

Billy Barlow in Australia

Songs about immigrants and their successes and woes were quite common in the 1800s. This version came from Goulburn musician, Peter McLaren and is based on that in the first Penguin songster.

The musical score is written in 3/4 time and consists of six staves of music. Each staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. Chord symbols are placed above the notes. The lyrics are: "When I was at home I was down on my luck And I earned a poor living by driving a truck But an aunt died and left me a thousand pounds - oh 'I'll start on my travels" said Billy Barlow. Oh dear! Lack-a-day-o So off to Australia went Billy Barlow."

When to Sydney I got there a merchant I met
Who said he would teach me a fortune to get
He had cattle and sheep past the colony's bounds
Which he sold with the station for my thousand pounds
Oh, dear! Lack-a-day-o!
He gammoned the cash out of Billy Barlow

So I got my supplies and I gave him my bill
And for New England started - my pockets to fill!
But by bushrangers met - with my traps they made free
Took my horse and left Billy tied up to a tree
Oh, dear! Lack-a-day-o!
"I shall die of starvation" thought Billy Barlow

At last I got loose and I then did repair
For my station once more and at length I got there
But a few days before that the blacks, you must know,
Had speared all the cattle of Billy Barlow.
Oh, dear! Lack-a-day-o!
"It's a beautiful country" said Billy Barlow

And for nine months before that no rain there had been
So the devil a blade of grass was to be seen
One third of my wethers the scab they had got
And the other two-thirds had just died of the rot
Oh, dear! Lack-a-day-o!
"I shall soon be a settler" said Billy Barlow

I'm in Sydney – insolvent – in poverty's toil
I've no cattle for salting, no sheep for to boil
I can't get a job, though to any I'd stoop
If 'twas only the making of portable soup
Oh, dear! Lack-a-day-o!
Pray give some employment to Billy Barlow!