

MINERS' TALES AND VERSE

Fiction and verse set in mining camps or on mining trails bulk large enough in writing about the North to warrant a separate section here. The range within the section is again very wide. George Jackson's story, "Farrel's Fate," is of historical interest for its account of travel to the mining field. It shows that some men followed the northern rushes from a futile wish to escape their pasts, and that the effects could be tragic. E. Downs provides the inevitable ghost story to do with mining: whether serious or comic, ghosts were a feature of Australian literature in the nineties, reflecting the current European craze for spiritualism and the occult. In his "Chant of the Lonely Digger," George Essex Evans, whose name is one to conjure with in early Queensland writing, creates zany comedy from the flightiness of Lady Luck on the mining field; while in yet further contrast Stefan von Kotze alternates in his two stories between an emotional rejection of the mining camp and the bush and a comic exposé of miners' attitudes to women.