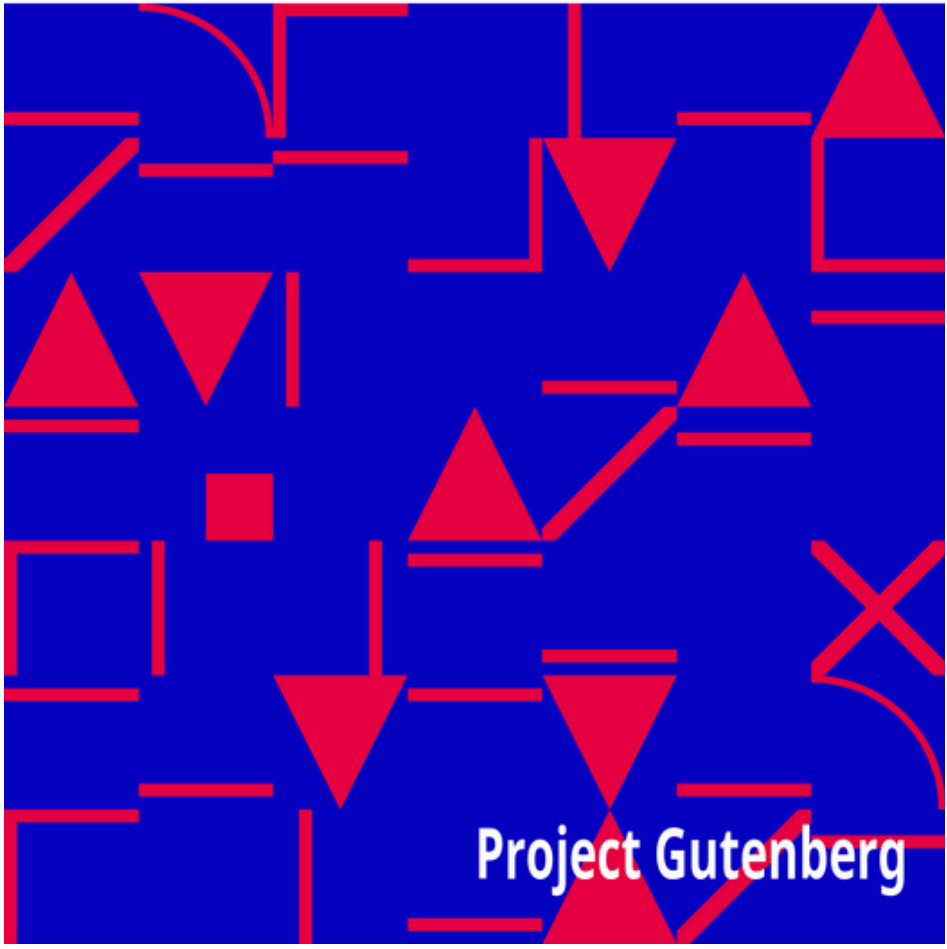
Rio Grande's Last Race, and Other Verses

A. B. Paterson



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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RIO GRANDE'S LAST RACE, AND OTHER VERSES ***

RIO GRANDE'S LAST RACE AND OTHER VERSES

by A. B. Paterson

Original 1902 Sydney edition

*The verses in this collection have appeared in papers in various parts
of the world—"Rio Grande" in London; most of the war verses
in Bloemfontein; others in Sydney.
A. B. Paterson.*

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From a section of Advertisements, 1909.

THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER,

RIO GRANDE'S LAST RACE, AND OTHER VERSES.

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RIO GRANDE'S LAST RACE AND OTHER VERSES

Rio Grande's Last Race

Now this was what Macpherson told
 While waiting in the stand;
A reckless rider, over-bold,
The only man with hands to hold
 The rushing Rio Grande.

He said, 'This day I bid good-bye
 To bit and bridle rein,
To ditches deep and fences high,
For I have dreamed a dream, and I
 Shall never ride again.

'I dreamt last night I rode this race
 That I to-day must ride,
And cant'ring down to take my place
I saw full many an old friend's face
 Come stealing to my side.

'Dead men on horses long since dead,
 They clustered on the track;
The champions of the days long fled,
They moved around with noiseless tread —
 Bay, chestnut, brown, and black.

'And one man on a big grey steed
 Rode up and waved his hand;
Said he, "We help a friend in need,
And we have come to give a lead
 To you and Rio Grande.

'"For you must give the field the slip,
 So never draw the rein,
But keep him moving with the whip,

And if he falter — set your lip
 And rouse him up again.

'"But when you reach the big stone wall,
 Put down your bridle hand
And let him sail — he cannot fall —
But don't you interfere at all;
 You trust old Rio Grande."

'We started, and in front we showed,
 The big horse running free:
Right fearlessly and game he strode,
And by my side those dead men rode
 Whom no one else could see.

'As silently as flies a bird,
 They rode on either hand;
At every fence I plainly heard
The phantom leader give the word,
 "Make room for Rio Grande!"

'I spurred him on to get the lead,
 I chanced full many a fall;
But swifter still each phantom steed
Kept with me, and at racing speed
 We reached the big stone wall.

'And there the phantoms on each side
 Drew in and blocked his leap;
"Make room! make room!" I loudly cried,
But right in front they seemed to ride —
 I cursed them in my sleep.

'He never flinched, he faced it game,
 He struck it with his chest,
And every stone burst out in flame,
And Rio Grande and I became
 As phantoms with the rest.

'And then I woke, and for a space
 All nerveless did I seem;
For I have ridden many a race,
But never one at such a pace
 As in that fearful dream.

'And I am sure as man can be
 That out upon the track,
Those phantoms that men cannot see
Are waiting now to ride with me,
 And I shall not come back.

'For I must ride the dead men's race,
 And follow their command;
'Twere worse than death, the foul disgrace
If I should fear to take my place
 To-day on Rio Grande.'

He mounted, and a jest he threw,
 With never sign of gloom;
But all who heard the story knew
That Jack Macpherson, brave and true,
 Was going to his doom.

They started, and the big black steed
 Came flashing past the stand;
All single-handed in the lead
He strode along at racing speed,
 The mighty Rio Grande.

But on his ribs the whalebone stung,
 A madness it did seem!
And soon it rose on every tongue
That Jack Macpherson rode among
 The creatures of his dream.

He looked to left and looked to right,

As though men rode beside;
And Rio Grande, with foam-flecks white,
Raced at his jumps in headlong flight
And cleared them in his stride.

But when they reached the big stone wall,
Down went the bridle-hand,
And loud we heard Macpherson call,
'Make room, or half the field will fall!
Make room for Rio Grande!'

. . . . .

'He's down! he's down!' And horse and man
Lay quiet side by side!
No need the pallid face to scan,
We knew with Rio Grande he ran
The race the dead men ride.

By the Grey Gulf-water

Far to the Northward there lies a land,
 A wonderful land that the winds blow over,
And none may fathom nor understand
 The charm it holds for the restless rover;
A great grey chaos — a land half made,
 Where endless space is and no life stirreth;
And the soul of a man will recoil afraid
 From the sphinx-like visage that Nature weareth.
But old Dame Nature, though scornful, craves
 Her dole of death and her share of slaughter;
Many indeed are the nameless graves
 Where her victims sleep by the Grey Gulf-water.

Slowly and slowly those grey streams glide,
 Drifting along with a languid motion,
Lapping the reed-beds on either side,
 Wending their way to the Northern Ocean.
Grey are the plains where the emus pass
 Silent and slow, with their staid demeanour;
Over the dead men's graves the grass
 Maybe is waving a trifle greener.
Down in the world where men toil and spin
 Dame Nature smiles as man's hand has taught her;
Only the dead men her smiles can win
 In the great lone land by the Grey Gulf-water.

For the strength of man is an insect's strength
 In the face of that mighty plain and river,
And the life of a man is a moment's length
 To the life of the stream that will run for ever.
And so it cometh they take no part
 In small-world worries; each hardy rover
Rideth abroad and is light of heart,

With the plains around and the blue sky over.
And up in the heavens the brown lark sings
The songs that the strange wild land has taught her;
Full of thanksgiving her sweet song rings —
And I wish I were back by the Grey Gulf-water.

With the Cattle

The drought is down on field and flock,
 The river-bed is dry;
And we must shift the starving stock
 Before the cattle die.
We muster up with weary hearts
 At breaking of the day,
And turn our heads to foreign parts,
 To take the stock away.
    And it's hunt 'em up and dog 'em,
    And it's get the whip and flog 'em,
For it's weary work is droving when they're dying every day;
    By stock-routes bare and eaten,
    On dusty roads and beaten,
With half a chance to save their lives we take the stock away.

We cannot use the whip for shame
 On beasts that crawl along;
We have to drop the weak and lame,
 And try to save the strong;
The wrath of God is on the track,
 The drought fiend holds his sway,
With blows and cries and stockwhip crack
 We take the stock away.
    As they fall we leave them lying,
    With the crows to watch them dying,
Grim sextons of the Overland that fasten on their prey;
    By the fiery dust-storm drifting,
    And the mocking mirage shifting,
In heat and drought and hopeless pain we take the stock away.

In dull despair the days go by
 With never hope of change,
But every stage we draw more nigh

Towards the mountain range;
And some may live to climb the pass,
And reach the great plateau,
And revel in the mountain grass,
By streamlets fed with snow.
As the mountain wind is blowing
It starts the cattle lowing,
And calling to each other down the dusty long array;
And there speaks a grizzled drover:
'Well, thank God, the worst is over,
The creatures smell the mountain grass that's twenty miles away.'

They press towards the mountain grass,
They look with eager eyes
Along the rugged stony pass,
That slopes towards the skies;
Their feet may bleed from rocks and stones,
But though the blood-drop starts,
They struggle on with stifled groans,
For hope is in their hearts.
And the cattle that are leading,
Though their feet are worn and bleeding,
Are breaking to a kind of run — pull up, and let them go!
For the mountain wind is blowing,
And the mountain grass is growing,
They settle down by running streams ice-cold with melted snow.

. . . . .

The days are done of heat and drought
Upon the stricken plain;
The wind has shifted right about,
And brought the welcome rain;
The river runs with sullen roar,
All flecked with yellow foam,
And we must take the road once more,
To bring the cattle home.

And it's 'Lads! we'll raise a chorus,
There's a pleasant trip before us.'
And the horses bound beneath us as we start them down the track;
And the drovers canter, singing,
Through the sweet green grasses springing,
Towards the far-off mountain-land, to bring the cattle back.

Are these the beasts we brought away
That move so lively now?
They scatter off like flying spray
Across the mountain's brow;
And dashing down the rugged range
We hear the stockwhip crack,
Good faith, it is a welcome change
To bring such cattle back.
And it's 'Steady down the lead there!'
And it's 'Let 'em stop and feed there!'
For they're wild as mountain eagles and their sides are all afoam;
But they're settling down already,
And they'll travel nice and steady,
With cheery call and jest and song we fetch the cattle home.

We have to watch them close at night
For fear they'll make a rush,
And break away in headlong flight
Across the open bush;
And by the camp-fire's cheery blaze,
With mellow voice and strong,
We hear the lonely watchman raise
The Overlander's song:
'Oh! it's when we're done with roving,
With the camping and the droving,
It's homeward down the Bland we'll go, and never more we'll roam;'
While the stars shine out above us,
Like the eyes of those who love us —

The eyes of those who watch and wait to greet the cattle home.

The plains are all awave with grass,
The skies are deepest blue;
And leisurely the cattle pass
And feed the long day through;
But when we sight the station gate,
We make the stockwhips crack,
A welcome sound to those who wait
To greet the cattle back:
And through the twilight falling
We hear their voices calling,
As the cattle splash across the ford and churn it into foam;
And the children run to meet us,
And our wives and sweethearts greet us,
Their heroes from the Overland who brought the cattle home.

The First Surveyor

'The opening of the railway line! – the Governor and all!
With flags and banners down the street, a banquet and a ball.
Hark to 'em at the station now! They're raising cheer on cheer!
"The man who brought the railway through – our friend the engineer!"

'They cheer HIS pluck and enterprise and engineering skill!
'Twas my old husband found the pass behind that big Red Hill.
Before the engineer was grown we settled with our stock
Behind that great big mountain chain, a line of range and rock –
A line that kept us starving there in weary weeks of drought,
With ne'er a track across the range to let the cattle out.

''Twas then, with horses starved and weak and scarcely fit to crawl,
My husband went to find a way across that rocky wall.
He vanished in the wilderness, God knows where he was gone,
He hunted till his food gave out, but still he battled on.
His horses strayed – 'twas well they did – they made towards

the grass,
And down behind that big red hill they found an easy pass.

'He followed up and blazed the trees, to show the safest track,
Then drew his belt another hole and turned and started back.
His horses died – just one pulled through with nothing much to spare;
God bless the beast that brought him home, the old white Arab mare!
We drove the cattle through the hills, along the new-found way,
And this was our first camping-ground – just where I live to-day.

'Then others came across the range and built the township here,
And then there came the railway line and this young engineer.
He drove about with tents and traps, a cook to cook his meals,
A bath to wash himself at night, a chain-man at his heels.
And that was all the pluck and skill for which he's cheered and praised,
For after all he took the track, the same my husband blazed!

'My poor old husband, dead and gone with never feast nor cheer;
He's buried by the railway line! – I wonder can he hear
When down the very track he marked, and close to where he's laid,
The cattle trains go roaring down the one-in-thirty grade.
I wonder does he hear them pass and can he see the sight,
When through the dark the fast express goes flaming by at night.

'I think 'twould comfort him to know there's someone left to care,
I'll take some things this very night and hold a banquet there!

The hard old fare we've often shared together, him and me,
Some damper and a bite of beef, a pannikin of tea:
We'll do without the bands and flags, the speeches and the fuss,
We know who OUGHT to get the cheers and that's enough for us.

'What's that? They wish that I'd come down — the oldest settler here!
Present me to the Governor and that young engineer!
Well, just you tell his Excellence and put the thing polite,
I'm sorry, but I can't come down — I'm dining out to-night!'

Mulga Bill's Bicycle

'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that caught the cycling craze;
He turned away the good old horse that served him many days;
He dressed himself in cycling clothes, resplendent to be seen;
He hurried off to town and bought a shining new machine;
And as he wheeled it through the door, with air of lordly pride,
The grinning shop assistant said, 'Excuse me, can you ride?'

'See, here, young man,' said Mulga Bill, 'from Walgett to the sea,
From Conroy's Gap to Castlereagh, there's none can ride like me.
I'm good all round at everything, as everybody knows,
Although I'm not the one to talk — I HATE a man that blows.
But riding is my special gift, my chiefest, sole delight;
Just ask a wild duck can it swim, a wild cat can it fight.
There's nothing clothed in hair or hide, or built of flesh or steel,
There's nothing walks or jumps, or runs, on axle, hoof, or wheel,
But what I'll sit, while hide will hold and girths and straps are tight:
I'll ride this here two-wheeled concern right straight away at sight.'

'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that sought his own abode,
That perched above the Dead Man's Creek, beside the mountain road.
He turned the cycle down the hill and mounted for the fray,
But ere he'd gone a dozen yards it bolted clean away.
It left the track, and through the trees, just like a silver streak,

It whistled down the awful slope, towards the Dead Man's Creek.

It shaved a stump by half an inch, it dodged a big white-box:
The very wallaroos in fright went scrambling up the rocks,
The wombats hiding in their caves dug deeper underground,
As Mulga Bill, as white as chalk, sat tight to every bound.
It struck a stone and gave a spring that cleared a fallen tree,
It raced beside a precipice as close as close could be;
And then as Mulga Bill let out one last despairing shriek
It made a leap of twenty feet into the Dead Man's Creek.

'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that slowly swam ashore:
He said, 'I've had some narrer shaves and lively rides before;
I've rode a wild bull round a yard to win a five pound bet,
But this was the most awful ride that I've encountered yet.
I'll give that two-wheeled outlaw best; it's shaken all my nerve
To feel it whistle through the air and plunge and buck and swerve.
It's safe at rest in Dead Man's Creek, we'll leave it lying still;
A horse's back is good enough henceforth for Mulga Bill.'

The Pearl Diver

Kanzo Makame, the diver, sturdy and small Japanee,
Seeker of pearls and of pearl-shell down in the depths of the sea,
Trudged o'er the bed of the ocean, searching industriously.

Over the pearl-grounds, the lugger drifted — a little white speck:
Joe Nagasaki, the 'tender', holding the life-line on deck,
Talked through the rope to the diver, knew when to drift or to check.

Kanzo was king of his lugger, master and diver in one,
Diving wherever it pleased him, taking instructions from none;
Hither and thither he wandered, steering by stars and by sun.

Fearless he was beyond credence, looking at death eye to eye:
This was his formula always, 'All man go dead by-and-bye —
S'posing time come no can help it — s'pose time no come, then no die.'

Dived in the depths of the Darnleys, down twenty fathom and five;
Down where by law and by reason, men are forbidden to dive;
Down in a pressure so awful that only the strongest survive:

Sweated four men at the air pumps, fast as the handles could go,
Forcing the air down that reached him heated, and tainted, and slow —
Kanzo Makame the diver stayed seven minutes below;

Came up on deck like a dead man, paralysed body and brain;
Suffered, while blood was returning, infinite tortures of

pain:
Sailed once again to the Darnleys — laughed and descended again!

. . . . .

Scarce grew the shell in the shallows, rarely a patch could they touch;
Always the take was so little, always the labour so much;
Always they thought of the Islands held by the lumbering Dutch,

Islands where shell was in plenty lying in passage and bay,
Islands where divers could gather hundreds of shell in a day:
But the lumbering Dutch, with their gunboats, hunted the divers away.

Joe Nagasaki, the 'tender', finding the profits grow small,
Said, 'Let us go to the Islands, try for a number one haul!
If we get caught, go to prison — let them take lugger and all!'

Kanzo Makame, the diver — knowing full well what it meant —
Fatalist, gambler, and stoic, smiled a broad smile of content,
Flattened in mainsail and foresail, and off to the Islands they went.

Close to the headlands they drifted, picking up shell by the ton,
Piled up on deck were the oysters, opening wide in the sun,
When, from the lee of the headland, boomed the report of a gun.

Once that the diver was sighted pearl-shell and lugger must go.
Joe Nagasaki decided — quick was the word and the blow —
Cut both the pipe and the life-line, leaving the diver below!

Kanzo Makame, the diver, failing to quite understand,
Pulled the 'haul up' on the life-line, found it was slack in his hand;
Then, like a little brown stoic, lay down and died on the sand.

Joe Nagasaki, the 'tender', smiling a sanctified smile,
Headed her straight for the gunboat – throwing out shells all the while –
Then went aboard and reported, 'No makee dive in three mile!

'Dress no have got and no helmet – diver go shore on the spree;
Plenty wind come and break rudder – lugger get blown out to sea:
Take me to Japanee Consul, he help a poor Japanee!'

. . . . .

So the Dutch let him go, and they watched him, as off from the Islands he ran,
Doubting him much, but what would you? You have to be sure of your man
Ere you wake up that nest-full of hornets – the little brown men of Japan.

Down in the ooze and the coral, down where earth's wonders are spread,
Helmeted, ghastly, and swollen, Kanzo Makame lies dead:
Joe Nagasaki, his 'tender', is owner and diver instead.

Wearer of pearls in your necklace, comfort yourself if you can,
These are the risks of the pearling – these are the ways of Japan,
'Plenty more Japanee diver, plenty more little brown man!'

The City of Dreadful Thirst

The stranger came from Narromine and made his little joke —
'They say we folks in Narromine are narrow-minded folk.
But all the smartest men down here are puzzled to define
A kind of new phenomenon that came to Narromine.

'Last summer up in Narromine 'twas gettin' rather warm —
Two hundred in the water-bag, and lookin' like a storm —
We all were in the private bar, the coolest place in town,
When out across the stretch of plain a cloud came rollin' down,

'We don't respect the clouds up there, they fill us with disgust,
They mostly bring a Bogan shower — three rain-drops and some dust;
But each man, simultaneous-like, to each man said, "I think
That cloud suggests it's up to us to have another drink!"

'There's clouds of rain and clouds of dust — we'd heard of them before,
And sometimes in the daily press we read of "clouds of war":
But — if this ain't the Gospel truth I hope that I may burst —
That cloud that came to Narromine was just a cloud of thirst.

'It wasn't like a common cloud, 'twas more a sort of haze;
It settled down about the streets, and stopped for days and days,
And not a drop of dew could fall and not a sunbeam shine
To pierce that dismal sort of mist that hung on Narromine.

'Oh, Lord! we had a dreadful time beneath that cloud of

thirst!
We all chucked-up our daily work and went upon the burst.
The very blacks about the town that used to cadge for grub,
They made an organised attack and tried to loot the pub.

'We couldn't leave the private bar no matter how we tried;
Shearers and squatters, union-men and blacklegs side by side
Were drinkin' there and dursn't move, for each was sure, he said,
Before he'd get a half-a-mile the thirst would strike him dead!

'We drank until the drink gave out, we searched from room to room,
And round the pub, like drunken ghosts, went howling through the gloom.
The shearers found some kerosene and settled down again,
But all the squatter chaps and I, we staggered to the train.

'And, once outside the cloud of thirst, we felt as right as pie,
But while we stopped about the town we had to drink or die.
But now I hear it's safe enough, I'm going back to work
Because they say the cloud of thirst has shifted on to Bourke.

'But when you see those clouds about – like this one over here –
All white and frothy at the top, just like a pint of beer,
It's time to go and have a drink, for if that cloud should burst
You'd find the drink would all be gone, for that's a cloud of thirst!'

. . . . .

We stood the man from Narromine a pint of half-and-half;
He drank it off without a gasp in one tremendous quaff;
'I joined some friends last night,' he said, 'in what THEY

called a spree;
  But after Narromine 'twas just a holiday to me.'

  And now beyond the Western Range, where sunset skies are red,
    And clouds of dust, and clouds of thirst, go drifting overhead,
  The railway-train is taking back, along the Western Line,
  That narrow-minded person on his road to Narromine.

Saltbush Bill's Gamecock

'Twas Saltbush Bill, with his travelling sheep, was making his way to town;
He crossed them over the Hard Times Run, and he came to the Take 'Em Down;
He counted through at the boundary gate, and camped at the drafting yard:
For Stingy Smith, of the Hard Times Run, had hunted him rather hard.
He bore no malice to Stingy Smith — 'twas simply the hand of fate
That caused his waggon to swerve aside and shatter old Stingy's gate;
And, being only the hand of fate, it follows, without a doubt,
It wasn't the fault of Saltbush Bill that Stingy's sheep got out.
So Saltbush Bill, with an easy heart, prepared for what might befall,
Commenced his stages on Take 'Em Down, the station of Rooster Hall.

'Tis strange how often the men out back will take to some curious craft,
Some ruling passion to keep their thoughts away from the overdraft;
And Rooster Hall, of the Take 'Em Down, was widely known to fame
As breeder of champion fighting cocks — his 'forte' was the British Game.
The passing stranger within his gates that camped with old Rooster Hall
Was forced to talk about fowls all night, or else not talk at all.
Though droughts should come, and though sheep should die,

his fowls were his sole delight;
He left his shed in the flood of work to watch two gamecocks fight.
He held in scorn the Australian Game, that long-legged child of sin;
In a desperate fight, with the steel-tipped spurs, the British Game must win!
The Australian bird was a mongrel bird, with a touch of the jungle cock;
The want of breeding must find him out, when facing the English stock;
For British breeding, and British pluck, must triumph it over all —
And that was the root of the simple creed that governed old Rooster Hall.

. . . . .

'Twas Saltbush Bill to the station rode ahead of his travelling sheep,
And sent a message to Rooster Hall that wakened him out of his sleep —
A crafty message that fetched him out, and hurried him as he came —
'A drover has an Australian Bird to match with your British Game.'
'Twas done, and done in a half a trice; a five-pound note aside;
Old Rooster Hall, with his champion bird, and the drover's bird untried.
'Steel spurs, of course?' said old Rooster Hall;
'you'll need 'em, without a doubt!'
'You stick the spurs on your bird!' said Bill, 'but mine fights best without.'
'Fights best without?' said old Rooster Hall; 'he can't fight best unspurred!
You must be crazy!' But Saltbush Bill said, 'Wait till you see my bird!'

So Rooster Hall to his fowlyard went, and quickly back he came,
Bearing a clipt and a shaven cock, the pride of his English Game.
With an eye as fierce as an eaglehawk, and a crow like a trumpet call,
He strutted about on the garden walk, and cackled at Rooster Hall.
Then Rooster Hall sent off a boy with word to his cronies two,
McCrae (the boss of the Black Police) and Father Donahoo.
Full many a cockfight old McCrae had held in his empty Court,
With Father D. as a picker-up — a regular all-round Sport!
They got the message of Rooster Hall, and down to his run they came,
Prepared to scoff at the drover's bird, and to bet on the English Game;
They hied them off to the drover's camp, while Saltbush rode before —
Old Rooster Hall was a blithesome man, when he thought of the treat in store.
They reached the camp, where the drover's cook, with countenance all serene,
Was boiling beef in an iron pot, but never a fowl was seen.

'Take off the beef from the fire,' said Bill,
'and wait till you see the fight;
There's something fresh for the bill-of-fare —
there's game-fowl stew to-night!
For Mister Hall has a fighting cock, all feathered and clipped and spurred;
And he's fetched him here, for a bit of sport, to fight our Australian bird.
I've made a match that our pet will win, though he's hardly a fighting cock,
But he's game enough, and it's many a mile
that he's tramped with the travelling stock.'
The cook he banged on a saucepan lid; and, soon as the sound was heard,

Under the dray, in the shadows hid, a something moved and stirred:
A great tame Emu strutted out. Said Saltbush, 'Here's our bird!'
But Rooster Hall, and his cronies two, drove home without a word.

The passing stranger within his gates that camps with old Rooster Hall
Must talk about something else than fowls, if he wishes to talk at all.
For the record lies in the local Court, and filed in its deepest vault,
That Peter Hall, of the Take 'Em Down, was tried for a fierce assault
On a stranger man, who, in all good faith, and prompted by what he heard,
Had asked old Hall if a British Game could beat an Australian bird;
And old McCrae, who was on the Bench, as soon as the case was tried,
Remarked, 'Discharged with a clean discharge — the assault was justified!'

Hay and Hell and Booligal

'You come and see me, boys,' he said;
'You'll find a welcome and a bed
 And whisky any time you call;
Although our township hasn't got
The name of quite a lively spot —
 You see, I live in Booligal.

'And people have an awful down
Upon the district and the town —
 Which worse than hell itself they call;
In fact, the saying far and wide
Along the Riverina side
 Is "Hay and Hell and Booligal".

'No doubt it suits 'em very well
To say it's worse than Hay or Hell,
 But don't you heed their talk at all;
Of course, there's heat — no one denies —
And sand and dust and stacks of flies,
 And rabbits, too, at Booligal.

'But such a pleasant, quiet place,
You never see a stranger's face —
 They hardly ever care to call;
The drovers mostly pass it by;
They reckon that they'd rather die
 Than spend a night in Booligal.

'The big mosquitoes frighten some —
You'll lie awake to hear 'em hum —
 And snakes about the township crawl;
But shearers, when they get their cheque,
They never come along and wreck

The blessed town of Booligal.

'But down in Hay the shearers come
And fill themselves with fighting-rum,
And chase blue devils up the wall,
And fight the snaggers every day,
Until there is the deuce to pay —
There's none of that in Booligal.

'Of course, there isn't much to see —
The billiard-table used to be
The great attraction for us all,
Until some careless, drunken curs
Got sleeping on it in their spurs,
And ruined it, in Booligal.

'Just now there is a howling drought
That pretty near has starved us out —
It never seems to rain at all;
But, if there SHOULD come any rain,
You couldn't cross the black-soil plain —
You'd have to stop in Booligal.'

. . . . .

'WE'D HAVE TO STOP!' With bated breath
We prayed that both in life and death
Our fate in other lines might fall:
'Oh, send us to our just reward
In Hay or Hell, but, gracious Lord,
Deliver us from Booligal!'

A Walgett Episode

The sun strikes down with a blinding glare,
 The skies are blue and the plains are wide,
The saltbush plains that are burnt and bare
 By Walgett out on the Barwon side —
The Barwon river that wanders down
In a leisurely manner by Walgett Town.

There came a stranger — a 'Cockatoo' —
 The word means farmer, as all men know
Who dwell in the land where the kangaroo
 Barks loud at dawn, and the white-eyed crow
Uplifts his song on the stock-yard fence
As he watches the lambkins passing hence.

The sunburnt stranger was gaunt and brown,
 But it soon appeared that he meant to flout
The iron law of the country town,
 Which is — that the stranger has got to shout:
'If he will not shout we must take him down,'
Remarked the yokels of Walgett Town.

They baited a trap with a crafty bait,
 With a crafty bait, for they held discourse
Concerning a new chum who of late
 Had bought such a thoroughly lazy horse;
They would wager that no one could ride him down
The length of the city of Walgett Town.

The stranger was born on a horse's hide;
 So he took the wagers, and made them good
With his hard-earned cash — but his hopes they died,
 For the horse was a clothes-horse, made of wood! —
'Twas a well-known horse that had taken down

Full many a stranger in Walgett Town.

The stranger smiled with a sickly smile –
'Tis a sickly smile that the loser grins –
And he said he had travelled for quite a while
In trying to sell some marsupial skins.
'And I thought that perhaps, as you've took me down,
You would buy them from me, in Walgett Town!'

He said that his home was at Wingadee,
At Wingadee where he had for sale
Some fifty skins and would guarantee
They were full-sized skins, with the ears and tail
Complete, and he sold them for money down
To a venturesome buyer in Walgett Town.

Then he smiled a smile as he pouched the pelf,
'I'm glad that I'm quit of them, win or lose:
You can fetch them in when it suits yourself,
And you'll find the skins – on the kangaroos!'
Then he left – and the silence settled down
Like a tangible thing upon Walgett Town.

Father Riley's Horse

'Twas the horse thief, Andy Regan, that was hunted like a dog
By the troopers of the Upper Murray side,
They had searched in every gully — they had looked in every log,
But never sight or track of him they spied,
Till the priest at Kiley's Crossing heard a knocking very late
And a whisper 'Father Riley — come across!'
So his Rev'rence in pyjamas trotted softly to the gate
And admitted Andy Regan — and a horse!

'Now, it's listen, Father Riley, to the words I've got to say,
For its close upon my death I am to-night.
With the troopers hard behind me I've been hiding all the day
In the gullies keeping close and out of sight.
But they're watching all the ranges till there's not a bird could fly,
And I'm fairly worn to pieces with the strife,
So I'm taking no more trouble, but I'm going home to die,
'Tis the only way I see to save my life.

'Yes, I'm making home to mother's, and I'll die o' Tuesday next
An' be buried on the Thursday — and, of course,
I'm prepared to meet my penance, but with one thing I'm perplexed
And it's — Father, it's this jewel of a horse!
He was never bought nor paid for, and there's not a man can swear
To his owner or his breeder, but I know,
That his sire was by Pedantic from the Old Pretender mare
And his dam was close related to The Roe.

'And there's nothing in the district that can race him for a

step,
   He could canter while they're going at their top:
  He's the king of all the leppers that was ever seen to lep,
   A five-foot fence – he'd clear it in a hop!
   So I'll leave him with you, Father, till the dead shall rise again,
   'Tis yourself that knows a good 'un; and, of course,
  You can say he's got by Moonlight out of Paddy Murphy's plain
   If you're ever asked the breeding of the horse!

   'But it's getting on to daylight and it's time to say good-bye,
   For the stars above the East are growing pale.
  And I'm making home to mother – and it's hard for me to die!
   But it's harder still, is keeping out of gaol!
  You can ride the old horse over to my grave across the dip
   Where the wattle bloom is waving overhead.
   Sure he'll jump them fences easy – you must never raise the whip
   Or he'll rush 'em! – now, good-bye!' and he had fled!

  So they buried Andy Regan, and they buried him to rights,
   In the graveyard at the back of Kiley's Hill;
   There were five-and-twenty mourners who had five-and-twenty fights
   Till the very boldest fighters had their fill.
  There were fifty horses racing from the graveyard to the pub,
   And their riders flogged each other all the while.
  And the lashins of the liquor! And the lavins of the grub!
   Oh, poor Andy went to rest in proper style.

  Then the races came to Kiley's – with a steeplechase and all,
   For the folk were mostly Irish round about,
  And it takes an Irish rider to be fearless of a fall,
   They were training morning in and morning out.
  But they never started training till the sun was on the course
   For a superstitious story kept 'em back,
  That the ghost of Andy Regan on a slashing chestnut horse,

Had been training by the starlight on the track.

And they read the nominations for the races with surprise
And amusement at the Father's little joke,
For a novice had been entered for the steeplechasing prize,
And they found that it was Father Riley's moke!
He was neat enough to gallop, he was strong enough to stay!
But his owner's views of training were immense,
For the Reverend Father Riley used to ride him every day,
And he never saw a hurdle nor a fence.

And the priest would join the laughter; 'Oh,' said he, 'I put him in,
For there's five and twenty sovereigns to be won.
And the poor would find it useful, if the chestnut chanced to win,
And he'll maybe win when all is said and done!'
He had called him Faugh-a-ballagh, which is French for clear the course,
And his colours were a vivid shade of green:
All the Dooleys and O'Donnells were on Father Riley's horse,
While the Orangemen were backing Mandarin!

It was Hogan, the dog poisoner — aged man and very wise,
Who was camping in the racecourse with his swag,
And who ventured the opinion, to the township's great surprise,
That the race would go to Father Riley's nag.
'You can talk about your riders — and the horse has not been schooled,
And the fences is terrific, and the rest!
When the field is fairly going, then ye'll see ye've all been fooled,
And the chestnut horse will battle with the best.

'For there's some has got condition, and they think the race is sure,
And the chestnut horse will fall beneath the weight,

But the hopes of all the helpless, and the prayers of all the poor,
Will be running by his side to keep him straight.
And it's what's the need of schoolin' or of workin' on the track,
Whin the saints are there to guide him round the course!
I've prayed him over every fence — I've prayed him out and back!
And I'll bet my cash on Father Riley's horse!'

. . . . .

Oh, the steeple was a caution! They went tearin' round and round,
And the fences rang and rattled where they struck.
There was some that cleared the water — there was more fell in and drowned,
Some blamed the men and others blamed the luck!
But the whips were flying freely when the field came into view,
For the finish down the long green stretch of course,
And in front of all the flyers — jumpin' like a kangaroo,
Came the rank outsider — Father Riley's horse!

Oh, the shouting and the cheering as he rattled past the post!
For he left the others standing, in the straight;
And the rider — well they reckoned it was Andy Regan's ghost,
And it beat 'em how a ghost would draw the weight!
But he weighed it, nine stone seven, then he laughed and disappeared,
Like a Banshee (which is Spanish for an elf),
And old Hogan muttered sagely, 'If it wasn't for the beard
They'd be thinking it was Andy Regan's self!'

And the poor of Kiley's Crossing drank the health at Christmastide
Of the chestnut and his rider dressed in green.
There was never such a rider, not since Andy Regan died,

And they wondered who on earth he could have been.
But they settled it among 'em, for the story got about,
'Mongst the bushmen and the people on the course,
That the Devil had been ordered to let Andy Regan out
For the steeplechase on Father Riley's horse!

The Scotch Engineer

With eyes that searched in the dark,
Peering along the line,
Stood the grim Scotchman, Hector Clark,
Driver of 'Forty-nine',
And the veldt-fire flamed on the hills ahead,
Like a blood-red beacon sign.

There was word of a fight to the north,
And a column hard-pressed,
So they started the Highlanders forth,
Without food, without rest.

But the pipers gaily played,
Chanting their fierce delight,
And the armoured carriages rocked and swayed,
Laden with men of the Scotch Brigade,
Hurrying up to the fight,
And the grim, grey Highland engineer,
Driving them into the night.

Then a signal light glowed red,
And a picket came to the track.
'Enemy holding the line ahead,
Three of our mates we have left for dead,
Only we two got back.'
And far to the north through the still night air,
They heard the rifles crack.

And the boom of a gun rang out,
Like the sound of a deep appeal,
And the picket stood in doubt
By the side of the driving-wheel.

But the Engineer looked down,
With his hand on the starting-bar,
'Ride ye back to the town,
Ye know what my orders are,
Maybe they're wanting the Scotch Brigade
Up on those hills afar.

'I am no soldier at all,
Only an engineer,
But I could not bear that the folk should say,
Over in Scotland — Glasgow way —
That Hector Clark stayed here
With the Scotch Brigade till the foe were gone,
With ever a rail to run her on.
Ready behind! Stand clear!

'Fireman, get you gone
Into the armoured train,
I will drive her alone;
One more trip — and perhaps the last —
With a well-raked fire and an open blast —
Hark to the rifles again.'

. . . . .

On through the choking dark,
Never a lamp nor a light,
Never an engine spark,
Showing her hurried flight.
Over the lonely plain
Rushed the great armoured train,
Hurrying up to the fight.

Then with her living freight
On to the foe she came,
And the rifles snapped their hate,
And the darkness spouted flame.

Over the roar of the fray
The hungry bullets whined,
As she dashed through the foe that lay
Loading and firing blind,
Till the glare of the furnace burning clear
Showed them the form of the engineer,
Sharply and well defined.

Through! They were safely through!
Hark to the column's cheer!
Surely the driver knew
He was to halt her here;
But he took no heed of the signals red,
And the fireman found, when he climbed ahead,
There on the floor of his engine — dead,
Lay the Scotch Engineer!

Song of the Future

'Tis strange that in a land so strong,
So strong and bold in mighty youth,
We have no poet's voice of truth
To sing for us a wondrous song.

Our chiefest singer yet has sung
In wild, sweet notes a passing strain,
All carelessly and sadly flung
To that dull world he thought so vain.

'I care for nothing, good nor bad,
My hopes are gone, my pleasures fled,
I am but sifting sand,' he said:
What wonder Gordon's songs were sad!

And yet, not always sad and hard;
In cheerful mood and light of heart
He told the tale of Britomarte,
And wrote the Rhyme of Joyous Guard.

And some have said that Nature's face
To us is always sad; but these
Have never felt the smiling grace
Of waving grass and forest trees
On sunlit plains as wide as seas.

'A land where dull Despair is king
O'er scentless flower and songless bird!'
But we have heard the bell-birds ring
Their silver bells at eventide,
Like fairies on the mountain side,
The sweetest note man ever heard.

The wild thrush lifts a note of mirth;
The bronzewing pigeons call and coo
Beside their nests the long day through;
The magpie warbles clear and strong
A joyous, glad, thanksgiving song,
For all God's mercies upon earth.

And many voices such as these
Are joyful sounds for those to tell,
Who know the Bush and love it well,
With all its hidden mysteries.

We cannot love the restless sea,
That rolls and tosses to and fro
Like some fierce creature in its glee;
For human weal or human woe
It has no touch of sympathy.

For us the bush is never sad:
Its myriad voices whisper low,
In tones the bushmen only know,
Its sympathy and welcome glad.

For us the roving breezes bring
From many a blossom-tufted tree —
Where wild bees murmur dreamily —
The honey-laden breath of Spring.

. . . . .

We have no tales of other days,
No bygone history to tell;
Our tales are told where camp-fires blaze
At midnight, when the solemn hush
Of that vast wonderland, the Bush,
Hath laid on every heart its spell.

Although we have no songs of strife,

Of bloodshed reddening the land,
We yet may find achievements grand
Within the bushman's quiet life.

Lift ye your faces to the sky
Ye far blue mountains of the West,
Who lie so peacefully at rest
Enshrouded in a haze of blue;
'Tis hard to feel that years went by
Before the pioneers broke through
Your rocky heights and walls of stone,
And made your secrets all their own.

For years the fertile Western plains
Were hid behind your sullen walls,
Your cliffs and crags and waterfalls
All weatherworn with tropic rains.

Between the mountains and the sea,
Like Israelites with staff in hand,
The people waited restlessly:
They looked towards the mountains old
And saw the sunsets come and go
With gorgeous golden afterglow,
That made the West a fairyland,
And marvelled what that West might be
Of which such wondrous tales were told.

For tales were told of inland seas
Like sullen oceans, salt and dead,
And sandy deserts, white and wan,
Where never trod the foot of man,
Nor bird went winging overhead,
Nor ever stirred a gracious breeze
To wake the silence with its breath —
A land of loneliness and death.

At length the hardy pioneers

By rock and crag found out the way,
And woke with voices of to-day,
A silence kept for years and years.

Upon the Western slope they stood
And saw — a wide expanse of plain
As far as eye could stretch or see
Go rolling westward endlessly.
The native grasses, tall as grain,
Were waved and rippled in the breeze;
From boughs of blossom-laden trees
The parrots answered back again.
They saw the land that it was good,
A land of fatness all untrod,
And gave their silent thanks to God.

The way is won! The way is won!
And straightway from the barren coast
There came a westward-marching host,
That aye and ever onward prest
With eager faces to the West,
Along the pathway of the sun.

The mountains saw them marching by:
They faced the all-consuming drought,
They would not rest in settled land:
But, taking each his life in hand,
Their faces ever westward bent
Beyond the farthest settlement,
Responding to the challenge cry
Of 'better country further out.'

And lo a miracle! the land
But yesterday was all unknown,
The wild man's boomerang was thrown
Where now great busy cities stand.
It was not much, you say, that these
Should win their way where none withstood;

In sooth there was not much of blood
No war was fought between the seas.

It was not much! but we who know
The strange capricious land they trod —
At times a stricken, parching sod,
At times with raging floods beset —
Through which they found their lonely way,
Are quite content that you should say
It was not much, while we can feel
That nothing in the ages old,
In song or story written yet
On Grecian urn or Roman arch,
Though it should ring with clash of steel,
Could braver histories unfold
Than this bush story, yet untold —
The story of their westward march.

. . . . .

But times are changed, and changes rung
From old to new — the olden days,
The old bush life and all its ways
Are passing from us all unsung.
The freedom, and the hopeful sense
Of toil that brought due recompense,
Of room for all, has passed away,
And lies forgotten with the dead.
Within our streets men cry for bread
In cities built but yesterday.

About us stretches wealth of land,
A boundless wealth of virgin soil
As yet unfruitful and untilled!
Our willing workmen, strong and skilled
Within our cities idle stand,
And cry aloud for leave to toil.

The stunted children come and go
In squalid lanes and alleys black;
We follow but the beaten track
Of other nations, and we grow
In wealth for some — for many, woe.

And it may be that we who live
In this new land apart, beyond
The hard old world grown fierce and fond
And bound by precedent and bond,
May read the riddle right and give
New hope to those who dimly see
That all things may be yet for good,
And teach the world at length to be
One vast united brotherhood.

. . . . .

So may it be, and he who sings
In accents hopeful, clear, and strong,
The glories which that future brings
Shall sing, indeed, a wond'rous song.

Anthony Considine

Out in the wastes of the West countrie,
 Out where the white stars shine,
Grim and silent as such men be,
Rideth a man with a history —
 Anthony Considine.

For the ways of men they are manifold
 As their differing views in life;
For some are sold for the lust of gold
 And some for the lust of strife:
But this man counted the world well lost
 For the love of his neighbour's wife.

They fled together, as those must flee
 Whom all men hold in blame;
Each to the other must all things be
Who cross the gulf of iniquity
 And live in the land of shame.

But a light-o'-love, if she sins with one,
 She sinneth with ninety-nine:
The rule holds good since the world begun —
Since ever the streams began to run
 And the stars began to shine.
The rule holds true, and he found it true —
 Anthony Considine.

A nobler spirit had turned in scorn
 From a love that was stained with mire;
A weaker being might mourn and mourn
 For the loss of his Heart's Desire:
But the anger of Anthony Considine
 Blazed up like a flaming fire.

And she, with her new love, presently
 Came past with her eyes ashine;
And God so willed it, and God knows why,
She turned and laughed as they passed him by —
 Anthony Considine.

Her laughter stung as a whip might sting;
 And mad with his wounded pride
He turned and sprang with a panther's spring
 And struck at his rival's side:
And only the woman, shuddering,
 Could tell how the dead man died!

She dared not speak — and the mystery
 Is buried in auld lang syne,
But out on the wastes of the West countrie,
Grim and silent as such men be,
Rideth a man with a history —
 Anthony Considine.

Song of the Artesian Water

Now the stock have started dying, for the Lord has sent a drought;
But we're sick of prayers and Providence — we're going to do without;
With the derricks up above us and the solid earth below,
We are waiting at the lever for the word to let her go.
Sinking down, deeper down,
Oh, we'll sink it deeper down:
As the drill is plugging downward at a thousand feet of level,
If the Lord won't send us water, oh, we'll get it from the devil;
Yes, we'll get it from the devil deeper down.

Now, our engine's built in Glasgow by a very canny Scot,
And he marked it twenty horse-power, but he don't know what is what:
When Canadian Bill is firing with the sun-dried gidgee logs,
She can equal thirty horses and a score or so of dogs.
Sinking down, deeper down,
Oh, we're going deeper down:
If we fail to get the water then it's ruin to the squatter,
For the drought is on the station and the weather's growing hotter,
But we're bound to get the water deeper down.

But the shaft has started caving and the sinking's very slow,
And the yellow rods are bending in the water down below,
And the tubes are always jamming and they can't be made to shift
Till we nearly burst the engine with a forty horse-power lift.
Sinking down, deeper down,

Oh, we're going deeper down
Though the shaft is always caving, and the tubes are always jamming,
Yet we'll fight our way to water while the stubborn drill is ramming —
While the stubborn drill is ramming deeper down.

But there's no artesian water, though we've passed three thousand feet,
And the contract price is growing and the boss is nearly beat.
But it must be down beneath us, and it's down we've got to go,
Though she's bumping on the solid rock four thousand feet below.
Sinking down, deeper down,
Oh, we're going deeper down:
And it's time they heard us knocking on the roof of Satan's dwellin';
But we'll get artesian water if we cave the roof of hell in —
Oh! we'll get artesian water deeper down.

But it's hark! the whistle's blowing with a wild, exultant blast,
And the boys are madly cheering, for they've struck the flow at last,
And it's rushing up the tubing from four thousand feet below
Till it spouts above the casing in a million-gallon flow.
And it's down, deeper down —
Oh, it comes from deeper down;
It is flowing, ever flowing, in a free, unstinted measure
From the silent hidden places where the old earth hides her treasure —
Where the old earth hides her treasure deeper down.

And it's clear away the timber, and it's let the water run:
How it glimmers in the shadow, how it flashes in the sun!
By the silent belts of timber, by the miles of blazing plain
It is bringing hope and comfort to the thirsty land again.
Flowing down, further down;

It is flowing further down

To the tortured thirsty cattle, bringing gladness in its going;

Through the droughty days of summer it is flowing, ever flowing —

It is flowing, ever flowing, further down.

A Disqualified Jockey's Story

You see, the thing was this way — there was me,
That rode Panoppoly, the Splendor mare,
And Ikey Chambers on the Iron Dook,
And Smith, the half-caste rider, on Regret,
And that long bloke from Wagga — him what rode
Veronikew, the Snowy River horse.
Well, none of them had chances — not a chance
Among the lot, unless the rest fell dead
Or wasn't trying — for a blind man's dog
Could see Enchantress was a certain cop,
And all the books was layin' six to four.

They brought her out to show our lot the road,
Or so they said; but, then, Gord's truth! you know,
You can't believe 'em, though they took an oath
On forty Bibles that they'd tell the truth.
But anyhow, an amateur was up
On this Enchantress, and so Ike and me,
We thought that we might frighten him a bit
By asking if he minded riding rough —
'Oh, not at all,' says he, 'oh, not at all!
I learnt at Robbo Park, and if it comes
To bumping I'm your Moses! Strike me blue!'
Says he, 'I'll bump you over either rail,
The inside rail or outside — which you choose
Is good enough for me' — which settled Ike;
For he was shaky since he near got killed
From being sent a buster on the rail,
When some chap bumped his horse and fetched him down
At Stony Bridge, so Ikey thought it best
To leave this bloke alone, and I agreed.

So all the books was layin' six to four
Against the favourite, and the amateur
Was walking this Enchantress up and down,
And me and Smithy backed him; for we thought
We might as well get something for ourselves,
Because we knew our horses couldn't win.
But Ikey wouldn't back him for a bob;
Because he said he reckoned he was stiff,
And all the books was layin' six to four.

Well, anyhow, before the start, the news
Got round that this here amateur was stiff,
And our good stuff was blued, and all the books
Was in it, and the prices lengthened out,
And every book was bustin' of his throat,
And layin' five to one the favourite.
So there was we that couldn't win ourselves,
And this here amateur that wouldn't try,
And all the books was layin' five to one.

So Smithy says to me, 'You take a hold
Of that there moke of yours, and round the turn
Come up behind Enchantress with the whip
And let her have it; that long bloke and me
Will wait ahead, and when she comes to us
We'll pass her on and belt her down the straight,
And Ikey'll flog her home, because his boss
Is judge and steward and the Lord knows what,
And so he won't be touched – and, as for us,
We'll swear we only hit her by mistake!'
And all the books was layin' five to one.

Well, off we went, and comin' to the turn
I saw the amateur was holding back
And poking into every hole he could
To get her blocked, and so I pulled behind
And drew the whip and dropped it on the mare –

I let her have it twice, and then she shot
Ahead of me, and Smithy opened out
And let her up beside him on the rails,
And kept her there a-beltin' her like smoke
Until she struggled past him pullin' hard
And came to Ike; but Ikey drew his whip
And hit her on the nose and sent her back
And won the race himself — for, after all,
It seems he had a fiver on the Dook
And never told us — so our stuff was lost.
And then they had us up for ridin' foul,
And warned us off the tracks for twelve months each,
To get our livin' any way we could;
But Ikey wasn't touched, because his boss
Was judge and steward and the Lord knows what.

But Mister — if you'll lend us half-a-crown,
I know three certain winners at the Park —
Three certain cops as no one knows but me;
And — thank you, Mister, come an' have a beer
(I always like a beer about this time) . . .
Well, so long, Mister, till we meet again.

The Road to Gundagai

The mountain road goes up and down,
From Gundagai to Tumut Town.

And branching off there runs a track,
Across the foothills grim and black,

Across the plains and ranges grey
To Sydney city far away.

. . . . .

It came by chance one day that I
From Tumut rode to Gundagai.

And reached about the evening tide
The crossing where the roads divide;

And, waiting at the crossing place,
I saw a maiden fair of face,

With eyes of deepest violet blue,
And cheeks to match the rose in hue —

The fairest maids Australia knows
Are bred among the mountain snows.

Then, fearing I might go astray,
I asked if she could show the way.

Her voice might well a man bewitch —
Its tones so supple, deep, and rich.

'The tracks are clear,' she made reply,

'And this goes down to Sydney town,
And that one goes to Gundagai.'

Then slowly, looking coyly back,
She went along the Sydney track.

And I for one was well content
To go the road the lady went;

But round the turn a swain she met —
The kiss she gave him haunts me yet!

. . . . .

I turned and travelled with a sigh
The lonely road to Gundagai.

Saltbush Bill's Second Fight

The news came down on the Castlereagh, and went to the world at large,
That twenty thousand travelling sheep, with Saltbush Bill in charge,
Were drifting down from a dried-out run to ravage the Castlereagh;
And the squatters swore when they heard the news,
and wished they were well away:
For the name and the fame of Saltbush Bill were over the country side
For the wonderful way that he fed his sheep,
and the dodges and tricks he tried.
He would lose his way on a Main Stock Route,
and stray to the squatters' grass;
He would come to a run with the boss away, and swear he had leave to pass;
And back of all and behind it all, as well the squatters knew,
If he had to fight, he would fight all day, so long as his sheep got through:
But this is the story of Stingy Smith, the owner of Hard Times Hill,
And the way that he chanced on a fighting man to reckon with Saltbush Bill.

. . . . .

'Twas Stingy Smith on his stockyard sat, and prayed for an early Spring,
When he stared at sight of a clean-shaved tramp, who walked with jaunty swing;
For a clean-shaved tramp with a jaunty walk a-swinging along

the track
Is as rare a thing as a feathered frog on the desolate roads out back.
So the tramp he made for the travellers' hut,
and asked could he camp the night;
But Stingy Smith had a bright idea, and he said to him, 'Can you fight?'
'Why, what's the game?' said the clean-shaved tramp,
as he looked at him up and down —
'If you want a battle, get off that fence, and I'll kill you for half-a-crown!
But, Boss, you'd better not fight with me, it wouldn't be fair nor right;
I'm Stiffener Joe, from the Rocks Brigade, and I killed a man in a fight:
I served two years for it, fair and square, and now I'm a trampin' back,
To look for a peaceful quiet life away on the outside track __'
'Oh, it's not myself, but a drover chap,' said Stingy Smith with glee;
'A bullying fellow, called Saltbush Bill — and you are the man for me.
He's on the road with his hungry sheep, and he's certain to raise a row,
For he's bullied the whole of the Castlereagh till he's got them under cow —
Just pick a quarrel and raise a fight, and leather him good and hard,
And I'll take good care that his wretched sheep don't wander a half a yard.
It's a five-pound job if you belt him well — do anything short of kill,
For there isn't a beak on the Castlereagh will fine you for Saltbush Bill.'

'I'll take the job,' said the fighting man; 'and hot as this cove appears,

He'll stand no chance with a bloke like me,
what's lived on the game for years;
For he's maybe learnt in a boxing school, and sparred for a round or so,
But I've fought all hands in a ten-foot ring each night in a travelling show;
They earned a pound if they stayed three rounds,
and they tried for it every night —
In a ten-foot ring! Oh, that's the game that teaches a bloke to fight,
For they'd rush and clinch, it was Dublin Rules, and we drew no colour line;
And they all tried hard for to earn the pound, but they got no pound of mine:
If I saw no chance in the opening round I'd slog at their wind, and wait
Till an opening came — and it ALWAYS came — and I settled 'em, sure as fate;
Left on the ribs and right on the jaw —
and, when the chance comes, MAKE SURE!
And it's there a professional bloke like me gets home on an amateur:
For it's my experience every day, and I make no doubt it's yours,
That a third-class pro is an over-match for the best of the amateurs ——'
'Oh, take your swag to the travellers' hut,'
said Smith, 'for you waste your breath;
You've a first-class chance, if you lose the fight,
of talking your man to death.
I'll tell the cook you're to have your grub, and see that you eat your fill,
And come to the scratch all fit and well to leather this Saltbush Bill.'

. . . . .

'Twas Saltbush Bill, and his travelling sheep were wending

their weary way
  On the Main Stock Route, through the Hard Times Run,
    on their six-mile stage a day;
   And he strayed a mile from the Main Stock Route, and started to feed along,
   And, when Stingy Smith came up, Bill said that the Route was surveyed wrong;
  And he tried to prove that the sheep had rushed
    and strayed from their camp at night,
   But the fighting man he kicked Bill's dog, and of course that meant a fight:
  So they sparred and fought, and they shifted ground
    and never a sound was heard
   But the thudding fists on their brawny ribs, and the seconds' muttered word,
   Till the fighting man shot home his left on the ribs with a mighty clout,
   And his right flashed up with a half-arm blow — and Saltbush Bill 'went out'.
  He fell face down, and towards the blow;
    and their hearts with fear were filled,
   For he lay as still as a fallen tree, and they thought that he must be killed.
   So Stingy Smith and the fighting man, they lifted him from the ground,
   And sent to home for a brandy-flask, and they slowly fetched him round;
   But his head was bad, and his jaw was hurt —
    in fact, he could scarcely speak —
   So they let him spell till he got his wits, and he camped on the run a week,
   While the travelling sheep went here and there, wherever they liked to stray,
   Till Saltbush Bill was fit once more for the track to the Castlereagh.

. . . . .

Then Stingy Smith he wrote a note, and gave to the fighting man:
'Twas writ to the boss of the neighbouring run, and thus the missive ran:
'The man with this is a fighting man, one Stiffener Joe by name;
He came near murdering Saltbush Bill, and I found it a costly game:
But it's worth your while to employ the chap,
for there isn't the slightest doubt
You'll have no trouble from Saltbush Bill while this man hangs about ——'
But an answer came by the next week's mail, with news that might well appal:
'The man you sent with a note is not a fighting man at all!
He has shaved his beard, and has cut his hair, but I spotted him at a look;
He is Tom Devine, who has worked for years for Saltbush Bill as cook.
Bill coached him up in the fighting yarn, and taught him the tale by rote,
And they shammed to fight, and they got your grass
and divided your five-pound note.
'Twas a clean take-in, and you'll find it wise —
'twill save you a lot of pelf —
When next you're hiring a fighting man, just fight him a round yourself.'

. . . . .

And the teamsters out on the Castlereagh, when they meet with a week of rain,
And the waggon sinks to its axle-tree, deep down in the black soil plain,
When the bullocks wade in a sea of mud, and strain at the load of wool,
And the cattle-dogs at the bullocks' heels are biting to make them pull,

When the off-side driver flays the team, and curses them while he flogs,
And the air is thick with the language used,
and the clamour of men and dogs —
The teamsters say, as they pause to rest and moisten each hairy throat,
They wish they could swear like Stingy Smith
when he read that neighbour's note.

Hard Luck

I left the course, and by my side
 There walked a ruined tout —
A hungry creature evil-eyed,
 Who poured this story out.

'You see,' he said, 'there came a swell
 To Kensington to-day,
And if I picked the winners well,
 A crown at least he'd pay.

'I picked three winners straight, I did,
 I filled his purse with pelf,
And then he gave me half-a-quid,
 To back one for myself.

'A half-a-quid to me he cast,
 I wanted it indeed.
So help me Bob, for two days past
 I haven't had a feed.

'But still I thought my luck was in,
 I couldn't go astray,
I put it all on Little Min,
 And lost it straightaway.

'I haven't got a bite or bed,
 I'm absolutely stuck,
So keep this lesson in your head:
 Don't over-trust your luck!'

The folks went homeward, near and far,
 The tout, Oh! where was he?

Ask where the empty boilers are,
 Beside the Circular Quay.

Song of the Federation

As the nations sat together, grimly waiting –
 The fierce old nations battle-scarred –
Grown grey in their lusting and their hating,
 Ever armed and ever ready keeping guard,
Through the tumult of their warlike preparation
 And the half-stilled clamour of the drums
Came a voice crying, 'Lo! a new-made nation,
 To her place in the sisterhood she comes!'

And she came – she was beautiful as morning,
 With the bloom of the roses in her mouth,
Like a young queen lavishly adorning
 Her charms with the splendours of the South.
And the fierce old nations, looking on her,
 Said, 'Nay, surely she were quickly overthrown,
Hath she strength for the burden laid upon her,
 Hath she power to protect and guard her own?

Then she spoke, and her voice was clear and ringing
 In the ears of the nations old and gray,
Saying, 'Hark, and ye shall hear my children singing
 Their war-song in countries far away.
They are strangers to the tumult of the battle,
 They are few but their hearts are very strong,
'Twas but yesterday they called unto the cattle,
 But they now sing Australia's marching song.'

Song of the Australians in Action

For the honour of Australia, our mother,
 Side by side with our kin from over sea,
We have fought and we have tested one another,
 And enrolled among the brotherhood are we.

There was never post of danger but we sought it

In the fighting, through the fire, and through the flood.
There was never prize so costly but we bought it,
Though we paid for its purchase with our blood.

Was there any road too rough for us to travel?
Was there any path too far for us to tread?
You can track us by the blood drops on the gravel
On the roads that we milestoned with our dead!

And for you, oh our young and anxious mother,
O'er your great gains keeping watch and ward,
Neither fearing nor despising any other,
We will hold your possessions with the sword.

. . . . .

Then they passed to the place of world-long sleeping,
The grey-clad figures with their dead,
To the sound of their women softly weeping
And the Dead March moaning at their head:
And the Nations, as the grim procession ended,
Whispered, 'Child! But ye have seen the price we pay,
From War may we ever be defended,
Kneel ye down, new-made Sister — Let us Pray!'

The Old Australian Ways

The London lights are far abeam
 Behind a bank of cloud,
Along the shore the gaslights gleam,
 The gale is piping loud;
And down the Channel, groping blind,
 We drive her through the haze
Towards the land we left behind —
The good old land of 'never mind',
 And old Australian ways.

The narrow ways of English folk
 Are not for such as we;
They bear the long-accustomed yoke
 Of staid conservancy:
But all our roads are new and strange,
 And through our blood there runs
The vagabonding love of change
That drove us westward of the range
 And westward of the suns.

The city folk go to and fro
 Behind a prison's bars,
They never feel the breezes blow
 And never see the stars;
They never hear in blossomed trees
 The music low and sweet
Of wild birds making melodies,
Nor catch the little laughing breeze
 That whispers in the wheat.

Our fathers came of roving stock
 That could not fixed abide:
And we have followed field and flock

Since e'er we learnt to ride;
By miner's camp and shearing shed,
In land of heat and drought,
We followed where our fortunes led,
With fortune always on ahead
And always further out.

The wind is in the barley-grass,
The wattles are in bloom;
The breezes greet us as they pass
With honey-sweet perfume;
The parakeets go screaming by
With flash of golden wing,
And from the swamp the wild-ducks cry
Their long-drawn note of revelry,
Rejoicing at the Spring.

So throw the weary pen aside
And let the papers rest,
For we must saddle up and ride
Towards the blue hill's breast;
And we must travel far and fast
Across their rugged maze,
To find the Spring of Youth at last,
And call back from the buried past
The old Australian ways.

When Clancy took the drover's track
In years of long ago,
He drifted to the outer back
Beyond the Overflow;
By rolling plain and rocky shelf,
With stockwhip in his hand,
He reached at last, oh lucky elf,
The Town of Come-and-help-yourself
In Rough-and-ready Land.

And if it be that you would know

 The tracks he used to ride,
Then you must saddle up and go
 Beyond the Queensland side –
Beyond the reach of rule or law,
 To ride the long day through,
In Nature's homestead – filled with awe
You then might see what Clancy saw
 And know what Clancy knew.

The Ballad of the 'Calliope'

By the far Samoan shore,
Where the league-long rollers pour
All the wash of the Pacific on the coral-guarded bay,
Riding lightly at their ease,
In the calm of tropic seas,
The three great nations' warships at their anchors proudly lay.

Riding lightly, head to wind,
With the coral reefs behind,
Three Germans and three Yankee ships were mirrored in the blue;
And on one ship unfurled
Was the flag that rules the world —
For on the old 'Calliope' the flag of England flew.

When the gentle off-shore breeze,
That had scarcely stirred the trees,
Dropped down to utter stillness, and the glass began to fall,
Away across the main
Lowered the coming hurricane,
And far away to seaward hung the cloud wrack like a pall.

If the word had passed around,
'Let us move to safer ground;
Let us steam away to seaward' — then this tale were not to tell!
But each Captain seemed to say
'If the others stay, I stay!'
And they lingered at their moorings till the shades of evening fell.

Then the cloud wrack neared them fast,

And there came a sudden blast,
And the hurricane came leaping down a thousand miles of main!
Like a lion on its prey,
Leapt the storm fiend on the bay,
And the vessels shook and shivered as their cables felt the strain.

As the surging seas came by,
That were running mountains high,
The vessels started dragging, drifting slowly to the lee;
And the darkness of the night
Hid the coral reefs from sight,
And the Captains dared not risk the chance to grope their way to sea.

In the dark they dared not shift!
They were forced to wait and drift;
All hands stood by uncertain would the anchors hold or no.
But the men on deck could see
If a chance of hope might be —
There was little chance of safety for the men who were below.

Through that long, long night of dread,
While the storm raged overhead,
They were waiting by their engines, with the furnace fires aroar.
So they waited, staunch and true,
Though they knew, and well they knew,
They must drown like rats imprisoned if the vessel touched the shore.

When the grey dawn broke at last,
And the long, long night was past,
While the hurricane redoubled, lest its prey should steal away,
On the rocks, all smashed and strewn,
Were the German vessels thrown,
While the Yankees, swamped and helpless, drifted shorewards

down the bay.

Then at last spoke Captain Kane,
'All our anchors are in vain,
And the Germans and the Yankees they have drifted to the lee!
Cut the cables at the bow!
We must trust the engines now!
Give her steam, and let her have it, lads, we'll fight her out to sea!'

And the answer came with cheers
From the stalwart engineers,
From the grim and grimy firemen at the furnaces below;
And above the sullen roar
Of the breakers on the shore
Came the throbbing of the engines as they laboured to and fro.

If the strain should find a flaw,
Should a bolt or rivet draw,
Then — God help them! for the vessel were a plaything in the tide!
With a face of honest cheer,
Quoth an English engineer,
'I will answer for the engines that were built on old Thames side!

'For the stays and stanchions taut,
For the rivets truly wrought,
For the valves that fit their faces as a glove should fit the hand.
Give her every ounce of power,
If we make a knot an hour
Then it's way enough to steer her and we'll drive her from the land.'

Like a foam flake tossed and thrown,
She could barely hold her own,
While the other ships all helplessly were drifting to the lee.

Through the smother and the rout
The 'Calliope' steamed out —
And they cheered her from the Trenton that was foundering in the sea.

Aye! drifting shoreward there,
All helpless as they were,
Their vessel hurled upon the reefs as weed ashore is hurled.
Without a thought of fear
The Yankees raised a cheer —
A cheer that English-speaking folk should echo round the world.

Do They Know

Do they know? At the turn to the straight
 Where the favourites fail,
And every atom of weight
 Is telling its tale;
As some grim old stayer hard-pressed
 Runs true to his breed,
And with head just in front of the rest
 Fights on in the lead;
When the jockeys are out with the whips,
 With a furlong to go;
And the backers grow white to the lips —
 Do you think THEY don't know?

Do they know? As they come back to weigh
 In a whirlwind of cheers,
Though the spurs have left marks of the fray,
 Though the sweat on the ears
Gathers cold, and they sob with distress
 As they roll up the track,
They know just as well their success
 As the man on their back.
As they walk through a dense human lane,
 That sways to and fro,
And cheers them again and again,
 Do you think THEY don't know?

The Passing of Gundagai

'I'll introdooce a friend!' he said,
 And if you've got a vacant pen
You'd better take him in the shed
And start him shearing straight ahead,
 He's one of these here quiet men.

'He never strikes — that ain't his game;
 No matter what the others try
HE goes on shearing just the same.
I never rightly knew his name —
 We always call him "Gundagai"!'

Our flashest shearer then had gone
 To train a racehorse for a race,
And while his sporting fit was on
He couldn't be relied upon,
 So 'Gundagai' shore in his place.

Alas for man's veracity!
 For reputations false and true!
This 'Gundagai' turned out to be,
For strife and all-round villainy,
 The very worst I ever knew!

He started racing Jack Devine,
 And grumbled when I made him stop.
The pace he showed was extra fine,
But all those pure-bred ewes of mine
 Were bleeding like a butcher's shop.

He cursed the sheep, he cursed the shed,
 From roof to rafter, floor to shelf;
As for my mongrel ewes, he said,

I ought to get a razor blade
 And shave the blooming things myself.

On Sundays he controlled a 'school',
 And played 'two-up' the livelong day;
And many a young confiding fool
He shore of his financial wool;
 And when he lost he would not pay.

He organised a shearers' race,
 And 'touched' me to provide the prize.
His packhorse showed surprising pace
And won hands down — he was The Ace,
 A well-known racehorse in disguise.

Next day the bruiser of the shed
 Displayed an opal-tinted eye,
With large contusions on his head.
He smiled a sickly smile, and said
 He'd 'had a cut at "Gundagai"!'

But just as we were getting full
 Of 'Gundagai' and all his ways,
A telegram for 'Henry Bull'
Arrived. Said he, 'That's me — all wool!
 Let's see what this here message says.'

He opened it, his face grew white,
 He dropped the shears and turned away.
It ran, 'Your wife took bad last night;
Come home at once — no time to write,
 We fear she may not last the day.'

He got his cheque — I didn't care
 To dock him for my mangled ewes;
His store account — we 'called it square'.
Poor wretch! he had enough to bear,
 Confronted by such dreadful news.

The shearers raised a little purse
 To help a mate, as shearers will,
'To pay the doctor and the nurse,
And if there should be something worse –
 To pay the undertaker's bill.'

They wrung his hand in sympathy,
 He rode away without a word,
His head hung down in misery.
A wandering hawker passing by
 Was told of what had just occurred.

'Well! that's a curious thing,' he said,
 'I've known that feller all his life –
He's had the loan of this here shed!
I know his wife ain't nearly dead,
 Because he HASN'T GOT A WIFE!'

. . . . .

You should have heard the whipcord crack
 As angry shearers galloped by,
In vain they tried to fetch him back.
A little dust along the track
 Was all they saw of 'Gundagai'.

The Wargeilah Handicap

Wargeilah town is very small,
 There's no cathedral nor a club,
In fact the township, all in all,
 Is just one unpretentious pub;
And there, from all the stations round,
The local sportsmen can be found.

The sportsmen of Wargeilah side
 Are very few but very fit:
There's scarcely any sport been tried
 But what they held their own at it
In fact, to search their records o'er,
They held their own and something more.

'Twas round about Wargeilah town
 An English new-chum did infest:
He used to wander up and down
 In baggy English breeches drest —
His mental aspect seemed to be
Just stolid self-sufficiency.

The local sportsmen vainly sought
 His tranquil calm to counteract,
By urging that he should be brought
 Within the Noxious Creatures Act.
'Nay, harm him not,' said one more wise,
'He is a blessing in disguise!

'You see, he wants to buy a horse,
 To ride, and hunt, and steeplechase,
And carry ladies, too, of course,
 And pull a cart and win a race.
Good gracious! he must be a flat

To think he'll get a horse like that!

'But since he has so little sense
 And such a lot of cash to burn,
We'll sell him some experience
 By which alone a fool can learn.
Suppose we let him have The Trap
To win Wargeilah Handicap!'

And here, I must explain to you
 That, round about Wargeilah run,
There lived a very aged screw
 Whose days of brilliancy were done:
A grand old warrior in his prime –
But age will beat us all in time.

A trooper's horse in seasons past
 He did his share to keep the peace,
But took to falling, and at last
 Was cast for age from the Police.
A publican at Conroy's Gap
Then bought and christened him The Trap.

When grass was good, and horses dear,
 He changed his owner now and then
At prices ranging somewhere near
 The neighbourhood of two pound ten:
And manfully he earned his keep
By yarding cows and ration sheep.

They brought him in from off the grass
 And fed and groomed the old horse up;
His coat began to shine like glass –
 You'd think he'd win the Melbourne Cup.
And when they'd got him fat and flash
They asked the new-chum – fifty – cash!

And when he said the price was high,

Their indignation knew no bounds.
They said, 'It's seldom you can buy
A horse like that for fifty pounds!
We'll refund twenty if The Trap
Should fail to win the handicap!'

The deed was done, the price was paid,
The new-chum put the horse in train:
The local sports were much afraid
That he would sad experience gain,
By racing with some shearer's hack,
Who'd beat him half-way round the track.

So, on this guileless English spark
They did most fervently impress
That he must keep the matter dark,
And not let any person guess
That he was purchasing The Trap
To win Wargeilah Handicap.

They spoke of 'spielers from The Bland',
And 'champions from the Castlereagh',
And gave the youth to understand
That all of these would stop away,
And spoil the race, if they should hear
That they had got The Trap to fear.

'Keep dark! They'll muster thick as flies
When once the news gets sent around
We're giving such a splendid prize —
A Snowdon horse worth fifty pound!
They'll come right in from Dandaloo,
And find — that it's a gift to you!'

. . . . .

The race came on — with no display,
Nor any calling of the card,

But round about the pub all day
 A crowd of shearers, drinking hard,
And using language in a strain
'Twere flattery to call profane.

Our hero, dressed in silk attire —
 Blue jacket and a scarlet cap —
With boots that shone like flames of fire,
 Now did his canter on The Trap,
And walked him up and round about,
Until the other steeds came out.

He eyed them with a haughty look,
 But saw a sight that caught his breath!
It was! Ah John! The Chinee cook!
 In boots and breeches! Pale as death!
Tied with a rope, like any sack,
Upon a piebald pony's back!

The next, a colt — all mud and burrs!
 Half-broken, with a black boy up,
Who said, 'You gim'me pair o' spurs,
 I win the bloomin' Melbourne Cup!'
These two were to oppose The Trap
For the Wargeilah Handicap!

They're off! The colt whipped down his head,
 And humped his back and gave a squeal,
And bucked into the drinking shed,
 Revolving like a Cath'rine wheel!
Men ran like rats! The atmosphere
Was filled with oaths and pints of beer!

But up the course the bold Ah John
 Beside The Trap raced neck and neck:
The boys had tied him firmly on,
 Which ultimately proved his wreck,
The saddle turned, and, like a clown,

He rode some distance upside down.

His legs around the horse were tied,
 His feet towards the heavens were spread,
He swung and bumped at every stride
 And ploughed the ground up with his head!
And when they rescued him, The Trap
Had won Wargeilah Handicap!

And no enquiries we could make
 Could tell by what false statements swayed
Ah John was led to undertake
 A task so foreign to his trade!
He only smiled and said, 'Hoo Ki!
I stop topside, I win all 'li!'

But never, in Wargeilah Town,
 Was heard so eloquent a cheer
As when the President came down,
 And toasted, in Colonial Beer,
'The finest rider on the course!
The winner of the Snowdon Horse!'

'You go and get your prize,' he said,
 'He's with a wild mob, somewhere round
The mountains near The Watershed;
 He's honestly worth fifty pound,
A noble horse, indeed, to win,
But none of US can run him in!

'We've chased him poor, we've chased him fat,
 We've run him till our horses dropped,
But by such obstacles as that
 A man like you will not be stopped,
You'll go and yard him any day,
So here's your health! Hooray! Hooray!'

. . . . .

The day wound up with booze and blow
 And fights till all were well content,
But of the new-chum, all I know
 Is shown by this advertisement —
'For Sale, the well-known racehorse Trap,
He won Wargeilah Handicap!'

Any Other Time

All of us play our very best game —
 Any other time.
Golf or billiards, it's all the same —
 Any other time.
Lose a match and you always say,
'Just my luck! I was 'off' to-day!
I could have beaten him quite half-way —
 Any other time!'

After a fiver you ought to go —
 Any other time.
Every man that you ask says 'Oh,
 Any OTHER time.
Lend you a fiver! I'd lend you two,
But I'm overdrawn and my bills are due,
Wish you'd ask me — now, mind you do —
 Any other time!'

Fellows will ask you out to dine —
 Any other time.
'Not to-night, for we're twenty-nine —
 Any other time.
Not to-morrow, for cook's on strike,
Not next day, I'll be out on the bike —
Just drop in whenever you like —
 Any other time!'

Seasick passengers like the sea —
 Any other time.
'Something . . I ate . . disagreed . . with me!
 Any other time
Ocean-trav'lling is . . simply bliss,
Must be my . . liver . . has gone amiss . .

Why, I would . . laugh . . at a sea . . like this —
 Any other time.'

. . . . .

Most of us mean to be better men —
 Any other time:
Regular upright characters then —
 Any other time.
Yet somehow as the years go by
Still we gamble and drink and lie,
When it comes to the last we'll want to die —
 Any other time!

The Last Trump

'You led the trump,' the old man said
 With fury in his eye,
'And yet you hope my girl to wed!
Young man! your hopes of love are fled,
 'Twere better she should die!

'My sweet young daughter sitting there,
 So innocent and plump!
You don't suppose that she would care
To wed an outlawed man who'd dare
 To lead the thirteenth trump!

'If you had drawn their leading spade
 It meant a certain win!
But no! By Pembroke's mighty shade
The thirteenth trump you went and played
 And let their diamonds in!

'My girl! Return at my command
 His presents in a lump!
Return his ring! For understand
No man is fit to hold your hand
 Who leads a thirteenth trump!

'But hold! Give every man his due
 And every dog his day.
Speak up and say what made you do
This dreadful thing — that is, if you
 Have anything to say!'

He spoke. 'I meant at first,' said he,
 'To give their spades a bump:
Or lead the hearts, but then you see

I thought against us there might be,
 Perhaps, a fourteenth trump!'

. . . . .

They buried him at dawn of day
 Beside a ruined stump:
And there he sleeps the hours away
And waits for Gabriel to play
 The last — the fourteenth — trump.

Tar and Feathers

Oh! the circus swooped down
On the Narrabri town,
For the Narrabri populace moneyed are;
And the showman he smiled
At the folk he beguiled
To come all the distance from Gunnedah.

But a juvenile smart,
Who objected to 'part',
Went in 'on the nod', and to do it he
Crawled in through a crack
In the tent at the back,
For the boy had no slight ingenuity.

And says he with a grin,
'That's the way to get in;
But I reckon I'd better be quiet or
They'll spiflicate me,'
And he chuckled, for he
Had the loan of the circus proprietor.

But the showman astute
On that wily galoot
Soon dropped, and you'll say that he leathered him —
Not he; with a grim
Sort of humorous whim,
He took him and tarred him and feathered him.

Says he, 'You can go
Round the world with a show,
And knock every Injun and Arab wry;
With your name and your trade,
On the posters displayed,

The feathered what-is-it from Narrabri.'

    Next day for his freak,
    By a Narrabri beak,
He was jawed with a deal of verbosity;
    For his only appeal
    Was 'professional zeal' —
He wanted another monstrosity.

    Said his worship, 'Begob!
    You are fined forty bob,
And six shillin's costs to the clurk!' he says.
    And the Narrabri joy,
    Half bird and half boy,
Has a 'down' on himself and on circuses.

It's Grand

It's grand to be a squatter
 And sit upon a post,
And watch your little ewes and lambs
 A-giving up the ghost.

It's grand to be a 'cockie'
 With wife and kids to keep,
And find an all-wise Providence
 Has mustered all your sheep.

It's grand to be a Western man,
 With shovel in your hand,
To dig your little homestead out
 From underneath the sand.

It's grand to be a shearer,
 Along the Darling side,
And pluck the wool from stinking sheep
 That some days since have died.

It's grand to be a rabbit
 And breed till all is blue,
And then to die in heaps because
 There's nothing left to chew.

It's grand to be a Minister
 And travel like a swell,
And tell the Central District folk
 To go to — Inverell.

It's grand to be a Socialist
 And lead the bold array
That marches to prosperity

At seven bob a day.

It's grand to be an unemployed
And lie in the Domain,
And wake up every second day
And go to sleep again.

It's grand to borrow English tin
To pay for wharves and Rocks,
And then to find it isn't in
The little money-box.

It's grand to be a democrat
And toady to the mob,
For fear that if you told the truth
They'd hunt you from your job.

It's grand to be a lot of things
In this fair Southern land,
But if the Lord would send us rain,
That would, indeed, be grand!

Out of Sight

They held a polo meeting at a little country town,
And all the local sportsmen came to win themselves renown.
There came two strangers with a horse, and I am much afraid
They both belonged to what is called 'the take-you-down brigade'.

They said their horse could jump like fun, and asked an amateur
To ride him in the steeplechase, and told him they were sure,
The last time round, he'd sail away with such a swallow's flight
The rest would never see him go – he'd finish out of sight.

So out he went; and, when folk saw the amateur was up,
Some local genius called the race 'the dude-in-danger cup'.
The horse was known as 'Who's Afraid', by Panic from 'The Fright'.
But still his owners told the jock he'd finish out of sight.

And so he did; for 'Who's Afraid', without the least pretence,
Disposed of him by rushing through the very second fence;
And when they ran the last time round the prophecy was right –
For he was in the ambulance, and safely 'out of sight'.

The Road to Old Man's Town

The fields of youth are filled with flowers,
The wine of youth is strong:
What need have we to count the hours?
The summer days are long.

But soon we find to our dismay
That we are drifting down
The barren slopes that fall away
Towards the foothills grim and grey
That lead to Old Man's Town.

And marching with us on the track
Full many friends we find:
We see them looking sadly back
For those that dropped behind.

But God forbid a fate so dread —
ALONE to travel down
The dreary road we all must tread,
With faltering steps and whitening head,
The road to Old Man's Town!

The Old Timer's Steeplechase

The sheep were shorn and the wool went down
 At the time of our local racing:
And I'd earned a spell — I was burnt and brown —
So I rolled my swag for a trip to town
 And a look at the steeplechasing.

'Twas rough and ready — an uncleared course
 As rough as the blacks had found it;
With barbed-wire fences, topped with gorse,
And a water-jump that would drown a horse,
 And the steeple three times round it.

There was never a fence the tracks to guard, —
 Some straggling posts defined 'em:
And the day was hot, and the drinking hard,
Till none of the stewards could see a yard
 Before nor yet behind 'em!

But the bell was rung and the nags were out,
 Excepting an old outsider
Whose trainer started an awful rout,
For his boy had gone on a drinking bout
 And left him without a rider.

'Is there not one man in the crowd,' he cried,
 'In the whole of the crowd so clever,
Is there not one man that will take a ride
On the old white horse from the Northern side
 That was bred on the Mooki River?'

'Twas an old white horse that they called The Cow,

 And a cow would look well beside him;
But I was pluckier then than now
(And I wanted excitement anyhow),
 So at last I agreed to ride him.

And the trainer said, 'Well, he's dreadful slow,
 And he hasn't a chance whatever;
But I'm stony broke, so it's time to show
A trick or two that the trainers know
 Who train by the Mooki River.

'The first time round at the further side,
 With the trees and the scrub about you,
Just pull behind them and run out wide
And then dodge into the scrub and hide,
 And let them go round without you.

'At the third time round, for the final spin
 With the pace, and the dust to blind 'em,
They'll never notice if you chip in
For the last half-mile — you'll be sure to win,
 And they'll think you raced behind 'em.

'At the water-jump you may have to swim —
 He hasn't a hope to clear it —
Unless he skims like the swallows skim
At full speed over, but not for him!
 He'll never go next or near it.

'But don't you worry — just plunge across,
 For he swims like a well-trained setter.
Then hide away in the scrub and gorse
The rest will be far ahead of course —
 The further ahead the better.

'You must rush the jumps in the last half-round
 For fear that he might refuse 'em;
He'll try to baulk with you, I'll be bound,

Take whip and spurs on the mean old hound,
 And don't be afraid to use 'em.

'At the final round, when the field are slow
 And you are quite fresh to meet 'em,
Sit down, and hustle him all you know
With the whip and spurs, and he'll have to go —
 Remember, you've GOT to beat 'em!'

. . . . .

The flag went down and we seemed to fly,
 And we made the timbers shiver
Of the first big fence, as the stand flashed by,
And I caught the ring of the trainer's cry:
 'Go on! For the Mooki River!'

I jammed him in with a well-packed crush,
 And recklessly — out for slaughter —
Like a living wave over fence and brush
We swept and swung with a flying rush,
 Till we came to the dreaded water.

Ha, ha! I laugh at it now to think
 Of the way I contrived to work it.
Shut in amongst them, before you'd wink,
He found himself on the water's brink,
 With never a chance to shirk it!

The thought of the horror he felt, beguiles
 The heart of this grizzled rover!
He gave a snort you could hear for miles,
And a spring would have cleared the Channel Isles
 And carried me safely over!

Then we neared the scrub, and I pulled him back
 In the shade where the gum-leaves quiver:
And I waited there in the shadows black

While the rest of the horses, round the track,
 Went on like a rushing river!

At the second round, as the field swept by,
 I saw that the pace was telling;
But on they thundered, and by-and-bye
As they passed the stand I could hear the cry
 Of the folk in the distance, yelling!

Then the last time round! And the hoofbeats rang!
 And I said, 'Well, it's now or never!'
And out on the heels of the throng I sprang,
And the spurs bit deep and the whipcord sang
 As I rode! For the Mooki River!

We raced for home in a cloud of dust
 And the curses rose in chorus.
'Twas flog, and hustle, and jump you must!
And The Cow ran well — but to my disgust
 There was one got home before us.

'Twas a big black horse, that I had not seen
 In the part of the race I'd ridden;
And his coat was cool and his rider clean,
And I thought that perhaps I had not been
 The only one that had hidden.

. . . . .

And the trainer came with a visage blue
 With rage, when the race concluded:
Said he, 'I thought you'd have pulled us through,
But the man on the black horse planted too,
 AND NEARER TO HOME THAN YOU DID!'

Alas to think that those times so gay
 Have vanished and passed for ever!
You don't believe in the yarn you say?

Why, man! 'Twas a matter of every day
 When we raced on the Mooki River!

In the Stable

What! You don't like him; well, maybe — we all have our fancies, of course:
Brumby to look at you reckon? Well, no: he's a thoroughbred horse;
Sired by a son of old Panic — look at his ears and his head —
Lop-eared and Roman-nosed, ain't he? — well, that's how the Panics are bred.
Gluttonous, ugly and lazy, rough as a tip-cart to ride,
Yet if you offered a sovereign apiece for the hairs on his hide
That wouldn't buy him, nor twice that; while I've a pound to the good,
This here old stager stays by me and lives like a thoroughbred should:
Hunt him away from his bedding, and sit yourself down by the wall,
Till you hear how the old fellow saved me from Gilbert, O'Maley and Hall.

. . . . .

Gilbert and Hall and O'Maley, back in the bushranging days,
Made themselves kings of the district — ruled it in old-fashioned ways —
Robbing the coach and the escort, stealing our horses at night,
Calling sometimes at the homesteads and giving the women a fright:
Came to the station one morning — and why they did this no one knows —
Took a brood mare from the paddock — wanting some fun, I suppose —
Fastened a bucket beneath her, hung by a strap round her

flank,
Then turned her loose in the timber back of the seven-mile tank.

Go! She went mad! She went tearing
and screaming with fear through the trees,
While the curst bucket beneath her was banging her flanks and her knees.
Bucking and racing and screaming she ran to the back of the run,
Killed herself there in a gully; by God, but they paid for their fun!
Paid for it dear, for the black-boys found tracks, and the bucket, and all,
And I swore that I'd live to get even with Gilbert, O'Maley and Hall.

Day after day then I chased them — 'course they had friends on the sly,
Friends who were willing to sell them to those who were willing to buy.
Early one morning we found them in camp at the Cockatoo Farm
One of us shot at O'Maley and wounded him under the arm:
Ran them for miles in the ranges, till Hall, with his horse fairly beat,
Took to the rocks and we lost him — the others made good their retreat.
It was war to the knife then, I tell you, and once, on the door of my shed,
They nailed up a notice that offered a hundred reward for my head!

Then we heard they were gone from the district;
they stuck up a coach in the West,
And I rode by myself in the paddocks, taking a bit of a rest,
Riding this colt as a youngster — awkward, half-broken and shy,
He wheeled round one day on a sudden; I looked, but I couldn't

see why,
  But I soon found out why, for before me, the hillside rose up like a wall,
  And there on the top with their rifles were Gilbert, O'Maley and Hall!

  'Twas a good three-mile run to the homestead —
    bad going, with plenty of trees —
  So I gathered the youngster together, and gripped at his ribs with my knees.
  'Twas a mighty poor chance to escape them! It puts a man's nerve to the test
  On a half-broken colt to be hunted by the best mounted men in the West.
  But the half-broken colt was a racehorse! He lay down to work with a will,
  Flashed through the scrub like a clean-skin —
    by Heavens we FLEW down the hill!
  Over a twenty-foot gully he swept with the spring of a deer
  And they fired as we jumped, but they missed me —
    a bullet sang close to my ear —
  And the jump gained us ground, for they shirked it:
    but I saw as we raced through the gap
  That the rails at the homestead were fastened —
    I was caught like a rat in a trap.
  Fenced with barbed wire was the paddock —
    barbed wire that would cut like a knife —
  How was a youngster to clear it that never had jumped in his life?

  Bang went a rifle behind me — the colt gave a spring, he was hit;
  Straight at the sliprails I rode him — I felt him take hold of the bit;
  Never a foot to the right or the left did he swerve in his stride,
  Awkward and frightened, but honest, the sort it's a pleasure to ride!

Straight at the rails, where they'd fastened
barbed wire on the top of the post,
Rose like a stag and went over, with hardly a scratch at the most;
Into the homestead I darted, and snatched down my gun from the wall,
And I tell you I made them step lively, Gilbert, O'Maley and Hall!

Yes! There's the mark of the bullet – he's got it inside of him yet
Mixed up somehow with his victuals, but bless you he don't seem to fret!
Gluttonous, ugly, and lazy – eats any thing he can bite;
Now, let us shut up the stable, and bid the old fellow good-night:
Ah! We can't breed 'em, the sort that were bred when we old 'uns were young.
Yes, I was saying, these bushrangers, none of 'em lived to be hung,
Gilbert was shot by the troopers, Hall was betrayed by his friend,
Campbell disposed of O'Maley, bringing the lot to an end.
But you can talk about riding – I've ridden a lot in the past –
Wait till there's rifles behind you, you'll know what it means to go fast!
I've steeplechased, raced, and 'run horses',
but I think the most dashing of all
Was the ride when the old fellow saved me from Gilbert, O'Maley and Hall!

"He Giveth His Beloved Sleep"

The long day passes with its load of sorrow:
 In slumber deep
I lay me down to rest until to-morrow —
 Thank God for sleep.

Thank God for all respite from weary toiling,
 From cares that creep
Across our lives like evil shadows, spoiling
 God's kindly sleep.

We plough and sow, and, as the hours grow later,
 We strive to reap,
And build our barns, and hope to build them greater
 Before we sleep.

We toil and strain and strive with one another
 In hopes to heap
Some greater share of profit than our brother
 Before we sleep.

What will it profit that with tears or laughter
 Our watch we keep?
Beyond it all there lies the Great Hereafter!
 Thank God for sleep!

For, at the last, beseeching Christ to save us,
 We turn with deep
Heart-felt thanksgiving unto God, who gave us
 The Gift of Sleep.

Driver Smith

'Twas Driver Smith of Battery A was anxious to see a fight;
He thought of the Transvaal all the day, he thought of it all the night —
'Well, if the battery's left behind, I'll go to the war,' says he,
'I'll go a-driving an ambulance in the ranks of the A.M.C.

'I'm fairly sick of these here parades, it's want of a change that kills
A-charging the Randwick Rifle Range and aiming at Surry Hills.
And I think if I go with the ambulance I'm certain to find a show,
For they have to send the Medical men wherever the troops can go.

'Wherever the rifle bullets flash and the Maxims raise a din,
It's there you'll find the Medical men a-raking the wounded in —
A-raking 'em in like human flies — and a driver smart like me
Will find some scope for his extra skill in the ranks of the A.M.C.'

So Driver Smith he went to the war a-cracking his driver's whip,
From ambulance to collecting base they showed him his regular trip.
And he said to the boys that were marching past, as he gave his whip a crack,
'You'll walk yourselves to the fight,' says he —
'Lord spare me, I'll drive you back.'

Now, the fight went on in the Transvaal hills for the half of a day or more,

And Driver Smith he worked his trip — all aboard for the seat of war!
He took his load from the stretcher men and hurried 'em homeward fast
Till he heard a sound that he knew full well — a battery rolling past.

He heard the clink of the leading chains and the roll of the guns behind —
He heard the crack of the drivers' whips,
and he says to 'em, 'Strike me blind,
I'll miss me trip with this ambulance, although I don't care to shirk,
But I'll take the car off the line to-day and follow the guns at work.'

Then up the Battery Colonel came a-cursing 'em black in the face.
'Sit down and shift 'em, you drivers there, and gallop 'em into place.'
So off the Battery rolled and swung, a-going a merry dance,
And holding his own with the leading gun goes Smith with his ambulance.

They opened fire on the mountain side, a-peppering by and large,
When over the hill above their flank the Boers came down at the charge;
They rushed the guns with a daring rush, a-volleying left and right,
And Driver Smith with his ambulance moved up to the edge of the fight.

The gunners stuck to their guns like men, and fought like the wild cats fight,
For a Battery man don't leave his gun with ever a hope in sight;
But the bullets sang and the Mausers cracked and the Battery

men gave way,
Till Driver Smith with his ambulance drove into the thick of the fray.

He saw the head of the Transvaal troop a-thundering to and fro,
A hard old face with a monkey beard — a face that he seemed to know;
'Now, who's that leader,' said Driver Smith, 'I've seen him before to-day.
Why, bless my heart, but it's Kruger's self,'
and he jumped for him straight away.

He collared old Kruger round the waist and hustled him into the van.
It wasn't according to stretcher drill for raising a wounded man;
But he forced him in and said, 'All aboard, we're off for a little ride,
And you'll have the car to yourself,' says he, 'I reckon we're full inside.'

He wheeled his team on the mountain side and set 'em a merry pace,
A-galloping over the rocks and stones, and a lot of the Boers gave chase;
But Driver Smith had a fairish start, and he said to the Boers, 'Good-day,
You have Buckley's chance for to catch a man that was trained in Battery A.'

He drove his team to the hospital and said to the P.M.O.,
'Beg pardon, sir, but I missed a trip, mistaking the way to go;
And Kruger came to the ambulance and asked could we spare a bed,
So I fetched him here, and we'll take him home to show for a bob a head.'

So the word went round to the English troops to say they need fight no more,

For Driver Smith with his ambulance had ended the blooming war:

And in London now at the music halls he's starring it every night,

And drawing a hundred pounds a week to tell how he won the fight.

There's Another Blessed Horse Fell Down

When you're lying in your hammock, sleeping soft and sleeping sound,
Without a care or trouble on your mind,
And there's nothing to disturb you but the engines going round,
And you're dreaming of the girl you left behind;
In the middle of your joys you'll be wakened by a noise,
And a clatter on the deck above your crown,
And you'll hear the corporal shout as he turns the picket out,
'There's another blessed horse fell down.'

You can see 'em in the morning, when you're cleaning out the stall,
A-leaning on the railings nearly dead,
And you reckon by the evening they'll be pretty sure to fall,
And you curse them as you tumble into bed.
Oh, you'll hear it pretty soon, 'Pass the word for Denny Moon,
There's a horse here throwing handsprings like a clown;
And it's 'Shove the others back or he'll cripple half the pack,
There's another blessed horse fell down.'

And when the war is over and the fighting all is done,
And you're all at home with medals on your chest,
And you've learnt to sleep so soundly that the firing of a gun
At your bedside wouldn't rob you of your rest;
As you lie in slumber deep, if your wife walks in her sleep,
And tumbles down the stairs and breaks her crown,
Oh, it won't awaken you, for you'll say, 'It's nothing new,
It's another blessed horse fell down.'

On the Trek

Oh, the weary, weary journey on the trek, day after day,
With sun above and silent veldt below;
And our hearts keep turning homeward to the youngsters far away,
And the homestead where the climbing roses grow.
Shall we see the flats grow golden with the ripening of the grain?
Shall we hear the parrots calling on the bough?
Ah! the weary months of marching ere we hear them call again,
For we're going on a long job now.

In the drowsy days on escort, riding slowly half asleep,
With the endless line of waggons stretching back,
While the khaki soldiers travel like a mob of travelling sheep,
Plodding silent on the never-ending track,
While the constant snap and sniping of the foe you never see
Makes you wonder will your turn come — when and how?
As the Mauser ball hums past you like a vicious kind of bee —
Oh! we're going on a long job now.

When the dash and the excitement and the novelty are dead,
And you've seen a load of wounded once or twice,
Or you've watched your old mate dying — with the vultures overhead,
Well, you wonder if the war is worth the price.
And down along Monaro now they're starting out to shear,
I can picture the excitement and the row;
But they'll miss me on the Lachlan when they call the roll this year,
For we're going on a long job now.

The Last Parade

With never a sound of trumpet,
 With never a flag displayed,
The last of the old campaigners
 Lined up for the last parade.

Weary they were and battered,
 Shoeless, and knocked about;
From under their ragged forelocks
 Their hungry eyes looked out.

And they watched as the old commander
 Read out, to the cheering men,
The Nation's thanks and the orders
 To carry them home again.

And the last of the old campaigners,
 Sinewy, lean, and spare —
He spoke for his hungry comrades:
 'Have we not done our share?

'Starving and tired and thirsty
 We limped on the blazing plain;
And after a long night's picket
 You saddled us up again.

'We froze on the wind-swept kopjes
 When the frost lay snowy-white.
Never a halt in the daytime,
 Never a rest at night!

'We knew when the rifles rattled
 From the hillside bare and brown,
And over our weary shoulders

We felt warm blood run down,

'As we turned for the stretching gallop,
Crushed to the earth with weight;
But we carried our riders through it —
Carried them p'raps too late.

'Steel! We were steel to stand it —
We that have lasted through,
We that are old campaigners
Pitiful, poor, and few.

'Over the sea you brought us,
Over the leagues of foam:
Now we have served you fairly
Will you not take us home?

'Home to the Hunter River,
To the flats where the lucerne grows;
Home where the Murrumbidgee
Runs white with the melted snows.

'This is a small thing surely!
Will not you give command
That the last of the old campaigners
Go back to their native land?'

. . . . .

They looked at the grim commander,
But never a sign he made.
'Dismiss!' and the old campaigners
Moved off from their last parade.

With French to Kimberley

The Boers were down on Kimberley with siege and Maxim gun;
The Boers were down on Kimberley, their numbers ten to one!
Faint were the hopes the British had to make the struggle good,
Defenceless in an open plain the Diamond City stood.
They built them forts from bags of sand, they fought from roof and wall,
They flashed a message to the south 'Help! or the town must fall!'
And down our ranks the order ran to march at dawn of day,
For French was off to Kimberley to drive the Boers away.

He made no march along the line; he made no front attack
Upon those Magersfontein heights that drove the Scotchmen back;
But eastward over pathless plains by open veldt and vley,
Across the front of Cronje's force his troopers held their way.
The springbuck, feeding on the flats where Modder River runs,
Were startled by his horses' hoofs, the rumble of his guns.
The Dutchman's spies that watched his march from every rocky wall
Rode back in haste: 'He marches east! He threatens Jacobsdal!'
Then north he wheeled as wheels the hawk and showed to their dismay,
That French was off to Kimberley to drive the Boers away.

His column was five thousand strong — all mounted men — and guns:
There met, beneath the world-wide flag, the world-wide Empire's sons;
They came to prove to all the earth that kinship conquers

space,
And those who fight the British Isles must fight the British race!
From far New Zealand's flax and fern, from cold Canadian snows,
From Queensland plains, where hot as fire the summer sunshine glows;
And in the front the Lancers rode that New South Wales had sent:
With easy stride across the plain their long, lean Walers went.
Unknown, untried, those squadrons were, but proudly out they drew
Beside the English regiments that fought at Waterloo.
From every coast, from every clime, they met in proud array,
To go with French to Kimberley to drive the Boers away.

He crossed the Reit and fought his way towards the Modder bank.
The foemen closed behind his march, and hung upon the flank.
The long, dry grass was all ablaze, and fierce the veldt fire runs;
He fought them through a wall of flame that blazed around the guns!
Then limbered up and drove at speed, though horses fell and died;
We might not halt for man nor beast on that wild, daring ride.
Black with the smoke and parched with thirst, we pressed the livelong day
Our headlong march to Kimberley to drive the Boers away.

We reached the drift at fall of night, and camped across the ford.
Next day from all the hills around the Dutchman's cannons roared.
A narrow pass between the hills, with guns on either side;
The boldest man might well turn pale before that pass he tried,

For if the first attack should fail then every hope was gone:
But French looked once, and only once, and then he said, 'Push on!'
The gunners plied their guns amain; the hail of shrapnel flew;
With rifle fire and lancer charge their squadrons back we threw;
And through the pass between the hills we swept in furious fray,
And French was through to Kimberley to drive the Boers away.

Ay, French was through to Kimberley! And ere the day was done
We saw the Diamond City stand, lit by the evening sun:
Above the town the heliograph hung like an eye of flame:
Around the town the foemen camped – they knew not that we came;
But soon they saw us, rank on rank; they heard our squadrons' tread;
In panic fear they left their tents, in hopeless rout they fled;
And French rode into Kimberley; the people cheered amain,
The women came with tear-stained eyes to touch his bridle rein,
The starving children lined the streets to raise a feeble cheer,
The bells rang out a joyous peal to say 'Relief is here!'
Ay! we that saw that stirring march are proud that we can say
We went with French to Kimberley to drive the Boers away.

Johnny Boer

Men fight all shapes and sizes as the racing horses run,
And no man knows his courage till he stands before a gun.
At mixed-up fighting, hand to hand, and clawing men about
They reckon Fuzzy-wuzzy is the hottest fighter out.
But Fuzzy gives himself away — his style is out of date,
He charges like a driven grouse that rushes on its fate;
You've nothing in the world to do but pump him full of lead:
But when you're fighting Johnny Boer you have to use your head;
He don't believe in front attacks or charging at the run,
He fights you from a kopje with his little Maxim gun.

For when the Lord He made the earth, it seems uncommon clear,
He gave the job of Africa to some good engineer,
Who started building fortresses on fashions of his own —
Lunettes, redoubts, and counterscarps all made of rock and stone.
The Boer needs only bring a gun, for ready to his hand
He finds these heaven-built fortresses all scattered through the land;
And there he sits and winks his eye and wheels his gun about,
And we must charge across the plain to hunt the beggar out.
It ain't a game that grows on us, there's lots of better fun
Than charging at old Johnny with his little Maxim gun.

On rocks a goat could scarcely climb, steep as the walls of Troy,
He wheels a four-point-seven about as easy as a toy;
With bullocks yoked and drag-ropes manned, he lifts her up the rocks
And shifts her every now and then, as cunning as a fox.
At night you mark her right ahead, you see her clean and clear,

Next day at dawn — 'What, ho! she bumps' — from somewhere in the rear.

Or else the keenest-eyed patrol will miss him with the glass —
He's lying hidden in the rocks to let the leaders pass;
But when the main guard comes along he opens up the fun,
There's lots of ammunition for the little Maxim gun.

But after all the job is sure, although the job is slow,
We have to see the business through, the Boer has got to go.
With Nordenfeldt and lyddite shell it's certain, soon or late,
We'll hunt him from his kopjes and across the Orange State;
And then across those open flats you'll see the beggar run,
And we'll be running after with OUR little Maxim gun.

What Have the Cavalry Done

What have the cavalry done?
Cantered and trotted about,
Routin' the enemy out,
Causin' the beggars to run!
And we tramped along in the blazin' heat,
Over the veldt on our weary feet.
Tramp, tramp, tramp
Under the blazin' sun,
With never the sight of a bloomin' Boer,
'Cause they'd hunted 'em long before –
That's what the cavalry done!

What have the gunners done
Battlin' every day,
Battlin' any way.
Boers outranged 'em, but what cared they?
'Shoot and be damned,' said the R.H.A.!
See! when the fight grows hot,
Under the rifles or not,
Always the order runs,
'Fetch up the bloomin' guns!'

And you'd see them great gun-horses spring
To the 'action front' – and around they'd swing.
Find the range with some queer machine
'At four thousand with fuse fourteen.
Ready! Fire number one!'
Handled the battery neat and quick!
Stick to it, too! How DID they stick!
Never a gunner was seen to run!
Never a gunner would leave his gun!

Not though his mates dropped all around!
Always a gunner would stand his ground.
Take the army – the infantry,
Mounted rifles, and cavalry,
Twice the numbers I'd give away,
And I'd fight the lot with the R.H.A.,
For they showed us how a corps SHOULD be run,
That's what the gunners done!

Right in the Front of the Army

'Where 'ave you been this week or more,
'Aven't seen you about the war?
Thought perhaps you was at the rear
Guarding the waggons.' 'What, us? No fear!
Where have we been? Why, bless my heart,
Where have we been since the bloomin' start?
    Right in the front of the army,
     Battling day and night!
    Right in the front of the army,
     Teaching 'em how to fight!'
    Every separate man you see,
    Sapper, gunner, and C.I.V.,
    Every one of 'em seems to be
     Right in the front of the army!

Most of the troops to the camp had gone,
When we met with a cow-gun toiling on;
And we said to the boys, as they walked her past,
'Well, thank goodness, you're here at last!'
'Here at last! Why, what d'yer mean?
Ain't we just where we've always been?
    Right in the front of the army,
     Battling day and night!
    Right in the front of the army,
     Teaching 'em how to fight!'
    Correspondents and vets. in force,
    Mounted foot and dismounted horse,
    All of them were, as a matter of course,
     Right in the front of the army.

Old Lord Roberts will have to mind

If ever the enemy get behind;
For they'll smash him up with a rear attack,
Because his army has got no back!
Think of the horrors that might befall
An army without any rear at all!
    Right in the front of the army,
     Battling day and night!
    Right in the front of the army,
     Teaching 'em how to fight!
    Swede attaches and German counts,
    Yeomen (known as De Wet's remounts),
    All of them were by their own accounts
     Right in the front of the army!

That V.C.

'Twas in the days of front attack,
 This glorious truth we'd yet to learn it —
That every 'front' had got a back,
 And French was just the man to turn it.

A wounded soldier on the ground
 Was lying hid behind a hummock;
He proved the good old proverb sound —
 An army travels on its stomach.

He lay as flat as any fish,
 His nose had worn a little furrow;
He only had one frantic wish,
 That like an antbear he could burrow.

The bullets whistled into space,
 The pom-pom gun kept up its braying,
The four-point-seven supplied the bass —
 You'd think the devil's band was playing.

A valiant comrade crawling near
 Observed his most supine behaviour,
And crept towards him, 'Hey! what cheer?
 Buck up,' said he, 'I've come to save yer.

'You get up on my shoulders, mate,
 And if we live beyond the firing,
I'll get the V.C. sure as fate,
 Because our blokes is all retiring.

'It's fifty pounds a year,' says he,
 'I'll stand you lots of beer and whisky.'
'No,' says the wounded man, 'not me,

I'll not be saved, it's far too risky.

'I'm fairly safe behind this mound,
I've worn a hole that seems to fit me;
But if you lift me off the ground,
It's fifty pounds to one they'll hit me.'

So back towards the firing line
Our friend crept slowly to the rear oh!
Remarking 'What a selfish swine!
He might have let me be a hero.'

Fed Up

I ain't a timid man at all, I'm just as brave as most,
I'll take my chance in open fight and die beside my post;
But riding round the 'ole day long as target for a Krupp,
A-drawing fire from Koppies — well, I'm fair fed up.

It's wonderful how few get hit, it's luck that pulls us through;
Their rifle fire's no class at all, it misses me and you;
But when they sprinkle shells around like water from a cup
From that there blooming pom-pom gun — well, I'm fed up.

We never get a chance to charge, to do a thrust and cut,
I'll have to chuck the Cavalry and join the Mounted Fut.
But after all — What's Mounted Fut? I saw them t'other day,
They occupied a Koppie when the Boers had run away.
The Cavalry went riding on and seen a score of fights,
But there they kept them Mounted Fut three solid days and nights —
Three solid starving days and nights with scarce a bite or sup,
Well! after that on Mounted Fut I'm fair fed up.

And tramping with the Footies ain't as easy as it looks,
They scarcely ever see a Boer except in picture books.
They do a march of twenty mile that leaves 'em nearly dead,
And then they find the bloomin' Boers is twenty miles ahead.
Each Footy is as full of fight as any bulldog pup,
But walking forty miles to fight — well, I'm fed up!

So after all I think that when I leave the Cavalry
I'll either join the ambulance or else the A.S.C.;
They've always tucker in the plate and coffee in the cup,
But Bully Beef and Biscuits — well! I'm fair fed up!

Jock!

There's a soldier that's been doing of his share
In the fighting up and down and round about.
He's continually marching here and there
And he's fighting, morning in and morning out.

The Boer, you see, he generally runs;
But sometimes when he hides behind a rock,
And we can't make no impression with the guns,
Oh, then you'll hear the order, 'Send for Jock!'

Yes, it's Jock — Scotch Jock.
He's the fellow that can give or take a knock.
For he's hairy and he's hard,
And his feet are by the yard,
And his face is like the face what's on a clock.
But when the bullets fly you will mostly hear the cry —
'Send for Jock!'

The Cavalry have gun and sword and lance,
Before they choose their weapon, why, they're dead.
The Mounted Fut are hampered in advance
By holding of their helmets on their head.

And when the Boer has dug himself a trench
And placed his Maxim gun behind a rock,
These mounted heroes — pets of Johnny French —
They have to sit and wait and send for Jock!

Yes, the Jocks — Scotch Jocks,
With their music that'd terrify an ox!
When the bullets kick the sand
You can hear the sharp command —
'Forty-Second! At the double! Charge the rocks!'

And the charge is like a flood
When they've warmed the Highland blood
Of the Jocks!

Santa Claus

Halt! Who goes there? The sentry's call
Rose on the midnight air
Above the noises of the camp,
The roll of wheels, the horses' tramp.
The challenge echoed over all —
Halt! Who goes there?

A quaint old figure clothed in white,
He bore a staff of pine,
An ivy-wreath was on his head.
'Advance, oh friend,' the sentry said,
Advance, for this is Christmas night,
And give the countersign.'

'No sign nor countersign have I,
Through many lands I roam
The whole world over far and wide,
To exiles all at Christmastide,
From those who love them tenderly
I bring a thought of home.

'From English brook and Scottish burn,
From cold Canadian snows,
From those far lands ye hold most dear
I bring you all a greeting here,
A frond of a New Zealand fern,
A bloom of English rose.

'From faithful wife and loving lass
I bring a wish divine,
For Christmas blessings on your head.'
'I wish you well,' the sentry said,
But here, alas! you may not pass

Without the countersign.'

He vanished – and the sentry's tramp
Re-echoed down the line.
It was not till the morning light
The soldiers knew that in the night
Old Santa Claus had come to camp
Without the countersign.

From a section of Advertisements, 1909.

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Biographical Note:

Andrew Barton Paterson was born at Narambla, in New South Wales, on 17 February 1864, but grew up at Buckenbah and Illalong. He became a lawyer but devoted much of his time to writing, and gained popularity especially for his poetry and ballads. His best known poems are The Man from Snowy River (1892) on which a motion picture was loosely based, and Waltzing Matilda (1895) which slowly became an Australian symbol and national song. The poems he wrote for a Sydney newspaper led him into reporting, and he went to South Africa to cover the Boer War. Always a fair man, he had his doubts about the war and was a little too vocal about it for the tastes of some of his readers. During the First World War he served in Egypt as a Major in a Remount Unit, training horses for the war. This fit one of his main interests in life — horses —a preoccupation which is very evident in his poems, and even in his choice of pseudonym —"The Banjo" was a race-horse.

The works for which Paterson is famous were mostly written before the First World War, and are collected in three books of poems, The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses (1895), Rio Grande's Last Race and Other Verses (1902), and Saltbush Bill, J.P. and Other Verses (1917). His prose works include An Outback Marriage (1906), and Three Elephant Power and Other Stories (1917), the latter of which is a collection of tall tales and serious (but often humourous) reporting. In fact, above all else it is perhaps Paterson's sense of humour that sets him apart from such balladists as Rudyard Kipling and Robert Service. It should also be noted that Paterson was writing his ballads before either of these became well-known, and there was little, if any, influence from either side. More likely, Paterson was influenced by the Scottish tradition of poetry (Paterson was of Scottish descent) which had been popularized in Australia by Adam Lindsay Gordon and others. Banjo Paterson died of a heart attack on 5 February, 1941.

A. Light, 1995.

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