founding of the The University of Sydney, which he helped to endow. Commemorated by the town of Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains, portraits in the chamber of the Legislative Assembly in Sydney and in the Mitchell Library, and a statue in the Great Hall of the University of Sydney.

A Coast View

High 'mid the shelves of a grey cliff, that yet
Riseth in Babylonian mass above,
In a benched cleft, as in the mouldered chair
Of grey-beard Time himself, I sit alone,
And gaze with a keen wondering happiness
Out o'er the sea. Unto the circling bend
That verges Heaven, a vast luminous plain
It stretches, changeful as a lover's dream --
Into great spaces mapped by light and shade
In constant interchange -- either 'neath clouds
The billows darken, or they shimmer bright
In sunny scopes of measureless expanse.
'Tis Ocean dreamless of a stormy hour,
Calm, or but gently heaving; -- yet, O God!
What a blind fate-like mightiness lies coiled
In slumber, under that wide-shining face!
While o'er the watery gleam -- there where its edge
Banks the dim vacancy, the topmost sails
Of some tall ship, whose hull is yet unseen,
Hang as if clinging to a cloud that still
Comes rising with them from the void beyond,
Like to a heavenly net, drawn from the deep
And carried upward by ethereal hands.

William Charles Wentworth

Australasia

Celestial poesy! whose genial sway
Earth's furthest habitable shores obey;
Whose inspirations shed their sacred light,
Far as the regions of the Arctic night,
And to the Laplander his Boreal gleam
Endear not less than Phoebus' brighter beam, --
Descend thou also on my native land,
And on some mountain-summit take thy stand;
Thence issuing soon a purer font be seen
Than charmed Castalia or famed Hippocrene;
And there a richer, nobler fane arise,
Than on Parnassus met the adoring eyes.
And tho', bright goddess, on the far blue hills,
That pour their thousand swift pellucid rills
Where Warragamba's rage has rent in twain
Opposing mountains, thundering to the plain,
No child of song has yet invoked thy aid
'Neath their primeval solitary shade, --
Still, gracious Pow'r, some kindling soul inspire,
To wake to life my country's unknown lyre,
That from creation's date has slumbering lain,
Or only breathed some savage uncouth strain;
And grant that yet an Austral Milton's song
Pactolus-like flow deep and rich along, --
An Austral Shakespeare rise, whose living page
To nature true may charm in ev'ry age; --
And that an Austral Pindar daring soar,
Where not the Theban eagle reach'd before.
And, O Britannia! shouldst thou cease to ride
Despotic Empress of old Ocean's tide; --
Should thy tamed Lion -- spent his former might, --
No longer roar the terror of the fight; --
Should e'er arrive that dark disastrous hour,
When bow'd by luxury, thou yield'st to pow'r; --
When thou, no longer freest of the free,
To some proud victor bend'st the vanquish'd knee; --
May all thy glories in another sphere
Relume, and shine more brightly still than here;
May this, thy last-born infant, then arise,

To glad thy heart and greet thy parent eyes;
And Australasia float, with flag unfurl'd,
A new Britannia in another world.

William Charles Wentworth

Love

She loves me! From her own bliss-breathing lips
 The live confession came, like rich perfume
 From crimson petals bursting into bloom!
 And still my heart at the remembrance skips
 Like a young lion, and my tongue, too, trips
 As drunk with joy! while every object seen
 In life's diurnal round wears in its mien
 A clear assurance that no doubts eclipse.
 And if the common things of nature now
 Are like old faces flushed with new delight,
 Much more the consciousness of that rich vow
 Deepens the beauteous, and refines the bright,
 While throned I seem on love's divinest height
 'Mid all the glories glowing round its brow.

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Words

Words are deeds. The words we hear
May revolutionize or rear
A mighty state. The words we read
May be a spiritual deed
Excelling any fleshly one,
As much as the celestial sun
Transcends a bonfire, made to throw
A light upon some raree-show.
A simple proverb tagged with rhyme
May colour half the course of time;
The pregnant saying of a sage
May influence every coming age;
A song in its effects may be
More glorious than Thermopylae,
And many a lay that schoolboys scan
A nobler feat than Inkerman.

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