

**IN PRAISE OF AUSTRALIA:
AN ANTHOLOGY IN
PROSE AND VERSE**

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In praise of Australia: an anthology in prose and verse by Florence Gay

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FLORENCE GAY

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IN PRAISE OF AUSTRALIA

AN ANTHOLOGY
IN PROSE AND VERSE

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PREFACE

I THANK, very heartily, the authors and publishers who have so kindly allowed me to quote from their books. Apologies are offered for any omissions which may possibly have occurred in acknowledging copyright. Much care has been taken in the matter, and it is hoped that mistakes have been avoided. Among the many sources from which I have obtained information, I should like to mention that Mr. Bertram Stevens's *Anthology of Australian Verse* afforded me great assistance in making my selections of Australian verse. A marginal reference has been made pointing out those singers who are, both by birth and education, Australian.

F. G.



PROEM

WHEN the idea presented itself to me that I should construct a volume 'In Praise of Australia,' no maker of books concerning any subject could have been more impressed with a sense of the felicity of a title. What fuller privilege than a special licence to paint in glowing colours the picture of a dear, native land? Moreover, I was sensible of the pleasing conviction that the allotted task would be as easy as it was grateful: to fly for metaphor to my own beloved Bush, I felt a rush of joy and freedom akin to that of some half-trained 'clear-skin' given his head for a gallop in the scrub.

Yet, no sooner were the reins, as I believed, thrown loose on my neck than I discovered to my eternal discomfiture that the very ensign of my freedom constituted in itself a most potent and effectual curb. Time after time my superscription became, likewise, my accusation. I was perpetually checked in my transports by the three warning words, 'In Praise of.' When, seeking passion and inspiration in passages concerning the stony heart and melancholy wilds of my southern land, I exulted over treasures which should give savour to my pages, I remembered to my sorrow that I was pledged to weave my garland of thornless roses. Stirred by some tragic picture recalling the fiery breath and arid deserts of a drought-stricken continent—a veritable vision of dry bones—the masterpiece had, perforce, to be cast by, lest my readers should complain of threnody in place of pæan. Much splendid material has been rejected because, considered in the sheer abstract, it could not be regarded as strictly 'In Praise of Australia.' The loss of such darker passages is the more to be regretted as the very essence of Australia consists in burning light and shade, wild extremes, and unimaginable paradoxes. Even in the reading of her story we are confronted by that opposition of qualities,