

Classic Poetry Series

Louis Esson
- poems -

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Louis Esson(1879 - 1943)

Thomas Buvelot Esson (Louis), was born in Edingurgh, Scotland and moved to Australia with his mother after his father died when Louis was three years old. He majored in English and French at Melbourne University. He was dissatisfied with Australian literary offerings of the time so travelled to France, England and Ireland. It was in Ireland that he was encouraged to return to Australia to write Australian material. He started writing poetry but later turned his talents to short stories and plays. He is now seen as the father of modern Australian drama

He died in 1943.

Brogan's Lane

There's a crack in the city—down that sharp street
In couples, and armed, tramp rozzers on beat.
Like a joss, silhouetted across the pane,
A Chinese face watches down Brogan's Lane,
 Brogan's Lane, Brogan's Lane,
A reeling moon blinks over Brogan's Lane.

Flash Fred, when he dives on a red lot, sneaks thro'
To moscow the swag with a Polaky Jew.
Tho' rooked by old Shylock, he needn't complain,
The melting pot bubbles in Brogan's Lane,
Brogan's Lane, Brogan's Lane,
Rats pinch from their cobbers down Brogan's Lane.

And Jenny, fresh down from the country, goes gay
And drives to the races and laughs at the play;
Till one morn, lying out in the cold and the rain,
A body is perished in Brogan's Lane,
Brogan's Lane, Brogan's Lane,
There's only one turn to the long last lane.

With opium dens, sly cribs, bones and rags,
'Tis the haunt of thieves, wastrels, poor women and vags.
They booze to bring joy, they sin to numb pain,
But there'll come a stretch at the end of the lane,
Brogan's Lane, Brogan's Lane,
The river and morgue shadow Brogan's Lane.

Louis Esson

Caprice

Blue and gold, and mist and sunlight,
Veils of colour blent and blown
In melodic monotone.
Dark and bright, and white and dun light
Clash and flash, as into one light
Trembling thro' an opal stone,
Over green robes of the mountain
And the blue skirts of the sea,
Spreading from a sacred fountain
Hymeneal harmony.

Drums and trumpets of the ocean,
Oboe spirits of the wind,
Violins of forest kind,
Flutes that breathe the trees' devotion,
Blending, hymn the joyous motion
Of the universal mind,
When, with chariot cavorting,
And a storm of symphonies,
Horses snorting, banners sporting,
Ocean Seas wed Harbour Seas.

Salt of waves, and scent of roses,
Seaweed strown along the sand,
Blossoms blown from high head-land,
As the Ocean-Lord reposes
Where the Harbour dreams and dozes,
Sultan and Sultana bland,
Rocky shrubs, earth, fragrant grasses
Spiced with sand and sea and sun,
As the gay procession passes,
Know that all things are but one.

At the sun a wave laughs, leaping
Thro' intoxicating air
Like a child with tossing hair.
But a sea-gull, vigil keeping
Flutters, musically sweeping,
Delicate and debonair,

Where the wave leaps, lightly wheeling,
Like a flash of amethyst
Clasps the wave, then leaves her, stealing
Kisses by the sunshine kissed.

Bird that brilliant pinion flies on
Thro' the azure atmosphere
Pipes a duet, sweet and clear,
With the wind the sunlight lies on;
Sea weds Sky on dim horizon,
And the distant joins the near.
Wave and cloud, and fish and swallow,
Swaying tree and flying bird
Music maddened, flee and follow
Till pale mortals, too, are stirred.

Over all things Love stands warder.
Cloud seeks wave, while close behind
Cloud is followed by the wind.
Dionysean disorder
Laughs, and leaps o'er bar and border,
Breaks the shackles of the mind;
And in wine-enchanted weather
Culls, that life and joy be one,
Grapes to mix all things together
From the Garden of the Sun.

Nature takes delight in shedding
Love that joins with benison
All the elements in one;
And to-day the feast is spreading
Till her creatures all are wedding,
And of sorrow there is none...
So the Summer Day rehearses
Bridal lyrics mad to sing
As a viol or a verse is,
Of the joy of everything.

Louis Esson

The Cradle Song

Baby, O baby, fain you are for bed,
Magpie to mopoke busy as the bee;
The little red calf's in the snug cow-shed,
An' the little brown bird's in the tree.

Daddy's gone a-shearin', down the Castlereagh,
So we're all alone now, only you an' me.
All among the wool-O, keep your wide blades full-O!
Daddy thinks o' baby, wherever he may be.

Baby, my baby, rest your drowsy head,
The one man that works here, tired you must be,
The little red calf 's in the snug cow-shed,
An' the little brown bird 's in the tree.

Louis Esson

The Old Black Billy An' Me

The sheep are yarded, an' I sit
Beside the fire an' poke at it.
Far from talk an' booze o' men
Glad, I'm glad I'm back agen
On the station, wi' me traps

An' fencin' wire, an' tanks an' taps,
Back to salt-bush plains, an' flocks,
An' old bark hut be the apple-box.
I turn the slipjack, make the tea,
All's as still as still can be -
An' the old black billy winks at me.

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The Shearers Wife

Before the glare o' dawn I rise
To milk the sleepy cows, an' shake
The droving dust from tired eyes,
Look round the rabbit traps, then bake
The children's bread.
There's hay to stook, an' beans to hoe,
An' ferns to cut in the scrub below,
Women must work, when men must go
Shearing from shed to shed.

I patch an' darn, now evening comes,
An' tired I am with labour sore,
Tired o' the bush, the cows, the gums,
Tired, but we must dree for long months more
What no tongue tells.
The moon is lonely in the sky,
Lonely the bush, an' lonely I
Stare down the track no horse draws nigh,
An' start . . . at the cattle bells.

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