

# Eureka (A Fragment)

Henry Lawson

1889

Roll up, Eureka's heroes, on that grand Old Rush afar,  
For Lalor's gone to join you in the big camp where you are;  
Roll up and give him welcome such as only diggers can,  
For well he battled for the rights of miner and of man.  
And there, in that bright, golden land that lies beyond our sight,  
The record of his honest life shall be his Miner's Right.  
Here many a bearded mouth shall twitch, and many a tear be shed,  
And many a grey old digger sigh to hear that Lalor's dead.  
But wipe your eyes, old fossickers, o'er worked-out fields that roam,  
You need not weep at parting from a digger going home.

Now from the strange wild seasons past, the days of golden strife,  
Now from the Roaring Fifties comes a scene from Lalor's life:  
All gleaming white amid the shafts o'er gully, hill, and flat  
Again I see the tents that form the camp at Ballarat.  
I hear the shovels and the picks, and all the air is rife  
With the rattle of the cradles and the sounds of digger-life;  
The clatter of the windlass-boles, as spinning round they go,  
And then the signal to his mate, the digger's cry, "Below!"  
From many a busy pointing-forge the sound of labour swells,  
The tinkling at the anvils is as clear as silver bells.

I hear the broken English from the mouth at least of one  
From every state and nation that is known beneath the sun  
The homely tongue of Scotland and the brogue of Ireland blend  
With the dialects of England, from Berwick to Land's End;  
And to the busy concourse here the West has sent a part,  
The land of gulches that has been immortalised by Harte;  
The land where long from mining-camps the blue smoke upward curled;  
The land that gave that "Partner" true and "Miss" unto the world;  
The men from all the nations in the New World and the Old,  
All side by side, like brethren here, are delving after gold;  
But suddenly the warning cries are heard on every side  
As, closing in around the field, a ring of troopers ride;  
Unlicensed diggers are the game, their class and want are sins,  
And so, with all its shameful scenes, the digger-hunt begins;  
The men are seized who are too poor the heavy tax to pay,  
And they are chained, as convicts were, and dragged in gangs away;  
While in the eye of many a mate is menace scarcely hid -  
The digger's blood was slow to boil, but scalded when it did.

But now another match is held that sure must light the charge,  
A digger murdered in the camp! his murderer at large!  
Roll up! Roll up! the pregnant cry awakes the evening air,  
And angry faces surge like waves around the speakers there.  
"What are our sins that we should be an outlawed class?" they say,  
"Shall we stand by while mates are seized and dragged, like `lags', away?  
Shall insult be on insult heaped? Shall we let these things go?"  
And on a roar of voices comes the diggers' answer - "No!"  
The day has vanished from the scene, but not the air of night  
Can cool the blood that, ebbing back, leaves brows in anger white.  
Lo! from the roof of Bentley's inn the flames are leaping high;  
They write "Revenge!" in letters red across the smoke-dimmed sky.  
Now the oppressed will drink no more humiliation's cup;  
Call out the troops! Read martial law! - the diggers' blood is up!

"To arms! To arms!" the cry is out; "To arms if man thou art;  
For every pike upon a pole will find a tyrant's heart!"  
Now Lalor comes to take the lead, the spirit does not lag,  
And down the rough, wild diggers kneel beneath the Diggers' Flag,  
And, rising to their feet, they swear, while rugged hearts beat high,  
To stand beside their leader and to conquer or to die!  
Around Eureka's stockade now the shades of night close fast,  
Three hundred sleep beside their arms, and thirty sleep their last.

Around about fair Melbourne town the sounds of bells are borne  
That call the citizens to prayer this fateful Sabbath morn;  
But there, upon Eureka's hill, a hundred miles away,  
The diggers' forms lie white and still above the blood-stained clay.  
The bells that ring the diggers' death might also ring a knell  
For those few gallant soldiers, dead, who did their duty well.  
There's many a "someone's" heart shall ache, and many a someone care,  
For many a "someone's darling" lies all cold and pallid there.  
And now in smoking ruins lie the huts and tents around,  
The diggers' gallant flag is down and trampled in the ground.

The sight of murdered heroes is to hero hearts a goad,  
A thousand men are up in arms upon the Creswick road,  
And wildest rumours in the air are flying up and down,  
'Tis said the men of Ballarat will march upon the town.  
But not in vain those diggers died. Their comrades may rejoice,  
For o'er the voice of tyranny is heard the people's voice;  
It says: "Reform your rotten law, the diggers' wrongs make right,  
Or else with them, our brothers now, we'll gather in the fight."  
And now before my vision flash the scenes that followed fast -  
The trials, and the triumph of the diggers' cause at last.

'Twas of such stuff the men were made who saw our nation born,  
And such as Lalor were the men who led their footsteps on;  
And of such men there'll many be, and of such leaders some,  
In the roll-up of Australians on some dark day yet to come.

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