

An Exile of Erin

The Plains of Emu

Words written by Rev John McGarvie, who provided articles to the Sydney Gazette until 1831. Proof of this is in his papers held in the Mitchell Library, which predate the arrival of Frank the Poet who is sometimes given credit for writing it.

capo 2

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of nine staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. Chords are indicated above the staff lines. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The piece begins with a 'capo 2' instruction. The lyrics are: 'Oh fare - well my coun - try, my kin ____ dred, my lov ____ er, Each morn ____ ing and ev ____ 'ning is sa - cred to you. While I toil the long day ____ with - out shel ____ ter or cov ____ er And fell the tall ____ gums ____ the black but - ted and blue. Full of - ten I think of and talk ____ of thee, Er ____ in, Thy heath ____ cov - ered moun - tains are fresh ____ in my view, ____ Thy glens, ____ lakes and riv - ers Loch Con ____ and Kil - jer ____ rin, Whilst chain'd ____ to the soil ____ on the Plains of E - - mu.'

Oh fare - well my coun - try, my kin ____ dred, my lov ____ er,
 Each morn ____ ing and ev ____ 'ning is sa - cred to you.
 While I toil the long day ____ with - out shel ____ ter or cov ____ er
 And fell the tall ____ gums ____ the black but - ted and blue.
 Full of - ten I think of and talk ____ of thee, Er ____ in,
 Thy heath ____ cov - ered moun - tains are fresh ____ in my view, ____
 Thy glens, ____ lakes and riv - ers Loch Con ____ and Kil - jer ____ rin,
 Whilst chain'd ____ to the soil ____ on the Plains of E - - mu.

The ironbark wattle and gum-trees extending
 Their shades under which rests the shy kangaroo
 May be felled by the bless'd who have hope o'er them bending
 To cheer their rude toil though far exiled from you
 But, alas! without hope peace or honour to grace me
 Each feeling was crushed in the bud as it grew
 Whilst "never" is stamped on the chains that embrace me
 And endless my thrall on the Plains of Emu

Hard hard was my fate far from thee to be driven
Unstained unconvicted as sure was my due
I loved to dispense of the freedom of Heaven
But force gained the day and I suffer for you
For this land never broke what by promise was plighted
Deep treason this tongue to my country ne'er knew
No base-earned coin in my coffer e'er lighted
Yet enchained I remain on the Plains of Emu.

Dearest mother, thy love from my bosom shall never depart
But shall flourish, untainted and true.
For hard was my fate, far from thee to be driven
But force gained the day, and now I suffer for you
Oh, spare her the tear, and no charge lay upon her
And weep not, my Nora, her tears to renew
But cherish her age, until night closes on her
And think of the swain who still thinks but of you.

Our names shall still live, though like writing in water
Confined to the call of the wild cockatoo
As each wattle-scrub echo repeats to the other our names,
Then each breeze will hear me sighing anew.
But dumb be my tongue if my heart should cease its motion
Or if the isle I forget where my first breath I drew
Each affection is warmed with sincerest devotion
And the tie it is unbroken on the Plains of Emu.