

Words of Songs

"REEDY RIVER"

I

Ten miles down Reedy River
One Sunday afternoon,
I rode with Mary Campbell
To that broad bright lagoon;
We left our horses grazing,
Till shadows climbed the peak
And strolled beneath the she oaks
On the banks of Rocky Creek.

II

Then home along the river
That night we rode a race,
And the moonlight lent a glory
To Mary Campbell's face;
I pleaded for my future
All through that moonlight ride,
Until our weary horses
Drew closer side by side.

III

Ten miles from Ryan's Crossing
And five below the peak,
I built a little homestead
On the banks of Rocky Creek;
I cleared the land and fenced it
And ploughed the rich, red loam;
And my first crop was golden
When I brought Mary home.

IV

Now still down Reedy River
The grassy she-oaks sligh;
The waterholes still mirror
The pictures in the sky;
The golden sand is drifting
Across the rocky bars;
And over all for ever
Go sun and moon and stars.

"BALLAD OF 1891"

I

The price of wool was falling
In eighteen ninety one;
The men who owned the acres
Saw something must be done.
"We will break the shearers' union
And show we're masters still;
And they'll take the terms we give them
Or we'll find the men who will!"

II

From Clermont to Barcardine
The shearers' camps were full,
Ten thousand blades were ready
To strip the greasy wool.
When through the west like thunder
Rang out the union's call:
"The sheds'll be shore union
Or they won't be shore at all!"

III

O Billy Lane was with them—
His words were like a flame.
The flag of blue above them,
They spoke Eureka's name.
"Tomorrow", said the squatters,
"You'll find it does not pay—
We're bringing up free labourers
To get the clip away!"

IV

"Tomorrow", said the shearers,
"They may not be so keen—
We can mount three thousand horsemen
To show them what we mean.
Then we'll pack the west with troopers—
From Bourke to Charters Towers—
You can have your fill of speeches
But the final strength is ours."

V

"Be damned to your six-shooters,
Your troopers and police;
The sheep are growing heavy,
The burr is in the fleece!"
"Then if Nordenfeldt and Gatling
Won't bring you to your knees
We'll find a law", the squatters said,
"That's made for times like these!"

VI

To trial at Rockhampton
The fourteen men were brought;
The judge had got his orders,
The squatters owned the court.
But for every one was sentenced
A thousand won't forget
Where they gaol a man for striking
It's a rich man's country yet.