

Clancy of the Overflow

Poem, Banjo Paterson, first published in The Bulletin, 21 December 1889
Music, Wallis and Matilda 1980

I had [C] written him a letter which I [F] had, for want of [C] better
Knowledge, [F] sent to where I [C] met him down the Lachlan, years [G] ago,
He was [F] shearing when I knew him, so I [C] sent the letter to him,
Just 'on [G] spec', addressed as follows, 'Clancy, [F] of The Over[C] flow'.

And an [C] answer came directed in a [F] writing unex[C]pected,
(And I [F] think the same was [C] written with a thumb-nail dipped in [G]tar)
'Twas his [F] shearing mate who wrote it, and ver[C]batim I will quote it:
'Clancy's [G] gone to Queensland droving, and we [F] don't know where he [C]are.'

In my [C] wild erratic fancy visions [F] come to me of [C] Clancy
Gone [F] a-droving 'down the [C] Cooper' where the Western drovers [G] go;
As the [F] stock are slowly stringing, Clancy [C] rides behind them singing,
For the [G] drover's life has pleasures that the [F] townsfolk never [C] know.

And the [C] bush hath friends to meet him, and their [F] kindly voices [C] greet him
In the [F] murmur of the [C] breezes and the river on its [G] bars,
And he [F] sees the vision splendid of the [C] sunlit plains extended,
And at [G] night the wondrous glory of the [F] everlasting [C] stars.

Spoken

*I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy
Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down between the houses tall,
And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city
through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all*

*And in place of lowing cattle, I can hear the fiendish rattle
Of the tramways and the 'buses making hurry down the street,
And the language uninviting of the gutter children fighting,
Comes fitfully and faintly through the ceaseless tramp of feet.*

*And the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me
As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste,
With their eager eyes and greedy, and their stunted forms and weedy,
For townsfolk have no time to grow, they have no time to waste.*

And I [C] somehow rather fancy that I'd [F] like to change with [C] Clancy,
Like to [F] take a turn at [C] droving where the seasons come and [G] go,
While he [F] faced the round eternal of the [C] cash-book and the journal
But I [G] doubt he'd suit the office, Clancy, [F] of 'The Over [C] flow'.