

SWEET RIVER FALLS

(A collection of poems)

by Austin Mitchell

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Published by

Austin Mitchell

In memory of my father, Evan Mitchell

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Bring back the good old days**

Waiting to Cross the Bridge**

Going to the Bushes to cut Firewood**

Taking a Shortcut Home**

Days up the River**

The Fire by the Wayside**

Riding the milk truck to School**

Making grass mats to Sell**

Going into the Hills to Teach**

I'm Back From the Hills Now**

Better Days are Coming**

*****Collection of short stories***

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BEN'S BACK

a Poem

by Austin Mitchell

That morning we ran to school
We had to be early
The morning was so cool
We could see clearly

That Ben was back
We were glad, we were sad
To see Quaco get the sack
We really felt bad

Oh, how we loved when he was around
When Quaco was around
Our recesses were the longest ever
Our lunchtimes were forever

But now Ben was back
And we had to be on time
No more looking back
No more endless lunchtime

We were sad, we were glad
We knew what we had
We had to learn our lessons
For all the right reasons

No more skylarking,
Discipline was back
No more late coming
Quaco was gone, Ben was back

IN THE CANEFIELDS

A Poem

by Austin Mitchell

I remember carrying sugar canes
Yes, carrying sugar canes
From the fields to the mills
And from the hills

Watching my father in the fields
My grand uncles as they reaped the canes
And we would heap up those canes
And take it from the fields

My grandmother and my mother
Cooking those large meals
Oh, how we enjoyed those meals
From my mother and grandmother

And the workers carrying those large bundles of cane
And us carrying our small bundles of cane
But what I enjoyed most of all was the food
We just couldn't get enough of that food

It was fantastic food
We called back two or three times
For more food
Yes, two or three times

Then we were off to the fields
To cut and move the canes
Out of the fields
The food energized us to move those canes

Unfortunately, the canes are no longer with us
No trucks moving canes again

Not in these areas again
And the old people too, are no longer with us

GIVE US BACK OUR NAMES

A Poem

by Austin Mitchell

I want back my name
Give me back my name
They took my name
And gave me their name

I don't look British
I'm not French or English
Or Portugese or Scottish
Neither Dutch nor Spanish

So how come I have this name?
This European name
Can't blame my father
Can't blame my mother

What happened to my African name?
They took it away
Gave me their name
Tell me why you took it away?

Reparation can't heal the breach
No money, no apologies will heal the breach
Tell us why you gave us your names?
What was wrong with our names?

We want to know the truth
The truth about our names
Don't give us money, tell us the truth
About our names

I guess we'll never know
They don't want us to know
The reason we lost our names
And got European names

STOP THE RAINS

A Poem

by Austin Mitchell

Will the rains ever stop?
It has been mashing up our crops
It wants to destroy everything
Leaving us with nothing

We prayed for rain
Now it is proving to be a drain
Our only bridge has been washed away
Our animals and crops have been washed away

Nobody seems willing to help us
We have just lost our bus
It has been washed away
We want to get away

Away from this place
But with no bus
Who will help us?
To leave this place

Children have to stay home
Parents have to stay home
Farmers can't go to their fields
To get their yields

We prayed for rain
But it's proving to be a drain
Now we want it to stop
But will it ever stop

CRICKET IN THE ROAD

A Poem

by Austin Mitchell

We used to play cricket anywhere
In gullies, on banks, in the road, anywhere
With anything for a ball or bat
We used to call it bowl for a bat

Age was no barrier to playing
The old and the young were playing
There were no holidays without a cricket game
And everybody came out to watch the game

We used to go miles to watch a game
To watch the great players play the game
We still marvel at the skill of those great players
The catches they took, those great players

We are glad that the game is still being played
Maybe not like how it used to be played
But it is good to see youngsters playing the game
Like how those of old used to play the game

LAMENT OF THE TAINO MAN

A Poem

by Austin Mitchell

They came to our lands
Searching for faraway lands
We gave them food and water
From our land of wood and water

Then they returned to take away our lands
They brought their plagues to kill us
Their diseases are foreign to our lands
Their plan was to get rid of us

We know that was their plan
Because we heard them talking
And making plans
Yes, we heard them talking

About taking away our lands
Putting us to work the lands
To make them rich
And when they get rich
They would depart these lands

They have gotten rid of my people
Through their plagues and their cruelty
Our people could not stand their cruelty
We had no weapons to fight these people

They've wiped us out
Several generations of us
Who is to tell our story, but us?
Sadly, our conquerors have wiped us out

WASH DAY

A Poem

by Austin Mitchell

It was wash day yet again
Heavy baskets to carry
Down to the river again
All of us had to hurry

To get first use of the rocks
On which to spread our clothes
We would beat the clothes on the rocks
To get the dirt out of those clothes

Wash day was really sweet
We had lots of food to eat
Lots of vegetables and meat
And lots of things to drink

While our mothers were washing
We were busy making drinks and cooking
Food for everyone to eat and drink
And while our mothers bathed upstream
We were swimming downstream

Finally, wash day was over
We headed for home with our clothes
Baskets of fresh, clean clothes
Another wash day was over

MARKET DAY

A Poem

by Austin Mitchell

Wednesday market up the road
Saturday market down the road
Those days were the nicest yet
Wednesday and Saturday market

People came from far and near
Buying and selling their wares
Some dressed in the latest wear
Making their strides with care

From the higglers to the coal burners
The butchers, the farmers
The market gardeners
Bringing to market their week's labor

The fish vendors shouting fish, fish
Doctor fish, king fish
Other vendors peddling their wares
Anxious faces moving through the crowd

Trying to get goods at the lowest bargain
Laughter spilling out amongst the gathering
Vendors and their customers haggling
Some filling their baskets and moving on again

Others lining up at the soup vendors
While others lined up at the cooked food vendors
People coming and going all the time
Way into evening time

And finally it was time to go home
The market was over
And they'd all pack their bags

And head for home

THE HAT PLATTERS

A Poem

by Austin Mitchell

My mother was a hat platter
My grandmother was a dressmaker
But my grandmother could also make hats
My father too could make hats

My mother never learned to sew
She was a very good hat maker
Only a few women could sew
Most were hat makers

All the adults were workers
The men made bags and mats
While the women made hats
There were no idlers

Those men who weren't farmers
Were tailors, barbers or shoemakers
Some were butchers, masons or carpenters
Others were shopkeepers
Or simply day workers

Only a few women weren't hat makers
But they were higglers or shopkeepers
A few women and men were also teachers
But in my community there were no idlers

DAYBREAK

A Poem

by Austin Mitchell

The morning burst with all its glory
Beautiful morning with the promise
Of a day full of glory
Sunshine hallowing that promise

Giving us that energy
To go and complete our chores
Do a morning's work
And then do a day's work

Sunshine coming at us
Through our Windows
Waking us up
Giving us the energy

To go and complete our tasks
Waking up the animals
Waking up everybody
Giving us all energy
For the day and tasks ahead

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