

# Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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## Exile's Lament (Australian)

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O! Farewell my country, my kindred, my lover;  
Each morning and evening are sacred to you,  
While I toil the long day, without shelter or cover,  
And fell the tall gums, the black-butt'd and blue.  
Full often I think of and talk of thee, Erin -  
Thy heath-covered mountains are fresh in my view,  
Thy glens, lakes and rivers, Loch Con and Kilkerran,  
While chained to the soil on the Plains of Emu.

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 hand 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.

Dear mother, thy love from my bosom shall never  
Depart, but shall flourish untainted and true;  
Nor grieve that the base in their malice should ever  
Upbraid thee, and none to give malice her due.  
Spare, spare her tears, and no charge lay upon her,  
And weep not, my Norah, her griefs to renew,  
But cherish her age until night closes on her,  
And think of the swain who still thinks but of you.

But your names shall still live, though like writing in water,  
When confined to the notes of the tame cockatoo,  
Each wattle-scrub echo repeats to the other  
Your names, and each breeze hears me sighing anew.  
For dumb be my tongue, may my heart cease her motion,  
If the Isle I forget where my first breath I drew!

Each affection is warmed with sincerest emotion,  
For the tie is unbroken on the Plains of Emu.

These words were published in the Sydney Gazette, 26 May 1829 and apparently attributed to "M" of Anambaba. The setting is Emu Plains, an agricultural establishment and convict settlement 57 kilometres west of Sydney. The apparent author would, be an Irish political convict, perhaps a rebel of 1798, on lifetime sentence, felling the native timber to clear the land for farming.

The tune set by Ron Edwards is apparently of the same name and comes from an earlier Irish song on the same theme, but (presumably) from the Irish perspective.

BB  
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