

A SUNBURNT COUNTRY.

by Harry Dunn
received 3/7/2020

With apologies to Dorothea MacKellar, who was an expatriate Aussie living in London in 1908, and wrote 'I LOVE A SUNBURNT COUNTRY' while she was feeling homesick and nostalgic, ending the poem with the words 'Wherever I may die / I know to what brown country / My homing thoughts will fly'. This is a 2020 pandemic update of old Dorothea's original.

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sleeping 'planes
Of ragged old self-funders,
On empty trams and trains,
A land of far horizons
And the endless testing queue
Waiting to be swabbed
For Donald's "harmless little 'flu",
With her beauty and her terror,
And her piles of doggy doo.

The blackened bushfired forests,
All tragically denuded,
The sapphire-blackened mountains,
The flooded flats and plains,
The river-banks extruded,
The choked-up water-mains
Where corpses deck the blue-gums
Burned black by raging fires
Then washed away and dumped there
By endless flooding rains,
Far exceeding our desires
And flooding our domains.

I love this sunburnt country,
But not the lock-down state,
This wilful, lavish land
Where men still need their mates,
With good old country pubs surviving
By selling food to go, served on plastic plates,
Instead of alcoholic beverages reviving,
Until this plague abates.

This earth holds many splendours,
And when, not if, I die,
It's in this sunburnt country
That I want my bones to lie.
Of course, I'd still like to travel
To destinations near and far
But I wouldn't want to hop the twig
In Boris Bird-nest's London
Or a smelly Mongol yurt, in Ulan-bloody-Bataar,
Nor in Vladimir's new lock-down Russia

Or any place that xi zin-ping
Is the self-appointed Czar;
Nor in those Pyrenees, where the fleas still bite and tease
And the wine still tastes of tar,
And most certainly not in old New York
Where they're dropping off the perch
In their thousands ev'ry day,
Without a chance to say 'tat-ta',
Much less a last 'gooday'.

So, I'd not wish to die in Yankee-land
While it's becoming great again,
Not In Donald's USA,
With all his merry men.

So, when I depart this mortal coil
Just plant me six feet deep
In Inverloch's Dead Centre;
No, not the roundabout up near the Espy,
I'd never get to sleep,
But the one just off the highway
Up near Mitre Ten,
Where some old acquaintances and friends,
Lay buried in this sunburnt southern land,
Long before these lines were penned.