

## The Apotheosis of Charles Lane Poole

St Peter met with Beezebub  
In the intergalactic eternal pub  
Where they meet to settle the bits of strife  
Which ruffle the calm of the after-life.  
And the Devil complained: 'There's a dreadful row  
Disturbing the underworld neighbourhood now,  
Cacophony day and night emergin'  
From the old-growth forests we used to call virgin.  
That piece of earth has grown appalling  
With quarrelling, growling, yelling, bawling –  
It may be all right in Kingdom Come,  
But for us it beats Pandemonium'.

St Peter replied: Take it easy mate,  
It's what they describe as the forests debate,  
It's always been willing and left me dismayed,  
But it's worse since they started the woodchip trade.  
For there's always demand for paper galore,  
And the Asian markets cry out for more,  
And without it the Japanese population  
Would suffer the trauma of constipation;  
But many have earnestly disagree  
That marri and jarrah should serve that need,  
And forests should fall to fill the quotas,  
And that's an issue that stirs the voters.

Beset on both sides, the politicians  
Contort themselves into odd positions.  
For reasons that nobody understands  
They'll trade the tuart for mineral sands.  
They make reserves where logging's prevented,  
But find the Greens still discontented.  
While timberworkers lacking a living  
Confront the future with misgiving.  
To sort things out, I'll send to Earth  
An expert of celestial worth.  
Lucid, experienced, nobody's fool:  
Find me the spirit of Charles Lane Poole.

So he summoned his trusty messenger Michael  
Who came on his jet-propelled motor-cycle.  
'Michael', said Peter, 'don't stand like a dunce  
But go and bring us Lane Poole at once.  
He may be in heaven with Willie Yeats,  
Drinking with Protestant Irish mates,  
He may be in Hell and suffering a blast  
From biographers raking over his past,  
But if I'm correct in recalling the story,  
He's probably chained up in Purgatory,  
With heat on his forehead and ice on his arse,  
Cheek by jowl with the working class'.

Lane Poole was glad to take the mission  
And gain promotion from perdition.  
Though Purgatory had made him moan  
It wasn't a patch on Sierra Leone.  
And he said he'd go to Australia again  
As long as he didn't meet up with Swain.  
'No', said Peter, 'I want you to travel  
And waft your spirit o'er John Dargavel,  
By alchemy which seems a mystery,  
He's got them keen on forest history.  
Fly down on the next Southerly buster  
And see what's happening at Augusta'.

Lane Poole discerned a motley crew  
Who covered every point of view,  
Some were timbermen, some were Green  
And most were something in between.  
But all could argue with propriety,  
All felt at home in that society,  
They liked their food, they liked their drinking,  
But they did lots of lively thinking.  
They only had one small complaint:  
They hadn't got a patron saint.  
So Lane Poole took their mild petition  
That he should serve in that position.

St Peter thought it only fair  
To grant the forest historians' prayer,  
So Lane Poole passed the Pearly Gates  
And talks of trees to William Yeats.

Geoffrey Bolton  
Augusta, September 2004