

Ellen Dracopoulos

*Dirge for a Sinner*

From courts and cells and over the sea,  
John Gavin met these lands  
Just six months since *The Shepherd* docked  
He'd find blood on his hands

Though given work, and meat to eat,  
The young man had no luck  
He could not know the mournful tune  
The strings of fate would pluck

The Pollard family took him in  
But never liked him well  
Then flames would take their daughter Jane  
And plunge them into hell

The mother fell down deep in grief,  
She barely slept or ate  
John Gavin felt her cruel stare as  
Her pain turned into hate

And he too hated her in turn  
All other thoughts consumed  
Raw malice poisoned both their hearts  
And left two people doomed

Young Gavin came up with a plan  
It must be done, he said  
There is no living in this state,  
No peace until she's dead

The master had left for his work  
And Missus went to rest  
There was just one thing in the way  
Of Johnny's evil quest

George, their eldest still at home  
Could stop or turn him in  
And so he must be dealt with first  
For John's plan to begin

Missus heard singing through the walls  
While neither of them knew  
That George would sing his final words  
"We will all be true blue."<sup>1</sup>

George Pollard lost his life that day  
But sick with guilt and shame  
John Gavin could not follow through  
And give Missus the same

A tale of grief, a swinging noose,  
A broken, bloodied adze;  
No one had known *The Shepherd* brought  
The death of both those lads.

---

<sup>1</sup> George Pollard's last words as reported by his mother.  
"Quarter Sessions," *The Inquirer*, April 10 1844.  
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/65583189?browse=ndp%3Abrowse%2Ftitle%2FI%2Ftitle%2F181%2F1844%2F04%2F10%2Fpage%2F6595163%2Farticle%2F65583189>