

# GROSVENOR BUNSTER

The son of a British army colonel, Grosvenor (Jack) Bunster was born in Hobart Town on 29 May, 1838. He is believed to have started his working life at the local post-office before taking on a position with a whaling ship. After spending some time travelling through India Bunster returned to Australia in the early-1860s and initially settled in Victoria. He worked briefly as a bank clerk in Melbourne before joining the press as a special sketch writer for the city's *Morning Herald*. The paper recalls in 1904 that it was "as a writer of short stories and specials that "Jack" chiefly shone," and that "some of his best work was done for the *Herald*:"

A marked feature of his style was the power of expressing an undercurrent of real pathos in the midst of much which sometimes verged upon the reverse.<sup>1</sup>

Bunster contributed numerous short stories to the *Australian Journal* among other periodicals. His first known published work, "Nobody's Child: How it was Found in a Cable," (prose) appeared in the *Australian Journal* in 1867 as part of a series called "Vagabond Sketches." The other two related works were: "Nobody's Child: How it Grew Up" and "Nobody's Child: How it Found its Mother." A novel, *Henstone's Revenge*, was published in 1896. His stories ranged from adventure and travel to romance.



Archives Office of Tasmania.

In addition to his articles and fiction Bunster also wrote at least three theatrical productions which were staged in Australia. One of these was *The Belle of Woolloomooloo; Or, The Wooer, the Waitress and the Willian* [sic], which is a musical burlesque of H.T. Arnold's 1867 play *The Belle of the Barley Mow*. Containing an operatic-style score arranged by G.B. Allen, it was staged at Sydney's Masonic Hall in 1872. The other two known works were a sketch, *Quarantine* (1872) and a three act comedy drama titled *Class* (1878), which is described by Margaret Williams as "certainly the most sophisticated Australian comedy of its period" (96).

Bunster died on 23 August 1904 in the Homeopathic Hospital, Prahran (Melbourne). In its obituary, the *Herald* staff writer notes:

The number of those who can remember the man in his best days is sadly dwindling, and the grass has for some time grown green on the graves of many of his old friends. But who still survive have pleasant memories of one who represented to the last the old Bohemian school of newspaper writers, who if they erred sometimes in discretion, maintained the battle right gallantly to the, too often, bitter end. As Sir Walter Scott quotes in *Castle Dangerous*:

The Knights are dust.  
Their swords are rust.  
Their swords are with the Saints, we trust.

## MUSIC THEATRE

**1872:** *The Belle of Woolloomooloo* (burlesque) with G.B. Allan.

## FURTHER REFERENCE

Djubal, Clay. "Bunster, Grosvenor." *AustLit* (2007), online [sighted 25/08/2020]

"Mr Grosvenor Bunster: End of a Varied Career" *Herald* (Melbourne) 24 August 1904, 6. Another, more readable version of this obituary can be found in the 10 September edition of the *Mercury* (Hobart).

"Mr. Grosvenor Bunster: End of a Varied Career." *Weekly Times* (Melbourne) 27 Aug. 1904, 14.

Williams, Margaret. *Australia on the Popular Stage*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1983, 94-6.

<sup>1</sup> "Mr Grosvenor Bunster," 6.

Last updated: 10/05/2011

Expanded and updated from Clay Djubal, "What Oh Tonight." Ph D Diss. U of Qld (2005), Appendix D.

**NB: The URL for this PDF will change each time it is updated. If you wish to cite or link to this record please use the following:**

Clay Djubal. "Grosvenor Bunster." *Australian Variety Theatre Archive*, Practitioners: Other [A-L].

<http://ozvta.com/practitioners-other-a-l/>