

Sovereign Hill Education

Golden Literature - Quotes from the Goldfields

Research Notes for Primary Schools

“Never shall I forget that scene, it well repaid a journey even of sixteen thousand miles. The trees had been all cut down; it looked like a sandy plain, or one vast unbroken succession of countless gravel pits.”

Ellen Glacy, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold-Diggings of Australia in 1852-3*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1963 (first published 1853)

“Night at the diggings is the characteristic time; murder here - murder there - revolvers cracking - blunderbusses (big firearms) bombing - rifles going off - balls whistling - one man groaning with a broken leg - another shouting because he couldn't find his way to his hole, and a third equally vociferous (loud) because he has tumbled into one - this man swearing - another praying - a party of bacchanals (drunks) chanting various ditties to different time and tune, or rather minus both.”

Ellen Glacy, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold-Diggings of Australia in 1852-3*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1963 (first published 1853)

“The ‘Southern Cross’ (flag) was hoisted up the flag-staff - a very splendid pole, eighty feet in length, and straight as an arrow. The maiden (first) appearance of our standard (flag), in the midst of armed men, sturdy, self-overworking gold-diggers of all languages and colours, was a fascinating object to behold. There is no flag in old Europe half so beautiful as the ‘Southern Cross’ of the Ballarat miners, first hoisted on the old spot, Bakery-hill. The flag is silk, blue-ground, with a large silver cross, similar to the one in our southern firmament (sky); no device or arms, but all exceedingly chaste (pure) and natural.”

Raffaello Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1969 (first published in 1855)

“What men! And what costumes! Huge burly fellows with broad, battered straw or cabbage-tree hats, huge beards, loose blue shirts, and trowsers (sic) yellow with clay and earth, many of them showing that they had already been digging in Sydney, where

there is so much gold, but according to fame, not so abundant or so pure as in this colony; almost every man had a gun, or pistols in his belt, and a huge dog, half hound half mastiff, led by a chain. Each had his bundle, containing his sacking to sleep upon, his blanket and such slight change of linen as these diggers carry. They had, besides, their spades and picks tied together; and thus they marched up the country, bearing with them all they want, and lying out under the trees.”

William Howitt, *Land, Labour & Gold or Two years in Victoria with visits to Sydney and Van Diemen's Land*, 2 vols, Longmans, Brown, Green and Longmans, London, 1855

“Men on foot, with pack, and gun, and huge following dogs; men on horseback, galloping as for life; men and women and children with loaded carts, rolling, plunging, tearing along, amid loud shouts and curses; high drays, hugely piled with goods, rolling and swaying along, drawn by long double teams of bullocks, and attended by huge fellows in jack-boots, huge hats, and smoking faces, and whips that cracked and thundered like volleys of unceasing musketry, and an eternal din of oaths, and shouts, and curses.”

William Howitt, *Tallangetta, The Squatter's Home*, 1857

“Men and women ... tearing, steering, winding, and streaming on and on, and without end, up that lately flowering valley, now flowering no longer; for that strange multitude burst through the sea of golden flowers, tread it down mercilessly, recklessly, drag their carts, gallop their horses, tramp in their ever coming hundreds and thousands over it. There they halt; and loud comes the thunder and the crash of fallen trees; out burst fires here, there, near, far, all along the creek side, and the wood side; kettles are boiling, frying pans hissing, dogs barking, horses and bullocks turned loose to graze, and far as the eye can see rise smokes and gleam fires.”

William Howitt, *Tallangetta, The Squatter's Home*, 1857

Look Out Below

Wherever he turned his wandering eyes
Great wealth did he behold,
And peace and plenty hand in hand,
By the magic power of gold;
Quoth he, "As I am young and strong,
To the diggings I will go,
For I like the sound of the windlass
And the cry "Look out below!"

Charles R. Thatcher, *'Look Out Below'*,
Thatcher's Colonial Minstrel, 1857

"Not one of this vast multitude seemed capable of turning a sympathising glance at nature or on his fellow-man. All seemed possessed by the demon of avarice (greed) and selfishness. They had been allured (tempted) by visions of golden treasures, and were only intent on securing as great a show as possible for themselves. Whatever their stand in society might have been formerly, they had little sympathy for each other, and few feelings in common. They were not gregarious (fond of company) by choice, and those who were not fortunate in turning up gold were jealous of the success of their neighbours. If there were any exceptions to this rule, I was not fortunate enough to meet with them. Here, there was neither philanthropy (kindness to others) nor philosophy - no God but Mammon (bad influence of wealth). Avarice, avarice alone, held undisputed sway."

Thomas McCombie *On the gold diggings at Ballarat*,
Australian Sketches, 1861

The night too quickly passes
And we are growing old,
So let us fill our glasses
And toast the Days of Gold;
When finds of wondrous treasure
Set all the South ablaze,
And you and I were faithful mates
All through the roaring days!

Henry Lawson, *'The Roaring Days'*, *In the Days
When the World Was Wide*, 1896

"The old diggers were a venturesome lot - whence came our hardy, gritty, self-reliant bushmen. That irresistible magnet, gold, attracting alike the kid-gloved (soft) and the horny-handed (tough), had drawn the

strong and adventurous from all parts of the civilised world, a mixture of many nations that is slowly blending into a race peculiarly Australian."

Edward S. Sorenson, *Life in the Australian Backblocks*, 1911

"Such were the fates of those who had succumbed to the 'unholy hunger'. It was like a form of revenge taken on them, for their loveless schemes of robbing and fleeing; a revenge contrived by the ancient, barbaric country they had so lightly invaded. Now, she held them captive - without chains; ensorcelled - without witchcraft; and, lying stretched like some primeval monster in the sun, her breasts freely bared, she watched, with a malignant eye, the efforts made by these puny mortals to tear their lips away."

Henry Handel Richardson, *Australia Felix*, 1917

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