

**MOYARRA: AN
AUSTRALIAN LEGEND,
IN TWO CANTOS**

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Moyarra: an Australian legend, in two cantos by George William Rusden

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GEORGE WILLIAM RUSDEN

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Experimini
In utramque partem ingenium quid possit meum.
Si nunquam avare pretium statui arti mee,
Et sum esse questum in animum induxi maximum,
Quam maxime servare vestris commodis;
Exemplum statuite in me, ut adolescentuli
Vobis placere studeant potius quam sibi.

DEDICATION TO THE PUBLIC.

Any fit excuse for publishing the following tale I know not; yet to give none, might seem to imply that, in my opinion, none is needed. I will briefly state, therefore, the best excuses that I can allege.

No one has, so far as I know, attempted to depict the simple lives of that race which is now so fast melting away before the ardour of the white man's progress in the Australian bush:—soon, none of the natural heirs of the soil will remain, and even now, their primitive mode of life is comparatively unknown to the majority of their invaders.

I would fain do honor to those artless qualities which have often been my sole social amusement when, week after week, I have sojourned in the bush, with no other companions than a faithful black, my

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dog, and my horse; and I bear willing testimony to the fidelity and cheerfulness which have sometimes made me think my sable companion a pattern worthy of imitation by many of his white and contemptuous supplanters.

Gratitude, therefore, is one motive which induces me to publish; and if I fail to give pleasure to my countrymen, they may yet perhaps, for the sake of the motive, excuse the awkwardness of the deed.

I may state also that, in accordance with the Horatian precept, this imprimatur has been deferred until the ninth year; and would not now have been ventured upon but for the following circumstance.

One of my most respected friends suggested that if the following poem were printed with colonial type, and bound in colonial material, it might fitly, perhaps, appear amongst Australian contributions to the Industrial Exhibition of 1851.

Humbly as I am disposed to think of my handiwork, I would nevertheless have adopted the above suggestion but for the loss of the only copy of *Moyarra* which I possessed: it had been mislaid or lost by the friend in whose care I had placed it.

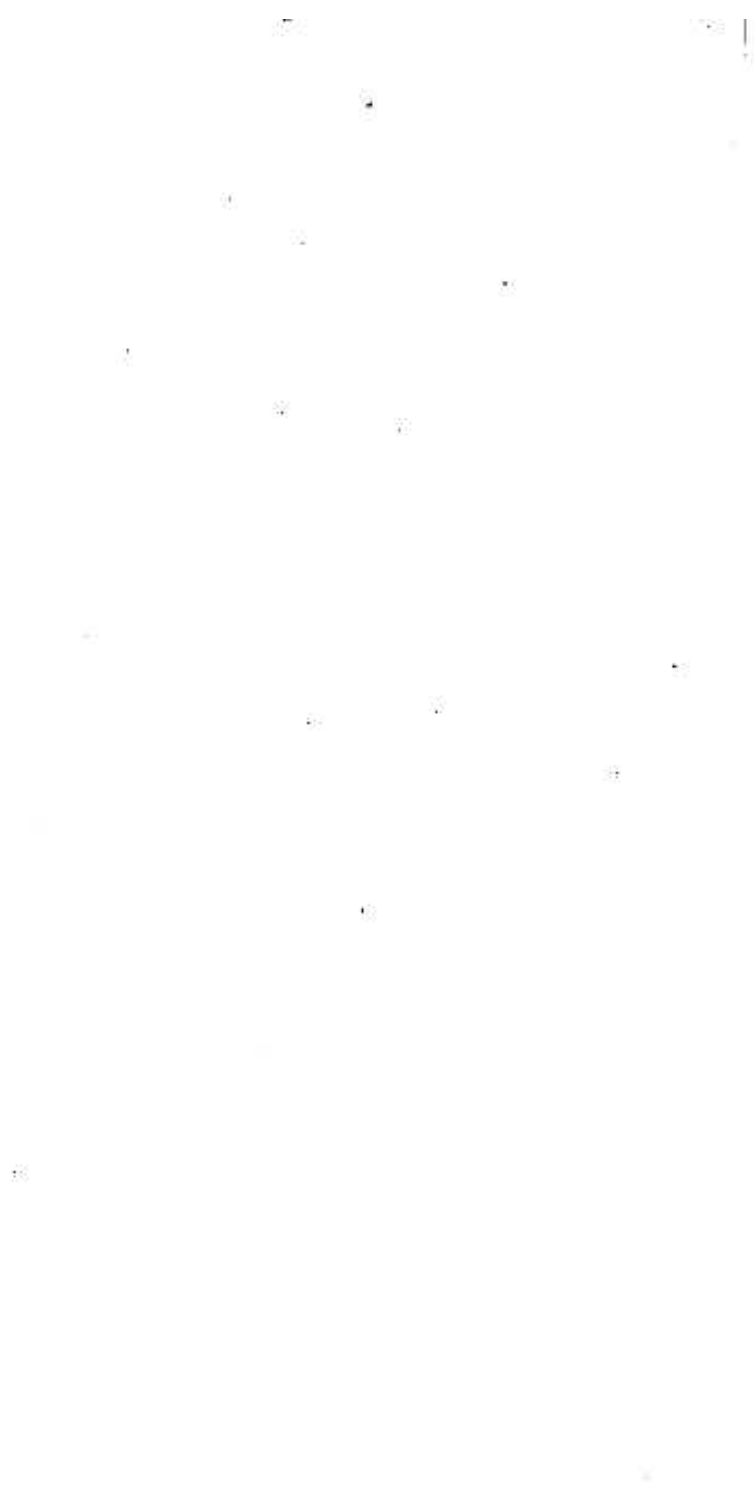
This accident may be considered as producing my poem now in the character of a "Rejected Address"; and though I cannot hope that it may be as favourably received as were the celebrated "Rejected Addresses" of the witty compounders, I am tempted to assay the verdict of the public in preference to abiding by the contingency which I have narrated; especially as the friend by whom my manuscript was mislaid, was, at one time, a warm applauder of its contents.

For the truthful air of the poem I ought easily to be able to vouch: it was written, (or, rather, composed, and jotted down subsequently at intervals) when I was in daily communication with the unfortunate race of which it treats; and I now present it as originally written, rather than interfere with it in a manner which might prejudice its faithfulness as a representation.

Further, I have little to say: of those who are inclined to condemn I would entreat the kind consideration, less for myself than for my attempt: if there should be anything in it worthy of encouragement, its favorable reception may elicit from worthier hands a worthier offering to the public.

In conclusion, as I publish anonymously, if the public should trouble itself to condemn me, I shall at least escape that loss of respect, which made the Roman say,

*"Eques Romanus ex Lare egressus meo,
Domum revertar minus."*



MOYARRA.

I.

In that far isle, which, long unknown,
Confesses now Britannia's throne ;
The sun, who flings his genial ray
O'er every clime from day to day,
Beheld one born to that dark race,
Who hail the woods their dwelling-place :—
The opening buds upon the trees
Were gently waving in the breeze ;
The flowerets round of every hue
Bent with full drops of morning dew ;
The feathered choir to greet the day
Poured forth their merry roundelay :
The robin with his blood-red hue,
The warbler of cerulean blue,
And all the variegated kind
That haunt the grove or ride the wind,
All—all conspired with tuneful lays
To hymn their great Creator's praise :
Nature, and nature's voice were glad,
While man—doomed man—alone was sad.

But it is past—one pilgrim more
Shall wear the chain his fathers wore ;
He too, affection's bonds shall nourish,
While yet alas ! their cause may flourish ;—
And when those links are rent in twain
He too, shall find the broken chain
Which once had cheered his happier day
Corrode his inmost heart away—

And is this all ? And do we cherish
The flower that must to-morrow perish ?
And is our earthly term so brief
Of bliss, so permanent of grief ?

Affections blighted and decaying,
 Hope, once how bright! but still delaying,
 Where'er our wanderings, shall show
 This life, a pilgrimage of woe.

II.

Moyarra lived, a reckless child,
 And deemed, albeit a savage, wild :
 His mimic spear was early sped
 Far o'er each wondering comrade's head ;
 The eucalyptus on the hill,
 Was silent challenge to his skill :—
 Did torrents deck the mountain's side—
 Moyarra stemmed the foaming tide—
 If spies went forth to circumvent
 The neighbouring tribes on plunder bent,
 Moyarra clasped his hands in prayer,
 That he, though young, th' exploit might share.

III.

Long years have passed ; those rites ⁽¹⁾ are done,
 Which, handed down from sire to son,
 Still from that wending people claim
 Obeisance to religion's name :—
 Their temple is the earth, air, sky,
 And through the gorgeous canopy,
 The moon, their priestess, wades in light—
 While round her path, in order bright,
 The stars, her ministers, array
 Their gleaming ranks, until the day
 Returning, chase their fires away :
 Around, in frowning grandeur, stand
 The forest patriarchs of the land ;
 In sullen sanction of the hour
 They wave beneath the West wind's power,
 Till the whole grove with yielding grace
 Murmurs around the sacred place.
 Moyarra felt his being thrill
 Within him as by magic spell :
 Like lightning through his sanguine frame
 As the electric transport came,

In fuller tide his life-blood ran ;—
He knew—he felt himself a man.

Then by those lights which o'er him sparkled,
And by the woods which round him darkled,
By the blue arch extended o'er him,
And by the sacred rites before him,
He vowed to that dear mother earth,
Which gave his ancestry their birth,
To wage, till life's extremest close,
Unyielding warfare 'gainst her foes.
His conscious step, his haughty bearing
Bespoke a spirit proud and daring ;
The flashing of his eye confest
The courage mantling in his breast :—

The hoary warriors round him smiled
Approval of his fervour wild ;
Recounting deeds themselves had done,
Ere yet their bloom of youth had flown.

IV.

Rise, Mytah ! the graceful, and list to thy lover,
The day is declining, my toils are all over ;
Fresh spoils from the stream and the forest I bring,
And flowers wet with dew of the fragrance of spring.

As the young blade of grass to the swift kangaroo,
So dear to me, Mytah, one kind glance from you :
As the flowers love the dewdrops which nightly they
sip,
In thy smiles I would revel, and feast on thy lip.

Then haste thee thy faithful Moyarra to cheer,
With the sound of that voice which is sweet to mine
ear ;
And the name of my Mytah shall ever remain
The home of my thoughts and the theme of my strain.

Ere the song had ceased, the maiden's breast
Was throbbing with tumultuous passion,
And, at its close, she gently rose
And glided to her lover's station.
The hurried air of wild despair