

Farewell to Australia
(1865)

Thou sun-bright land that gems the Austral Sea,
With fond regret, I bid farewell to thee;
Land of the Golden Fleece and generous vine,
Rich in thy flocks and herds, thy corn and wine.

While here in pleasing reverie I stand
On the same spot where first I pressed thy strand
I live again in the romantic days,
When thy rich hal'o set the world ablaze;

When from the furthest bounds of distant lands
Came thronging hosts to rob thy golden sands;
When eager thousands toiled along thy plains
And woke the slumbers of thy shepherd swains;

When rustic garden crofts and meadows green,
Flecked yonder hills, where Melbourne sits, a queen
In maidens beauty, as of magic power
Had spoke her into being in an hour;

When gallant fleets cast anchor in yon bay
Or treasure laden, seaward shaped their way,
Or inward pouring through thy golden gate*
Conveyed from every part a goodly freight,

Of young life, strong in arm and high in hope,
With adverse fortune resolute to cope
Who braved the dangers of the wild sea foam,
To find, in this fair southern land a home.

* Port Phillip Heads

Time was when commerce plied the labouring ore,
In cumbrous barges, urged along the shore,
Treading the margin of the watery lone,
While all beyond was shadowy and unknown.

Till science came to unlock the mystery
And in the hand of Commerce placed the key.
She bade the trembling filament of steel
Point to its talisman and guide the wheel.

Mysterious magnet what unseen control
Binds thee resistless to thy distant pole,
Through storm and night thy certain course to keep
Leading “the wanderer o’er the ecliptic deep”!

By faith in thee, the adventurous Genoese
Urged his undaunted bark o’er unknown seas,
Cleaving with fearless prow the boundless waste
Which never oar had tossed or keel had traced;

Winging to the far occident his way
And regions basking in the glare of day,
Where nature’s vastness awed on every hand
With giant streams and mountains doubly grand;

Where Chimborazo ago towering to the skies,
Sees Marañón and Orinoco rise,
Or where St. Lawrence pours his ample flood
And bears his commerce through Canadian woods.

Guided by thee, to this, then unknown shore,
The gallant Cook came boldly to explore
And to the world of science brought to view
Fauna and flora, multiform and new;

Told of thy swelling hills and flowering vales
Where round the year perennial spring prevails;
Told of thy rolling downs of emerald green
Where now uncounted flocks and herds are seen;

Then rose Britannia’s flag o’er cape and bay
And a new empire owned her sovereign sway.
Yet oh! thy natal morn in sorrow rose
Mid moral mists and chilled by heavy woes

And thy first breath was poisoned for a time
By noxious airs—the pestilence of crime.
But in the furnace of affliction tried
Thou camest forth refined and purified,

And now thou mayest claim a leading part
In learning, science, literature and art.
Oh what a destiny were thine to share
Thou favoured land so youthful and so fair,

Born as of yesterday, yet even now
Wearing the seal of empire on thy brow,
Foremost among the nations, yet to be
When countless millions find a home in thee;

The promise of thy greatness now we trace
In all that constitutes a manly race.
While vast achievement to the mind appears
Crowding the vista of thy coming years.

Ye who in older lands, by ceaseless toil
Wring a mere pittance from an o'er taxed soil
Through a long life of penury alone,
Tilling the lands which ye shall never own.

And ye sad Artisans*, who mourn your doom
Pining in want beside your silent loom
While bleeds your hearts, to see your children fed
By public alms and eat the pauper's bread;

Oh could some kind benignant power today
To these fair realms your famished lands convey
How would your powers in manly growth expand
And add new wealth to your adopted land.

* When these lines were written, the Lancashire Cotton Famine was at its height. Thousands of workmen were thrown out of employment and their families were dependent on the public charity for sustenance.

What though I part today from many ties
Dear to my heart and pleasant to my eyes
To tempt the dangers of the stormy main
And hie me to my northern home again

In Nova Scotia of historic fame,
Which yet prefers its ancient Norman name
Acadia, sacred to the timeful vine,
Abode of Gabriel and Evangeline,

Farewell dear land!—when o'er yon distant sea,
Oft shall my thoughts return and visit thee,
Breathing in fancy of the sweet perfume
On Yarra's banks where golden wattle's bloom,

Or where the Was-Was* tunes his sprightly song
Among the froned glades of Dandenong†
Or where the swans sail forth, a fairy fleet
Upon the bosom of Lake Burrumbeet‡

The high, auspicious day draws surely nigh
When closer bonds our scattered realms shall tie
And round the world our federated state
Be one in arms, in council and debate.

Till then dear England shall thy offshoots be
A reflex of thyself, close knit to thee
Our pride—tho' peopling worlds from pole to pole—
Thy laws and language still pervade the whole.

* See Gould's ornithology for a description of this Australian Songster.

† A pleasure resort near Melbourne.

‡ Near Ballarat.