Lawson Henry

Henry Lawson was born on the goldfields of Grenfell, New South Wales, Australia. He was the eldest son of a Norwegian sailor, Peter Lawson, and his wife, Louisa. His mother was actively involved in publishing and was a famous leader of the women's rights movement in Australia. Lawson's early life was difficult: His family was poor, and an ear infection caused him to lose his hearing by the time he turned 14. His parents eventually separated, and his mother moved to Sydney. Lawson later moved to Sydney as well and became deeply influenced by his mother's radical friends.

Lawson's writings reflect his bitter life experiences. His inability to communicate because of the deafness led him to develop a keen habit of observing people. Lawson's works are about watching people and observing their actions. He used his powers of observation and his past experiences to enhance his writing. The major themes of Lawson's poems revolve around the Australian bush. Growing up in the bushland, Lawson knew the hardships of bush life and drew inspiration from the lessons learned coping and living with nature and the land, as can be seen in most of his short stories, including "The Drover's Wife," published in his collection *While the Billy Boils* (1896). Lawson found an affinity with the bush that he could not feel from human company. The celebratory tone of such poems as "The Roaring Days" (1889) and "Andy's Gone with Cattle" (1888) contrasts with the estrangement that the poet clearly felt in observing people.

Lawson's writings also reflect his deep concern for political and social issues. Some of his major poems of political and social protest include "The Watch on the Kerb" (1888) and "The Men Who Made Australia" (1901), which highlight the alienation and despair that are shared among most of Australia's struggling population. These same themes can be seen in his short stories "In the Storm That Is to Come" (1904) and "The Union Buries Its Dead" (1896).

Lawson's isolation increased as he failed to find happiness in marriage. He resorted to heavy drinking and spent most of his later life in a state of delirium and mental instability. His writing declined as his health collapsed. He began to write autobiographical works as he sought to hang on to his sanity. At his death, he was the first Australian writer to be granted a state funeral. Lawson's contribution to Australian and world literature lies in his accurate but starkly depressing portrayal of the difficult lives of the Australian lower classes, especially the much neglected regions of the Australian countryside and bush areas.

**Further Information**

**Other Works by Henry Lawson**


**Works about Henry Lawson**


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