

The Voice of the Banjo

In a small and lonely cabin out of noisy traffic's way,
Sat an old man, bent and feeble, dusk of face, and hair of gray,
And beside him on the table, battered, old, and worn as he,
Lay a banjo, droning forth this reminiscent melody:

"Night is closing in upon us, friend of mine, but don't be sad;
Let us think of all the pleasures and the joys that we have had.

Let us keep a merry visage, and be happy till the last,
Let the future still be sweetened with the honey of the past.

"For I speak to you of summer nights upon the yellow sand,
When the Southern moon was sailing high and silvering all the land;
And if love tales were not sacred, there's a tale that I could tell
Of your many nightly wanderings with a dusk and lovely belle.

"And I speak to you of care-free songs when labour's hour was o'er,
And a woman waiting for your step outside the cabin door,

And of something roly-poly that you took upon your lap,
While you listened for the stumbling, hesitating words, 'Pap, pap.'

"I could tell you of a 'possum hunt across the wooded grounds,
I could call to mind the sweetness of the baying of the hounds,
You could lift me up and smelling of the timber that's in me,
Build again a whole green forest with the mem'ry of a tree.

"So the future cannot hurt us while we keep the past in mind,
What care I for trembling fingers,—what care you that you are blind?
Time may leave us poor and stranded, circumstance may make us bend;
But they'll only find us mellower, wont they, comrade?—in the end."