

# “A Golden Shanty”

**Australian Stories and Sketches in Prose and Verse**

**Bulletin Writers**

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**“A Golden Shanty”**  
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## **Preface.**

The matter within these covers was, without exception, originally written for — and first appeared in — THE BULLETIN newspaper (published at Sydney, New South Wales, Australia) by the men whose names are appended to their respective contributions. The issue of “A GOLDEN SHANTY” is chiefly due to the many requests made from time to time by BULLETIN readers in Australasia and abroad for the publication in handy form of a series of selections from the vast mass of matter of more than ephemeral interest which has appeared in that most popular and widely-circulated of Australasian publications. Encouraged by the success of “THE HISTORY OF BOTANY BAY,” reprinted in book-form from the columns of THE BULLETIN, the publishers have decided on issuing a number of cheap publications in somewhat similar shape, and now, ere a copy of the present volume has been seen by the public there is reason for believing that the sale of “A GOLDEN SHANTY” will even exceed that of “THE HISTORY OF BOTANY Bay,” so far the most successful Australian book ever issued from an Australian printing-office.

## **The Bulletin.**

### **Australia's National Illustrated Weekly.**

*(Published at Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.)*

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and pleasure.” — SYDNEY MORNING HERALD.

“A Golden Shanty” Australian Stories &  
Sketches in Prose and Verse

## **A Golden Shanty.**

### **Edward Dyson**

ABOUT ten years ago, not a day's tramp from Ballarat, set well back from a dusty track that started nowhere in particular and had no destination worth mentioning, stood the Shamrock Hotel. It was a low, rambling, disjointed structure, and bore strong evidence of having been designed by an amateur artist in a moment of vinous frenzy. It reached out in seven well-defined angles, and had a lean-to building stuck on here and there; numerous out-houses were dropped down about it promiscuously; its walls were propped up in places with logs, and its moss-covered shingle-roof, bowed down with the weight of years and a great accumulation of stones, hoop-iron, jam-tins, broken glassware, and dried 'possum skins, bulged threateningly, on the verge of utter collapse. The Shamrock was built of sundried bricks, of an unhealthy, bilious tint. Its dirty, shattered windows were plugged in places with old hats and discarded female apparel, and draped with green blinds, many of which had broken their moorings, and hung despondently by one corner. Groups of ungainly fowls coursed the succulent grasshopper before the bar-door; a moody, distempered goat rubbed her ribs against a shattered trough roughly hewn from the butt of a tree, and a matronly old sow of spare proportions wallowed complacently in the dust of the road, surrounded by her squealing brood.

A battered sign hung out over the door of the Shamrock, informing people that "Michael Doyle was licensed to sell fermented and spirituous liquors," and that good accommodation could be afforded to both man and beast at the lowest current rates. But that sign was most unreliable; the man who applied to be accommodated with anything beyond ardent beverages, liquors so fiery that they "bit all the way down," evoked the astonishment of the proprietor. Bed and board were quite out of the province of the Shamrock. There was, in fact, only one couch professedly at the disposal of the weary wayfarer, and this, according to the statement of the few persons who had ever ventured to try it, seemed stuffed with old boots and stubble; it was located immediately beneath a henroost, which was the resting-place of a maternal fowl, addicted on occasion to nursing her chickens upon the tired sleeper's chest. The

“turn-over” at the Shamrock was not at all extensive, for, saving an occasional agricultural labourer, who came from “beyant” — which was the versatile host's way of designating any part within a radius of five miles — to revel in an occasional “spree,” the trade was confined to the passing “cockatoo” farmer, who invariably arrived on a bony, drooping prad, took a drink, and shuffled away amid clouds of dust.

The only other dwellings within sight of the Shamrock were a cluster of frail, ramshackle huts, compiled of slabs, scraps of matting, zinc, and gunny-bag. These were the habitations of a colony of squalid, gibbering Chinese fossickers, who herded together like hogs in a crowded pen, as if they had been restricted to that spot on pain of death or its equivalent, a washing.

About a quarter of a mile behind the Shamrock ran, or rather crawled, the sluggish waters of the Yellow Creek. Once upon a time, when the Shamrock was first built, the creek was a beautiful limpid rivulet, running between verdant banks; but an enterprising prospector wandering that way, and liking the indications, put down a shaft, and bottomed on “the wash” at twenty feet, getting half-an-ounce to the dish. A rush set in, and within twelve months the banks of the creek, for a distance of two miles, were denuded of their timber, torn up, and covered with unsightly heaps. The creek had been diverted from its natural course half-a-dozen times, and hundreds of diggers, like busy ants, delved into the earth, and covered its surface with red, white and yellow tips. Then the miners left almost as suddenly as they had come; the Shamrock, which had resounded with wild revelry, became as silent as a morgue, and desolation brooded on the face of the country. When Mr. Michael Doyle, whose greatest ambition in life had been to become lord of a “pub.,” invested in that lucrative country property, saplings were growing between the deserted holes of the diggings, and agriculture had superseded the mining industry in those parts.

Landlord Doyle was of Irish extraction; his stock was so old that everybody had forgotten where and when it originated, but Mickey was not proud — he assumed no unnecessary style, and his personal appearance would not have led you to infer that there had been a king in his family, and that his paternal progenitor had killed a landlord “wanst.” Mickey was a small, scraggy man, with a mop of grizzled hair and a little red, humorous face, ever bristling with auburn stubble. His trousers were the most striking things about him; they were built on the premises, and always contained enough stuff to make him a full suit and a winter overcoat. Mrs. Doyle manufactured those pants after plans and specifications of her own designing, and was mighty proud when Michael would yank them up into his armpits, and amble round, peering about discontentedly over the waistband — “They wus th' great sayin' in weskits,” she said.

Of late years it had taken all Mr. Doyle's ingenuity to make ends meet. The tribe of dirty, unkempt urchins who swarmed about the place "took a power of feedin'," and Mrs. D. herself was "th' big ater." "Ye do be atin' twinty-four hours a day," her lord was wont to remark, "and thin yez must get up av noights for more. Whin ye'r not atin' ye'er munchin' a schnack, bad cess t'ye."

In order to provide the provender for his unreasonably hungry family, Mickey had been compelled to supplement his takings as a Boniface by acting alternately as fossicker, charcoal-burner, and "wood-jamber;" but it came "terrible hard" on the little man, who waxed thinner and thinner, and sank deeper into his trousers every year. Then, to augment his troubles, came that pestiferous heathen, the teetotal Chinee. One hot summer's day he arrived in numbers, like a plague, armed with picks, shovels, dishes, cradles, and tubs, and with a clatter of tools and a babble of grotesque gibberish, camped by the creek, and refused to go away again. The awesome solitude of the abandoned diggings was ruthlessly broken. The deserted field, with its white mounds and decaying windlass-stands fallen aslant, which had lain like a long-forgotten cemetery buried in primeval forest, was now desecrated by the hand of the Mongol, and the sound of his weird, Oriental oaths. The Chows swarmed over the spot, tearing open old sores, shovelling old tips, sluicing old tailings, digging, cradling, puddling, ferreting into every nook and cranny.

Mr. Doyle observed the foreign invasion with mingled feelings of righteous anger and pained solicitude. He had found fossicking by the creek very handy to fall back upon when the wood-jambering trade was not brisk; but now, that industry was ruined by Chinese competition, and Michael could only find relief in deep and earnest profanity.

With the pagan influx began the mysterious disappearance of small valuables from the premises of Michael Doyle, licensed victualler. Sedate, fluffy old hens, hitherto noted for their strict propriety and regular hours, would leave the place at dead of night, and return from their nocturnal rambles never more; stay-at-home sucking-pigs, which had erstwhile absolutely refused to be driven from the door, corrupted by the new evil, absented themselves suddenly from the precincts of the Shamrock, taking with them cooking utensils and various other articles of small value, and ever afterwards their fate became a matter for speculation. At last a favourite young porker went, whereupon its lord and master, resolved to prosecute inquiries, bounced into the Mongolian camp, and, without any unnecessary preamble, opened the debate: "Look here, now," he observed, shaking his fist at the group, and bristling fiercely, "which av ye dhirty, haythen furriners cum up to me house lasht noight, and shtole me pig Nancy? Which av ye is it, so't I kin bate him! ye thavin' yellow dogs?"

The placid Orientals surveyed Mr. Doyle coolly, and innocently smiling said, "No savee;" then bandied jests at his expense in their native tongue, and laughed the little man to scorn. Incensed by the evident ridicule of the "haythen furriners," and goaded on by the smothered squeal of a hidden pig, Michael "went for" the nearest Asiatic, and proceeded to "put a head on him as big as a tank," amid a storm of kicks and digs from the other Chows. Presently the battle began to go against the Irish cause; but Mrs. Mickey making a timely appearance, warded off the surplus Chinamen by chipping at their skulls with an axe-handle. The riot was soon quelled, and the two Doyles departed triumphantly, bearing away a corpulent young pig, and leaving several broken, discouraged Chinamen to be doctored at the common expense.

After this gladsome little episode the Chinamen held off for a few weeks; then they suddenly changed their tactics and proceeded to cultivate the friendship of Michael Doyle and his able-bodied wife. They liberally patronised the Shamrock, and beguiled the licensee with soft but cheerful conversation: they flattered Mrs. Doyle in seductive pigeon-English, and endeavoured to ensnare the children's young affections with preserved ginger. Michael regarded these advances with misgiving; he suspected the Mongolians' intentions were not honourable, but he was not a man to spoil trade — to drop the substance for the shadow.

This state of affairs had continued for some time before the landlord of the Shamrock noticed that his new customers made a point of carrying off a brick every time they visited his caravanserai. When leaving, the bland heathen would cast his discriminating eye around the place, seize upon one of the sun-dried bricks with which the ground was littered, and steal away with a nonchalant air — as though it had just occurred to him that the brick would be a handy thing to keep in stock.

This matter puzzled Mr. Doyle sorely; he ruminated over it, but he could only arrive at the conclusion that it was not advisable to lose custom for the sake of a few bricks; so the Chinese continued to walk off with his building material. When asked what they intended to do with the bricks, they assumed an expression of the most deplorably hopeless idiocy, and suddenly lost their acquaintance with the "Inglisiman" tongue. If bricks were mentioned, they became as devoid of sense as wombats, although they seemed extremely intelligent on most other points. Mickey noticed that there was no building in progress at their camp, also that there were no bricks to be seen about the domiciles of the Pagans, and he tried to figure the mystery on a slate, but, on account of his lamentable ignorance of mathematics, failed to reach the unknown quantity and elucidate the enigma. He watched the invaders march off with all the loose bricks that were scattered around, and never once complained; but, when they began to abstract one end of his licensed premises, he felt himself called upon, as a husband and father, to arise and enter a protest;

which he did, pointing out to the Yellow Agony, in graphic and forcible language, the gross wickedness of robbing a struggling man of his house and home, and promising faithfully to “bate” the next lop-eared child of the Sun whom he “cot shiftin' a'er a brick.” “Ye dogs! Wud yez shtale me hotel, so't whin me family go insoide they'll be out in the rain?” he queried, looking hurt and indignant.

The Chinaman said “No savee.” Yet, after this warning, doubtless out of consideration for the feelings of Mr. Doyle, they went to great pains and displayed much ingenuity in abstracting bricks without his cognisance. But Mickey was active; he watched them closely, and whenever he caught a Chow in the act, a brief and onesided conflict raged and a dismantled Chinaman crawled home with much difficulty.

This violent conduct on the part of the landlord served in time to entirely alienate the Mongolian custom from the Shamrock, and once more Mickey and the Chows spake not when they met. Once more, too, promising young pullets, and other portable valuables, began to go astray, and still the hole in the wall grew till the after-part of the Shamrock looked as if it had tried to stop a runaway cannon-ball. The Chinamen came while Michael slept, and filched his hotel inch by inch. They lost their natural rest, and ran the gauntlet of Mr. Doyle's stick and his curse — for the sake of a few bricks. At all hours of the night they crept through the gloom, and warily stole a bat or two, getting away unnoticed perhaps, or, mayhap, only disturbing the slumbers of Mrs. Doyle, who was a very light sleeper for a woman of her size. In the latter case, the lady would awaken her lord by holding his nose — a very effective plan of her own — and, filled to overflowing with the rage which comes of a midnight awakening, Mickey would turn out of doors in his shirt to cope with the marauders, and course them over the paddocks. If he caught a heathen, he laid himself out for five minutes' energetic entertainment, which fully repaid him for lost rest and missing hens, and left a Chinaman too heart-sick and sore to steal anything for at least a week. But the Chinaman's friends would come as usual, and the pillage went on.

Michael Doyle puzzled himself to prostration over this insatiable and unreasonable hunger for bricks; such an infatuation on the part of men for cold and unresponsive clay had never before come within the pale of his experience. Times out of mind he threatened to “have the law on the yalla blaggards;” but the law was a long way off, and the Celestial housebreakers continued to elope with scraps of the Shamrock, taking the proprietor's assaults humbly, and as a matter of course.

“Why do ye be shtealing me house?” fiercely queried Mr. Doyle of a submissive Chow, whom he had taken in the act of ambling off with a brick in either hand one night.

“Me no steal 'em, no feah — odder fellah, him steal 'em,” replied the

quaking pagan.

Mickey was dumb-stricken for the moment by this awful prevarication; but that did not impair the velocity of his kick — this to his great subsequent regret, for the Chinaman had stowed a third brick away in his pants for convenience of transit, and the landlord struck that brick; then he sat down and repeated aloud all the profanity he knew, and wished he were a boy again, so that he could get his big toe into his mouth. The Chinaman escaped, and had presence of mind enough to retain his burden of clay.

Month after month the work of devastation went on. Mr. Doyle fixed ingenious mechanical contrivances about his house, and turned out at early dawn to see how many Chinamen he had “nailed” — only to find his spring-traps stolen and his hotel yawning more desperately than ever. Then Michael could but lift up his voice and swear — nothing else afforded him any relief.

At last he hit upon a brilliant idea. He commissioned a “cocky,” who was journeying into Ballarat, to buy him a dog — the largest, fiercest, ugliest, hungriest animal the town afforded; and next day a powerful, ill-tempered canine, almost as big as a pony, and quite as ugly as any nightmare, was duly installed as guardian and night-watch at the Shamrock. Right well the good dog performed his duty. On the following morning he had trophies to show in the shape of a boot, a scrap of blue dungaree trousers, half a pig-tail, a yellow ear, and a large part of a partially-shaved scalp; and just then the nocturnal visits ceased. The Chows spent a week skirmishing round, endeavouring to call the dog off, but he was neither to be begged, borrowed, nor stolen; he was too old-fashioned to eat poisoned meat, and he resented the smallest approach to familiarity on the part of a Chinaman by snapping off the most serviceable portions of his vestments, and always fetching a scrap of heathen along with them.

This, in time, sorely discouraged the patient children of the Sun, who drew off to hold congress and give the matter weighty consideration. After deliberating for some days, the yellow settlement appointed a deputation to wait upon Mr. Doyle. Mickey saw them coming, and armed himself with a log and unchained his dog. Mrs. Doyle ranged up alongside, brandishing her axe-handle, but by humble gestures and a deferential bearing the Celestial deputation signified a truce. So Michael held his dog down and rested on his arms to await developments. The Chinamen advanced, smiling blandly; they gave Mr. and Mrs. Doyle fraternal greeting, and squirmed with that wheedling obsequiousness peculiar to “John” when he has something to gain by it. A pock-marked leper placed himself in the van as spokesman:

“Nicee day, Missa Doyle,” said the moon-faced gentleman, sweetly. Then, with a sudden expression of great interest, and nodding towards

Mrs. Doyle, "How you sissetah?"

"Foind out! Fwhat yer wantin'?" replied the host of the Shamrock, gruffly; "t' shtale more bricks, ye crawlin' blaggards?"

"No, no. Me not steal 'em blick — odder feller; he hide 'em; build big house byem-bye."

"Ye loi, ye screw-faced nayger! I seed ye do it, and if yez don't cut and run I'll lave the dog loose to feed on yer dhirty carcasses." The dog tried to reach for his favourite hold, Mickey brandished his log, and Mrs. Doyle took a fresh grip of her weapon. This demonstration gave the Chows a cold shiver, and brought them promptly down to business:

"We buy 'em you hotel: what for you sell 'em — eh?"

"Fwhat! Yez buy me hotel? D'ye mane it? Puchis th' promises, and yez can shtale ivery brick at yer laysure. But ye're joakin'. Whoop! Look ye here. I'll have th' lot av yez aten up in two minits if yez play yer Choinase thricks on Michael Doyle."

The Chinamen eagerly protested chat they were in earnest, and Mickey gave them a judicial hearing. For two years he had been in want of a customer for the Shamrock, and he now hailed the offer of his visitors with secret delight. After haggling for an hour, during which time the ignorant Hi Yup of the contorted countenance displayed his usual business tact, a bargain was struck. The yellow men agreed to give fifty pounds cash for the Shamrock and all buildings appertaining thereto, and the following Monday was the day fixed for Michael to journey into Ballarat with a couple of representative heathens to sign the transfer-papers and receive the cash.

The deputation departed smiling, and when it gave the news of its triumph to the other denizens of the camp, there was a perfect babel of congratulations in the quaint dialogue of the Mongol. The Chinamen proceeded to make a night of it in their own outlandish way, indulging freely in the seductive opium, and holding high carouse over an extemporised fantan-table; proceedings which made it evident that they thought they were getting to windward of Michael Doyle, licensed victualler.

Michael, too, was rejoicing with exceeding great joy, and felicitating himself on being the shrewdest little man who ever left the "ould sod." He had not hoped to get more than a twenty-pound note for the dilapidated old humpy, erected on Crown land, and unlikely to stand the wear and tear of another year. As for the business, it had fallen to zero, and would not have kept a Chinaman in soap. So Mr. Doyle plumed himself on his bargain, and expanded till he nearly filled his capacious garments. Still, he was harassed to know what could possibly have attached the Chinese so strongly to the Shamrock. They had taken samples from every part of the establishment, and fully satisfied themselves as to the quality of the bricks, and now they wanted to buy. It

was most peculiar. Michael "had never seen anything so quare before, savin' wanst whin his grandfather was a boy."

After the agreement arrived at between the publican and the Chinese, one or two of the latter hung about the hotel nearly all their time, in sentinel fashion. The dog was kept on chain, and lay in the sun in a state of moody melancholy, narrowly scrutinising the Mongolians. He was a strongly anti-Chinese dog, and had been educated to regard the almond-eyed invader with mistrust and hate; it was repugnant to his principles to lie low when the heathen was around, and he evinced his resentment by growling ceaselessly.

Sunday dawned. It was a magnificent morning; but the rattle of the Chinamen's cradles and toms sounded from the creek, as usual. Three or four suave and civil Asiatics, however, still lingered around the Shamrock, and kept an eye on it in the interests of all, for the purchase of the hotel was to be a joint-stock affair. These "Johns" seemed to imagine they had already taken lawful possession; they sat in the bar most of the time, drinking little, but always affable and genial. Michael suffered them to stay, for he feared that any fractiousness on his part might upset the agreement, and that was a consummation to be avoided above all things. They had told him, with many tender smiles and much gesticulation, that they intended to live in the house when it became theirs; but Mr. Doyle was not interested — his fifty pounds was all he thought of.

Michael was in high spirits that morning: he beamed complacently on all and sundry, appointed the day as a time of family rejoicing, and in the excess of his emotion actually slew for dinner a prime young sucking-pig, an extravagant luxury indulged in by the Doyles only on state occasions. On this particular Sunday the younger members of the Doyle household gathered round the festive board and waited impatiently for the lifting of the lid of the camp-oven. There were nine children in all, ranging in years from fourteen downwards — "foine, shtrappin' childer, wid th' clear brain," said the prejudiced Michael. The round, juicy sucker was at last placed upon the table. Mrs. Doyle stood prepared to administer her department — serving the vegetables to her hungry brood — and, armed with a formidable knife and fork, Michael, enveloped in savoury steam, hovered over the pig.

But there was one function yet to be performed, a function which came as regularly as Sunday's dinner itself. Never, for years, had the house-father failed to touch up a certain prodigious knife on one particular hard, yellow brick in the wall by the door, preparatory to carving the Sunday's meat. Mickey examined the edge of his weapon critically, and found it unsatisfactory. The knife was nearly ground through to the backbone; another "touch-up" and it must surely collapse, but, in view of his changed circumstances, Mr. Doyle felt that he might take the risk. The

brick, too, was worn an inch deep. A few sharp strokes from Mickey's vigorous right arm were all that was required, but, alas! the knife snapped, whereupon Mr. Doyle swore at the brick, as if holding it immediately responsible for the mishap, and stabbed it fiercely with the broken carver.

“Howly Moses! Fwhat's that?”

The brick fell to pieces, and there, embedded in the wall, gleaming in the sunbeam, was a nugget of yellow gold. With feverish haste Mickey tore the brick from its bedding, and smashed the gold-bearing fragment on the hearth. The nugget was a little beauty, smooth, round, and four ounces to a grain.

The sucking-pig froze and stiffened in its fat, the “taters” and the cabbage stood neglected on the dishes. The truth had dawned upon Michael, and whilst the sound of a spirited debate in musical Chinese echoed from the bar, his family was gathered around him, open-mouthed, and Mickey was industriously, but quietly, pounding the sun-dried brick in a digger's mortar. Two bricks, one from either end of the Shamrock, were pulverised, and Michael panned off the dirt in a tub of water which stood in the kitchen. Result: seven grains of waterworn gold. Until now Michael had worked dumbly, in a fit of nervous excitement; now he started up, bristling like a hedgehog.

“Let loose th' dog, Mary Melinda Doyle!” he howled, and, uttering a mighty whoop, he bounded into the bar to dust those Chinamen off his premises.

“Gerrout!” he screamed — “Gerrout av me premises, ye thavin' crawlers!” And he frolicked with the astounded Mongolians like a tornado in full blast, thumping at a shaven occiput whenever one showed out of the struggling crowd. The Chinamen left, they found the dog waiting for them outside, and he encouraged them to leave “some more.” Like startled fawns the heathens fled, and Mr. Doyle followed them howling: —

“Buy the Shamrock, wud yez! Robbers! Thaves! Fitch back th' soide o' me house, or Oi'll have th' law onto yez all.” The damaged escapees communicated the intelligence of their overthrow to their brethren on the creek, and the news carried consternation and deep, dark woe to the pagans, who clustered together and ruefully discussed the situation.

Mr. Doyle was wildly jubilant. His joy was only tintured with a spice of bitterness, the result of knowing that the “haythens” had got away with a few hundreds of his precious bricks. He tried to figure out the amount of gold his hotel must contain, but again his ignorance of arithmetic tripped him up, and already in imagination Michael Doyle, licensed victualler, was a millionaire and a J.P.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Shamrock was really a treasure-house. The dirt of which the bricks were composed had been taken from the banks of the Yellow Creek, years before the outbreak of the rush, by an eccentric German who had settled on that sylvan spot. The German died, and his grotesque structure passed into other hands. Time went on, and then came the rush. The banks of the creek were found to be charged with gold for miles, but never for a moment did it occur to anybody that the clumsy old building by the track, now converted into a hotel, was composed of the same rich dirt; never till years after, when by accident one of the Mongolian fossickers discovered grains of gold in a few bats he had taken to use as hobs. The intelligence was conveyed to his fellows, they got more bricks and more gold — hence the robbery of Mr. Doyle's building-material and the anxiety of the Mongolians to buy the Shamrock.

Before nightfall Michael summoned half-a-dozen men from “beyant,” to help him in protecting his hotel from a possible Chinese invasion. Other bricks were crushed and yielded splendid prospects. The Shamrock's small stock of liquor was drunk, and everybody became hilarious. On the Sunday night, under cover of the darkness, the Chows made a sudden sally on the Shamrock, hoping to get away with plunder. They were violently received, however, they got no bricks, and returned to their camp broken and disconsolate.

Next day the work of demolition was begun. Drays were backed up against the Shamrock, and load by load the precious bricks were carted away to a neighbouring battery. The Chinamen slouched about watching greedily, but their now half-hearted attempts at interference met with painful reprisal. Mr. Doyle sent his family and furniture into Ballarat, and in a week there was not a vestige left to mark the spot where once the Shamrock flourished. Every scrap of its walls went through the mill, and the sum of one thousand nine hundred and eighty-three pounds sterling was cleared out of the ruins of the hostelry. Mr. Doyle is now a man of some standing in Victoria, and as a highly-respected J.P. has often been pleased to inform a Chinaman that it was “foive pound or a month.”

## How He Died.

### John Farrell

“Take my horse,” cried the squatter to Nabbage — “ ’Tis forty long miles at the least;  
Ride as if you were heeled by the devil, and don't spare yourself or the beast:  
And just mark me, my man, if I find that you stop for as much as a nip,  
I will hide you while I've got the strength, and then pass Curly Johnson the whip.

“Give the doctor this letter, and tell him to get his best horses and drive  
As he never has driven before, if he wants to find Freddy alive:  
Say I'll pay him a dozen times over — he can flog them until they drop dead —  
And be there in two hours, or by”——(there is no need to add what he said).

There was no need of threats to urge Nabbage; one instant, and firm on the back  
Of the boss's blood mare, he was racing away down the dimly-marked track;  
Far away in the thickening night, with the hand of an awful despair  
On his soul, for the help that was hopeless for a life that was past even prayer.

Not a man on the station liked Nabbage — he held himself coldly aloof  
From the boys in the hut, and his eyes always dwelt on the floor or the roof;  
He was pock-marked and wrinkled and stooped, and at meal-times sat ever apart,  
As though nursing some scorn untranslated that grew in the shade of his heart.

For a time all his mates thought him sulky, and said he was “putting it on;”  
Then the sense of the hut being taken, decided him just “a bit gone;”  
But Old Stumpy, the cook, held the view that the man was a “natural

skunk”

Who (thus heightening public disfavour) oft-times went *alone* and got drunk.

Curly Johnson, the super., despised him, and never neglected a chance  
To annoy and degrade the poor wretch, who replied not with even a  
glance:

He was general drudge at the homestead, and slaved in a spiritless way  
At whatever they told him to do, for whatever they fancied to pay.

Strange that Freddie, the master's one darling, the golden-haired,  
impudent boy,

With the slang of the bush on his lips, and the great eyes of Helen of  
Troy.

He, the eager imperious young master, whose talk was of yearlings and  
brands,

Should pick out this strange slouch for a chum, and ignore the more  
sociable hands.

But it was so, and often and often from daybreak till set of the sun  
Rode the two through the light of the summer far out on the limitless run;  
Freddie riding his favourite pony, and Nabbage — I think you can guess  
That the steed Curly Johnson let *him* have was not of the build of Black  
Bess.

And everyone noticed that Nabbage grew gentle and sweet with the  
child,

And a rumour spread wildly abroad that one night in the hut he had  
smiled

As a man might whose thoughts were away in the grave of one cherished  
and kissed,

While his comrades grew heated at euchre, or smoked their unspeakable  
twist.

And like this things went on till one day when the gum-leaves hung  
lifelessly down

In the haze of a ring of bush-fires that by night made each hill seem a  
town —

They had yarded some steers to be branded, a wild-looking, dangerous  
lot,

And young Freddie had kindled his fire, and the iron was just getting hot,

When Joe Smith, the new boundary-rider, whose conduct was painfully  
“flash,”

Passed along down the side of the fence, hitching in his red silk-woven  
sash,

All at once came a rush, as of water, and Joe made one spring past the gate  
Which withstood for a minute, then crashed with the strain of the multiplied weight.

Whereat Freddie, poor Freddie, looked up, with a laugh, to see what had gone wrong,  
When a score of mad steers burst upon him, and trampled and tossed him along.  
Every man rushed at once to his help, and they lifted him, silent and white,  
And a little while afterwards Nabbage was riding away through the night.

\* \* \* \* \*

Every light on the hills out of view, in the dim solemn glens not a light,  
Not a sound nor a stir in the depths of the marvellous hush of the night,  
Not a pulse or a heart-beat of Nature, no break in the infinite rest,  
Every star with the eyelight of God, lidded down in the east and the west.

Half a mile from a town wrapped in midnight, a broken-necked horse at a creek.

And a man with death's dew on his forehead and blood on his coat and his cheek:

“I am dying — I feel death upon me, but yet, even yet, if God wills  
I may crawl on my knees to the doctor's — yes, this is the last of the hills.

“To the left is the way, I am certain — Heaven grant that it be not too late —

Heaven grant that my life may be paid for the life of my poor little mate!  
Darling child of the woman I loved in the days when — O, God! is it vain?

No! — for your sake, my lost angel's boy, I can fight yet awhile with this pain.

“Years ago, when the curse overtook me, when drink flung its chain round my lot,

She recoiled with a shudder of loathing and scorn from the pitiful sot;  
But to-night may be large with atonement — Yes! to-night, if her spirit may know

How and why I am wrestling with Death, may redeem the love lost long ago!

“Not two hundred yards now! If I reach it, though even to die at the door,

Here's the letter to tell him — O. Heaven! the thought never struck me before;

Doctor Thompson will see I am injured, and stop to attend me. What way  
Can I think of in time to prevent half a moment of needless delay?

“Ha! I have it. He knows, like the rest, that one-half of my time I am  
‘tight;’

I'll pretend that I stopped out at Brown's, and got drunk — for the last  
time — to-night;

I can muffle this handkerchief well round my face, and he'll not see the  
mark

Of the rock on my head where I fell with the mare when we jumped in  
the dark.”

So the man, like a serpent disabled, writhes on with low, agonised  
groans,

And here and there tinges with blood fallen logs and twigs and sharp  
stones,

Till he wearily drags round a corner, and finds a warm light in the  
gloom,

And crawls further and beats with his hand on the door of the young  
doctor's room.

A strange man, most decidedly drunk, with a letter held out in his hand!

Doctor Thompson can't quite make it out, and proceeds in stern words to  
demand

What he wants? Who he is? But the drunkard, half-rolling away from the  
door.

Curled up, where the light can't come near him, and calmly commences to  
snore.

Then the doctor tears open the letter, and yells to the stable-boy: “Dick,  
Fix up Starlight and Fan in the buggy, and fetch 'em around pretty  
quick;”

Then angrily kicks the fallen drunkard, and seizing the drugs he may  
need,

Drives away up the street with the greys at the uttermost reach of their  
speed.

Then the drunkard half-rises and listens, a wistful, strange smile on his  
face,

As he mutters, “Thank God, I deceived him! — in three hours they'll be  
at the place;

And alike if he lives, or has wandered to dwell with his mother above,  
I have triumphed an hour over Death for the boy with the eyes of my

love.”

## The Old Wife and the New.

Victor J. Daley

He sat beneath the curling vines  
That round the gay verandah twined,  
His forehead seamed with sorrow's lines,  
An old man with a weary mind.

His young wife, with a rosy face  
And brown arms, tinted by the sun  
Went flitting all about the place —  
Master and mistress both in one.

What caused that old man's look of care?  
Was she not blithe and fair to see?  
What blacker than her raven hair —  
What darker than her eyes might be?

Were her curved lips not ripe and red,  
And white as pearls her flashing teeth?  
Who e'er saw such a handsome head  
Ringed round with such a raven wreath?

Had she no heart whose tendrils he  
Could thrill, or one that nothing melts?  
(Such hearts there are), or, could it be,  
She had a heart — for someone else?

Who knows? The old man bent his head  
The sunlight on his gray hair shone,  
His thoughts were with a woman dead  
And buried years and years ago:

The good old wife who took her stand  
Beside him at the altar-side,  
And walked with him, hand clasped in hand,  
Through joy and sorrow till she died.

Then she was fair as heart's desire,

And gay, and supple-limbed, in sooth,  
And in his veins there leaped like fire  
The hot red blood of lusty youth.

She stood by him in shine and shade,  
And, when hard-beaten, at his best,  
She took him like a child and laid  
His aching head upon her breast.

She helped him make a little home  
Where once were gum-trees gaunt and stark,  
And bloodwoods waved green-feathered foam —  
Working from dawn of day to dark,

Till that dark forest formed a frame  
For vineyards that the gods might bless,  
And what was savage once became  
A Tadmor in the wilderness.

And how at their first vintage-time  
She laughed and sang — you see such shapes  
On vases of the Grecian prime —  
And danced a reel upon the grapes.

And ever, as the years went on,  
She kept all things with thrifty hand,  
Till never shone the sun upon  
A fairer homestead in the land.

Then children came — ah me! ah me!  
Sad blessings that a mother craves!  
That old man from his seat could see  
The shadows playing o'er their graves.

And then he closed her eyes at last,  
Her gentle, useful, peaceful life  
Was over — garnered with the past,  
God rest thee gently, Good Old Wife!

\* \* \* \* \*

His young wife has a rosy face,  
And laughs, with reddest lips apart,  
But cannot fill the empty place  
Within that old man's lonely heart.

His young wife has a rosy face,

And brown arms, tinted by the sun,  
Goes flitting all about the place,  
Master and mistress both in one.

But though she sings, or though she sighs,  
He sees her not — he sees instead  
A gray-haired Shade with gentle eyes —  
The good old wife, long dead, long dead.

He sits beneath the curling vines,  
Through which the merry sunrays dart,  
His forehead seamed with Sorrow's lines,  
An old man with a broken heart.

## Shadow-Hunting.

Francis Myers

“Two travellers on their way to Kimberley diggings, Western Australia, found beside the track a dead body, that of a gray-headed man, buttoned up tightly in an old long-tailed black coat. A wrinkled tall black hat lay near the remains.” — *Daily paper*.

“Hillo, Daddy!” the lads sang out —  
“Here's luck, Dad!” as the ship hauled out;  
Poor old Dad, in his old black coat  
Buttoned up tightly from knees to throat.  
“Where are you bound for?” “What's your lay?”  
“Set up a coffin-shop 'bout half-way?”  
“Law now, or physic by ounces sold —  
Or a sermon maybe on the thirst for gold?”

“Never you mind, lads,” the old man says,  
“The old black coat has seen better days —  
Bendigo gullies and Black Hill leads,  
Deep Creek boozes, and ‘Shamrock’ feeds;  
We followed our shadows to seek them out,  
But things have turned right round about.  
Vic.'s all dead now, and New South done;  
And east from the sea must the new track run.”  
“Bully, old Dad!” said the lads with zest,  
As the long ship plunged round the Cape due west.

“So long, old Dad!” said the lusty wag,  
As he jogged 'way past on his wiry nag.  
“You'll never get up, man,” the trooper said,  
But he pushed along nodding his old gray head;  
And the noise and the chaff and the dust went by  
As he said, “Shadow points, and I won't say die;”  
So the seventh, eighth, ninth days passed, and still  
He toiled through the sand-flats — crept up the hill;

And the tenth day rose, and he somehow found —  
As his quaint, dark shadow went round and round —  
In his heart new pangs, in his limbs new pain,  
And the blood growing hot in his aching brain.

So he stood on the ridge and laughed to see  
Fate's finger point so steadily  
Right to the world's rim, murky and red,  
Longer, more faint, till the day was dead.  
Then he shivered and shook, though the old black coat  
Was buttoned up tightly from knees to throat.  
And he slept by his swag; but he woke, for soon  
Right out of the east came the great red moon —  
The great round moon, growing white and bright  
In a bank of clouds like the grave of night;  
And the plain-wind lifted his long gray hair,  
As he rose up straight and looked, and there  
Was the low quaint shadow — 'twas pointing back  
Like Death's own finger along the track.  
“Ah! Shadow,” he said (for his brain was hot),  
“He needs must perish who follows not!  
Shadow, I follow, and hey, good moon,  
We will come to the gold-hills sure, and soon!”

“Follow!” — he followed on fast and fast,  
And the moon rose high as the miles went past,  
And his shadow came in, and he paused and now  
Cold sweat broke out on his burning brow.  
“Shadow, what means it?” The great moon clomb  
Right up to the crown of the star-pierced dome.  
“Shadow!” he cried, as a lost man cries  
To the nurse who leaves him before he dies;  
And he dashed out left and he dashed out right,  
And he looked up aloft to the great still night.  
“None now to lead me and none to save!”  
He stood on his shadow, and on his grave

In his old black hat and his old black coat,  
Buttoned up tightly from knees to throat.  
He was there in the morn when the red sun came,  
Over sand-ridge and scrub-patch with steps of flame;  
He was there when the red moon rose again,  
Yet he cast no shadow along the plain.  
Then the dingo came and sniffed and saw,  
But howled as he vanished with empty maw,

And the crow flapped up on the long-scent trail,  
But turned from the sight like a fluttered quail;  
And the lurking myall just looked and went  
Like a black snake back to the thick scrub sent;  
But two men hurrying out to the front  
Stopped with a start in the phantom-hunt.  
And “Hillo!” they said, “are you there, old sport?”  
When — “God, but it is!” as they pulled up short,  
And came down slowly, stood off and said,  
“Wrapped up like a mummy, and dead — yes, dead!”

And coffin and shroud was the old black coat  
Buttoned up tightly from knees to throat,  
Folding and guarding shrunk skin, parched bones,  
Covered up lightly with loose grey stones.  
Marked with a chopped tree, rude and sad,  
“Half way to Kimberley — Poor old Dad!”

## **His Father's Mate.**

**Henry Lawson**

### **Chapter I. — Worked Out.**

IT was Golden Gully still, but golden in name only, unless, indeed, the yellow mullock-heaps, or the bloom of the hillside wattles furnished it with a claim to the title. But the gold was gone from the gully, and the diggers were gone, too, after the manner of Timon's friends when his wealth had deserted him. Golden Gully was a dreary place — dreary even for an abandoned gold-field. The tortured earth, with its wounds all bare, seemed to make a mute appeal to the surrounding bush to come and hide it; and as if in answer to its appeal the scrub and saplings were beginning to close in from the foot of the range. The wilderness was reclaiming its own again.

The two dark, sullen hills that stood on either side were clothed from tip to hollow with gloomy scrub and scraggy box-trees. The top of the western hill was shaped somewhat like a saddle, and, standing high above the eucalypti, on a point in position and appearance resembling the pommel, were three tall pines. These lonely trees, seek for miles around, had caught the yellow rays of many a setting sun long ere the white man wandered over the ranges.

The “predominant note” of the scene was a painful sense of listening, that never seemed to lose its tension, a listening as though for the sounds of digger-life, sounds that had gone and left a void — a void accentuated by the signs of a former presence. Years had passed since the army of diggers vanished to new rushes, like other armies, leaving its stragglers and deserters behind. These were men who were too poor to drag families about — men who were old and feeble, men who had lost their faith in Fortune. They dropped unnoticed from the ranks, and remained to scratch out a living among the abandoned claims.

Golden Gully had its little community of fossickers, who lived at the foot of the gully, in a cleared patch, called “Spencer's Flat” on one side and “Pounding Flat” on the other, but they lent no life to the scene — they only haunted it. The stranger might think the hand of man had not touched the ground for years, until he came suddenly upon a coat and

hat lying at the top of some old shaft. These, and the thud of a pick in the shallow ground underneath, told him of some fossicker below rooting out what little “wash” remained.

## Chapter II. — “Isley.”

One afternoon towards Christmas a windlass was erected over an old shaft of considerable depth at the foot of the gully. Next morning a green-hide bucket attached to a rope on the windlass was lying near the mouth of the shaft, and beside it, on a clear-swept patch, was a little mound of cool, wet wash-dirt.

A clump of saplings near at hand threw a shade over part of the heap, and in this shade, seated on an old coat, was a small boy of eleven or twelve years, writing on a slate.

He had fair hair, blue eyes, and a thin old-fashioned face — a face that would scarcely alter much as he grew to manhood — and was clad in a pair of trousers, upheld by a strip of hide, and a cotton shirt. He held the slate rigidly, with a corner of its frame pressed close against his ribs, while his head hung to one side, so close to the slate that his straggling hair almost touched it. The lad was regarding his work fixedly out of the corners of his eyes, whilst he painfully copied down the head-line, spelling it in a different way each time. In this laborious task he appeared to be greatly assisted by a tongue that lolled out of the corner of his mouth and made an occasional revolution round it, leaving a circle of temporarily clean face. His little, clay-covered toes also entered into the spirit of the thing, and helped him not a little by their energetic wriggling. He paused occasionally to draw the back of his small brown arm across his mouth.

Little Isley Mason, or, as he was afterwards called, “His Father's Mate,” had been a general favourite with the fossickers, and even with the diggers, from the days when he used to rise in early morning and run across the frosty flat. Long Tom Hopkins — nick-named “Tom the Devil” — would often tell how Isley once came home at breakfast-time naked, after his run in the long, wet grass, with the information that he had “lost his shirt.”

Later on, when most of the diggers had gone, and Isley's mother was dead, he was to be seen about the place with bare, sun-browned arms and legs, a pick and shovel, and a gold-dish, in diameter equalling about two-thirds of his height, with which he used to go “a-speekin' ” and “fossickin' ” among the old waste-heaps. Long Tom was Isley's special crony, and would often go out of his way to “lay the boy onter bits o' wash and likely spots,” lamely excusing his long yarns with the child by the explanation that it was “amusin' to draw Isley out.”

Isley had been sitting writing for some time when a deep voice called

out from below:

“Isley!”

“Yes, father.”

“Send down the bucket.”

“Right.”

Isley put down his slate, and going to the shaft dropped the bucket down as far as the slack-rope reached; then, placing his left hand above the bole of the windlass, and the right beneath, he let it slip round between his palms until the bucket reached the bottom. A sound of shovelling was then heard for a few moments, and presently a voice cried:

“Wind away, sonny!”

“Thet ain't *half* enough,” said the boy, peering down. “Don't be frightened to put it in, father. I kin wind up a lot mor'n thet.”

A little more scraping, and the boy braced his feet well upon the mound of clay which he had raised under the handle of the windlass to make up for his deficiency in stature.

“Now then, Isle'!”

Isley wound up slowly but sturdily, and soon the laden bucket appeared above the surface; then he carried it in short lifts and deposited its contents with the rest of the wash-dirt.

“Isley!” called his father again.

“Yes, father.”

“Have you done that writing-lesson yet?”

“Very near.”

“Then send down the slate next time for some sums.”

“All right.”

The boy resumed his seat, and fixing the corner of his slate well into his ribs, humped his back and commenced another wavering line.

### **Chapter III. — Pictures on the “Face.”**

Tom Mason was known on the place as a silent hard worker. He was a man of about sixty — tall and dark-bearded. There was nothing uncommon about his face, except, perhaps, that it had hardened, as the face of a man might harden who had suffered a long succession of griefs and disappointments. He lived in a little hut under a peppermint-tree at the far end of Pounding Flat, where his wife had died about six years before, and the memory detaining him — though new rushes had broken out, and Mason was well able to go — he had never left Golden Gully.

He was kneeling in front of the “face,” digging away by the light of a sperm candle stuck in the side. The floor of the drive was very wet, and his trousers were heavy and cold with clay and water; but the old digger was used to that sort of thing. His pick was not bringing out much today,

however, for he seemed abstracted, and would occasionally pause in his work, while his thoughts wandered far away from the narrow streak of wash on the “face.”

He was digging out pictures from a past life. They were not pleasant ones, for his face was stony and white in the dim glow of the candle.

Thud, thud, thud, the blows became slower and more irregular as the fossicker's mind wandered into the past. The sides of the drive seemed to vanish slowly away, and the “face” retreated far out beyond a horizon that was hazy in the glow of the Southern Ocean. He was standing on the deck of a ship and by his side stood a brother. They were sailing southward to the Land of Promise that was shining there in all its golden glory! The sails pressed forward in the bracing wind, and the clipper-ship raced along burdened with the wildest dreamers ever borne in a vessel's hull! Up over long blue ocean ridges, down into long blue ocean gullies. On to lands so new, and yet so old, where above the sunny glow of the southern skies blazed the richly-gilt names of Ballarat and Bendigo. The deck seemed to lurch, and the fossicker fell forward against the face of the drive. The shock recalled him, and he lifted his pick once more.

The blows again slacken as another vision rises before him. It is Ballarat now. He is working in a shallow claim at Eureka, his brother by his side. The brother looks pale and ill — has been up all night dancing and drinking. Out behind them is the line of blue hills, in front is the famous Bakery Hill, and down to the left Golden Point. Two troopers ride up over Specimen Hill. What do they want?

They take the brother away handcuffed. Manslaughter last night. Cause, drink and jealousy.

The vision is gone again. Thud, thud, goes the pick, it counts the years that follow — one, two, three, four, ten, twenty, and then it stops for the next scene — a selection on the sunny banks of a bright river in New South Wales. The little homestead is surrounded by vines and fruit-trees. Many swarms of bees work under the shade of the trees, and a wheat-crop is nearly ripe on the hillside.

A man and a boy are engaged in clearing a paddock just below the homestead. They are father and son. The son is a powerful lad of about seventeen years.

Thud, thud, again. Horses' feet! Again comes Nemesis in troopers' uniform.

The mail was stuck up last night about five miles away, and a refractory passenger shot. The son had been out “shooting” with some “friends.”

The troopers bear the son away handcuffed: “Robbery under arms.”

The father was taking out a stump when the troopers came. His foot is still resting on the spade, which is half driven home. He watches the troopers take the boy up to the house, and then, driving the spade to its

full length, he turns up another sod. The troopers reach the door of the homestead; but still he digs steadily, and does not seem to hear his wife's cry of despair. The troopers search the boy's room and bring out some clothing in two bundles; but still the father digs. They have saddled up one of the farm-horses and made the boy mount. The father digs. They ride off along the ridge with the boy between them. The father never lifts his eyes; the hole widens round the stump; he digs away till his brave little wife comes and takes him gently by the arm. He half rouses himself and follows her to the house like an obedient dog.

Trial and disgrace follow, and then other misfortunes, disease among cattle, drought, and poverty.

Thud, thud, thud, again! But it is not the sound of the fossicker's pick — it is the fall of sods on his wife's coffin.

It is a little bush cemetery, and he stands stonily watching them fill up her grave. She died of a broken heart and shame. "I can't bear disgrace! I can't bear disgrace!" she had moaned all these six weary years, for the poor are often proud.

But he lives on. He holds up his head and toils on for the sake of a child that is left, and that child is — Isley.

And now the fossicker sees a vision of the future. He seems to be standing somewhere, an old, old man, with a younger one at his side; the younger one has Isley's face. Horses' feet again! Ah, God! Nemesis once more in troopers' uniform!

\* \* \* \* \*

The fossicker falls on his knees in the mud and clay at the bottom of the drive, and prays Heaven to take his last child ere Nemesis again comes attired as of old.

#### **Chapter IV. — "Tom the Devil."**

Tom Hopkins' profile, at least from one side, certainly did recall that of the sarcastic Mephistopheles, but the other side of his face, like his true character, was by no means devilish. His physiognomy had been much damaged, and one eye removed by a blast in some old Ballarat mine. The blind eye was covered with a green patch, which gave a sardonic appearance to the remaining features. He was a stupid and heavy, but good-natured Englishman. He stuttered a little, and had a peculiar habit of wedging the monosyllable "why" into his conversation at times when it served no other purpose than to fill up the pauses caused by his stuttering; but this by no means assisted him in his speech, for he often stuttered over the "why" itself. This peculiarity gave a flavour of originality and humour to Tom's utterances.

The sun was low, and its yellow rays reached far up among the saplings of Golden Gully, when the lumbering Tom came down by the path that ran under the western hill. He was dressed in cotton shirt, moleskin trousers, faded hat and waistcoat and blucher boots. He carried a pick over his shoulder, the handle of which was run through the heft of a short shovel that hung down behind, and he had a big dish under his arm. He paused opposite the windlassed shaft and hailed the boy —

“See — why — here, Isley!”

“What is it, Tom?”

“I seed a young — why — magpie up in the scrub, and yer oughter be able to catch it.”

“Can't leave the shaft; father's b'low.”

“How did yer father know there was any — why — wash in the old shaft?”

“See'd old Corney in town Saturday, 'n he said thur was enough to make it worth while balin' out. Bin balin' all the mornin'.”

Tom came over, and letting his tools down with a clatter, he hitched up the knees of his moleskins and sat down on one heel.

“What are yer — why — doin' on the slate, Isley?” said he, taking out an old clay pipe and lighting it.

“Sums,” said Isley.

Tom puffed away at his pipe a moment.

“Taint no use,” he said, sitting down on the clay and drawing his knees up. “Edication's a failyer.”

“Listen at 'im!” exclaimed the boy; “d'yer mean ter say it ain't no use learnin' readin' and writin' and sums?”

“Isley!”

“Right, father.”

The boy went to the windlass and let the bucket down. Tom offered to assist him, but Isley, proud of his strength, insisted on winding by himself.

“You'll be a strong — why — man some day, Isley,” said Tom, landing the bucket.

“Oh, I could wind up a lot more'n father puts in. Look how I greased the handles! It works like butter now,” and the boy sent the handle spinning round with a jerk to illustrate his meaning.

“What did they call you ‘Isley’ for?” queried Tom, as they resumed their seats; “it ain't yer real name, is it?”

“No; my name's Harry. A digger used to say I was an isle in the ocean to father 'n mother, 'n then I was nick-named Isle 'n then Isley.”

“You hed a — why — brother once, didn't yer?”

“Yes; but that was afore I was borned. He died, at least mother used to say she didn't know if he was dead; but father says he's dead as fur's he's concerned.”

“And yer father hed a brother, too. Did yer ever — why — hear of him?”

“Yes, I heard father talkin' about it wonst to mother. I think father's brother got into some trouble over a squabble in a bar where a man was killed.”

“And was yer — why — father — why — fond of him?”

“I heered father say that he was wonst, but thet was all past.”

Tom smoked in silence for a while, and seemed to look at some dark clouds that were drifting along like a funeral out in the west. Presently he said half aloud something that sounded like “All, all — why — past!”

“Aye?” said Isley.

“Oh, it's — why, why — nothin',” answered Tom, rousing himself “Is that a paper in your father's coat-pocket, Isley?”

“Yes,” said the boy, taking it out.

Tom took the paper and stared hard at it for a moment or so.

“There's somethin' about edication there,” said Tom, putting his finger on a tailor's advertisement. “I wish you'd — why — read it to me, Isley — I can't see the small print they uses nowadays.”

“No, thet's not it,” said the boy, taking the paper; “it's something about — ”

“Isley!”

“Old on, Tom, father wants me.”

The boy ran to the shaft, and resting his hands and forehead against the bole of the windlass, he leant over to hear what his father was saying.

Without a moment's warning the treacherous bole slipped round, a small body bounded a couple of times against the sides of the shaft, and fell into the well-hole at Mason's feet, where it lay motionless!

Heaven had listened to the fossicker's prayer. Nemesis could come now.

## **Chapter V. — “He Never Knowed.”**

“Mason! — Jim!”

“Aye?”

“Put him in the bucket and lash him to the rope with your belt!”

A few moments, and —

“Now, Tom!”

Tom's trembling hands would scarcely grasp the handle, but he managed to wind somehow.

Presently the form of the child appeared, motionless, covered with clay and water, while Mason, climbing up by the steps in the side of the shaft, slowly neared the light.

Tom tenderly unlashed the boy and laid him under the saplings on the grass. He then wiped some of the clay and blood away from the child's

forehead, and dashed over him some clay-coloured water.

Presently Isley gave a gasp and opened his eyes.

“Are yer — why — hurt much, Isley?” asked Tom.

“Ba-back's bruk, Tom.”

“Not so bad as that, old man.”

“Where's father?”

“Coming up.”

Silence awhile, and then —

“Father! father! Be quick, father!” Mason reached the surface and came and knelt by the other side of the boy.

“I'll, I'll — why — run for some — why — brandy,” said Tom.

“No use, Tom,” said Isley, “I'm all bruk up.”

“Don't yer feel better, sonny?”

“No — I'm — goin' to — die, Tom.”

“Don't say it, Isley,” groaned Tom.

A short silence, and then the boy's body suddenly twisted with pain. But it was soon over. He lay still awhile. and then said quietly — “Good-bye, Tom!”

Tom made a vain attempt to speak. “Isley,” he said, “I — ”

But the child turned and stretched out his hands to the silent, stony-faced man on the other side.

“Father — father, I'm — goin'!”

A shuddering groan broke from Mason's lips, and then all was quiet.

Tom had taken off his hat to wipe his forehead, and his face, in spite of its disfigurement, was strangely like the face of the moody man opposite.

For a moment they looked at one another across the body of the child, and then Tom said quietly —

“He never knowed.”

“What does it matter?” said Mason, gruffly; and taking the dead child in his arms, he walked towards the hut.

## Chapter VI.

It was a sad group that gathered outside Mason's hut next day. The wife of Martin, the store-keeper, had been there all the morning, and one of the women had used up her husband's white shirts in making a shroud.

One after another the fossickers took off their hats and entered, stooping through the low door. Mason sat silently at the foot of the bunk, his head supported by his hand, and watched the men with a strange, abstracted air.

“Tom the Devil” had ransacked the camp in search of some boards for a coffin. “It will be the last I'll be able to — why — do for him,” he said.

At last he came to Mrs. Martin. That lady took him into the dining-room, and pointed to a large white table, of which she had been very

proud.

“Knock it to pieces,” she said, taking off the few things that lay upon it. Tom turned it over and began taking the top off.

When he had finished the coffin a fossicker's wife said it looked too bare, and she ripped up her black riding-skirt and made Tom tack the cloth over the coffin.

There was only one vehicle available as a hearse, and that was Martin's old dray; so about two o'clock Pat Martin attached his old horse, Dublin, to the shafts with sundry bits of harness and plenty of old rope, and dragged Dublin, dray and all, across to Mason's hut.

The little coffin was carried out, and two brandy-cases were placed by its side in the dray to serve as seats for Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Grimshaw, who mounted in tearful silence.

Pat Martin lit his pipe and mounted on the shafts. Mason fastened up the door with a padlock. A couple of blows on one of his sharp points roused Dublin from his reverie; with a lurch to the right and another to the left he started, and presently the little funeral disappeared down the road that led to the “town” and its cemetery.

## **Chapter VII. — “Father, Do you Want Another Mate?”**

About six months afterwards Tom Hopkins went on a short journey, and returned in company with a tall, bearded young man. He and Tom arrived after dark and went straight to Mason's hut. There was a light inside, but when Tom knocked there was no answer.

“Go in; don't be afraid,” he said to his companion.

The stranger pushed open the creaking door and stood bare-headed just inside the doorway.

A billy was boiling unheeded on the fire. Mason sat at the table with his face buried in his arms.

“Mr. Mason!”

There was no answer, but the flickering of the firelight made the stranger think he could detect an impatient shrug in Mason's shoulders.

For a moment the stranger paused irresolute, and then, stepping up to the table, he laid his hand on Mason's arm, and said, gently —

“Father, do you want another mate?”

But the sleeper did not — at least, not in this world.

## **M'Gillviray's Dream.**

### **A Forest-Ranger's Story.**

#### **Thomas Bracken**

JUST nineteen long years, Jack, have passed o'er my shoulders  
    Since close to this spot we lay waiting the foe;  
Ay, here is the mound where brave Percival moulders,  
    And yonder's the place where poor Norman lies low;  
'Twas only a skirmish — just eight of our number  
    Were stretch'd on the sward when the fighting was done;  
We scooped out their beds, and we left them to slumber,  
    The bold-hearted fellows went down with the sun.  
The month was October — young Summer was peeping  
    Through evergreen forests where Spring, still supreme,  
Spread all the rich tints that she had in her keeping  
    On tree, shrub, and bush, while each brooklet and stream  
With babblings of joy ran along to the river —  
    But, hang it, old man, I am going too far;  
I talk as I used to when from Cupid's quiver  
    Flew darts of affection my bosom to scar.  
I'm not much at poetry, Jack, though I've written  
    Some nonsense in verse when my heart was aglow  
With what they call love — have you ever been smitten  
    By some artful minx who deceived you? What, no?  
By Jove, you've been lucky; but, Jack, I'm digressing.  
    Our quarters were here, under Lusk, and we made  
Our camp in the church without asking a blessing;  
    This place is still known as the Mauku Stockade.<sup>1</sup>  
I'd fought with Von Tempsky along the Waikato;  
    I'd seen the green banks of that fair river dyed  
With British blood, red as the plumes of the rata  
    When Spring scatters scarlet drops thick in her pride.  
I cared not for danger, and fighting was pleasure,  
    The life of a Ranger was one of romance —  
A dare-devil fool ever ready to measure

A savage's length with my rifle. 'Twas chance  
That sent me among them; I lived but for glory;  
My comrades were all of good mettle and true,  
And one was a hero; I'll tell you his story —  
God rest poor M'Gillviray — brave-hearted Hugh!  
I knew him for years, Jack, and shoulder to shoulder  
He stood by me often when swift leaden hail  
Whizzed close to our ears. Ah! old man, I was bolder  
In those valiant days than I'm now. To my tale: —

The morning was gloomy, and Hugh sat beside me;  
We'd chumm'd in together for two years or more;  
I found him a brick, and he said when he tried me  
In front of the foe, "Dick, you're true to the core!"  
Enough — we were friends, and in trouble or danger  
We stuck by each other in camp and in fray.  
How often we find in the breast of a stranger  
The heart of a kind brother throbbing away  
With warmest affection, responsive and tender —  
Hugh's breast had a tenant like this, and I knew  
In him I'd a brother, a friend, a defender,  
Prepared for whatever a brave man might do.  
The morning was dark, and the outlook was dreary;  
I noticed my comrade was sitting alone,  
All thoughtful, disconsolate, pallid, and weary,  
"Why, where has the gladness of yesterday flown?  
Come, tell me, Hugh, why you are gloomy this morning;  
What change has come over my light-hearted mate?  
You've not" (and I laughed) "had a Banshee's death-warning,  
Have Brownies or Goblins been sealing your fate?"  
He turned his pale face, while his eyes, full of sorrow,  
Met mine, and it seemed like the gaze of the dead;  
I spoke once again: "Hugh, we'll meet them to-morrow,  
Fierce Rewi is coming this way." Then he said —

"Why am I sad? Ah, comrade kind,  
We cannot tell why shadows fall  
Across the soul and o'er the mind;  
We cannot tell why dreams recall  
Old scenes endeared by mem'ry's spell,  
Old haunts where love and sorrow met,  
Old spots where airy castles fell,  
And Hope's young sun for ever set;  
We cannot tell why thought should leap

Across the ocean's wide expanse,  
And through the telescope of sleep  
Review the dead years at a glance;  
We cannot tell—— But why should I  
Philosophize? We know we're here,  
And for the wherefore and the why,  
That problem suits the sage and seer,  
But not the soldier. Listen, mate —  
I'm not a coward, for I've stood  
Full face to face with death, and fate  
Has led me safe through scenes of blood;  
But now my hour is drawing nigh,  
Life's battle now is nearly done,  
For me to-morrow's arching sky  
Shall canopy no rising sun.”  
“Why, comrade, you but jest,” I said;  
“You shouldn't joke with me, you know;  
To-morrow's sun shall shine o'erhead,  
And see us watching for the foe.”

“Nay, comrade, we must part to-day,  
A hand has beckon'd through the gloom,  
And signalled me away, away  
To brighter realms beyond the tomb;  
You smile and count me as a slave  
Of superstition — be it so;  
My vision stretches o'er the grave;  
I travel where you cannot go.  
Ah! friend, you were not nursed beneath  
The Highland hills, where every glen  
Is filled with those who've conquered death —  
Is tenanted with ghosts of men.  
Ah! friend, your feet have never trod  
The mighty Bens, whose summits grim  
Approach the starry gates of God,  
Where heaven grows bright and earth grows dim.  
The legendary lore that clings  
Round Highland hearts you have not felt,  
Nor yet the weird imaginings  
Which stir the spirit of the Celt.  
Well, hear my story — listen, pray,  
And I'll explain why I am sad  
And in a downcast mood to-day.  
You smile again and deem me mad —

Last night I was again a boy  
    Light-hearted 'mong my native hills,  
Filled with a bright, ecstatic joy,  
    And pure as my own mountain rills;  
I stood beneath old Monagh Leagh,<sup>2</sup>  
    Nor far from rugged Dumnaglass,  
And in the distance I could see  
    Wild Farracagh's romantic Pass;  
A monarch proud, a youthful king,  
    Alone with nature there I stood,  
At peace with God and everything,  
    For all His works seemed fair and good;  
But best and fairest of them all  
    Was she who came to meet me there, —  
I little thought dreams could recall  
    Those silken waves of sunny hair,  
That tender smile, those eyes of blue,  
    The magic of whose flashing glance  
Inflamed my soul with love, and threw  
    A glamour round me, — joyous trance!  
We met last night just as of old,  
    And Elsie nestled by my side,  
While playing with each tress of gold  
    I whispered, 'Lassie, be my bride.'  
The sweet soft answer came — why dwell  
    On that dear moment of delight?  
Our heaven was in that Highland dell,  
    Where all seemed beautiful and bright.  
We parted, and my dreaming soul  
    On Fancy's pinions forward flew  
O'er five short years, and reached the goal  
    That love and hope had kept in view.  
Oh, joyous day! a merry throng  
    Were gathered on the Clachan green;  
The villagers, with dance and song,  
    Held jubilee; that happy scene  
Is treasured in my memory still.  
    I hold again that little hand;  
I hear the whispered word, 'I will!'  
    I lead her through that cheerful band,  
While Donald Beg,<sup>3</sup> and Fergus Mohr,<sup>4</sup>  
    And Angus Dhu<sup>5</sup> — the pipers three —  
Strike up, while marching on before,  
    The pibroch of M'Gillviray.

Oh! how the wild notes brought a flood  
Of mem'ries bright and glories gone,  
When, for the Royal Stuart blood.

Our chief led great Clan Chattan<sup>6</sup> on  
To famed Culloden's field: — 'Tis past,  
That marriage scene with all its charms  
And winter comes with freezing blast,  
To find my young wife in my arms,  
And all the villagers in tears

Assembled round us — she was gone;  
The prize was mine a few short years,  
And I was now alone, alone.

Oh! what had I to live for then?

One clasp, one look, one fond caress,  
And flying far from each proud Ben,  
With sorrow deep as dark Loch Ness,  
I left my humble Highland home,

To gaze on Monagh Leagh no more.  
With blighted heart I crossed the foam  
And landed on New Zealand's shore;  
You know the rest——”

“But what has all  
This home-sick dreaming got to do  
With death, my friend?”

“I've got a call  
To meet my Elsie.”

“Nonsense, Hugh!”  
I laughed, but still his brow was sad;  
“Cheer up and chase this gloom away,  
There's pleasure yet in life, my lad.”

“I tell you we must part to-day;  
I have not told you all that passed  
Before me in my dreaming hours.

This day, with you, shall be my last.  
True friendship, Dick, has long been ours.  
And we must part in love, my friend, —  
You smile again — well, time will prove  
My premonition true; — The end  
Is drawing nigh; — Behold my love,  
My life, my Elsie, on you hill, —  
Ay, yonder hill is Monagh Leagh —  
Just listen, friend, she's calling still,  
And still the dear one beckons me

Away — the sun upon the peaks  
 Is blushing crimson o'er the snow.  
 Behold! how bright its rays and streaks  
 Are dancing on Loch Ness below;  
 Rich violet and purple clouds  
 A tabernacle form on high,  
 Behind whose folds the starry crowds  
 Lie hidden in the silent sky —  
 'Tis there, 'tis there, the same fond face,  
 Which, but a few short hours ago,  
 Pressed close to mine; just in this place  
 My Elsie stood, and, bending low,  
 She whispered in an icy breath,  
 'Oh! Hugh, behold thy spirit-bride.  
 I'm here for thee; prepare for death.  
 Thy soul to-morrow, by my side,  
 Shall trace the scenes we loved of yore.  
 Again, my Hugh, my husband brave,  
 We'll watch the Highland eagle soar;  
 We'll see the heath and bracken wave.  
 Ah! Hugh, the spirit-sight is keen;  
 We cross the ocean with a glance;  
 We know not time — ' She left the scene,  
 And I awakened from my trance;  
 But let us change the subject, mate;  
 Let's have a smoke; — Hark! there's a shot —  
 One, two, three, four! we mustn't wait —  
 Where are our rifles? Ah! we've got  
 The darkies now. See, see, they dance  
 Before our eyes; hear how they yell!  
 There goes the order for advance —  
 There's Norman out and Percival."

M'Gillviray ceased, and we ran to the door,  
 Prepared to advance where our officers led;  
 Both Hill and O'Beirne were well to the fore,  
 While Norman and Percival rushed on ahead.  
 Flash! flash! went our rifles; we followed their track,  
 And in through a gap in the timber we broke;  
 We loaded again, and they answered us back —  
 The rebels, I mean — as they plunged through the smoke.  
 "Now, back to the camp, lads; we've scattered the swine;  
 They've tasted enough of our metal to-day!"  
 Twas Percival spoke, and we fell into line,

And back through the break in the bush took our way.  
 We reached but the centre, when out from the bush  
 That skirted each side with its branches and logs  
 The Maoris in crowds, with a yell and a rush,  
 Encompassed us: — “Boys, give the treacherous dogs  
 A taste of our true British pluck!” — a wild cry,  
 As a tomahawk's stroke cut the sentence in twain,  
 Went in through the woodlands and up to the sky,  
 And Percival lay in the front of the slain.  
 Oh, God! in my ears still rings yell after yell.  
 I see the bright tomahawks dripping with blood;  
 The wild demons looked as if painted in hell;  
 They leaped through the thicket and burst from the wood.  
 Outflanked and outnumbered, our officers dead,  
 A handful of men in the grasp of the foe,  
 What could we have done in such stress? so we fled  
 When Norman and Wheeler and Hill were laid low.  
 We reached the old church, but the savages stay'd  
 To butcher the wounded and mangle the slain;  
 They vanished ere night in the forest's dark shade,  
 To steer their canoes o'er Waikato again.  
 At daybreak we went to the scene of the fray,  
 To bury our comrades and bid them adieu,  
 And near a small mound where five savages lay  
 We found brave M'Gillviray sleeping there too.  
 Five warrior chiefs proved the work he had done;  
 They fell by his hand ere his soul went to God;  
 He smiled in the face of the bright morning sun  
 That shone on the purple streaks o'er the green sod.  
 I planted a wattle to mark where he sleeps —  
 I wonder where is it? — Ah, there stands the tree!  
 By Jove, it's in blossom, too! See how it weeps  
 Rich tears of bright gold o'er the hillock where he  
 Is resting in peace. Is he dreaming there still  
 Of Elsie, his bride, and his dear Highland glen?  
 This life is a puzzle, Jack; fight as we will,  
 We're nothing at last but the shadows of men.  
 The substance soon blends with the blossoms and weeds  
 That spring to the surface; and as for the soul.  
 Perhaps it may flourish or fade in its deeds,  
 Or find in some other bright planet its goal.

1 On October 23rd, 1863, a skirmish took place at Mauku Stockade, in  
 which the subject of this poem and seven others were killed.

2 The grey mountain.

3 Little Donald.

4 Big Fergus.

5 Black Angus.

6 A M'Gillviray led the Clan Macintosh, or Clan Chattan, at Culloden.

## Peter and Paul.

Anon.

“Peter Lovell and his partner, Paul, worked together at the Inglewood (Vic.) diggings, through good luck and bad luck, for over twenty-five years. They were familiarly known as ‘Peter and Paul.’ Peter died lately, and Paul was beside him to the last.” — *Daily paper*.

The soul of the miner, Peter,  
Went out in the solemn night  
On a pathway of mystic starshine  
To the city of Crystal Light.

The gleam of its gates of glory  
Shone over the deeps of space,  
Beside them, Peter, the sainted,  
Sat keeping the keys of grace.

“Thy name?” said Peter the sainted.  
“Your own.” He unlocked the gate.  
“Enter!” the saint said, smiling,  
“Your way through the world was straight.”

But the soul of the miner, Peter,  
Still stayed in the outer space,  
Nor moved; then Peter, the sainted,  
Threw open the gates of grace.

A flood of immortal splendour  
Through the open portals passed,  
With the sound of a mighty music,  
Like the rush of a rising blast.

And the soul of the miner, Peter,  
Saw a vision great and fair  
Of golden thrones, and amidst them  
A high throne vacant there.

“Go up!” said the Great Gatekeeper,  
“And take thy appointed place”  
And a smile of beautiful meaning  
Shone over his blessed face.

But the soul of the miner, Peter,  
Moved not from the outer gate;  
Then the good old saint said, mildly  
“Dear brother, why do you wait;

And the miner's soul made answer:  
“I will go in never at all —  
Unless you'll promise when *he* comes  
To let in my old mate Paul!”

## At Sandy Crossing.

**J. M. Marsh**

There, below the river's elbow, where the faint and grass-grown track  
Winds across the bloodwood level, stands the charred and lonely wrack.  
Blackened uprights, 'mid the tall grass, like a gibbet grim and sere,  
Loom above the verdure's tangle in the sunset's paling glare;  
Yonder, by the white ants' clay-pile, where the sapling grove is dense,  
Past the ruined stockyard's sliprail, by the crumbling dog-leg fence,  
Shrouded by the wild vine-creepers, in the gum-trees' scented shade,  
Levelled by the many rainfalls, many bushmen's beds are made.

Swift the filing years have flitted o'er the stage of hoary time  
Since the house of "Sandy Crossing" flourished in its baleful prime;  
Ere the fitful tide of traffic, with its changeful ebb and flow,  
Left it bare and custom-stranded seven fleeting years ago.  
Now the prowling fearsome dingo howls his monody of woe,  
And the hooting mopehawk answers when the moon is very low —  
Like to sprites of evil omen o'er the forest harpy's lair,  
For the blood of many victims ever cries for vengeance there.

Here, the half-demented shepherd perished in his maudlin craze;  
Here, the blatant horsey shearer saw his final drinking days;  
Here, the stalwart strong-lunged teamster passed his spirit-reeking  
breath;  
Here, "Old Bill," the hurdle-maker, died the "horrors'" fiery death.  
"Pat the Mailman's" whitened relics here have found a lasting bed —  
Many a nameless wearied traveller resteth here his fevered head;  
But amongst the shanty's victims, fell mortality may claim  
One who died as dies a hero, though we never knew his name.

But two letters rudely carved on the gum-tree at his head  
By the hand of silent friendship as we scooped his sandy bed!  
From the eyes unused to weeping fell the big unbidden tear,  
As we lowered him in his blanket from the rustic sapling bier.  
Only known as "German Charlie," stalwart, comely, in his prime;  
Only known his native land was somewhere by the fruitful Rhine;

Only heard his Swabian accents wrestling with our English tongue,  
As he shouted, "I vill go, boys!" and in the current sprung —  
How with bated breath we watched him breast the rushing river's  
strength —

One short minute seeming drawn out to an hour's tedious length —

Caught within the swirling eddies, struggling in the flood-wrecks' toils;  
Dashed against the polished boulders where the racing water boils;  
By the whirling muddied waters, like a bubble plaything flung  
To the almost submerged ti-tree where the drowning woman clung.  
How our ringing plaudits nerved him in his hampered backward flight  
Ere the rapid rushing river took him downward in its might!

Yet 'twas only for a woman, she a pioneer of Shame —  
Reft of all her sex's glories, nothing left her but the name —  
Outcast of the Seaside City, tracking up the venturous band  
Drawn by Fortune's tinselled glister to the golden Northern land;  
But he only saw her clinging to the tea-tree's fragile limb,  
Only heard her shrieks appealing; and it mattered not to him  
Whether tawdry Vice's helot, vestal maid, or model wife —  
'Twas to save a drowning woman, and he gave his gallant life.

Ah! the ruck of fortune-seekers, pressing onward day by day,  
Think not of their fallen brothers' lonely graves beside the way.  
Selfish progress, ever motive, as the season-marching year,  
Rushes forward, little recking of its martyrs lying here.  
Here is one for whom some maiden, sick with hope deferred, may pine  
In some vine-surrounded cottage by the fruitful river Rhine.  
Rest thee, nameless, gallant spirit, in thy quiet sandy grave;  
Be thy memory held immortal with the great forgotten brave!

Here we stood in silent sorrow, as we laid our comrade down —  
Five were youthful, lusty fellows; one was bearded, tall, and brown,  
Strong in hope — the digger's lode-star — heedless of the weary miles.  
Fearless chasing Fortune's footsteps for her golden syren smiles.  
One lies on a virgin sandridge, by the Mitchell's spacious flood;  
Two have gone, their lives the payment for the slaughtered natives'  
blood;  
Gone are two, by thirst and fever of the deathly tropic zone;  
Here am I, the drifting remnant, standing by this grave — alone!

## **Mr. and Mrs. Sin Fat.**

### **Edward Dyson**

MR. SIN FAT arrived in Australia in the year of grace 1870, a poor and friendless man. He entered the great city of Melbourne, a stranger in a strange country, possessed only of a blue dungaree suit that had served him long and faithfully in his distant home, ninepence in coppers, and as much of his fatherland spread over his surface, and deposited in the cracks and crannies of his gaunt person, as he could conveniently carry.

Sin Fat was not tall and athletic, nor fair to look upon — in truth, he was stunted, and as plain of face as the pottery gods that he had learned to revere at his good mother's knee. His complexion was so distraught by an uncongenial climate that it possessed less bloom and beauty than the inside of a sun-dried lambskin; his features were turned and twisted and pulled awry till they resembled excrescences and indentations on a pie-melon, and his lank, lean limbs were mute evidence of a life of privation and toil. In point of fact, Sin Fat was so ungainly and so sparing of personal attractions at this period of his existence, that his homely visage soon became the theme of popular comment, and “ugly as Sin” is an aphorism which will survive as long as the English language is spoken.

The humble immigrant paid no poll-tax; he was a duly certified subject of Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, towards whose throne and person he possessed an ardent Freetrade affection, as he told the Customs officer, in mutilated English and accents tremulous and low. For Sin was by nature bashful and conciliatory, his tones were unctuous, and his humble carriage excited the derision of a distempered and woe-worn dog which had its habitat amongst the lumber on the wharf — a vagrant, craven mongrel, that lived in a perpetual state of cringe, yet which assumed something of dignity in the presence of a still meaner creature, and boldly pursued Sin Fat as he ambled away, and assailed him in the rearmost parts of his frame. But the lowly foreigner continued on his road with downcast eyes and an expression of religious meekness, till, as if guided by instinct or the power of affinity, he slunk into that nest of pestilence between Little Bourke and Lonsdale streets, and was lost amongst the hordes which there do congregate.

Fifteen years ago the Chinese camp at Ballarat East was a large and

populous suburb. Thousands of prosperous, but unkempt and wasted, disciples of Confucius lodged in a nest of tottering, vermin-ravaged, smoke-begrimed hovels, of which no independent hog would accept a protracted tenure. The area extending from the main road to back beyond the old Llanberris was almost covered with the broken-backed tenements of squalid, immoral heathens, who followed various light and remunerative callings — peddling tea, gimcrack fancy-goods and moonstruck fish; fossicking on the Yarrowee and Black Hill flats; or prowling round with a pair of shabby baskets strung on a stick, collecting rags, bones and bottles, or any movable items of intrinsic value which could be reached through the fence when the proprietor's attention was otherwise engaged, and each and all supplementing their income by deeply-planned nocturnal raids on distant poultry-yards, fruit-farms, wood-heaps, or sluice-boxes. A couple of serpentine streets, inhabited by grimy pagans, still remain, but the majority of the Chows have migrated to other diggings — some have returned to the homes of their childhood, and some have gone to heaven. The staggering shanties which still remain are a good sample of the sties that littered the flat in '73; decrepid dens, reaching away in all directions for something to lean against, indented on one side, bulged on the other — compiled of logs, stones, palings, flattened tins and battered pans, and roofed with sugar-mats. The common Chinaman glories in these little snuggeries. When by some chance he becomes possessed of a home with a respectable exterior he straightway hews a hole in the roof, boards up the windows with borrowed planks, and disfigures the front with scraps of tin and old battens; whether in accordance with a perverted taste, or out of a guileful desire to mislead the tax-assessor, is beyond Caucasian comprehension.

It was evening, after a day hot enough to blister the ear of an elephant. Sin Fat's work was done, and he jogged homewards along a little side-street in Ballarat East. He bore the orthodox Chinese baskets, a pair which had evidently been in active business for some considerable time, and, judging from the hooked stick in his hand, and the grateful aroma of old bones and such things which clung to him like a brother, Sin was following the calling of a "Rag John." S. Fat, as we now see him with the eye of faith, is physically much improved since he landed in Australia; he does not appear to have missed meals so regularly of late, and his predatory success has lent him an air of confidence and self-esteem, though he smiles with his old deference and still clings with superstitious awe to the dirt of his fatherland, now cemented by grit of Australian origin.

Our hero has disposed of his day's collection of rags and rottenness, gleaned from the gutters and rubbish-heaps of the city, at a local marine-store, and he now hies him to his humble home and merited repose. But he is not lost to a sense of duty; his ever-watchful eye is open to detect an

opportunity, however trifling, of increasing his diurnal income, and when he espies a goose, obese and matronly, making frantic endeavours to squeeze her portly form through a small aperture in a fowl-house behind a private residence, his soul is instantly fired with a desire to possess her — to call her his own, if only for a few hours.

Sin is a man of action; dropping his baskets, and casting aside all reserve, he enters the yard and in a moment the well-conditioned bird is in his power. Tucking her under his arm, and stifling her noisy clamours, he turns to vacate the premises; but, alas for his circumspection, the door of the residence opens, and a fat woman, with a baby dangling over one arm, comes out to swear at a neighbour's boy who is throwing stones at a cat on her roof. She has not noticed the enterprising Mongol, but "he who hesitates is lost," and Sin's native wit serves him well. Advancing boldly to the stout female, smiling obsequiously the while, and covering the brands and birth-marks of the goose with his jerkin, he blandly queries:

"Buy em goose, missee? Welly good, welly fat."

"Naw!" snaps the woman, eyeing him suspiciously.

"Muchee fine goose, welly fat!" persists Sin, coyly smiling.

"Don't want it; go away!"

"All li; some odder day, eh?" So Sin retreats, still smiling, and as he trots on his way congratulates himself, gibbering aloud in his rapture.

Sin had a bijou villa, built in his spare time from plans and specifications of his own designing, and composed of old palings gleaned from neighbouring fences on moonless nights, and multitudinous other scraps and patches which were within the reach of a poor Chinese. The residence was a very comfortable one for summer wear; it had openings to catch the breeze from every point of the compass, and if the rain did come in at the roof — well, it ran out at the sides again. Standing at the front door, one commanded an excellent view of a creek, embedded in whose thick yellow clay lay the decomposing remains of many domestic fauna. The house was within two minutes' walk of a fantan-table and a Joss-house; it abutted on a stagnant pool, and received the balmy westerly breeze as it bounced off a candle-factory. Our hero was content with these few advantages for the time being, but, by steady industry and frugality, he hoped one day to run a gambling-hell of his own, and move in the best Celestial society in imported wooden boots. Sin was ambitious.

Sin Fat parted with his feathered prize to an epicurean fellow-countryman at a high figure before he reached his humble home. He knew that, had he not done so, Mrs. Sin Fat would have seized the earliest opportunity of converting the bird into square gin. Mrs. Fat was possessed of a deplorable habit of thus transmuting all kinds of personal property into liquor, in consequence of which it was part of her

industrious husband's policy to carefully place all articles readily saleable beyond her reach.

It was dark before Mr. Fat reached his own roof-tree. He groped his way into the parlour, which was also kitchen, bedroom, drawing-room, and outhouse, and lit a candle (candles were another of Mrs. Fat's extravagances). The glare awoke a woman who was sleeping, sprawling amongst a few filthy rags on a low bunk at one end of the hut. She lifted herself on her hands, and gazed at the Chinaman with stupid, drunken eyes. A great shock of unkempt black hair fell about her sallow face, which, despite the ravages of drink, and that faint, strange Mongolian look which surely comes to the woman who consorts with Chinamen, still possessed something of beauty. Under earlier and more favourable circumstances, her eyes had been full, dark, and luminous. Her features were well cut, the nose somewhat aquiline, the mouth large and sensual. A visage surly, with the temper of fifty devils — a woman abandoned to the filth and utter loathsomeness of a Chinese camp. About thirty-four years of age, tall, round, with the unnatural obesity of a heavy drinker, intensely hating all about her — aye, and hating herself worse than all as she wallowed in the very dregs and slime of the social system — such was Mrs. Sin Fat.

“Home again, sweetheart!” she muttered; “home again to your true-love, my tall, beautiful — Bah, you ugly thief! Get out or I'll brain you!” And a list of profane ejaculations was smothered as she fell with her face amongst the rags once more, clutching vacantly for the empty bottle wherewith to deprive her husband of the contents of his head.

This was Sin's only weakness — this she-frend from whose bursts of passion he had often to fly for his life. He had found her one cold wet night, stretched in the mud at the door of his hovel, and had taken her in. She was haggard, ragged, and so fearfully emaciated that the men turned from her with wry expressions, and this seemed her last chance. She and Sin Fat “got married.” She was possessed of one husband already, a portly Melbourne mechanic, but she had left him and her child years before — left him because he was a “fat old fool,” an opinion based on the fact that he did not kick her down and jump on her with his working boots when she flew into a tantrum. Other men had done this since, and she respected them. Sin fed her up, dressed her well, and then she left him, only to return again, worn with debauchery, to be dressed and fed, and to “clear” once more. She repeated this several times, and her dutiful lord always received her with open arms; but at length an idea occurred to Sin: he refused to provide fine clothes, and then she stayed with him, and made merry by occasionally cracking his head with a gin-bottle — an empty bottle, of course, for she would rather that her dear lord should escape correction altogether than waste a “nobbler” of her favourite nectar. Sin bore his cross patiently, but it was not affection

entirely which restrained him from dropping something unhealthy into her gin. We have said that he was ambitious; he had many plans, and this woman could dress well and ape the lady. He foresaw the time when she would be useful to him.

Sin had no intention of remaining a toiler and moiler all his life. He had done well in the rag-and-bone business, but it was laborious, and our hero had gentlemanly instincts — he wanted to acquire riches and fatty tissue without expending any more of the sweat of his brow than was absolutely necessary, and he but waited to increase his available capital before embarking in business. By a dispensation of Providence, the fulfilment of his laudable ambition was brought about earlier than he expected.

Midnight. The white moon floated low in the eastern sky, and thrust her sheeny beams like sword-blades through the crazy walls of Sin Fat's home. A tall, willowy cat, with swan-like neck and attenuated frame, bestrode the ridge-pole, and stood black against the pallid orb of night, and lifting up her voice recited her woes to the listening spheres in accents wild and weird. All else was still. The camp lay like a cluster of islands in a lake of light. Sin's sleep was calm and childlike, and his wife had ceased to toss and breathe half-uttered curses in his deaf ear. The moon rose higher and higher, and the long black shadows slowly folded towards their base. Suddenly and stealthily the ground opened like a yawning giant; Sin Fat's villa trembled, tottered, and sank quietly into the black abyss, and where it had stood gaped a deep dark pit — and a dusty cat with a broken tail, a bunged eye and a coat of many colours, tearing madly across the battery sands, seemed to be the only creature that quite realised the extent of the catastrophe. The Chinese camp at Ballarat is situated chiefly on "old ground;" it has been worked so thoroughly that sections of the earth's crust often settle down abruptly into the caverns below, accompanied by sundry Mongolian residences, to the exceeding discomfort of their greasy inhabitants.

At break of day the squalid denizens of the camp gathered about the chasm, at the bottom of which lay Mr. and Mrs. Sin Fat buried in the ruins. The Chows appointed a chairman, and discussed the situation with characteristic clamour and gesticulation, finally resolving by a large majority to call in white men to undertake the rescue. When there is work to be done which entails the probability of a broken head or the unearthing of a corpse, the Heathen Chinese is sure to have a sore hand or an important engagement at some distance. White men came, and Mr. and Mrs. Sin Fat were fossicked out of the *debris*, full of dust, old nails, and wooden splinters, but not much the worse for their premature interment. Mrs. Fat thanked her rescuers, as she was hauled up through the roof of the hut, with a few well-chosen objurgations, terminating with a heartfelt wish that they might be instantly consigned to a region where

frost and snow are unknown, and where no time need be wasted in rubbing chilblains with turpentine. Sin stood on the brink of the aperture for some time after the thoughtless herd had dispersed, dolefully surveying the fragments of his late home. His mind was made up at last — he would not build again, he would go into business.

The year 1876 A.D. Little Bourke-street, Melbourne, Sunday morning. On both sides of the narrow thorough-fare groups of sleek-looking Chinese, arrayed in imported clothes, their hands buried in their long sleeves, debating politics and theology, or more likely cavilling at the absurdly low price of “cabbagee” and “gleen pea,” the conversation occasionally eliciting a shrewd ejaculation from a dun-coloured philosopher a hundred yards off, or from a hoary, half-dressed Pagan at a third-storey window. They were a fat, comfortable-looking lot, and they aired their Sunday best on a fine Sabbath “allee same Eulopean.” In front of a smoky little shop, possessed of only one window, in which a roast fowl, beautifully browned and highly polished, hung suspended by a string, and served as a roost for half the flies in the lane, was congregated a particularly verbose and noisy crowd, attracted evidently by the brilliant conversational powers of one of their number — a short, but enormously fat, “John” who leaned in the doorway. His stoutness was phenomenal; it would not have discredited the treatment of those wily men who prepare prize hogs for agricultural shows. Layers of blubber bulged about his eyes, leaving only two conical slits for him to peer through; his cheeks sagged below his great double chin, and his mighty neck rolled almost on to his shoulders, and vibrated like jelly with every movement. But his corporation was his greatest pride — it was the envy and admiration of all his friends; it jutted out, bold and precipitous, and seemed to defy the world. This Celestial phenomenon was dressed in the very latest Chinese style; gorgeous silks of many colours bedizened his capacious person; his feet were encased in the richest stub-toed, wooden shoes, his hat was a brilliant building direct from Flowery Land, and his proud tail swept the floor. A dandy dude was he — a heavy swell from home — oily and clean, looking as if he had been well scraped and polished with a greasy rag. He was jolly, his smiles went from his ears to his toes like ripples on a lake, and succeeded each other like winks — in fact, he was brimful of a wild sort of Chinese humour. We have read that the Chinese delight in punning; this man must have been the king of Mongolian punsters, judging from the merriment his every remark was wont to receive. He was brimming with irony, sarcasm, and sparkling repartee. A white man could never grasp his witticisms; after translation they sounded much like childish nonsense but anyone who listened to him would feel confident that he was a comical dog all the same.

In compliance with a suggestion from the portly host, the Chows streamed after him through the dark, dirty “shop” into a long, low room

on the left, where were a number of tables covered with matting. Seating himself at the head of one of these, and producing the "tools," the fat man prepared to preside over the game, his small eyes twinkling keenly enough now from out of the depths of his head; and soon all were enthralled in the mysteries of fantan. The Chinaman, stoical under all other circumstances, gambles like a fiend; these men were soon worked into a delirium of excitement, but the fat Mongolian was always cool, and whilst the sums of money before the players fluctuated, his increased, steadily, surely.

A sign over the door of the little, smoky shop, translated into English, implied that Sin Fat, Chinese cook, lived and plied his trade within, and was prepared to fulfil all orders with promptitude. That sign was a bold and brazen lie. Sin Fat was no cook, and the burnished fowl which hung in the window was only a "blind" — a window-blind, so to speak — intended to beguile "him foolee white feller." Sin Fat ran a gambling-hell and something worse. Sin had attained his ambition; while making flesh he also was making money rapidly. Our hero, the poor broken Chow who had landed in the city not many years before, without a shilling or a change of raiment, had, by patient industry and steadfastness of purpose, acquired an extensive business and a quantity of capital at interest. The colonial climate agreed with him, and he had many friends. When Constable Mahoney, Sergeant Mulduckie, or Private O'Brien met him, they greeted him like a brother, they winked knowingly, dug him jocularly in the ribs, and insinuated that he was a sly dog. These zealous guardians of public property and morality had mastered the art which is necessary to every "mimber av the foorce" who would have his bank-book and little terrace in the suburbs — the art of not seeing too much.

Beyond the little shop adorned with the pendant fowl, stretched to the right and left till the back premises of the houses in the block seemed to be absorbed, were numerous small rooms — cabins, reeking with the nauseating odour of opium and pollution and Chinamen, and always clouded with smoke. There was no order, no design in the building of these cribs; big rooms had been portioned off and holes cut in partitions recklessly. You groped through the place, and might find your way, to your great surprise, into two or three filthy lanes at the back, right, or left. The curious European, on a voyage of discovery, saw in these rooms, through the clouds of choking, evil-smelling opium-fumes, debilitated Chinamen, with animalised faces, floating to hell in the midst of visions of heaven; lank, skinny coolies, Indians, and other vile Asiatics; and, worst of all, European girls, corrupt below anything else in nature, excepting only the ghouls they consorted with. Girls of sixteen, decoyed in at the front door by the sheen of silk and the jingle of gold, percolating through that terrible den, to be finally cast out amongst the slime and rottenness of the lanes — abject wrecks, with nothing of

humanity left within them, and hardly the semblance without.

Mrs. Sin Fat was well and hearty; she had fine clothes galore, and no longer thought of deserting her dear lord — perhaps because she saw that he was not now so very anxious to prevent it. A great assistance in the business was the tall, dark woman, who could “put on style;” she clung to her old love — the gin-bottle, and frequently worked up a small cyclone, an hysterical fit peculiarly her own, which militated against the prosperity of the house by suspending business for the time being. In these moments she called herself many vile and unladylike names, bit her arms, tore her hair, spat upon her lord, and spurned him with something heavy and hard, even going to the extent of hurling bottles and other dangerous projectiles at the shaven heads of the best customers. This was unpleasant, but Sin condescended to overlook it when she sallied forth in fine raiment, with a thick veil concealing half her face, to wander in the public parks and gardens, and enter into conversation with young girls who were airing babies, or reading romances in the shade. She talked with them so sweetly (one at a time always) about babies, birds, or flowers; but she was at her best when describing with poetic fervour, gorgeous dresses, all bespangled and glittering, or dwelling upon hats that were dreams of loveliness. She was always making appointments with these girls, and gradually, deftly leading them by a golden thread, she drew them into the shop of Sin Fat the cook, and the sign over the door might well have read: — “Abandon all hope ye who enter here.” Mrs. Fat was not always successful, but one success condoned for fifty failures. Sin Fat's trade was so extensive that he was enabled to give other women commissions in this line; none of them, however, succeeded so well as his wife.

Two years rolled by, and Sin Fat's business increased and multiplied in every branch. A polished fowl still hung in the little window, and the green and golden sign published the same old lie. Sin was even jollier and more rotund; he was looked up to as a Chow among Chows. His capital at interest had grown apace, and he fondly dreamed of selling out and returning home to the Flowery Land, there to buy a Celestial C.M.G.-ship, and lord it as a representative Australian. His wife by this time was a source of grave uneasiness to him; her temper had intensified, she had grown hypochondriacal, and refused for months to tout for the business. Her burst of passion were terrible to contemplate, and Sin Fat, Esq., had now attained a station so exalted that to be seen evading the wrath of a tall female armed with a poker or a bottle compromised his dignity. He felt that it was time to assert his authority.

One day Sin, as head of the firm, was overjoyed at the advent of a new victim. The decoy in this case was a loudly dressed young woman who shortly before had developed marvellous ability in that line. The new girl was aged about seventeen, tall, dark, and thin, but handsome — the spoilt

daughter of a weak parent. She had been caught with the golden cord, and the hook had been baited with her own vanity. A few hours after her advent he was seated with her in the one room of the place which had any pretensions to cleanliness and attraction. It was draped and hung about with all kinds of ridiculous, high-coloured, Chinese gew-gaws, and fairly furnished. This was the bower into which all novices were first introduced; when they left it they had received their initial lesson in the hard course of misery just entered upon. Sin was introducing this girl to her first pipe of opium — that devil's drug and Chinaman's greatest ally. The obese Confucian prattled to her in tender tones, like the jolly old gallant he was, and the girl, half-stretched upon a sort of settee, laughed and joked with the boldness of an old hand.

Suddenly the door opened, and Mrs. Sin Fat entered. She had come to inspect the strange girl for the first time. She looked wild and uncanny enough as she stepped over the threshold, but when her eyes encountered the face of the new-comer her countenance became horrifying.

“Great ——!” she whispered, supporting her shivering limbs against the door. The exclamation was not blasphemous — for a wonder — it was half a prayer, half the expression of strong inward agony. Then a fierce determination seemed to strengthen every muscle and sinew in her tall frame; she strode into the room, dashed the pipe from the girl's hands, and, seizing her by the arms with a force that made the bones crack, she said, hoarsely:

“Who are you, my fine miss? Your name? What's your name? You need not scream, Jessie Hill; you see I know you. I have watched you from a distance for years. So your tender-hearted father has let you drift this way, as he did me, by giving me too much rope! He is too kind for devils like us. You go out of this — back to your father! Do you hear me? You go now, and if you ever come here again I'll stab you to death? Remember, I swear I will watch for you, and if you come here again I will kill you on the spot! They told you you would have rich dresses, handsome admirers, pockets full of gold, didn't they? They have lied, as they lied to the miserable wretches who have gone before you. There is no finery here — nothing but filth and misery and degradation. Come here again, and I will throw your dead body into the gutter. Now, go!”

But the girl had fainted, and no wonder, for the woman gripped her like a vice, and her face was as frightful as a nightmare. Mrs. Sin Fat ran out for water; when she returned her husband had locked the outer door and placed the key in his pocket. She rushed at him in a fury, but checked herself with her hands in the air.

“That girl has got to go!” she hissed.

“No savee,” muttered Sin, putting on a bolder front than ever he had dared to do before.

“I tell you she shall go; she is my daughter, my child!”

“No savee! Stay here all a same.” And he crossed into another room. Sin had paid his agent a big commission on this girl, and was determined not to lose her. Besides, he had taken a fancy to her himself; he would rather have lost the mother than the daughter. Mrs. Sin Fat did not storm and rage but turned away with a calmness that was unnatural and presently followed Sin into the room, and came close to him, concealing one hand in the folds of her dress.

“That girl,” she said, calmly; “is she to go?”

“No, no! Go yourself — ”

These memorable words were the last ever spoken by the great, the prosperous Sin Fat. A knife flashed before his eyes, and was driven to the hilt in his side. He fell forward with only a groan, and the fall forced the heavy handle of the weapon still deeper between his ribs. Mrs. Sin Fat, coolly removing the keys from his pocket, went out, followed by a little stream of bright blood, which ran along the floor under the closed door as if to keep watch upon her, and entered the room where she had left the new girl — her own daughter, as the fates would have it. The girl was sitting gazing about her, dazed and confused.

“Here, come with me,” said the woman, seizing her roughly by the arm; “come with me, and see the delightful life you would have of it in this house!” She led the girl through the vile den, showed her all its abominations, and at last pushed her into one of the filthy alleys. “Here,” she said, “you would be thrown out in a few months' time, a degraded wretch. A fine, gay life, eh? Now go, and be a good woman if you can. So help me Heaven, if you ever come back I will kill you. Remember that, night and day!” The girl hurried away, full of horror and fear, but saved, and her mother followed her at a distance.

Sin Fat was found, and duly inquested. A verdict of murder was returned, and a warrant issued for Mrs. Sin Fat, but she was never caught. Only one man ever cast eyes on her again. A week after the murder a stoical old ferryman was working his lumbering craft across the river late one night when something struck the prow, turned slowly round, and quietly drifted with the dark waters. It was a body. It turned over after the contact with the boat, and the man saw a white bleached face in the moonlight, surrounded by a mass of black hair, which formed a sombre halo. The ferryman looked after it curiously for a time, then resumed his rowing, muttering: “Only a body! Well, I don't want t'be mixed up in no inkwests.”

# The Last Bullet.

**John Farrell**

Since the first human eyes saw the first timid stars break through heaven,  
and shine,

Surely never a man has bowed under the cross of a curse such as mine;  
They of all the dead millions of millions whose dust whirls and flees in  
the wind,

Who were born sorry heirs of the hate of a Fate that is bitter and

All whose lives pain has smitten with fire since God first set the sun to  
its course —

What have they known of woe like to mine? what of grief? of despair? of  
remorse?

O, to cancel one hour of my past! O, to shut out all thought — to forget!  
Then go forth as a leper, to die in hot wastes! Listen! Over us yet,

Her and me, in the heart of the North, hung the glamour of love at its  
height,

Joy of things unperceived of the others, holy hours of unwaning  
delight —

Joy of selfless devotion to each in each heart — joy of guiding the feet  
Of our babe, our one daughter, our May, by three summers of childhood  
made sweet.

I had dared overmuch in the battle for wealth, I had ventured alone  
Upon verdurous tracts that lay fronting the edge of a desert unknown,  
Fifty miles further out than the furthest I had chanced on a green width  
of plain,

In a time when the earth was made glad with a grey wealth of bountiful  
rain.

Fifty miles from Maconochie's Gap. They had warned me. Some three  
years gone by,

In a night when the flames of his home reddened far up the heights of the  
sky,

With a hard ragged spear through his heart, and a tomahawk-blade in his  
head,

Lay the master, in death, and his wife — ah, how better had she, too, lain dead!

Dark the tale is to tell, yet it was but a cruel resentment of wrong,  
A fierce impulse of those who were weak for revenge upon those who were strong;  
Cattle speared at the first — blacks shot down, and the blood of their babes, even, shed —  
Blood that stains the same hue as our own! It is written red blood will have red.

But an organised anger of whites swept the bush with a fury unchained,  
Till the feet of the trees had their dead, and the black murdered corpses remained  
Till the black gluttoned crows scarce could rise from the feast at the sound of a foot,  
And the far-away camps through the nights lay unlighted, and ghastly, and mute.

And the terror ran out through the tribes, and since that dismal crime had been done,  
Not a dusk stealthy savage had crossed the wide bounds of Maconochie's run.  
But the white skies, in set malediction, stared at palpitant wastes that implored  
For the wine of dry clouds that rose, mocking them. “Vengeance is Mine!” saith the Lord.

They had warned me. “Out yonder,” they said, “there's abundance of water and grass;  
You've Brown's Ranges on one side, they draw down and drain all the rain-clouds that pass;  
(We are outside the rainy belt here) but — remember the words we have said —  
If you *will* go, take plenty of arms, and be sure to take powder and lead!”

And I went, with my trustworthy helpers, and lived through a desolate year  
Of suspicions and vigils, and hunger for her of all dear ones most dear;  
But a year crowned with utmost successes, and crowned above all things in this  
That it brought her at last to my side, with the gift of a new face to kiss.

And a blessedness came with her feet, and our life was an infinite peace,  
And the prospering years shed upon us a fair meed of worldly increase;  
But a thousand times better to me than large prospect of silver and gold

Was the sumptuous love of a wife, mine for ever to have and to hold.

O, the sting of remembering *then!* O, could madness dishevel my mind  
Till I babbled of wry tangled things, looking neither before nor behind!  
But *that* memory never will sleep, and I crouch, as the first of our race,  
Not my peer in his guilt, crouched and hid from the sight of God's  
terrible face!

We had hardly been vexed by the blacks in our work, though, all through  
the first year  
And the second, we stood upon guard with the disciplined earnest of  
fear,  
But the summers and winters went by, and the wild hordes gave never a  
proof  
Of their hate, and our vigilance slept and security came to our roof.

So, unwarned, fell the night of my doom. There was smoke in the West  
through the day,  
And an hour after noontide the men had been mustered and sent to  
waylay  
In its course the quick wave that might ruin, for the high grass was  
yellow and sere  
With the withering breath of the dense sullen heat of the last of the year.

Some had rifles to shoot kangaroo; some had not; and my darlings and I  
Sat alone in the dusk near our door, with our eyes on a fringe in the sky,  
Where the light of the late-sunken sun was replaced by a wide livid glow  
Which pulsed high or grew pale as the fire underneath it waxed fierce or  
waned low.

We had spoken together, glad-voiced, of the time when our exile would  
be  
At an end, and our feet once again in the quiet lands over the sea,  
Till the large lovely eyes of the child felt their lids grow despotic. She  
drew  
To her mother, and slept in her arms, and the new-risen moon kissed the  
two!

I was looking beyond them to where the broad columns of tree-shadows  
slept,  
Stretching west twice the length of the trees, when a horror of something  
that crept,  
Something blacker than shade through the shade, smote my heart with a  
hammer of ice,  
And with eyeballs dilated and strained, and hands clenched with the  
clench of a vice.

I leaped up. But a clear sudden whirr cleaved the night, and, with scarcely a moan  
From her lips, the white soul of our child went among the white souls at the Throne!  
“To the house!” With the dead and the living, half dead, clasped before me, I sprang  
Through the strong door, and bolted and barred it, before on the stillness out rang

One wild, volumed malignance of yells! To have light might be death. In the dark  
On the floor the poor mother groped madly about the dead child for a spark  
Of the hope of pulsation of life, till the blood that was mine and her own,  
From the boomerang-gash warmed her hands, and she knew that we two were alone!

Yell on yell of the monsters without! crash of shutters behind! — but I knew  
How the wall that divided was built; *that*, at least, they could never get through —  
Crash of manifold blows on the door; but I knew, too, how that had been made,  
And I crawled to the corner and found my revolvers, and hoarsely I said:

“Kiss me now, ere the worst, O Bereft! — O most stricken and dearest of wives —  
They will find out this window! — I hold in my hands but a dozen of lives;  
In the storehouse the arms are — God help us! Fold your hands in the dark, dear, and pray!”  
But she sobbed from the floor, “God forgets us, and I have forgotten the way!”

Crash of spear through the window! — and answering flash, with the message of lead  
From my hand! — and dull answer to that of a lean demon form falling dead!  
Crash on crash of a dozen of spears! — till they lay in a sheaf on the floor —  
Red rejoinder of fire as the moonlight revealed them — “But one bullet more!”

I had hissed to myself. But she heard me, and, seizing my arm, held it fast,

And a hard, altered voice that I knew not at once, cried, "Hold! — *I*  
claim the last,  
Dearest love, by *your* hand the divorce! One last kiss, till the Infinite  
Life —  
Once again, on my lips! *Hold it close, and . .... remember Maconochie's*  
*wife!*"

By the white sickly gleam of the match she had bared that true bosom, all  
red  
With the blood of her slain one. I looked in her eyes. "God forgive me!"  
I said ...  
. .... And the sound of a crime unexampled was echoed outside by a  
sound —  
Not as awful to me that dread Trump, when the time of my sentence  
comes round——

Rifle-shots close at hand! — devil-cries! — counter-cheers of the voices  
I knew!  
They were back! I was saved! Lost! lost! lost! Can the blood of the  
Saviour they slew  
Upon Calvary's hill wash off *hers* from my hands! For I trusted not God  
To the full in the hour of my need, and my lips will not cleave to the rod  
Of His wrath, and I fall in the sand, with the weight of the cross that I  
bear.  
Who has ever gone out with a burden of crime, of remorse, of despair  
Like to this? Let me stumble to death, or through life — it is equally  
well,  
Doubly-damned, what can death be to me but translation from Hell unto  
Hell?

## **Seen Again.**

## **A Bush Vision.**

### **E. Lowe**

It is winter again, and the odour of night and the look of the trees  
    As the breeze  
Stirs the branches awaken within me a mem'ry long years do not kill;  
    And whenever it rises I kneel, for before me the river, the eyes,  
And the faces of terror I witnessed of old at the fall of the hill  
    Group around like a frame, and within, like a picture, her dead body  
lies.

There was talk of the wonder long after. How was it I, chained to my  
bed,  
    With my head  
In the swirl of a fever, could know she was drowned? I had sprung down  
the plain  
    To the edge of the river, they said, with my shroud of a fever-dress  
blown  
By the wind, and my lips crying "Alice!" and found her and upwards  
again  
    To the bank had swum with her, and staring, had called her dead body  
my own.

Radiant Alice! Her life, with the lustre of womanhood rising, was lit,  
    And, as flit  
To and fro in the sunshine, the birds with the wings that make flowerless  
trees  
    Look bedecked by an artist, she moved, and the air, as it tremblingly  
broke  
To admit her lithe figure, grew supple and glowed: and the plains', like  
the sea's  
    Open face when the cloud rift, or sky's when the sun breaks, to  
brightness awoke.

*She had spoken in bitterness to me!* Ho, man, have you felt how the

speed

Of your steed

Will unconsciously quicken, with west wind in front, and the leaves of the gum

Underfoot, and the point of a spinifex blade now and then, as you spring

And touch ground pricking smartly? So! westward you go, and the hum

And the whirr and the song are above, and *you reckon not a womanish thing!*

But you sometimes forget; or, a thing that's as bad, with the heat underneath

And the breath

Of the horse in your nostrils, you feel you are one, and that he, as he jumps,

Is as full as yourself of disdain for the risk of the race and the leap: Swift along on the ledge of the chasm, right across the hole girt with jagged stumps,

And around to the bank of the river, and over the flood with a sweep!

It was thus that I thought. You can scarce call it thinking at all, as you know;

For you go

By a kind of wild instinct at such times. So, on by the ridge, with my face

Looking full in the west, and my hat flying and held on with a string, I and Hector went, length and length, right enough, right enough; space

There to plant his hoofs, hold his hoofs, length and length, right enough. Now! One last spring!

I suppose you can guess I went under. The bank of the river, they say,

Broke away.

It was rotten. It must have been. Ten nights thereafter I opened my eyes.

It was just as if some hours before I had fallen in a doze on the grass. I sat up, looked around. But away, as if down in my infancy, cries

Were raised to me, and faces looked at me, but dimly, as if through a glass.

And my head! But at the very instant the door was moved gently apart,

And my heart

Leaped with sudden remembrance and joy, for a form and a face that I knew,

But tear-wet and white-garmented — Alice, a Spirit — broke on me; the room,

Filled with light, whirled around; there were earfuls of musical callings

that flew

To the brain; and I stretched out my arms, and then up, like a ghost from the tomb.

I arose and rushed to her, she shrinking and holding apart; and we two

For a few

Narrow seconds strove wildly, not touching in body, but wrestling in mind —

I to seize, she to fly, and while forward I pressed she shrank backwards, till air

Of the open, like wind armed with ice, struck my forehead, and leaving behind

The sick room, where the fever had chained me, I followed with passionate pray'r.

Then the vision of Alice spoke to me, and said, with a sob, "I have come

From my home —

From my home, O, my lover, where ever, while mornings awake and nights fall;

Until all the bright splendour of life has gone from thee, alone, all alone,

I must wait for thy touch; from my home I have come, O, my lover, to call

For thy pardon! I sinned by my words; may my words now, sweet lover, atone!"

I followed and, lit by the Spirit, I found her! Around me were cries,

And the skies

Overhead, for I looked there, were bright with white light, and among it the trees,

As it flowed to the earth, like an ether, kept shaking their branches, and keen,

As if born on an iceberg, and nursed there, swept through them the midwinter breeze;

But I held her, though dead and drowned — held her, my Alice, my Alice, my Queen!

It was just such a night as the present! O, Spirit of Alice, my love,

Up above,

Where, alone, all alone, in thy home, thou awaitest my coming; behold,

Thou canst see that I see thee again as a picture, and round thee a frame

Made of turbulent waters, and cries, and white light, and canst see that I fold

Thy dear body again in my arms, and kneel down while I call on thy

name!

## North Queensland Journalism.

### Titus Salt

I HAVE the honour to be engaged on a N.Z. bush weekly in the capacity of sub-editor, reporter, compositor, war-correspondent, and book-keeper. I look after the dog-fights, the drought, missionary meetings, gigantic water-melons, and the Irish policy of the Government. Our journal was originally started to fill a yawning cavity in the Northern intellect, and the long-felt want of the district now is that we should stop for evermore. I have diligently endeavoured to discover the cause of our non-success, and have at last come to the conclusion that it may be accounted for in two ways. Firstly, we try to please everybody; secondly, no one buys the paper. Our proprietor is a clergyman, and he contributes a religious column weekly with a Scripture-text on top. His favourite quotation comes from somewhere in the New Testament, and reads: 'All flesh is grass;' but the printer's devil transposes it as often as not, and it generally appears in type: 'All grass is fresh. As there is not a blade of anything green within ten miles of us this reads like wild sarcasm. It creates a prejudice against us, too, in the minds of the neighbouring squatters, who are mostly soured by misfortune, and they call in whenever they have an afternoon to spare, and allude to us casually as liars, and want to know where we are going when we die. Still, our religious column might prove a success were it not that it gets mixed up now and then with the sporting items, and then there is trouble. Our Christianity is obscured by cricket; our dogmas degenerate into dog-fights; and we think nothing of telling our readers that 'He said: Saddle me the ass, and they saddled him, and he finally came in a good first, just beating Ben Bolt on the post by a neck, with Pirate two lengths in the rear.' None of our readers can tell what our creed is now; it has been interspersed with billiards, and adulterated with aquatics, until we are unable ourselves to distinguish sculler Searle from the prophet Elijah, and our underproof doctrines won't go down with the soulless multitude. Our editor is an atheist, and says he is related to a viscount — though I do not mean to imply, even for a moment, that his connection with the peerage does the paper any harm; but he often forgets to put on his shirt and stockings before coming down to the office, and this weakness has

gradually alienated the auctioneer at the corner, the chemist down the road, and the rest of the aristocracy, so that they withhold their support. Moreover, our respected chief's pants are short to the verge of indecency; his language is 'frequent and painful and free;' the extra twopence for manners was not paid when he got his education; and he generally smells like a billiard-room full of stale tobacco-smoke, with an opium-den next door. On Monday this great literary man starts a spree that lasts till Wednesday night, and then, on Thursday, he comes down and writes the leader for the next day's issue. The article commences invariably with a vicious attack on Prince Bismarck; the middle is filled up with extracts from last Sunday's sermon; and the disjointed moral at the end consists of a touching anecdote about the sagacity of dogs. And, unhappily, it is always the same dog, which makes things dreadfully monotonous. This brute was four years old when he first showed signs of superior intelligence; he has now seen fourteen summers, and the ravages of mange have given him that aspect of wisdom which always accompanies extreme baldness; but he is sagacious to the last. Moreover, the editor and the dog both write in the first person, so that nine o'clock on Friday morning invariably sees our stock of "I's" run out, and then "X's" are used instead. Our local column is chiefly devoted to the advancement of the district, and as it advocates the interests of a bush township, three gullies, a waterhole, and a deserted goldfield, the tension on the space is at times very severe. Then comes a long article against Gladstone, which was set up some two years ago, and has done duty as a literary Juggernaut until this day. The heading is altered weekly, and by this simple device it has served as a violent onslaught against almost every public man living; the only time when it did not fit was when we tried to level it at Milan Obrenovitch — 'from our own correspondent.' The disaster occurred through the misguided ambition of our proprietor, who insisted on sticking in at random, here and there, such names as 'Leschjanin,' 'Ranko Olimpisch,' and the like, coupled with occasional references to the 'Skuptschina,' in order to make it appear as if evolved by deep and painful study. The printing machine broke down, however, beneath this load of Servian philology. The roller groaned as it passed over the orthographic corpse of a Belgrade hero; it balked at Olimpisch; it cleared Leschjanin with a leap, as if that warrior had been a post-and-rail fence; and it brought up against the awful Skuptschina with a crash that reduced the whole machine to a hopeless wreck. The remaining column of the journal contains our principles, of which we have several. We support Lord Salisbury, the Australian Eleven, the deepening of the town well, sculler Searle, the Federal Council, the annexation of the New Hebrides, the £10,000,000 loan, the doctor at the local hospital, the opening of hotels on Sunday, and the Soudan Contingent; but the whole lot put together are not able to support us. We also deal tenderly with

every religion, except Mormonism; and when we want to call a man a blackguard we do it in the correspondence column, and sign it 'Pro Bono Publico.' The compositors generally set up 'bono' as 'bones,' and transpose 'publico' into 'public-house,' but that only adds a trifle to the cumulative agony of the situation. Altogether, the man who runs a bush journal in Queensland cannot be said to have struck melted grease in his choice of a vocation; and I write these lines in sorrow rather than anger as a warning to my brethren of the Press.

## Old Pardon, the Son of Reprieve.

### A Racing Rhyme.

#### The Banjo

You never heard tell of the story?  
Well, now, I can hardly believe!  
Never heard of the honour and glory  
Of Pardon, the son of Reprieve?  
But maybe you're only a Johnnie  
And don't know a horse from a hoe?  
Well, well, don't get angry, my sonny,  
But, really, a young 'un should know.

They bred him out back on "The Never,"  
His mother was Mameluke breed.  
To the front — and then stay there — was ever  
The root of the Mameluke creed.  
He seemed to inherit their wiry  
Strong frames, and their pluck to receive —  
As hard as a flint and as fiery  
Was Pardon, the son of Reprieve.

We ran him at many a meeting  
At crossing and gully and town,  
And nothing could give him a beating —  
At least when our money was down.  
For weight wouldn't stop him, nor distance,  
Nor odds, though the others were fast,  
He'd race with a dogged persistence,  
And wear them all down at the last.

At the Turon the Yattendon filly  
Led by lengths at the mile-and-a-half.  
And we all began to look silly  
While *her* crowd were starting to laugh;  
But the old horse came faster and faster,

His pluck told its tale, and his strength.  
He gained on her, caught her, and passed her,  
And won it, hands-down, by a length.

And then we swooped down on Menindie  
To run for the President's Cup —  
Oh! that's a sweet township — a shindy  
To them is board, lodging, and sup.  
Eye-openers they are, and their system  
Is never to suffer defeat;  
It's "win, tie, or wrangle" — to best 'em  
You must lose 'em, or else it's "dead heat."

We strolled down the township and found 'em  
At drinking and gaming and play;  
If sorrows they had, why they drowned 'em,  
And betting was soon under way.  
Their horses were good 'uns and fit 'uns,  
There was plenty of cash in the town;  
They backed their own horses like Britons,  
And, Lord! how *we* rattled it down!

With gladness we thought of the morrow,  
We counted our wagers with glee,  
A simile homely to borrow —  
"There was plenty of milk in our tea."  
You see we were green; and we never  
Had even a thought of foul play,  
Though we well might have known that the clever  
Division would "put us away."

Experience "docet," they tell us,  
At least, so I've frequently heard,  
But, "dosing" or "stuffing," those fellows  
Were up to each move on the board;  
They got to his stall — it is sinful  
To think what such villains would do —  
And they gave him a regular skinful  
Of barley — green barley — to chew.

He munched it all night, and we found him  
Next morning as full as a hog —  
The girths wouldn't nearly meet round him;  
He looked like an overfed frog.  
We saw we were done like a dinner —

The odds were a thousand to one  
Against Pardon turning up winner,  
'Twas cruel to ask him to run.

We got to the course with our troubles,  
A crestfallen couple were we;  
And we heard the “books” calling the doubles —  
A roar like the surf of the sea;  
And over the tumult and louder  
Rang “Any price Pardon, I lay!”  
Says Jimmy, “The children of Judah  
Are out on the warpath to-day.”

Three miles in three heats: — Ah, my sonny,  
The horses in those days were stout,  
They had to run well to win money;  
I don't see such horses about.  
Your six-furlong vermin that scamper  
Half-a-mile with their featner-weight up;  
They wouldn't earn much of their damper  
In a race like the President's Cup.

The first heat was soon set a-going;  
The Dancer went off to the front;  
The Don on his quarters was showing,  
With Pardon right out of the hunt.  
He rolled and he weltered and wallowed —  
You'd kick your hat faster, I'll bet.  
They finished well bunched, and he followed  
All lathered and dripping with sweat.

But troubles came thicker upon us,  
For while we were rubbing him dry  
The stewards came over to warn us:  
“We hear you are running a bye!  
If Pardon don't spiel like tarnation  
And win the next heat — if he can —  
He'll earn a disqualification;  
Just think over *that*, now, my man!”

Our money all gone and our credit,  
Our horse couldn't gallop a yard;  
And then people thought that *we* did it!  
It really was terribly hard.  
We were objects of mirth and derision

To folk in the lawn and the stand,  
And the yells of the clever division  
Of “Any price, Pardon!” were grand.

We still had a chance for the money,  
Two heats still remained to be run;  
If both fell to us — why, my sonny,  
The clever division were done.  
And Pardon was better, we reckoned,  
His sickness was passing away,  
So he went to the post for the second  
And principal heat of the day.

They're off and away with a rattle,  
Like dogs from the leashes let slip,  
And right at the back of the battle  
He followed them under the whip.  
They gained ten good lengths on him quickly,  
He dropped right away from the pack;  
I tell you it made me feel sickly  
To see the blue jacket fall back.

Our very last hope had departed —  
We thought the old fellow was done,  
When all of a sudden he started  
To go like a shot from a gun.  
His chances seemed slight to embolden  
Our hearts; but, with teeth firmly set,  
We thought, “Now or never! The old 'un  
May reckon with some of 'em yet.”

Then loud rose the war-cry for Pardon;  
He swept like the wind down the dip,  
And over the rise by the garden.  
The jockey was done with the whip,  
The field were at sixes and sevens —  
The pace at the first had been fast —  
And hope seemed to drop from the heavens,  
For Pardon was coming at last.

And how did he come! It was splendid;  
He gained on them yards every bound,  
Stretching out like a greyhound extended,  
His girth laid right down on the ground  
A shimmer of silk in the cedars

As into the running they wheeled,  
And out flashed the whips on the leaders,  
For Pardon had collared the field.

Then right through the ruck he came sailing —  
I knew that the battle was won —  
The son of Haphazard was failing,  
The Yattendon filly was done;  
He cut down the Don and the Dancer,  
He raced clean away from the mare —  
He's in front! Catch him now if you can, sir!  
And up went my hat in the air!

Then loud from the lawn and the garden  
Rose offers of “Ten to one *on!*”  
“Who'll bet on the field? I back Pardon!”  
No use; all the money was gone.  
He came for the third heat light-hearted,  
A-jumping and dancing about;  
The others were done ere they started,  
Crestfallen, and tired, worn out.

He won it, and ran it much faster  
Than even the first, I believe —  
Oh, he was the daddy, the master!  
Was Pardon, the son of Reprieve.  
He showed 'em the method to travel —  
The boy sat as still as a stone —  
They never could see him for gravel;  
He came in hard-held, and alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

But he's old — and his eyes are grown hollow;  
Like me, with my thatch of the snow;  
When he dies, then I hope I may follow,  
And go where the racehorses go.  
I don't want no harping nor singing —  
Such things with my style don't agree;  
Where the hoofs of the horses are ringing  
There's music sufficient for me.

And surely the thoroughbred horses  
Will rise up again and begin  
Fresh races on far-away courses,  
And p'raps they might let me slip in.

It would look rather well the race-card on  
'Mongst Cherubs and Seraphs and things,  
“Angel Harrison's black gelding Pardon,  
Blue halo, white body and wings.”

And if they have racing hereafter  
(And who is to say they will not?),  
When the cheers and the shouting and laughter  
Proclaim that the battle grows hot;  
As they come down the racecourse a-steering,  
He'll rush to the front, I believe;  
And you'll hear the great multitude cheering  
For Pardon, the son of Reprieve.

# The Drivel of Our Fathers.

**James Edmond**

THE DRIVEL OF OUR FATHERS, — it is borne across the seas,  
Like Britain's half-mast flag it braves the battle and the breeze;  
Unchanging and eternal, it fills the listening air,  
Where'er our fathers trod they left its dismal spirit there

The drivel of our fathers — it shall never pass away,  
The “gags” about an empire blessed by eternal day,  
And the bald and dreary chestnut concerning men of old  
(Certain ancient Hebrew prophets long since gathered to the fold)

Who wrote a burning Scripture that Victoria's throne might stand  
(As expounded to a native from Asia's coral strand  
Whose fathers sold their kingdom for a quantity of rum,  
That the Briton's trade might prosper and the Christian faith might  
hum —

And who sent a startled nigger to inquire about the way  
That a pious Christian nation had bounced his throne away,  
And received a joyous answer that the British crown was moored  
On the drivel of our fathers and the glory of the Lord.

But the rum that bought the empire, and the brass nails, and the tacks,  
And the lying, and the slaughter, and the other cheerful fax  
Were omitted from the fable that the heathen bore away,  
For the drivel of our fathers is mostly built that way.

And the whole thing never happened — here we pause to curse and  
pray —  
For there wasn't any heathen, and besides he stayed away,  
But the tale is still narrated by the Fathers of the Church  
How that pagan prince discovered what had left him in the lurch.)

The drivel of our fathers like a ceaseless river flows,  
And the cable daily tells us how the ancient legend goes;  
And our hearts are filled with triumph and our souls with sacred joy

When we hear of how an army (three armed cripples and a boy)

Met ten thousand raging Arabs in some unexpected spot,  
And straightway rose in anger and shattered all the lot;  
For where the British soldier is the heathen dies in stacks,  
For the drivel of our fathers always whoops its battle-axe.

And history mostly travels on the things it never knew —  
And the deeds of men who never lived, or else kept out of view,  
Are revealed in tomes of frenzy by historians who died  
And were buried and embalmed before the days of which they lied.

The scenes of ancient battles are moved about a heap,  
For the place where each *first* happened was mostly found too steep,  
And it proved, on close spection, that the troops who struggled there  
(If there ever was a struggle) must have hung on by their hair.

And the noble deeds of ancient days were mostly done in swamps,  
Which suggests that many a hero must have been exposed to cramps;  
But the men who sung their glories didn't first survey the ground,  
So they never even hinted why these heroes weren't drowned.

The drivel of our fathers on many a tombstone shines  
Where the earthly gods of ages are sleeping 'neath the vines —  
Men who hollered loud on paper while in strife they hollered low,  
And perished fighting bravely where the ruby liquors flow.

The drivel of our fathers tells us how they died in mail  
Where the blood-stained flags were streaming on the shrill November  
gale,  
And as they fell they spluttered forth some language wild and terse  
(Sometimes they spoke in prose and other times they spoke in verse);

And in these observations they said that they were there,  
And begged their stricken country not to weep and rend its hair  
When their spirits had departed to join the heav'nly choirs,  
And their mem'ries were embalméd 'midst the drivel of their sires.

The drivel of our fathers hands the dreary legend down,  
Its gods and heroes building out of dolt and ass and clown;  
The facts that never happened and the things that never would  
Are engraved upon the statues of the men who never could.

The warriors who skedaddled, the kings of rags and dust,  
The saints who liquored for their faith and perished “on the bust,”  
The philosophers and sages who gibbered in their caves,  
The buccaneers and vikings who were sick upon the waves;

The saga-singing poet roaming o'er an ancient sea  
(An unshorn, dusty savage who stuttered from a tree)  
Through the weary tracks of history since man's primeval fall,  
The drivel of our fathers has been drivelled o'er them all.

And when heaven and earth are reeling 'midst a galaxy of wreck  
The last of human drivellers will raise his voice on deck,  
And the gabble of his fathers in a dismal tone rehearse  
To the seraphim astounded who steer the universe.

## Between Two Bottles.

(A Christmas Sampling Sketch.)

J. K.

MORNING at last! The night has been long — long. Thunder! — no water in the jug! Well, I must have — but what's the use? Let me gaze out of the window. The sun-rays gild the door of the pub. opposite. I can see them playing hide-and-seek among the decanters. Ah, Tantalus, Tantalus, you had an easy time of it compared to me. All *your* trouble was to be up to the chin in water and not be able to get a draught of it, while mine! — I don't care if there never was water any more! What I want — there comes a man out of the bar wiping his mouth with his coat-sleeve and smiling. Scoundrel! He'll probably be whirling drunk before noon, while I — but there; some people have the luck of it! Hold! I'll have another hunt through my clothes. I *must* have something; I *couldn't* have been such a blazing jackass as to spend all I had last night and leave myself without the price of a drink in the morning. I *have* been. I could with pleasure sit down now and curse monotonously all created things for an hour by Shrewsbury clock. But, again, what's the use? No Eau de Cologne left! If there had been I might have fixed up a drink from that. Kerosene I *can't* drink at any price. Took a deadly hatred to it when staying in back-block hotels. Well — if it must be, it must be — the tap.

How the hours have passed beats me. It is now after 10 o'clock. I would, as Heine says, give thirty-six little monarchs, if I had them, for one stiff glass of absinthe — aye, or even rum. To think that I have become so degraded! I that used to be the white-headed boy of the Sunday-school, and was once patted on the head by the Pope's Legate. It is — ugh! I must drown these thoughts. Ma-ri-a! another bucket of water. From this moment no more rum for me. There is nothing in it. An hour or two of excitement, perhaps — then madness — maudlin muddle, and — oblivion. Next morning — the furies! Life is too short for it. In future I shall abjure it, and go in for calm enjoyment and the cup that cheers. In the meantime I shall suffer and be strong. Ha! ha! Ho! ho! I should like to see the man, or even a picture of him, who could get *me* to drink anything intoxicating now. I would give him an order on my salary

for half-a crown. I would——

A knock. Hem! I had better have a look at my visitor through the venetian before I open the door. He can't take possession unless I open it. It's only the office-boy. A letter — and a parcel. Wonder what's in the parcel! Feels confounded heavy. Better open the letter first. Um! “You mentioned some time ago that you had a theory that different liquors produced different results on the human system.” The devil I did! Then I ought to know. The knowledge has cost me enough to build a church. “We therefore send you two bottles of whisky — one Scotch, one Irish — which please sample, and give us your practical experience of how your theory works. Copy must be in to-morrow morning first thing.” It can't be done — no, not if I never write another line. What? Am I a weather-cock — a Jim Crow — to go back on moral principles at the bidding of an editor? Never. Lie there in that corner, ye two tempters, and I will send ye back again to where ye came from as soon as the Rufus-headed Phyllis has done peeling the potatoes. But, no; ye shall stand upon the table and I shall defy ye. Gods! Am I a sentient being with a will of my own — or a brainless ape, to be afraid of two bottles of what I know to be liquid poison? Ha, ha! We shall see. We shall see.

Um! There's no harm in opening the parcel just to see what the brands are. This is not a sign of weakness; it is a test of strength. Besides, I am curious to see what sort of liquor they have foisted upon the editor. Hum! The old thing — Walker and Dunville, first-class whiskies when they *are* good. I *would* just like to know if these are the genuine thing. There is so much swindling now-a-days you can never be sure of a liquor till you have sampled it. But I have an oath — an oath in Heaven! Still, one small taste won't hurt me. In fact, it will steady my nerves a bit. After this, though——

I have taken a thimbleful from each, and I can't see much difference. My palate must be crooked somehow. But then you can never get the taste of whisky properly unless you take a good stiff drink of it. I don't like to, but in the interests of science, and for the sake of the editor, I'll sacrifice myself for once. Um! Irish — fine mellow liquor, with just enough fire in it to send a glow through one; Scotch — good clean spirit, with a reek in it, smoked to a nicety. Now, Messieurs Barleycorn, you will be corked up and set aside till Maria has time to take you back. I like not your luring looks. Gadzooks, am I to be made a jest of by two miserable bottles of whisky? Go — get ye under the bed lest some weak-minded friend of mine come in, and ye tempt him.

I feel a lot better since I took those two drinks. After all, it is absurd nonsense for a man, when he has been drinking, to “put the plug in” suddenly. More than that — it is dangerous. I read in the paper the other morning of a man who dropped dead through having — after a long bout — given up his liquor all at once. I can tell you it was a warning to

me. The thing should be done gradually. Say four, or even five, drinks the first day; three the next; two the third day, and the fourth day none. I know there are people who say that such a plan of recovery is trifling with the enemy, and that a man who starts to taper off thus is likely to go home barking the first night, and to sit out in the park baying the moon the second. But it is a mystery to me how anyone with a mind of his own can't control himself to this extent. *I can't understand it.* Now, let me see. I ought to eat something. If I could get something devilled I might manage it. Ho, ho! in a boarding-house. Devilled hash I might get, or I should, perhaps, say bedevilled. (This liquor must be getting into my head.) I'll take a turn into the kitchen and have a chat with the cook. ... *She is making soup out of corned beef and plate-cleanings!* She is, by the Prophet! No more soup for me. Pah! the smell of it. I must take a drink to deaden it. And while I am at it I may as well carry out my instructions and take two.

Ha! I begin to feel myself my own man again. Wonderful liquid! Potent necromancer! Why shouldst thou raise us up to Olympian heights only to dash us into the gutter, and get us forty-eight hours without the option? But, thank goodness, I have done with all that kind of foolishness. If I do take a drink — and when I come to think of it calmly, the man who can't trust himself to take a drink or two and stop at that is a poor creature — I'll take it to do me good and leave off when I think more of it might hurt me. Besides, good liquor never harmed anybody. It's only those wretched adulterated compounds that send men into lunatic asylums and early graves. The men who sell such stuff ought to be compelled to paint over their doors — “*Licensed Toxicologist.*”

I had better get to work now and finish that article at once. But — it makes me laugh to think of it! — I've clean forgotten the difference in the taste of the two whiskies. If I am to analyse the sensations produced by each, I had better try two or three glasses of one sort at a time and then put down in writing how I feel. No fear of *me* getting too far gone. I can stand more whisky than one man out of a hundred. But I do wish I hadn't to write to-day. It's a ghastly thing that when a man feels nice and comfortable, and inclined to look upon life with a mellow eye, he should have to sit down and slave for a paper. If I had only enough money to buy a raft with a house on it I'd give up writing and live on fish. My lines would all be fishing-lines and cast in pleasant places — somewhere about the Bottle and Glass, or off Taylor Bay at times. And I'd never wish to see a paper any more, though I suppose I could hardly help getting the DAILY IMPERIAL FEDERATIONIST AND GOVERNMENT HOUSE CHRONICLE now and then wrapped round bait. It is a fine journal to wrap worms in — *it has such a crawling style of its own!* That would be the life for me. Hence, vain vision! Mocking dream, begone!

Just had three goes of Scotch, one after another. I feel like a giant refreshed. Never properly realised my own strength before. I believe I could knock a hole through the panel of the door with one blow. Don't mean to try, though — cost too much to square the damage. A man may have a few drinks in him, but that's no reason why he should be extravagant. The man who is extravagant is an ass, and the man who does not profit by his extravagance is a greater one. Sloshing money around may amuse your mad-headed Irishmen, but a man of common sense sees no fun in it — *for him to do it!* I don't mean to say that when I meet a friend I wouldn't ask him to take a drink for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, but I hold with Robbie Burns —

“Surely you'll be your pint stoup  
As sure as I'll be mine.”

This inspires me. Now I will sing you an auld Scots sang I made myself. I am going to have it set to a soft and melancholy air, and dedicate it to Sir——one of these days. Give ear now: —

Jean M'Fadzean.  
(Air — “Bonnie Charlie's Noo Awa.”)

Jean M'Fadzean, Bonnie Jean,  
Flower o' the M'Fadzean clan,  
Auld M'Fadzean grat his een  
When awa wi me she ran.

Auld M'Fadzean grat his een  
Till I thoct his hairt wad brak;  
Jean M'Fadzean, bonnie Jean,  
Wad tae Heev'n he had her back.

I never knew before I could write in the “braid Scottish tongue” so well. It must be something in the whisky. Still, I am as sober as a tombstone. Drink, somehow, seems to have no effect on me. I think I'll try a fall with the Irish bottle now.

Have often tried a fall with it and knocked it over the ropes in four rounds. It's a lovely liquor; but it little knows the kind of man it has to reckon with if it thinks it can send *me* under. Why, I remember Barney Kelly, Pat O'Connor, Dennis Kilpatrick and myself making a wager that we could drink potheen for three days as fast as old Larry Rogan, who kept the private still in Quigley's Gap, could turn it out; and we won, and were each of us able to dance a jig on the top of a gate-post at the finish,

though Larry, who hadn't tasted a drop all the time, was as drunk as a blind piper *on the smell of it!* What do you think of that now? Yerra! I'll give you a song of my own. Easy now, and keep time with your brogues: —

Pat M'Laughlin.

(Air — “Finnegans Wake.”)

Yerra, Pat M'Laughlin was a hayro,  
Faix he wuz the Divil's limb,  
Nayther Punchus Pilate, boys, nor  
Nayro,  
Cud a candle hould to him.  
Wanst he shot a landlord dead, sirs,  
Divel shoot the lot o' *thim!* —  
Twice he bruk a bailiff's head, sirs,  
Pat was full o' fun an' whim.

But at last the base, black-hearted  
Saxon

Caught poor Paddy dhrunk one  
day,  
An' — the divel dam thim! — widout  
axin'

*By yer lave, tuk him away.*  
'Twas in the could month o' Decimber  
They shipped him out to Bot'ny  
Bay.  
Yerra! now he is a Parlimint mimer,  
Fwhat they call an M.L.A.

CHORUS. — Then fut it up and down  
the middle,

Crack your heels and pound the  
flure;  
Keep up Kelly wid the fiddle,  
Dance, ye divels — Home Rule's  
*share!*

Had another Scotch. Two friends of  
mine were in a minute ago. Stuck the  
liquor under the bed.

Had a go of Irish. Called them back.  
Both Fenians. In my opinion Parnell is  
the greatest man of the century. My

grand father was a King — whoop!

[To the Editor BULLETIN. Sir, — The  
jintilman wot rote this left it in his boots,  
so I took the libberty of sending it by my  
girl.]

## Frank Denz.

## Henry Kendall

An incident in the wreck of the s.s. Tararua, on the coast of Southland, New Zealand.

In the roar of the storm, in the wild bitter voice of the tempest-whipped sea,  
The cry of my darling, my child, comes ever and ever to me;  
And I stand where the haggard-faced wood stares down on a sinister shore;  
But all that is left is the hood of the babe I can cherish no more.

A little blue hood, with the shawl of the girl that I took for my wife  
In the happy old season, is all that remains of the light of my life.  
The wail of a woman in pain, and the sob of a smothering bird,  
They come through the darkness again — in the wind and the rain they are heard.

Oh, women and men who have known the perils of weather and wave,  
It is sad that my sweet ones are blown under sea without shelter or grave;  
I sob like a child in the night, when the gale on the waters is loud —  
My darlings went down in my sight, with neither a coffin nor shroud.

In the whistle of wind, and the whirl of ominous fragments of wreck,  
The wife, with her poor little girl, saw death on the lee of the deck;  
But, sirs, she depended on me — she trusted my comforting word;  
She is down in the depths of the sea — my love, with her beautiful bird.

In the boat I was ordered to go — I was not more afraid than the rest;  
But a husband will falter, you know, with the love of his life at his breast.  
My captain was angry a space, but soon grew tender in tone —  
Perhaps there had flashed by his face a wife and a child of his own.

I was weak for some moments, and cried; but only one hope was in life;

The hood upon baby I tied — I fastened the shawl on my wife.  
The skipper took charge of the child — he stuck to his word till the last;  
But only this hood on the wild bitter shore of the sea has been cast.

In the place of a coward, who shook like a leaf in the quivering boat,  
A seat at the rowlocks I took; but the sea had me soon by the throat,  
The surge gripped me tight by the neck — with a ring and a roll and a  
roar,  
I was cast like a piece of the wreck, on a bleak, beaten, shelterless shore.

And there were my darlings on board for the rest of that terrible day;  
And I watched and prayed to the Lord as never before I could pray.  
The windy hills stared at the black, heavy clouds coming over the wave;  
My girl was expecting me back, but where was my power to save?

Ah, where was my power, when death was glaring at me from the reef?  
I cried till I gasped for my breath — alone with a maddening grief.  
We couldn't get back to the deck; I wanted to go, but the sea  
Dashed over the sides of the wreck, and carried my darling from me.

Oh, girl that I took by the hand to the altar two summers ago,  
I would you were buried on land — my dear, it would comfort me so!  
I would you were sleeping where grows the grass and the musical reed;  
For how can you find a repose in the toss of the tangle and weed?

The night sped along, and I strained to the shadow, and saw to the end  
My captain and bird — he remained to the death a superlative friend.  
In the face of the hurricane wild, he clung with the babe to the mast;  
To the last he was true to my child — he was true to my child to the last.

The wind, like a life without home, comes mocking at door and at pane  
In the time of the cry of the foam — in the season of thunder and rain;  
And, dreaming, I start in the bed, and feel for my little one's brow!  
But lost is the beautiful head; the cradle is tenantless now!

My home was all gladness and glow when wife and her baby were there;  
But, ah! it is saddened, you know, by dresses my girl used to wear.  
I cannot re-enter the door; its threshold can never be crossed,  
For fear I should see on the floor the shoes of the child I have lost.

There were three of us once in the world; but two are deep down in the  
sea,  
Where waif and where tangle are hurled — the two that were portions of  
me;  
They are far from me now; but I hear, when hushed are the night and the  
tide,  
The voice of my little one near — the step of my wife by my side.

## Up a Northern River.

**James Edmond**

IT is early autumn — the season when the cart-horse bard of the Australian plains dodders in smothered verse about the leaves that are not getting brown, and the songful goat which stamps on the bank of the muddy river, as the saddle-coloured current staggers feebly towards the distant sea, and lifts up his voice concerning the bugs and tight boots of his beloved motherland, likewise the snakes and the ague, the stumps on the highway, the wattle, the wild pigs, the distemper, and other cognate themes. The bare gaunt claws of Nature are spreading out over the earth, and through the crisp night air come strange mixed sounds — the “awk-awk-awk” of some undistinguishable reptile, the “z-z-z-z-z-z” of some flying insect with a red-hot tail, and, above all, the accursed, soul-destroying “toot” of that passing steamer which plods in and out of the remoter seaports bearing exasperation on its wings, and spreading human demoralisation wherever it goes.

What Australian is there who does not know that deceptive little craft — the broken-down, one-horse vessel which steals alongside the wharf just after the expectant traveller has given up all hope and gone to bed, and then creeps away again before he is awake, and leaves him hopelessly behind, a lost atom with a portmanteau blaspheming in a fifth-rate public-house — the flat-bottomed steam failure with an agonising shriek, which is supposed to call twice a week in the dead waste and wilderness of the night, and which is twenty miles away before the morning resurrection? The places which this vessel most loves to haunt are the weary, mouldering, prematurely-old, bush-grown little ports of the Northern rivers, and it comes out of its lair to lie off these spots and toot its aggravating whistle, and then it slides away into outer darkness, and leaves its intending passengers to walk. As a rule the belated traveller who intends trusting his body to this means of conveyance arrives by land a day ahead, with his heart full of hope and his shirts in a capacious bag, and hunts up the dismal, tangled clerk, who represents the local shipping interests in a dismantled fortress beside the wharf. There is a certain tired, shock-headed race of clerks who appear to grow for this especial branch of industry, and the representative of this outcast race is

generally found keeping his weary watch in company with a dog-eared ledger and a three-legged stool which was made out of an ancient Egyptian coffin. He is an individual who knows nothing, and knows it worse than any other man on earth, and he doesn't even know enough to know that he knows nothing, but booms along with a serenity which is little short of sublime.

Still he is in a position to report that the steamer will most likely come along some time, if she doesn't die on the way. She calls in every three days, except when she is a month and a-half overdue, and then she calls in twice a week every day except Sunday, and that day she calls every alternate fortnight and three-quarters only. At present, however, there is a hitch in the time-table arrangements, and consequently she only arrives semi-occasionally, and sometimes not so often as that by a good deal, but she will probably be along about the middle of the night, or from that to the early part of the week after next. Then you probably inquire if this miserable Flying Dutchman hasn't been signalled from somewhere or other along the coast, and he explains, with a pitying smile, that there is no telegraph in these parts; but an orphan boy, who was up on the top of an adjacent hill, about the centre of yesterday, saw some smoke on the horizon, which might have been the steamer, or, on the other hand again, it mightn't. It further transpires that the witness in this case died early the same morning, so that he can't be further questioned on the subject; but, by way of corroborative evidence, it is mentioned that a subscription is now being got up to buy his mother a mangle — “and can I put you down for a trifle, sir?” At all events, the shock-headed commercial youth has got a bill of lading for 187 bananas duly made out, and he trusts that the vessel may come along shortly and remove that festering luggage out of sight.

After this you can wander up the dreamy grass-grown thoroughfare and muse in the sweltering sun, and have dinner at the licensed sepulchre in the next street, and await the course of events. Sometimes, in the tangled wilds of the afternoon it may be, an unhappy native floats along, and you can curse him with you acquaintance and gnaw his soul with your personal friendship till he withers away and becomes a hollow-minded and mysterious wreck, and then you can spread your moral infection around until it appears to be time to move your soul back to the silent wharf and inquire some more about the steamer.

Generally this second visit breaks up the shock-headed clerk, and he informs you sorrowfully that he believes the company has made arrangements to avoid this particular port in future as if it were a serpent. They tell a tale to this day about a clerk on one of the northern rivers who was in the act of explaining something like this to a demoniacal traveller, and the latter in bitter irony propounded to him a mysterious conundrum, which was meant to be a sarcasm upon his common sense, about certain

circumstances under which a door got tired of being a door and became something else, and asked him if he thought this fact should be taken three times a day in a glass of water, and the clerk considered about it till he died and was buried in a leafy spot under a spreading tree, but the circumstance is not sufficiently substantiated. Towards six o'clock, however, the inky menial generally brightens up, and if he is struck about that hour, the inquirer may possibly be supplied with some fresh ignorance, and may acquire a disjointed paragraph to the effect that the expected steamer may possibly show in the river about ten o'clock, upside down, with the captain swimming alongside and carrying the boiler on his head. Sometimes the tangleheaded one adds that he will call up at the hotel and advise you when the cough of the asthmatic monster is heard upon the bosom of the deep; but this is merely a premonitory sign that he is going out of town at once and won't be back for three days, and is not by any means to be relied upon.

By this time the tea and flies are ready at your mausoleum, and two clump-soled men, who live by prodding the paunchy bullock to his doom at the butcher's shop, are blaspheming at the table; and then the evening drags wearily along while you smoke and wait and drink and swear and pray. By eight o'clock the local liquors have eaten away your vitals; by ten you have smoked till you are a hollow mummy, caked all over on the inside with soot; by eleven there isn't any sign of the steamer, and nobody in the place has ever heard of such a means of conveyance in his life. At midnight you wander down to the collection of ancient tea-chests, where the shipping cannibal is generally on view; but all is silent and deserted, and the loafer who hangs about outside is quite sure that the place is only a potato-store. The tide is falling in the river, and where water used to be there are only the footprints of an alligator on the long, slimy sand-banks; and, finally, you drift back to bed with a conviction that a raft may possibly come along about the back part of the Day of Judgment, but till then business is suspended.

Shade of the great original alligator! Is that the whistle of a steam-boat after all? The belated stranger comes out of bed with a crash, and hurriedly gets into his portmanteau under the impression that it is his clothes. An iron-clad insect, with eight legs and four horns, is walking across the floor, and a horror, the size of a dinner-plate, is roosting on the curtains. Something with long feelers and a tail is sitting on the traveller's hat, and while escaping it he squashes a general sort of reptile which seems to be there for no particular purpose except to look mysterious like and fill the bill. There is only one chair in the room, and he falls over it unto seventy times seven; but at last, by the exercise of a patient sagacity which is half bloodhound and half Job, he disentangles himself from this weapon for sitting down upon, and splits down the street with one pair of socks in his hand and the rest of his baggage left behind in the darkness.

There are more whistlings on the river, more insects, the shadow of something that looks like a kangaroo spreads across the road, somebody is yelling at the top of his voice on the wharf, somebody else——

There is a mud-barge aground on the shore, and the shade of a half-grown tug-steamer is trying to get it off and is blowing an unearthly toot about twice in five minutes. The steamer came in and left again half an hour ago. Somebody had stuffed a cork in the whistle, so that it had to leave without saying anything. It won't be back for a month, and the other steamer which travels that way went ashore last night, and won't be fit for work for eight weeks. There is just a faint possibility that a ketch, laden with bone-dust and condemned fish, may put in about two o'clock in the morning next Tuesday fortnight, but this point is uncertain because the captain has gone mad and the mate recently hanged himself. Anyhow, you better not stand on them bannaners for the captain wouldn't take them on account of there bein' a lot of scorpions about them, and if you wouldn't mind givin' a haul on this rope we'll have this 'ere mud-barge off in two jiffs.

Bless the man who invented the steam-boat system on Australia's Northern rivers!

## The Song of Te Kooti.

Arthur Desmond

Te Kooti is a veritable Maori Robin Hood — an outlaw, who for years fought the invaders of his country, and out-manoevred their generals by his knowledge of the bush. The translator has done his best to turn the savage force and poetic fervour of a wild Maori chant into the rhythmic swing of ordinary English verse. In doing so he has faithfully preserved its meaning, but has been compelled to take some liberties with construction and metaphor.

Exult for Te Kooti! To Kooti the bold;  
So fierce in the onset, so dauntless of old,  
Whose might was resistless when battle-waves rolled —  
Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

The Pakehas came with their rum and their gold,  
And soon the broad lands of our fathers were sold,  
But the voice of Te Kooti said, “HOLD THE LAND! HOLD!”  
Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

They falsely accused him — no trial had he,  
They carried him off to an isle in the sea;  
But his prison was broken, once more he was free —  
Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

They tried to enslave us, to trample us down  
Like the millions that serve them in field and in town;  
But the sapling that's bended when freed will rebound —  
Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

He plundered their rum-stores, he ate up their priests,  
He robbed the rich squatters to furnish his feasts —  
What fare half so fine as their clover-fed beasts? —

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

In the wild midnight foray whose footsteps trod lighter?  
In the flash of the rifle whose eyeballs gleamed brighter?  
What man with our hero could clinch as a fighter? —

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

They say it was murder; but what, then, is war?  
When they slaughtered our kin in the flames of the pah,  
O, darker their deeds and more merciless far! —

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

They boast that they'll slay him — they'll shoot him at sight,  
But the power that nerves him's a giver of might;  
At a glance from his eye they shall tremble with fright —

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

When the darkness was densest he wandered away  
To rejoice in the charge of the wild battle-fray;  
Now, his limbs they are feeble, his beard it is grey —

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

The Eternal's our father, the land is our mother,  
The forest and mountains our sister and brother;  
Who'd part with his birthright for gold to another?

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

We won't sell the land — 'tis the gift of the Lord —  
Except it be bought with the blood-drinking sword;  
But ALL men are welcome to share in its hoard —

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

Yet 'mid thy rejoicing forget not the braves  
Who, in glades of the forest, have found lonely graves,  
Who welcomed cold Death, for they scorned to be slaves —

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

Exult for Te Kooti, Te Kooti the bold,  
So sage in the council, so famous of old,  
Whose war-cry's our motto — 'tis "HOLD THE LAND! HOLD!"

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

## **The Washerwoman of Jacker's Flat.**

**Edward Dyson**

THE extreme disparity in the number of male and female denizens of Jacker's Flat was a source of sore discontent to the former. That refining influence which fair women are said to exert over rude mankind was a long-felt want, as, out of a population of twelve hundred and odd, only nine were of the feminine gender. Four of the ladies were mated — a reverential regard for beautiful truth forbids us saying married — and stultified the glorifying womanly attribute to a great extent by persisting in a course of intemperance, and rarely appearing abroad, excepting under the stimulus of rum. Deduct from the five of the softer sex who remain unallied so to speak, three under the age of six, and that the malcontent of the men was a rational grievance becomes patent to the meanest understanding. It has been said that where women and children are few, men of affectionate natures lavish their surplus sentiment on the lower animals. This characteristic did not prevail on the Flat — indeed, experience has taught us that there, as elsewhere, men so circumstanced invariably cleave to the intoxicating cup and abandon themselves to the seductive wiles of euchre, crib, and Yankee-grab.

The few dogs of the camp were lean and debilitated, of a furtive habit, and noted for their agility in dodging missiles; the cats were unkempt and fearful, and much disposed to abandon civilisation for the joys of a wild, free life on Mount Miamia; but there was not a pack of cards or a dice-box on that flat that did not bear unmistakable traces of good handling and long attention, and Monkey Bill, otherwise Mr. William Monk, the local publican, had no just cause to complain that the worshippers at the shrine of the god set up in his temple, “The Pick and Barrow,” were wanting in numbers or in religious zeal. However, these joys are vain and meagre substitutes for the companionship of lovely woman, and small wonder that the sign-board hung out before the new tent down the creek should excite pleasurable anticipations in the susceptible breasts of the local bachelors. The sign itself, apart from its terseness and the originality of its orthography, was not an object of the deepest interest, for it was merely the bottom of a candle-box, on which had been inscribed with a ball of blue, in large, irregular capitals, that staggered

across the board at independent angles, two words, "WASHING DID." Nor was the eloquent message which this laconic advertisement was intended to convey calculated to carry any great amount of satisfaction to the masculine soul, for, if truth *must* prevail, the negligent diggers seldom had any washing to be "did." as many of them, reckless in the pride of big yields, utterly abandoned a "rig-out" when once its appearance called very loudly for soap and water. Others acknowledged but one limit to the time an article might be retained in wear without washing, and that was regulated by the durability of the garment in question. Economy commended this latter usage, and it was most popular. No, the sign had a deeper, a more sacred import to the lone diggers; it announced a very welcome addition to the one-sided population, and signified — A WOMAN. What style and condition of woman she would prove was the subject of earnest speculation in Monkey Bill's canvas bar on the evening following the first appearance of the placard.

"I hope t' goodness she ain't hitched," moodily remarked a long, angular man with a phenomenal growth of red hair and whiskers, who was revelling in the luxury of twist tobacco and raw brandy — a combination which seemed to suit his taste, as the "quid" was never removed to make way for the liquor, each pull at the pannikin being preceded, however, by mechanical and voluminous expectoration. The observation was greeted with derisive laughter.

"Anyhow, *you* won't stand a show, Bender; I'll bet a cabbage-tree you're the ugliest man from Home!" observed Dick Freen, with refreshing candour. "You've got no luck, old Frightful. Don't forget the time when you smiled at Martin's daughter on Bendigo and made her horse bolt."

"I don't, I don't, Dick," said Bender, as calmly as if he had been paid a flowery compliment; "I ain't built to please horses — and *asses*; but ladies is different; some of them takes to ugliness!"

And the speaker resumed his mastication with an air of supreme complacency, and passed his hand feelingly over his nose, which organ had been badly battered by a blow from a shovel in an encounter with a "jumper" at Deadman's Rush in '52, and afforded no contrast to his natural facial deformities, which were many and various.

"For my part, I'd rather she were married," observed a tall, rather handsome, young fellow, conspicuous by reason of his immaculate rig-out, who was sitting on a bush table. "Young, you know, and married to a beautiful youth like Bender!"

"Well, supposin' her boss *does* happen t' be anythin' like Joe Bender?" replied that gentleman, evidently nettled by the other's sneer. "Supposin' he is; if he ever catches you sneakin' round his tent he'll knock yer stiff for a blessed crawler! That's what Joe Bender 'ud do, me Honorable

John, an' you'd best make a note of it, case y' forget!"

The Honorable John laughed lightly, and, turning his back on the group, entered into conversation with a digger who was drinking alone in the shadowy part of the tent. In common with every other man on the Flat, he believed that it was not advisable to go too far with Mr. Bender, who (like every other man with a broken nose) had quite a reputation as a "slogger." He was known to have knocked out Black Anderson after a tightly-contested battle of twenty-seven rounds at Specimen Hill one Sunday afternoon, and was, although rather proud of his unique ugliness, prepared to instantly resent any derisive levity, especially if it emanated from a person like the Honorable John, whose well-greased wellingtons, careful shave, and neatly-arranged curls, earned the contempt of four-fifths of the miners.

John Blake could not have been more scrupulous about the set of his Crimean shirt, the arrangement of his silk sash and tie, or the curl of his moustache, had the township boasted a large assortment of fair maids instead of being limited to so meagre a female population. With the few women at hand, however, he was on the very best of terms. "I'm of good family, and a gentleman, by G — !" was his stock boast. The community accepted the statement in good faith, and dignified him with the title of "Honorable."

The man who was drinking alone in the dark corner was Mr. Stephen Bacon. It was a peculiarity of Mr. Bacon's that when he was drinking, in which agreeable recreation he passed most of his spare time, he loved to sit in the shanty, as far out of sight as possible, and drink alone — a particularly detestable characteristic in the eyes of the average digger. Mr. Bacon was a widower of three years' standing, and he drank, it was stated, to drown the grief occasioned by the loss of his wife. What terrible woe gnawed at his vitals and gave rise to an insatiable thirst for brandy previous to the demise of that lamented lady was never known, but that it was intense and irrevocable is proven by the knowledge that Stephen's unremitting but ineffectual endeavours to drown some secret sorrow in large quantities of ardent spirit had been the main factor in bringing his still young but broken-hearted spouse to her grave. After that sad event Mr. Bacon was able to start afresh and found his thirst on a tangible grievance. As an evidence of the enormous quantity of alcohol a settled sorrow can withstand, it may be mentioned that Steve Bacon had not exhaled a breath untainted with brandy for many years. He and "Mite" Power had "struck it" in a hole below the bend, but Monkey Bill "cleaned him out" pretty effectually before each sluicing-day came round. Every night saw him in the shanty, where he would sit and absorb grog till his hair became moist and clung to his temples in clammy rings, and the perspiration oozed from his forehead in large beads. At this stage he was wont to weep great tears of fusel-oil, and call upon his dead wife

in lugubrious tones, or chummer over his sorrow with drunken dolorousness, till he was warned off by the forcible curses of the company, or unceremoniously ejected by a disgusted digger — whereupon he would stagger to his canvas residence and reassert his manliness by knocking his only child down and kicking her for falling.

Cecilia Bacon, known on the Flat as “Cis.,” was about seventeen, slight and pale, with very fair hair, and large, frightened eyes of a light-blue tint. Her whole bearing was one of excessive timidity. Of a shrinking, retiring disposition, imagining herself a burden to her besotted sire, since the death of her mother her life had been a joyless one. She was not an interesting girl, never associated with the other females of the camp, and thought she had but one friend in the world — the Honorable John. He was very kind; he overcame her bashfulness, walked and talked with her, and being interested in the daughter was gracious to the father. Often and again had that sallow, fragile, awkward girl stolen into the shanty after midnight to guide the eccentric footsteps of her drunken parent to his tent, fearing he might stray into some abandoned hole and break his worthless neck if left to come home alone, and almost as often had she been heartily kicked for her pains.

The fair lady whose condescension in shedding the lustre of her charms on Jacker's Flat had awakened tender anticipations in the breasts of the forlorn bachelors of that encampment by her preliminary announcement, made her first public appearance on the following evening at Monk's hostelry. The usual brilliant assemblage was gathered together in the “bar” of that elegant establishment, engaged in the usual convivial pursuits, when universal attention was suddenly withdrawn from cards, dice, and brandy by the entrance of a stranger.

An apparition would not have been more startling. A coarse skirt alone betokened the stranger's sex; she wore a man's black slouch hat, which bore palpable traces of having seen long service “below,” and was trimmed with a narrow leather belt; she smoked a highly-coloured meerschaum pipe, the bouquet of which eloquently testified its strength; she had on a short guernsey buttoned up the front like a coat, whose sleeves, rolled to the elbow, betrayed an arm that might have graced a navvy; her hair was cropped short, and bristled almost six feet from the floor. Fleshy, broad-shouldered, and straight as a sapling, her hands thrust into the pockets on either side of her skirt with an air of aggressive manliness, the new washerwoman strolled into the room and up to the counter, coolly oblivious of the impression she had created. In a strong, masculine voice she ordered “stout.” Mr. Monk could scarcely express his sorrow — he had no stout — didn't keep it.

The lady calmly anathematised his eyes, cleverly lumped his soul, shanty, and immediate relatives, in a brief but comprehensive curse, and “made it gin.”

The gin was satisfactory. Then she replaced her pipe, after throwing off the “nobbler” with scientific abruptness, thrust her hands into her side-pockets once more, and, lounging against the counter in a devil-may-care, intensely-mannish attitude, boldly surveyed the company. Everything about the woman bespoke her manly sentiments. Those skirt-pockets were a brazen plagiarism of the refuges for idle hands in the nether habiliments of the lords of creation, and her upper lip bore unmistakable traces of an earnest endeavour to grow a moustache; even her distorted nose seemed to suggest the pugnacious male.

Monkey Bill's patrons were astounded; they gazed at the washerwoman and at each other in grave surprise, and continued playing their hands with unwonted solemnity. Bender alone seemed capable of grasping the situation, and, after concluding the game in which he was engaged, left his seat and advanced to the new-comer with outstretched hand.

“Brummy Peters!”

“What! Bender?”

“That same.”

“Well, I'm ——!”

After a hearty, hail-fellow-well-met sort of greeting, Bender ventured the query:

“Well, Brummy, how's things?”

To which the lady replied that things were very slow indeed, emphasising the assertion with an ejaculation only admissible in the pulpit, and informed Bender, in a casual way, that Peters was no more. Mr. Bender did not seem to think himself called upon to exhibit very violent grief over this sad intelligence; he merely remarked:

“You and Peters weren't spliced, were you?”

One might think that the palpable indelicacy of this question would have affected the lady to anger; but no, it touched only her pride.

“Spliced!” she ejaculated, and all the scorn she felt for that feminine weakness was apparent in her voice. “Devil a fear! We just chummed in.”

Further conversation revealed the fact that the late Mr. Peters, whilst under the influence of blended liquors, had fallen into a puddling-machine at Bendigo, a lamentable accident which was only made apparent some time later, when bones, buttons, boots, and other distinguishing features turned up in the sluice-boxes. Mr. Peters' chum, who had been accorded her mate's surname and *sobriquet* as a humble tribute to her superior manliness, was then thrown upon her own resources — and there she was at Monkey Bill's bar.

Mr. Bender introduced the latest acquisition to the assembled gentlemen as “Brummy Peters,” insinuating, with some judicious profanity, that she was a splendid fellow, and had vanquished a reputable pugilist in her time. After which the lady took a hand at crib, and

succeeded in winning several pounds, and establishing her reputation as “a good sort of a chap” before the night was spent.

Three months passed by, and Jacker's Flat still maintained its not over-numerous population. The yields, though good enough to keep its pioneers hanging on, were not sufficiently exciting to attract strangers from a distance, and if few had departed less had arrived. Amongst the former was the Honorable John — that gentleman, “by G — ,” having furled his tent by night and silently stolen away, without taking the trouble to afford his numerous creditors an opportunity of bidding him a fond farewell. Brummy Peters, by which inelegant appellation the Amazonian laundress became generally known, was a frequent visitor at Monkey Bill's establishment, where she placidly puffed at her meerschaum, dashed off an occasional brandy, called down dire eternal penalties on the urbane host for omitting stout from his stock-in-trade, and engaged in various games of cards and Yankee-grab with so natural an air of manly bravado that her chosen associates at length quite overcame the diffidence that the presence of a woman had occasioned, and comported themselves with their accustomed easy freedom, no longer pausing to select their oaths with an eye to gentility or style, or being deterred by gallantry from raising a row when all didn't seem fair, square, and above-board at the card-table. In fact, since Brummy acted as bottle-holder for Treen, when he and Barney Ryan settled their little difference in a fifteen-round mill, and displayed her signal ability to fulfil that honourable and responsible office, the men had quite disburdened their minds of the impression that she *was* a woman, and now looked upon her as one of themselves, a compliment for which she was duly grateful. Certainly, Bender was frequently chaffed about his intimacy with Brummy, between him and whom there existed a friendship; but the inferences of these jokes were so preposterous, and the jokers themselves were palpably so cognisant of the absurdity, that Mr. Bender could receive the chaff with as good grace as if, for instance, he had been facetiously accused of an intention of leading his mate, Dick Treen, to the altar. Mrs. Peters did not consort with the others of her sex at the camp, but in the unwholesome-looking daughter of Mr. Stephen Bacon she displayed a sort of fraternal interest, which moved her to tow that lugubrious inebriate from the shanty to his tent on divers occasions in a manner at once unceremonious and emphatic.

The washerwoman had adorned the locality with her rather massive charms for the space of about ten months, when one dark night, deterred by the rain from making her usual visit to the “Pick and Barrow,” as she sat on an inverted tub in her cosy tent, her hands deep in her side-pockets, her back against the bunk, her feet thrust out towards the fire that raged up the small sod chimney, and the inevitable meerschaum in her lips (manly even in her solitude), a light, quick step was heard

without, the flap of the tent was drawn aside, and Cecilia Bacon, whiter, more wretchedly woe-begone and desolate-looking a thousand times than was her wont — and she was white and woe-begone at her best — staggered into the tent. Her head was bare, her thin flaxen hair, sopping wet, clung to her face and neck; and the rain dripped from the poor skirt that was drawn up to shield a tiny object feebly wailing at her breast.

Brummy started up, her beloved meerschaum, the object of a year's tender solicitude, fell, unheeded, and was broken on the clay floor. She caught the reeling girl in her arms, and laid her on the bunk, tenderly took the babe from the wet skirt, wrapped dry things of her own about the feeble atom of humanity, and laid it on a 'possum rug by the fire. After which she turned her attention to the young woman, and without a word proceeded to divest her of her soddened garments and dry her reeking hair. Brummy was a woman now, with all a good woman's gentleness, compassion, and quick perception. She showed neither surprise nor curiosity, but proceeded quietly and quickly with her work; and when the girl, revived by the warmth and the spirit that was forced between her lips, began to moan and cry, she soothed her with pitiful words in a soft, low voice that proved how vain had been the long years of wild, rough life and harsh associations to embitter the soul within.

Cecilia's story was soon told. The Honorable John was the father of her child; he had deserted her without a consideration, without a word. After the birth, fearful of meeting her father, she had left her tent, intending to crawl to the creek and drown herself and her child; but when the black waters lay at her feet she had not the courage to take the leap, and, after wandering about the bush in the wind and rain, distracted with misery and fear, she sought the washerwoman's tent. "Because," she said, "you saved me from him when you could." And starting up, she continued wildly: "He will kill me! I am sure of it! My father will kill me when he knows!"

"No, no," murmured the woman, compassionately; "don't you fear; I will watch you."

"You do not know him," hoarsely whispered the young mother. "You do not know how terrible he is at times. He has threatened me with a pick over and over. He will do it now. Hadn't I far better have gone into the creek with my baby? My blood would not have been on my father's head then, but on *his* — its father's. Father is drinking again, and he will kill me!"

"Hush! hush! and rest now. If you can, go back to your tent early in the morning. Your father is drinking; he will notice nothing — tell him nothing. Leave your baby with me; I will care for it. Nobody will kill me!" And Mrs. Peters squared her great shoulders, and thrust her hands into her pockets, with her old assumption of manliness. "No one will kill

*me, I think!*”

The habitués of the “Pick and Barrow” were astounded, mystified, amazed, and virtuously indignant when on the night following the incidents related above Dick Treen entered Monk's bar with the intelligence that “Brummy Peters had got a kid!”

The shock conveyed by the news was general, and confounded the miners. They gazed open-mouthed and dumb. A hurt and resentful feeling succeeded. They had been imposed upon — their confidence had been outraged. To think that Brummy Peters, who had overawed them with her muscle and manly assurance, and hoodwinked them with side-pockets and a billycock hat, was as frail as the frailest of her sex — a weak, wayward woman after all! It was a violation of all their finest sentiments. “And *she* threw me, Cumberland and Durham style, best three out of five!” murmured a brawny Geordie, in a bated whisper, only now feeling the full force of his degradation. Strangely enough all eyes focussed on Mr. Joseph Bender, who blushed like a school-girl under the concerted gaze, and toyed uneasily with his dislocated nose.

Gradually the look of consternation on the faces of the assemblage gave place to a broad grin, which presently extended to a wild guffaw, and thirty accusing fingers were pointed at the now furious Bender.

“Here, look here, you fellers!” he roared, dashing his glass upon the floor and drawing his sleeves back from his great, knotted fist. “This is too thunderin' stiff, y'know! The first man ez says I've anythin' t'do with that youngster 'll get smashed! Now, notice!”

Nobody spoke, but everybody laughed, and the accusing fingers still pointed. Mr. Bender lingered for a moment on the point of running *amok* and wreaking his vengeance on all and sundry, but thought better of it, pulled his hat over his eyes, and strode out, his soul a prey to angry passions and injured innocence.

Mrs. Peters fed the child by artificial means; she procured a cunningly-designed bottle and tubes, and went regularly to the station homestead, at the foot of Miamia, for milk. The diggers regarded this conduct with an unfavourable eye; they supposed it to be another display of anti-feminine sentiment, and nothing that Brummy might do now could make them forget that she was a woman — she had forfeited all her rights as a man and a brother irretrievably. She visited the shanty occasionally, and endeavoured to maintain her old footing, but the men preserved a studied coolness, and Curly Hunt even went so far as to suggest that she be summarily ejected; but that perky little individual was brought to a sudden repentance by being knocked over a bench and thrown bodily through the calico window by the ireful washerwoman.

Brummy appeared to be very fond of the child, but Bender was frequently accused of displaying a criminal lack of parental affection. Since the arrival of the little stranger the demeanour of this gentleman

had undergone a painful change. He had grown moody and furtive; the banter of his companions drove him furious; to be regarded as the father of Brummy's child was bitter gall. Given any other woman, and he might have accepted the imputation with some complacency, but Brummy — Brummy Peters, with her side-pockets, ready fist, and strong meerschaum — it was *too* much. He determined to vindicate his character, and clear his name of the tender impeachment at any cost. With this object in view he developed amateur-detective proclivities, and kept a zealous eye on the laundry.

The baby was just a month old, when one night the homely Mr. Bender burst into the “Pick and Barrow” (which, by the way, he had avoided of late), his face radiant, and the ejaculation of an ancient philosopher on his lips.

“Eureka! I've struck it, boys!” he cried triumphantly.

“What? The reef?” exclaimed the men with one voice — there having been some prospecting for a reef on the high ground.

“Reef be d——! No; proofs that you fellers're a lot of blamed asses as've been barkin' up th' wrong tree!” The representation of a lot of asses barking up a tree was certainly not a strikingly felicitous illustration; but Bender was too excited to be precise in small matters. He continued:

“See here, with all yer infernal jaw an' cheek, that kid ain't Brummy's, after all.”

“Not Brummy's!” — and great excitement.

“No 'taint. It's *his* daughter's!”

But, despite Bender's circumspection, Mr. Bacon had heard, and he advanced into the light, the big tears stealing down his cheeks and his favourite look of unutterable woe overspreading his bloated face.

“*Whose* child did you say, Mr. Bender, sir?” he queried, in tones of deep bathos.

“Nobody's! Go to blazes, snufflebuster! This ain't no business of yours!”

Stephen Bacon retired again to his shades to indulge his lachrymose propensities and sorrow over his brandy, and Bender related in a low voice how, by keeping an eye on Brummy's establishment, noting Cis's frequent visits, and putting this and that together, he had arrived at the conclusion that was to prove him innocent of the delicate peccadillo insinuated against him. Mr. Bacon's settled sorrow was very distressing that night, and he was subsequently ejected amidst a shower of tears, dolefully calling upon his late lamented wife to come back and comfort his declining years; but that lady, doubtless retaining a lively remembrance of the weight of his fist and the force of his foot, failed to respond.

Next morning being Sunday, an off-day, quite a number of the miners, who were indulging in a game of quoits, and others who were sunning

themselves and smoking on the grass, indolent and uninterested spectators, were disturbed by sounds of a row at the tent of their laundress, and as the public interest of the Flat centred for the time in that domicile, the loungers leisurely arose, the contestants dropped their quoits, and all strolled across to the tent. Mrs. Peters was standing with her back to the entrance, her lips were tightly compressed, and there was an awed, sorrowful expression in her face that the men had never seen there before. She held the baby in her arms, in quite a matronly fashion, and calmly faced Mr. Stephen Bacon, who was bordering on sobriety, and whose settled sorrow was subordinated for the time to unreasoning rage.

"You've got my girl here!" he yelled, gracefully turning the sentence with several euphonious curses, and brandishing the pick-handle he held in his hand.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Peters, quietly; "she's in the cent."

"Well, I want her. D——n you! I want her. I've 'eard your little game. It's all up! She got away from me last night, but I'll have her now!"

"She got further away than you think, Steve Bacon; but you can have her."

"You don't want t' see no girl with that in yer fist," said Bender, who had come up with the others, snatching the pick-handle from his grasp. "And yer want t' be carm, y' know, 'cause if yer hurt yer girl when I'm near, I'll spread y' out quick."

"He can't hurt her," added Brummy. "Come in. Don't go away, boys; she'd like to see y' all. Jest come up and look in."

The men who had turned away, thinking the girl would doubly feel her shame if upbraided in their presence, startled by the tone in which the request was made, went back. Brummy held the flap of the tent aside, and they all looked in.

"Great God! Dead?"

Yes, the pale, slight, awkward girl, scarcely paler in death, her large, light-blue eyes fixed with the frightened expression that had characterised them in life, lay dead upon Brummy's bunk, and from the spare flaxen hair, and the long thin hand, and the points of her clothing, hanging over the side, pools of water had dripped to the floor.

"Yes, she's dead!" said Mrs. Peters, the tears on her lashes belying her harsh tones. "Drowned! I found her body in the shallow water near the bank when I went to the dam this morning. This is your work, Joe Bender."

"No! No! For Lord's sake don't say that!!"

"You told her story at Monkey Bill's last night — *he* heard you. That snivelling cur was a devil to her. She said he would kill her if he ever knew — he intended to last night, but she got away and took the job off his hands."

Steve Bacon, shocked by the unexpected sight, had fallen into a crouching position in the corner. He straightened himself now.

“And her child?” he muttered, pointing towards the dead girl.

“He is mine. She gave him to me, and I will keep him.” And the muscular arms of the washerwoman folded the tiny mite closer to her breast.

On the Monday evening following Brummy Peters was waited on by a deputation. A very respectful deputation it was, and wished to signify that the fellers all voted her a brick, an' hoped how she'd pocket that trifle to help her with the youngster, an' say nothin'." That trifle was a roll of notes of all sorts and sizes surrounding a fiveounce nugget, the biggest ever found on the rush, and the contribution of the Geordie. Mrs. Peters, in responding, accepted the gift, and said she knew the boys was real grit, and promised to make a man of the little chap on her bosom if she could. And right royally she fulfilled her promise; it would astonish you if you only knew who is the foster-son of the washerwoman of Jacker's Flat.

## **Faces in the Street.**

### **Henry Lawson**

They lie, the men who tell us in a loud decisive tone  
That want is here a stranger, and that misery's unknown,  
For where the nearest suburb and the city proper meet  
My window-sill is level with the faces in the street —

    Drifting past, drifting past,  
    To the beat of weary feet —  
While I sorrow for the owners of those faces in the street.

And cause I have to sorrow, in a land so young and fair,  
To see upon those faces stamped the marks of Want and Care;  
I look in vain for traces of the fresh and fair and sweet,  
In sallow, sunken faces that are drifting through the street —

    Drifting on, drifting on,  
    To the tread of listless feet;  
I can sorrow for the owners of those faces in the street.

In hours before the dawning dims the starlight in the sky,  
The wan and weary faces first begin to trickle by,  
Increasing as the moments hurry on with morning feet,  
Till like a pallid river flow the faces in the street —

    Flowing in, flowing in,  
    To the beating of their feet —  
Ah! I sorrow for the owners of those faces in the street.

The human river dwindles when 'tis past the hour of eight,  
Its waves go flowing faster in the fear of being late;  
But slowly drag the moments, whilst, beneath the dust and heat,  
The city grinds the owners of the faces in the street —

    Grinding flesh, grinding bone,  
    Yielding scarce enough to eat —  
Oh! I sorrow for the owners of the faces in the street.

And then the only faces till the sun is sinking down  
Are those of outside toilers and the idlers of the town,  
Save here and there a face that seems a stranger in the street,

Tells of the city's unemployed upon his weary beat —  
    Drifting round, drifting round,  
    To the scrape of restless feet —  
Ah! My heart aches for the owner of that sad face in the street.

And when the hours on lagging feet have slowly dragged away,  
And sickly yellow gaslights rise to mock the going day,  
Then, flowing past my window, like a tide in its retreat,  
Again I see the pallid stream of faces in the street —  
    Ebbing out, ebbing out,  
    To the drag of tired feet,  
While my heart is aching dumbly for the faces in the street.

And now all blurred and smirched with vice the day's sad pages end,  
For while the short "large hours" towards the longer "small hours" trend,  
With smiles that mock the wearer, and with words that half entreat,  
Delilah pleads for custom at the corner of the street —  
    Sinking down, sinking down,  
    Battered wreck by tempests beat —  
A dreadful, thankless trade is hers, that Woman of the Street.

But, ah! To dreader things than these our fair young city comes,  
For in its heart are growing thick the filthy dens and slums,  
Where human forms shall rot away in sties for swine unmeet,  
And ghostly faces shall be seen unfit for any street —  
    Rotting out, rotting out,  
    For lack of air and meat —  
In dens of vice and horror that are hidden from the street.

I wonder would the avarice of wealthy men endure  
Were all their windows level with the faces of the Poor?  
Ah! Mammon's slaves, your knees shall knock, your hearts in terror beat,  
When God demands a reason for the sorrows of the street!  
    The wrong things and the bad things  
    And the sad things that we meet  
In the filthy lane and alley, and the cruel, heartless street.

I left the dreadful corner where the steps are never still,  
And sought another window overlooking gorge and hill;  
But when the night came dreary with the driving rain and sleet,  
They haunted me — the shadows of those faces in the street,  
    Flitting by, flitting by,  
    Flitting by with noiseless feet,  
And with cheeks but little paler than the real ones in the street.

Once I cried: "Oh, God Almighty! if Thy might doth still endure,

Now show me in a vision, for the wrongs of Earth, a cure.”  
And lo! with shops all shuttered, I beheld a city's street,  
And in the waning distance heard the tramp of many feet,  
    Coming near, coming near,  
    To a drum's dull distant beat,  
And soon I saw the army that was marching down the street.

And, like a swollen river that has bursted bank and wall,  
The human flood came pouring with the red flags over all!  
And kindled eyes all blazing bright with revolution's heat!  
And flashing swords reflecting rigid faces in the street  
    Pouring on, pouring on,  
    To a drum's loud threatening beat,  
And the war-hymns and the cheering of the people in the street.

And so 'twill be while e'er the world goes rolling round its course,  
The warning pen shall write in vain, the warning voice grow hoarse,  
But not until a city feels red revolution's feet  
Shall its sad people miss awhile the terrors of the street —  
    The dreadful everlasting strife  
    For scarcely clothes and meat  
In that great mill for human bones — the city's cruel street

## Reveries in Rhyme.

Victor J. Daley

### Midsummer in a Hawkesbury Valley.

It was a day of sombre heat:  
The still, dense air was void of sound  
And life; no wing of bird did beat  
A little breeze through it — the ground  
Was like live ashes to the feet.  
From the black hills that loomed around  
The valley, many a sudden spire  
Of flame shot up, and writhed, and curled,  
And sank again for heaviness:  
And heavy seemed to men that day  
The burden of the weary world.  
For evermore the sky did press  
Closer upon the earth that lay  
Fainting beneath, as one in dire  
Dreams of the night upon whose breast  
Sits a black phantom of unrest  
That holds him down. The earth and sky  
Did seem, unto the troubled eye,  
A roof of smoke, a floor of fire.

There was no water in the land.  
Deep in the night of each ravine  
Men, vainly searching for it, found  
Dry hollows in the gaping ground,  
Like sockets where clear eyes had been,  
Now burnt out with a scorching brand.  
There was no water in the land  
But the salt-sea tide, that did roll  
Far past the places where, till then,  
The sweet streams met and flung it back;  
The beds of little brooks, that stole

In spring-time down each ferny glen,  
And rippled over rock and sand,  
Were drier than a cattle-track.  
A dull, strange languor of disease  
That ever with the heat increased,  
Fell upon man, and bird, and beast;  
The thin-flanked cattle gasped for breath,  
The birds dropped dead from drooping trees,  
And men, who drank the muddy lees  
From each near-dry though deep-dug well,  
Grew faint, and over all things fell  
A heavy stupor, dank as Death.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fierce Nature, glaring with a face  
Of savage scorn at my despair,  
Withered my heart. From cone to base  
The hills were full of hollow eyes  
That rayed out darkness, dead and dull;  
Gray rocks grinned under ridges bare,  
Like dry teeth in a mouldered skull,  
And ghastly gum-tree trunks did loom  
Out of black clefts, and rifts of gloom  
As sheeted spectres that arise  
From yawning graves at dead of night  
To fill the living with affright,  
And, like to witches foul that bare  
Their withered arms, and bend, and cast  
Dread curses on the sleeping lands  
In awful legends of the past;  
Red gums, with outstretched, bloody hands,  
Shook maledictions in the air.

Fear was around me everywhere;  
The wrinkled foreheads of the rocks  
Frowned on me, and methought I saw —  
Deep down in dismal gulfs of awe,  
Where grey death-adders have their lair,  
With the fiend-bat, the flying-fox,  
And dim sun-rays, down-groping far,  
Pale as a dead man's fingers are —  
The grisly image of Decay,  
That at the root of Life does gnaw,  
Sitting alone upon a throne

Of rotting skull and bleaching bone.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is an end to all our griefs:  
Little the red worm of the grave  
Will vex us when our days are done,  
So changed my thought; up-gazing them  
On gray-piled stones, that seemed the cairns  
Of dead and long-forgotten chiefs —  
The men of old, the poor wild men  
Who, under dim lights, fought a brave,  
Sad fight of Life, where hope was none,  
In the vague, voiceless, far-off years —  
It changed again to present pain,  
And I saw Sorrow everywhere:  
In blackened trees and rust-red ferns,  
Blasted by bush-fires and the sun;  
And by the salt-flood — salt as tears —  
Where the wild apple-trees hung low,  
And evermore did stoop and stare  
At a drowned image in the wave,  
Wringing their knotted hands of woe;  
And the dark swamp-oaks, row on row,  
Did line the banks — a sombre train  
Of mourners with down-streaming hair.

## **Two Sunsets.**

### **On the Shore.**

The day and its delights are done;  
So all delights and days expire:  
Down in the dim, sad West the sun  
Is dying like a dying fire.

The fiercest lances of his light  
Are spent; I watch him droop and die  
Like a great king who falls in fight;  
None dared the duel of his eye  
Living, but, now his eye is dim,  
The eyes of all may stare at him.  
How lovely in his strength at morn  
He orb'd along the burning blue!  
The blown gold of his flying hair

Was tangled in green-tressed trees,  
And netted in the river sand  
In gleaming links of amber clear.  
But all his shining locks are shorn,  
His brow of its bright crown is bare,  
The golden sceptre leaves his hand,  
And deeper, darker, grows the hue  
Of the dim purple draperies  
And cloudy banners round his bier.

O beautiful, rose-hearted dawn! —  
O splendid noon of gold and blue! —  
Is this wan glimmer all of you?  
Where are the blush and bloom ye gave  
To laughing land and smiling sea? —  
The swift lights that did flash and shiver  
In diamond rain upon the river,  
And set a star in each blue wave?  
Where are the merry lights and shades  
That danced through wood and over lawn,  
And flew across the dewy glades  
Like white nymphs chased by satyr lovers?  
Faded and perished utterly.  
All delicate, and all rich colour  
In flower and cloud, on lawn and lea,  
On butterfly, and bird, and bee,  
A little space and all are gone —  
And darkness, like a raven, hovers  
Over the death-bed of the day.

\* \* \* \* \*

So, when the long, last night draws on,  
And all the world grows ghastly gray,  
We see our beautiful and brave  
Wither, and watch with heavy signs  
The life-light dying in their eyes,  
The love-light slowly fading out,  
Leaving no faint hope in their place,  
But only, on each dear wan face  
The shadow of a weary doubt,  
The ashen pallor of the grave.

O gracious morn and golden noon!  
With what fair dreams did ye depart —

Beloved so well and lost so soon!  
I could not fold ye to my breast;  
I could not hide ye in my heart;  
I saw the Watchers in the West —  
Sad, shrouded shapes, with hands that wring,  
And phantom fingers beckoning!

**On the River.**

Fade off' the ridges, rosy light,  
Fade slowly from the last gray height,  
And leave no gloomy cloud to grieve  
The heart of this enchanted eve!

All things beneath the still sky seem  
Bound by the spell of a sweet dream;  
In the dusk forest, dreamingly,  
Droops lowly down each plumèd head;  
The river flowing softly by  
Dreams of the sea; the quiet sea  
Dreams of the unseen stars; and I  
Am dreaming of the dreamless dead.

The river has a silken sheen,  
But red rays of the sunset stain  
Its pictures, from the steep shore caught,  
Till shades of rock, and fern, and tree  
Glow like the figures on a pane  
Of some old church by twilight seen,  
Or like the rich devices wrought  
Upon an ancient tapestry.

\* \* \* \* \*

All lonely in a drifting boat  
Through shine and shade I float and float,  
Dreaming and dreaming, till I seem  
Part of the picture and the dream.

There is no sound to break the spell;  
No voice of bird or stir of bough.  
Only the lisp of waters wreathing  
In little ripples round the prow  
And a low air, like Silence breathing,  
That hardly dusks the sleepy swell  
Whereon I float to that strange deep

That sighs upon the shores of Sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

But, in the silent heaven blooming,  
Behold the wondrous sunset-flower  
That blooms and fades within the hour —  
The flower of fantasy, perfuming  
With subtle melody of scent  
The blue aisles of the firmament!

For colour, music, scent, are one;  
From deeps of air to airless heights,  
Lo, how he sweeps, the splendid sun,  
His burning lyre of many lights!  
See the clear golden-lily blowing!  
It shines as shone thy gentle soul,  
O my most sweet, when from the goal  
Of life, far-gazing, thou didst see —  
While Death still feared to touch thine eyes,  
Where such immortal light was glowing —  
The vision of Eternity,  
The pearly gates of Paradise!

Now richer hues the sky illumine:  
The pale-gold blushes into bloom,  
Delicate as the flowering  
Of first-love in the tender spring  
Of life, when love is wizardry  
That over narrow days can throw  
A glamour and a glory; so  
Did thine, my Beautiful, for me  
So long ago; so long ago.

So long ago! so long ago!  
Ah, who can Love and Grief estrange?  
Or Memory and Sorrow part?  
Lo, in the West, another change —  
A deeper glow: a rose of fire:  
A rose of passionate desire  
Lone burning in a lonely heart.

A lonely heart; a lonely flood.  
The wave that glassed her gleaming head  
And smiling passed, it does not know  
That gleaming head lies dark and low;

The myrtle-tree that bends above,  
I pray that it might early bud,  
For under its green boughs sate we —  
We twain, we only, hand in hand,  
When Love was lord of all the land —  
It does not know that she is dead  
And all is over now with Love,  
Is over now with Love and me.

Once more, once more, O shining years  
Gone by; once more, O vanished days  
Whose hours flew by on iris-wings,  
Come back and bring my love to me!  
My voice faints down the wooded ways  
And dies along the darkling flood.  
The past is past; I cry in vain,  
For when did Death an answer deign  
To Love's heart-broken questionings?  
The dead are deaf; dust chokes their ears;  
Only the rolling river hears  
Far off the calling of the sea —  
A shiver strikes through all my blood,  
My eyes are full of sudden tears.

\* \* \* \* \*

The shadows gather over all,  
The valley, and the mountains old;  
Shadow on shadow fast they fall  
On glooming green and waning gold;  
And on my heart they gather drear,  
Damp as with grave-damps, dark with fear.

\* \* \* \* \*

O Sorrow, Sorrow, couldst thou leave me  
Not one brief hour to dream alone?  
Hast thou not all my days to grieve me?  
My nights, are they not all thine own?  
Thou hauntest me at morning light,  
Thou blackenest the white moonbeams —  
A hollow voice at noon; at night  
A crowned ghost, sitting on a throne,  
Ruling the kingdom of my dreams.

\* \* \* \* \*

Maker of men, Thou gavest breath,  
Thou gavest love to all that live.  
Thou rendest loves and lives apart;  
All wise art Thou; who questioneth  
Thy will, or who can read Thy heart?  
But couldst Thou not in mercy give  
A sign to us — one little spark  
Of sure hope that the end of all  
Is not concealed beneath the pall,  
Or wound up with the winding-sheet?  
Who heedeth aught the preacher saith  
When eyes wax dim, and limbs grow stark,  
And fear sits on the darkened bed?  
The dying man turns to the wall.  
What hope have we above our dead? —  
Tense fingers clutching at the dark,  
And hopeless hands that vainly beat  
Against the iron doors of Death!

## **Dreams.**

I have been dreaming all a summer day  
Of rare and dainty poems I would write;  
Love-lyrics delicate as lilac-scent,  
Soft idylls wov'n of wind, and flow'r, and stream  
And songs and sonnets carven in fine gold.

The day is fading, and the dusk is cold;  
Out of the skies has gone the opal gleam,  
Out of my heart has passed the high intent  
Into the shadow of the falling night —  
Must all my dreams in darkness pass away?

I have been dreaming all a summer day:  
Shall I go dreaming so until Life's light  
Fades in Death's dusk, and all my days are spent?  
Ah, what am I the dreamer but a dream!  
The day is fading, and the dusk is cold.

My songs and sonnets carven in fine gold  
Have faded from me with the last day-beam  
That purple lustre to the sea-line lent,  
And flushed the clouds with rose and chrysolite;  
So days and dreams in darkness pass away.

I have been dreaming all a summer day  
Of songs and sonnets carven in fine gold;  
But all my dreams in darkness pass away;  
The day is fading, and the dusk is cold.

### **Hail to the Dead.**

Hail to the dead whose cares are over,  
Hail to the dead whose days are done.  
    Quiet they lie beneath the clover,  
    Maiden and young man, loved and lover,  
While the old world spins around the sun.  
    Hail to the dead!

Hail to the dead; their land is freehold;  
    For their low houses they pay no rent.  
The fattest of soils the dead in fee hold;  
Fretting and toil is ours, but, behold,  
    Who but the dead are well content?  
    Hail to the dead!

Hail to the dead, their thirst they're slaking  
    With the strong red juice from the vine at its root.  
Down in the land where there is no waking,  
No forgetting, and no forsaking,  
    While we toil hard for the sapless fruit.  
    Hail to the dead!

Husbands and wives in peace together,  
    There they lie with never a word;  
Never a hitch in the marriage tether,  
Never a storm through the stilly weather,  
    Above, long grass by the warm winds stirred.  
    Hail to the dead!

### **Even So.**

The days go by; the days go by,  
Sadly and wearily to die:  
    Each with its burden of small cares,  
    Each with its sad gift of grey hairs  
For those who sit, like me, and sigh,  
"The days go by! The days go by!"

Ah, nevermore on shining plumes,

Shedding a rain of rare perfumes  
That men call memories, they are borne  
As in Life's many-visioned morn,  
When Love sang in the myrtle-blooms:  
Ah, nevermore on shining plumes!

Where is my Life? Where is my Life?  
The morning of my youth was rife  
With the promise of a golden day.  
Where have my hopes gone? Where are they —  
The passions and the splendid strife?  
Where is my Life? Where is my Life?

My thoughts take hue from this wild day,  
And, like the skies, are ashen grey;  
The sharp rain, falling constantly  
Lashes with whips of steel the sea:  
What words are left for Hope to say?  
My thoughts take hue from this wild day.

I dreamt — my Life is all a dream! —  
That I should sing a song supreme  
To gladden all sad eyes that weep;  
And take the Harp of Time and sweep  
Its chords to some eternal theme.  
I dreamt — my Life is all a dream.

The world is very old and wan —  
The sun that once so brightly shone  
Is now as pale as the pale moon.  
I would that Death came swift and soon:  
For all my dreams are dead and gone.  
The world is very old and wan.

\* \* \* \* \*

The world is young, the world is strong,  
But I in dreams have wandered long.  
God lives. What can Death do to me?  
(The sun is shining on the sea).  
Yet shall I sing my splendid song —  
The world is young, the world is strong.

## **The First of May.**

The waters make a music low:

The river reeds  
Are trembling to the tunes of long ago —  
Dead days and deeds

Become alive again, as on  
We float, and float,  
Through shadows of the golden Summers gone,  
And Springs remote.

Above our heads the trees bloom out  
In white and red  
Great blossoms, that make glad the air about;  
And old suns shed

Their rays athwart them. Ah, the light  
Is bright and fair!  
No suns that shine upon us now are bright  
As those suns were.

And, gazing down into the stream,  
We see a face,  
As sweet as buds that blossom in a dream,  
Ere sorrows chase

Fair dreams from men, and send in lieu  
Sad thoughts. A wreath  
Of blue-bells binds the head — a bluer blue  
The eyes beneath.

This is our little Annie's face.  
Our child-sweetheart  
Whom long ago we lost in that dark place  
Where all lives part.

Beside us, still, we see her stand,  
Who is no more.  
She walked with us through childhood, hand in hand,  
But at the door

Of Youth departed from us. Fain  
Were we that day  
To go with her. Ah, sweetheart, come again,  
This First of May!

**At the Opera.**

The curtain rose — the play began —  
The limelight on the gay garbs shone;  
Yet carelessly I gazed upon  
The painted players, maid and man,  
As one with idle eyes who sees  
The marble figures on a frieze.

Long lark notes clear the first act close,  
So the soprano: then a hush —  
The tenor, tender as a thrush.  
Then loud and high the chorus rose,  
Till, with a sudden rush and strong,  
It ended in a storm of song.

The curtain fell — the music died —  
The lights grew bright, revealing there  
The flash of jewelled fingers fair,  
And wreaths of pearls on brows of pride;  
Then, with a quick flushed cheek, I turned  
And into mine her dark eyes burned.

Such eyes but once a man may see,  
And, seeing once, his fancy dies  
To thought of any other eyes:  
So shadow-soft, they seemed to be  
Twin-haunted lakes, lit by the gleams  
Of a mysterious moon of dreams.

Silk lashes veiled their liquid light  
With such a shade as tall reeds fling  
From the lake-marge at sunseting:  
Their darkness might have hid the night —  
Yet whoso saw their glance would say  
Night dreamt therein, and saw the day.

Long looked I at them, wondering  
What tender memories were hid  
Beneath each blue-veined lily-lid;  
What hopes of joys the years would bring;  
What griefs? In vain: I might not guess  
The secret of their silentness.

What of her face? Her face, meseems,  
Was such as painters see who muse  
By moonlight in dim avenues,  
Yet cannot paint; or, as in dreams,

Strange poets see, but, when they try  
To carve in verse are dumb — so I.

Yet well I know that I have seen  
That sweet face in the long ago  
In a rose-bower — well I know —  
Laughing the singing leaves between,  
In that strange land of rose and rhyme —  
The land of Once upon a Time.

O, unknown sweet, so sweetly known,  
I know not what your name may be —  
Madonna is your name to me —  
Nor where your lines in life are thrown;  
But soul sees soul — what is the rest?  
A passing phantom, at the best.

Did your young bosom ever glow  
To love? or burns your heart beneath  
As burns the bud rose in its sheath?  
I neither know nor wish to know:  
I smell the rose upon the tree —  
Who will may pluck, and wear for me —

May wear the rose, and watch it die,  
And, leaf by red leaf, fade and fall,  
Till there be nothing left at all  
Of its sweet loveliness; but I  
Love it so well, I leave it free —  
The scent alone I take with me!

As one who visits sacred spots  
Brings tokens back, so I from you  
A glance, a smile, a rapture new!  
And these are my forget-me-nots!  
I take from you but only these —  
Give all the rest to whom you please.

Sweet flowers no bitter weeds may choke,  
I keep ye still to muse upon  
When the dark night is creeping on,  
And, drawing haughtily his cloak  
Of purple cloud across his eyes,  
The Caesar of the heavens dies.

Sweet eyes, your glance a light shall cast

On me, when dreaded ghosts arise  
Of dead regrets with shrouded eyes,  
And phantoms of the perished past —  
Old thoughts, old hopes, and old desire —  
Gather around my lonely fire!

Farewell! In rhyme, I kiss your hand —  
Kiss not unsweet, although unheard! —  
This is our secret, say no word  
That I have been in Fairyland,  
And seen for one brief moment's space  
The Queen Titania face to face.

### **A Sunset Fantasy.**

Spell-bound by a sweet fantasy  
At evenglow I stand  
Beside a strange sardonyx sea  
That rings a sunset land.

The rich lights fade out one by one,  
Like to a peony  
And drowned in wine, the round red sun  
Sinks down in that strange sea.

With red clouds has he chapletéd  
His brows, like him who tied  
Of old a rose-wreath round his head,  
And drank to Death, and died.

His wake across the ocean-floor  
In a long glory lies,  
Like a gold wave-way to the shore  
Of some sea-paradise.

My dream flies after him, and I  
Am in another land;  
The sun sets in another sky,  
And we sit hand in hand.

Grey eyes look into mine; such eyes  
I think the angels' are —  
Soft as the soft light in the skies,  
When shines the morning star.

And tremulous as morn when thin

Gold lights begin to glow,  
Revealing the bright soul within  
As dawns the sun below.

So, hand in hand, we watch the sun  
Burn down the Western deeps,  
Dreaming a charmed dream, as one  
Who in enchantment sleeps.

A dream of how we twain some day,  
Careless of map or chart,  
Will both take ship and sail away  
Into the sunset's heart.

Our ship shall be of sandal built,  
Like ships in old-world tales,  
Carven with cunning art and gilt,  
And winged with scented sails

Of silver silk, whereon the red  
Great gladioli burn,  
A rainbow-flag at her mast-head,  
A rose-flag at her stern.

And, perching on the point above  
Wherefrom the pennon blows,  
The figure of a flying dove,  
And in her beak a rose.

And from the fading land the breeze  
Shall bring us, blowing low,  
Old odours and old memories,  
And airs of long ago —

A melody that has no words  
Which are of speech a part,  
Yet touching all the deepest chords  
That tremble in the heart.

A scented song blown oversea,  
As though, from bow'rs of bloom,  
A wind-harp in a lilac-tree  
Breathed music and perfume.

And we, no more with longings pale,  
Will hearken to its blow —  
I, in the shadow of the sail,

You, in the sunset glow.

For, with the fading land, our fond  
Old fears shall all fade out,  
Paled by the light from shores beyond  
The dread of Death or Doubt.

And when Death from a cloud above  
His awful shadow flings,  
The Spirit of Immortal Love  
Will shield us with his wings.

He is the Lord of dreams divine,  
And lures us with his smiles  
Along the splendour opaline  
Unto the Blessed Isles.

## **In Memoriam: Marcus Clarke.**

### **Henry Kendall**

The night winds sob on mountains drear,  
Where gleams by fits the wint'ry star;  
And in the wild dumb woods I hear  
A moaning harbor bar.

The branch and leaf are very still,  
But now the great grave dark has grown,  
The torrent in the harsh sea-hill  
Sends forth a deeper tone.

Some sad, faint voice is far above,  
And many things I dream, it saith,  
Of home made beautiful by Love  
And sanctified by Death.

I cannot catch its perfect phrase;  
But, ah, the touching words to me  
Bring back the lights of other days —  
The friends that used to be.

Here sitting by a dying flame,  
I cannot choose but think with grief  
Of Harpur, whose unhappy name  
Is as an autumn leaf.

And domed by purer breadths of blue  
Afar from folds of forest dark,  
I see the eyes that once I knew —  
The eyes of Marcus Clarke.

Their clear, bright beauty shines a space;  
But sunny dreams in shadows end,  
The sods have hid the faded face  
Of my heroic friend.

He sleeps where winds of evening pass,

Where water songs are soft and low —  
Upon his grave the tender grass  
Has not had time to grow.

Few knew the cross he had to bear,  
And moan beneath from day to day.  
His were the bitter hours that wear  
The human heart away.

The laurels in the pit were won:  
He had to take the lot austere  
That ever seems to wait upon  
The man of letters here.

His soul was self-withdrawn. He made  
A secret of the bitter life  
Of struggle in inclement shade  
For helpless child and wife.

He toiled for love unwatched, unseen,  
And fought his troubles band by band,  
Till, like a friend of gentle mien,  
Death took him by the hand.

He rests in peace! No grasping thief  
Of hope and health can steal away  
The beauty of the flower and leaf  
Upon his tomb to-day.

The fragrant woodwinds sing above  
Where gleams the grace of willow fair;  
And often kneels a mournful love  
To plant a blossom there.

So let him sleep, whose life was hard;  
And may they place beyond the wave  
This tender rose of my regard  
Upon his tranquil grave.

# The Ghost.

**Victor J. Daley**

*(As delivered at a meeting of the Coffin Club last Christmas Eve.)*

In a life I can hardly call long  
I have had superstitions like most;  
But I rise now to own I was wrong  
In my notions regarding the Ghost —  
I was terribly hard on the Ghost.

And I think that a gentleman, when  
He finds prejudice lead him astray,  
Should acknowledge the fact, there and then,  
In a simple and straightforward way,  
In a candid and dignified way.

So I take this occasion to state  
That the Ghost, which I thought was a dread  
Thing of Tombs that did merriment hate,  
Is the gayest of creatures instead,  
The most sprightly of creatures instead.

It was night, and I sat in my room,  
Striving vainly (on gin, too!) to write,  
By a kind of a glimmering gloom  
That looked like the spectre of light,  
Like the pale simulacrum of light.

I was working a yarn up for Yule,  
That season of stories and toasts,  
In which — like a blundering mule —  
I had cast some reflections on ghosts,  
Most uncalled-for reflections on ghosts.

When, as I sat pondering there,  
The candle burnt suddenly blue!  
And I felt a cold wind in my hair!

That a Ghost sat beside me I knew,  
I most surely and dismally knew.

I am not more than humanly brave,  
And now to confess I am free  
That this gentleman fresh from the grave  
Was a sight that was too much for me,  
It was more than sufficient for me.

And I think you will grant me just here,  
Such a sight would be too much for most —  
Though I hadn't the ghost of a fear  
I might still have the fear of a Ghost,  
The popular dread of a Ghost.

It stared, and I stared at It back,  
And I tried hard to speak: the words froze  
And I felt my jaws meet with a crack,  
Like the clappers that scare away crows,  
That the farmer-boys use to scare crows.

Then slowly, by bit and by bit,  
I began (and grew bold then) to see  
That, although I was frightened of It,  
It was vastly more frightened of me!  
Many jugsful more frightened of me.

So I pushed round the gin — which was square —  
With a speech in my courtliest tones;  
But It sat like a corner-man there,  
And absently rattled its bones,  
Merely gibbered, and rattled its bones.

Then I said, “This to nothing much tends,  
And I'm busy.” It touched with its nails  
That pious contrivance of friends  
To keep dead men from telling of tales,  
The jaw-bandage, stifler of tales.

So I took up the scissors I use  
(What the trouble was then became plain)  
For dissecting my items of news,  
And I severed the bandage in twain,  
Cut it quickly and cleanly in twain.

Whereupon the Ghost rose up and laughed —  
It would freeze you to hear its dread laugh! —

And it emptied the gin at a draught.  
Blessed saints, how that Spectre could quaff!  
You would catalepse seeing It quaff.

Then It said: "Arrah, give us yer fisht!  
The divel a bone av me's proud,  
Though I happen jist now to be dhrist  
Out to kill in an illigant shroud,  
An ixpensive and illigant shroud

"And betune you and me and the posht,  
When I go on a bit av a shpree,  
There isn't, be jabers, a Ghost  
In the yard that can turn out loike me,  
As gintale and as dhressy as me."

Then I caught up its humour and said:  
"If the question is not impolite,  
How long, sir, might you have been dead  
And planted away out of sight —  
Dibbled down in the ground out of sight?

"For to me, by your leave, it appears  
That with fun and high spirits you're rife."  
"Twinty years," It replied. "Twinty years —  
And the foinest I've shpint in me loife,  
Jusht the gayest I've passed in me loife.

"And the thought of that same makes me laugh,  
Though I don't shtand another Gosht's jeers —  
When I look at me own eppytaff,  
Bemoanin' me sad fate wid tears,  
Wid poethry, praises and tears."

Then It laughed, and I said, "Bathershin,  
Mister, what may your name be again?"  
It replied, "Thravel round wid the gin:  
Me name's Mither Murphy — from Shpane,  
From the county of Cork in ould Shpane."

Then said I: "What became of your soul  
When your body died? Where did it go?"  
Its expression was dismally droll  
As it answered: "That's more than I know,  
Be me sowl, then, that's more than I know."

I said nothing, but lit a cigar,

And marked, with a scarce-repressed sigh,  
How the gin had gone down in the jar;  
For the Ghost was most fearfully dry —  
It was grimly and gruesomely dry.

Then it went on: “Now, lishten to me,  
And ye'll soon be as wise as an owl;  
The parts av a man are jisht three —  
The body, the gosht, and the sowl,  
The gosht, and the body, and sowl.

“Well, the sowl av a man, whin he dies,  
Slithers off——” Said I, “Where does it go?  
Does it play on a trump in the skies?”  
The Ghost testily said, “I dunno,  
That depinds on its hand. I dunno.

“But I know that the body and gosht  
Stay behind on the airth, and agree  
That the gosht by itself for the mosht  
Should fly round; but at times, as wid me,  
It takes its bones, too, just loike me.

“And I want ye to shtate — pass the dhrink! —  
That we goshts are not gloomy or sad,  
As ye people above seem to think;  
We are merry as niggers, and glad  
To be dead — and who wouldn't be glad

“To have no rint to pay, and no debts,  
No mother-in-law, and no wife,  
And none of the throubles and frets  
That make up the thing ye call Loife,  
The sorry ould farce ye call Loife.

“And if nixt Christmas Eve ye'll come round  
To the Simmethry, bringin' a pome —  
Yer shtyle is much loiked undherground —  
I'll take ye where ye'll be at home,  
Where, me bhoy, ye'll at wanst be at home

“It's a saypulchre, where a few picked  
Shpirits meet to enjoy thimsilves — quare  
Chaps they are, too, but very selict —  
No ornery gosht gets in there,  
No low shpecthres ever go there.”

Then It rose to propose a last “toasht,”  
And It fell on its skull, and It said,  
“I’m not a rispictable gosht;  
I’m dhrunk, sor — I wish I was dead!  
Be the hokey, I wish I was dead.”

But I lifted It up, and observed,  
I would see It safe home to its tomb;  
So out of the doorway It swerved,  
And we both plunged out into the gloom.  
And it said, as we bored through the gloom —

“Well, God be betune us and harm.”  
And I said, to myself, “ ’Twill look bright,  
With a staggering ghost on my arm,  
To be seen at this time of the night,  
At this vagabond hour of the night.”

For It kept up a fusillade loud  
Of fierce hiccoughs the whole of the way;  
Then It stopped, and said, “Tuck up me shroud!  
I would not have it shpatthered wid clay,  
It’s too good to be shpatthered wid clay.”

How this score-year old shroud should be new  
Was to me, sirs, a marvel unique;  
But It airily said, “I’ve a few  
Shtylish shrouds — I shtole this one lasht week  
From a nob that was berried lasht week.”

Then a cab passed. I hailed it. The man  
Asked me where he should drive, and I said,  
“To the Cemetery — fast as you can! —  
To the Home of the Riotous Dead —  
The Abode of the Rollicking Dead.”

“Ante-up,” said the cabman, “the fare!  
I don’t go, sir, on this lay no more;  
I believe in things done on the square —  
I’ve been had by these dashed ghosts before,  
Too frequent and often before.”

Then the Ghost went to peel off its shroud  
To fight, but I said, “You keep still  
Or you’ll be locked up! Do not be proud!”  
To the cabman: “I’ll settle the bill!

I'll fix up my spectral friend's bill.”  
“Fwhat!” it yelled; “I kin pay him his fee!”  
Then sobbed, “This disthrust is too hard —  
Take me tombshtone — it's no use to me.”  
“Pooh!” the man said, “I've three in my yard,  
Three I got the same way, in my yard.”

So I paid. We drove off. Such a drive!  
I've been round, in my time, much as most,  
But I've never, since I've been alive,  
Met such company as that same Ghost!  
None so genial as Murphy the Ghost.

Grateful, too — for It said, “I would loike  
To give a miminto to ye  
To put ye in mind of ould Moike,  
The Gosht that ye met on the shpree,  
The blathrin' ould Gosht on the shpree.

“To such kindness as yours I'm not dull.”  
Then it made the proposal bizarre,  
There and then, sirs, to screw off its skull,  
To give it to me for a jar  
For “tabakky” — Great Scott! what a jar!

Well, the time pretty pleasantly passed;  
Then silence awhile did we keep.  
When we got to the graveyard at last,  
By Jove, sirs, the Ghost was asleep,  
Snoring hard in a stertorous sleep.

We went in — and the rest is a blur —  
We each have our own little faults!  
But some faint recollections occur  
Of a revel in one of the vaults,  
A wild orgie in one of the vaults.

In which — I remember no more;  
But that Murphy, my festive old friend,  
Kept the coffin-lids all in a roar  
With his jokes — and that, sirs, is the end  
Of my story — the ultimate end.

How I got out I never have known;  
But when dawn in the Eastern sky glowed  
I found myself sitting alone

On a kerb in the Waverley Road,  
At my ease in the Waverley Road.

My memory must be at fault —  
There is *some* intellectual gloom —  
But I never could find Murphy's vault,  
Nor could spend Christmas Eve in the tomb,  
Christmas Eve in the jocular tomb.

But I think, sirs, I've put past debate  
That the Ghost which I thought was a dread  
Thing of Tombs that did merriment hate,  
Is the gayest of creatures instead,  
The most sprightly of creatures instead.

## “Clancy of the Overflow.”

### Banjo

I had written him a letter which I had, for want of better  
Knowledge sent to where I met him down the Lachlan, years ago,  
He was shearing when I knew him, so I sent the letter to him,  
Just “on spec.,” addressed as follows, “Clancy, of ‘The Overflow.’ ”

And an answer came directed in a writing unexpected  
(Which I think the same was written with a thumb-nail dipped in tar)  
'Twas his shearing-mate who wrote it, and *verbatim* I will quote it:  
“Clancy's gone to Queensland droving, and we don't know where he  
are.”

\* \* \* \* \*

In my wild erratic fancy visions come to me of Clancy  
Gone a-droving “down the Cooper” where the Western drovers go;  
As the stock are slowly stringing, Clancy rides behind them singing,  
For the drover's life has pleasures that the townsfolk never know.

And the bush hath friends to meet him and their kindly voices greet him  
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,  
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,  
And at night the wond'rous glory of the everlasting stars.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy  
Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down between the houses tall,  
And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city  
Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all.

And in place of lowing cattle, I can hear the fiendish rattle  
Of the tramways and the 'busses making hurry down the street,  
And the language uninviting of the gutter children fighting,  
Comes fitfully and faintly through the ceaseless tramp of feet.

And the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me

As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste,  
With their eager eyes and greedy, and their stunted forms and weedy,  
For townsfolk have no time to grow, they have no time to waste.

And I somehow rather fancy that I'd like to change with Claney,  
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go,  
While he faced the round eternal of the cash-book and the journal —  
But I doubt he'd suit the office, Clancy of "The Overflow."

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