

# When I Was King

**And Other Verses**

**Lawson, Henry (1867-1922)**

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And Other Verses  
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MANY of the verses in this volume appeared originally in the SYDNEY *Bulletin*, others in the *Daily Telegraph*, *Town and Country Journal*, *Evening News*, *World's News*, *Australian Star*, *Amateur Gardener*, and KALGOORLIE *Sun*, while eleven are reprinted from *The Children of the Bush*, published by Messrs. Methuen and Co., London.

The author acknowledges the courteous permission of the publishers of the foregoing to include the respective pieces here. Out of deference to repeated requests, one of the pieces omitted from the later editions of *When the World was Wide* is here restored to print.

# When I Was King And Other Verses

## The Cross-Roads

*Once more I write a line to you,  
While darker shadows fall;  
Dear friends of mine who have been true,  
And steadfast through it all.  
If I have written bitter rhymes,  
With many lines that halt,  
And if I have been false at times  
It was not all my fault.*

*To Heaven's decree I would not bow,  
And I sank very low —  
The bitter things are written now,  
And we must let them go.  
But I feel softened as I write;  
The better spirit springs,  
And I am very sad to-night  
Because of many things.*

*The friendships that I have abused,  
The trust I did betray,  
The talents that I have misused,  
The gifts I threw away.  
The things that did me little good,  
And — well my cheeks might burn —  
The kindly letters that I should  
Have answered by return.*

*But you might deem them answered now,  
And answered from my heart;  
And injured friends will understand  
'Tis I who feel the smart.  
But I have done with barren strife  
And dark imaginings,  
And in my future work and life  
Will seek the better things.*

## When I Was King

THE second time I lived on earth  
Was several hundred years ago;  
And — royal by my second birth —  
I know as much as most men know.  
I was a king who held the reins  
As never modern monarch can;  
I was a king, and I had brains,  
And, what was more, I was a man!

Called to the throne in stormy times,  
When things were at their very worst,  
I had to fight — and not with rhymes —  
My own self and my kindred first;  
And after that my friends and foes,  
And great abuses born of greed;  
And when I'd fairly conquered those,  
I ruled the land a king indeed.

I found a deal of rottenness,  
Such as in modern towns we find;  
I camped my poor in palaces  
And tents upon the plain behind.  
I marked the hovels, dens and drums  
In that fair city by the sea.  
And burnt the miles of wretched slums  
And built the homes as they should be.

I stripped the baubles from the State,  
And on the land I spent the spoil;  
I hunted off the sullen great,  
And to the farmers gave the soil.  
My people were their own police;  
My courts were free to everyone.  
My priests were to preach love and peace;  
My Judges to see justice done.

I'd studied men and studied kings,  
No crawling cant would I allow;

I hated mean and paltry things,  
As I can hate them even now.  
A land of men I meant to see,  
A strong and clean and noble race —  
No subject dared kneel down to me,  
But looked his king straight in the face

Had I not been a king in fact,  
A king in council-hall and tent,  
I might have let them crawl and act  
The courtier to their heart's content;  
But when I called on other kings,  
And saw men kneel, I felt inclined  
To gently tip the abject things  
And kick them very hard behind.

My subjects were not slaves, I guess,  
But though the women in one thing —  
A question 'twas of healthy dress —  
Would dare to argue with their king  
(I had to give in there, I own,  
Though none denied that I was strong),  
Yet they would hear my telephone  
If anything went very wrong.

I also had some poets bright —  
Their songs were grand, I will allow —  
They were, if I remember right,  
About as bad as bards are now.  
I had to give them best at last,  
And let them booze and let them sing;  
As it is now, so in the past,  
They'd small respect for gods or king.

I loved to wander through the streets —  
I carried neither sword nor dirk —  
And watch the building of my fleets,  
And watch my artisans at work.  
At times I would take off my coat  
And show them how to do a thing —  
Till someone, clucking in his throat,  
Would stare and gasp, 'It is the king!'

And I would say, 'Shut up, you fools!  
Is it for this my towns I burn?

You don't know how to handle tools,  
And by my faith you'll have to learn!"  
I was a king, but what of that?  
A king may warble in the spring  
And carry eggs home in his hat,  
Provided that he *is* a king.

I loved to stroll about the town  
With chums at night, and talk of things,  
And, though I chanced to wear the crown,  
My friends, by intellect, were kings.  
When I was doubtful, then I might  
Discuss a matter quietly,  
But when I felt that I was right  
No power on earth could alter me!

And now and then it was no sin  
Nor folly to relax a bit —  
I'd take my friends into an inn  
And call for wine and pay for it.  
And then of many things we'd clack  
With loosened tongues and visions clear —  
I often heard behind my back  
The whispered 'Peace, the king is here!'

The women harped about a queen,  
I knew they longed to have a court  
And flaunt their feathers on the scene,  
But hitherto I'd held the fort.  
My subjects wanted me, no doubt,  
To give the throne a son and heir —  
(There were some little kings about,  
But that was neither here nor there).

I'd no occasion for a wife —  
A queen as yet was not my plan;  
I'd seen a lot of married life —  
My sire had been a married man.  
'A son and heir be hanged!' I said —  
'How dare you ask for such a thing,  
'You fight it out when I am dead  
'And let the best man be the king!'

'Your Majesty, we love you well!'  
A candid friend would say to me —

'But there be tales that people tell  
    'Unfitted to thy dignity' — —  
'My dignity be damned!' I'd say,  
    'Bring me no women's chattering!  
'I'll be a man while yet I may —  
    'When trouble comes I'll be a king!

I'd kept my kingdom clean and strong  
    While other kingdoms were like ours —  
I had no need to brook a wrong,  
    I feared not all the rotten Powers  
I did not eat my heart out then,  
    Nor feebly fight in verse or prose  
I'd take five hundred thousand men  
    To argue matters with my foes!

It thrilled me through, the mighty tramp  
    Of armèd men, the thundering cheer —  
The pregnant whisper through the camp  
    At dead of night: 'The King is here!'  
And though we paid for victory  
    On some fields that were hard to hold,  
The faith my soldiers had in me  
    Oft strengthened mine a hundredfold.

I'd chat with soldiers by the fires  
    On rocky heights and river banks,  
I'd seek the brains that war requires,  
    And take my captains from the ranks.  
And so, until the storm was by,  
    And came the peace just war can bring,  
I bore me so that men might cry  
    With all their hearts, 'God Save the King.'

*When I was king the world was wide,  
    And I was strong and I was free.  
I knew no hatred, knew no pride,  
    No envy and no treachery.  
I feared no lies. I feared no truth,  
    Nor any storm that time might bring.  
I had my love, I had my youth,  
    The world was mine when I was king.*

Peace came at last — and strange is Fate —  
    The women begged just once alone

To see me robed in royal state  
And seated on my father's throne.  
I thought, 'Shall I this boon deny?'  
And said — and 'twas a paltry thing:  
'I'll show the fools just once that I  
'Can look, as well as be, a king.'

They dusted out the castle old,  
And from the closet and the chest  
They dug the jewels set in gold —  
The crown and robes and all the rest.  
They came with eyes like stars of night,  
With diamonds set in raven hair,  
They came with arms and bosoms white —  
And, Oh my God! but one was fair!

They dressed me as the kings had been,  
The ancient royal purple spread,  
And one that was to be my queen,  
She placed the circlet on my head.  
They pressed their hearts and bowed to me,  
They knelt with arms uplifted all.  
I felt the rush of vanity —  
The pride that goes before the fall.

\* \* \* \* \*

And then the banquet and the wine  
With Satan's music and the glance  
Of siren eyes. Those captains mine  
Were reeling in the maddening dance:  
A finger writing on the wall,  
While girls sang as the angels sing —  
*A drunken boaster in the hall,  
The fool that used to be a king.*

I rose again — no matter how —  
A woman, and a deeper fall —  
I move amongst my people now  
The most degraded of them all.  
But, if in centuries to come,  
I live once more and claim my own,  
I'll see my subjects blind and dumb  
Before they set me on a throne.

## The Author's Farewell to the Bushmen

SOME carry their swags in the Great North-West,  
Where the bravest battle and die,  
And a few have gone to their last long rest,  
And a few have said: Good-bye!  
The coast grows dim, and it may be long  
Ere the Gums again I see;  
So I put my soul in a farewell song  
To the chaps who barracked for me.

Their days are hard at the best of times,  
And their dreams are dreams of care —  
God bless them all for their big soft hearts,  
And the brave, brave grins they wear!  
God keep me straight as a man can go,  
And true as a man may be!  
For the sake of the hearts that were always so,  
Of the men who had faith in me!

And a ship-side word I would say, you chaps  
Of the blood of the Don't-give-in!  
The world will call it a boast, perhaps —  
But I'll win, if a man can win!  
And not for gold nor the world's applause —  
Though ways to the end they be —  
I'll win, if a man might win, because  
Of the men who believed in me.

## From the Bush

*The Channel fog has lifted —  
And see where we have come!  
Round all the world we've drifted,  
A hundred years from 'home.'  
The fields our parents longed for —  
Ah! we shall ne'er know how —  
The wealth that they were wronged for  
We'll see as strangers now!*

THE Dover cliffs have passed on —  
In morning light aglow —  
That our fathers looked their last on  
A weary time ago.  
Now grin, and grin your bravest!  
We need be strong to fight;  
For you go home to picture  
And I go home to write.

Hold up your head in England,  
Tread firm on London streets;  
We come from where the strong heart  
Of all Australia beats!  
Hold up your head in England  
However poor you roam!  
For no men are your betters  
Who never sailed from home!

From a hundred years of hardships —  
'Tis ours to tell the cost —  
From a thousand miles of silence  
Where London would be lost;  
From where the glorious sunset  
On sweeps of mulga glows —  
Ah! we know more than England,  
And more than Europe knows!

Hold up your head in London,  
However poor you come,

For no man is your better  
Who never sailed from home!  
Our 'home' and foreign fathers,  
Where none but men dared go,  
Have done more for the White Man  
Than England e'er shall know!

## Heed Not

HEED not the cock-sure tourist,  
    Seeing with English eyes;  
Stroked at the banquet table  
    Still, with the old stock lies —  
Pet of a social circle,  
    Guest in a garden fair —  
Free of the first-class carriage —  
    He learns no Australia there.

Heed not the Southern humbugs  
    By the first saloons who come —  
From his work in the wide, hot scrub-lands  
    The Australian goes not home.  
Give them the toadies' knighthood,  
    Fit for the souls they've got;  
Fear not to shame Australia  
    For Australia knows them not.

Heed not the Sydney 'dailies,'  
    Naught for the land they do;  
Heed not the Melbourne street crowd,  
    For they know no more than you!  
Pent in the coastal cities,  
    Still on the old-world track —  
They know naught of Australia,  
    Of the heart of the great Out-Back.

But wait for the voice that gathers  
    Strength by the western creeks!  
Heed ye the Out-Back shearers —  
    List when the Great Bush speaks!  
Heed ye the black-sheep, working  
    His own salvation free —  
And Oh! heed ye the sons of the exiles  
    When they speak of the things to be!

## The Bush Girl

So you rode from the range where your brothers select,  
Through the ghostly, grey Bush in the dawn —  
You rode slowly at first, lest her heart should suspect  
That you were so glad to be gone;  
You had scarcely the courage to glance back at her  
By the homestead receding from view,  
And you breathed with relief as you rounded the spur,  
For the world was a wide world to you.

Grey eyes that grow sadder than sunset or rain,  
Fond heart that is ever more true,  
Firm faith that grows firmer for watching in vain —  
She'll wait by the slip-rails for you.

Ah! the world is a new and a wide one to you,  
But the world to your sweetheart is shut,  
For a change never comes to the lonely Bush homes  
Of the stockyard, the scrub, and the hut;  
And the only relief from its dulness she feels  
When the ridges grow softened and dim,  
And away in the dusk to the slip-rails she steals  
To dream of past hours 'with him.'

Do you think, where, in place of bare fences, dry creeks,  
Clear streams and green hedges are seen —  
Where the girls have the lily and rose in their cheeks,  
And the grass in mid-summer is green —  
Do you think, now and then, now or then, in the whirl  
Of the town life, while London is new,  
Of the hut in the Bush and the freckled-faced girl  
Who waits by the slip-rails for you?

Grey eyes that are sadder than sunset or rain,  
Bruised heart that is ever more true,  
Fond faith that is firmer for trusting in vain —  
She waits by the slip-rails for you.

## **‘G.S.,’ or the Fourth Cook**

HE has notions of Australia from the tales that he's been told —  
Land of leggings and revolvers, land of savages and gold;  
So he begs old shirts, and someone patches up his worn-out duds.  
He is shipped as ‘general servant,’ scrubbing pots and peeling spuds  
(In the steamer's grimy alley, hating man and peeling spuds).

There is little time to comfort, there is little time to cry —  
He will come back with a fortune — ‘We'll be happy by-and-by!’  
Scarcely time to kiss his sweetheart, barely time to change his duds,  
Ere they want him at the galley, and they set him peeling spuds  
(With a butcher's knife, a bucket, and, say, half a ton of spuds).

And he peels 'em hard to Plymouth, peels 'em fast to drown his grief,  
Peels 'em while his stomach sickens on the road to Teneriffe;  
Peels 'em while the donkey rattles, peels 'em while the engine thuds,  
By the time they touch at Cape Town he's a don at peeling spuds  
(And he finds some time for dreaming as he gets on with the spuds).

In the steamer's slushy alley, where the souls of men are dead,  
And the adjectives are crimson if the substances are red,  
He's perhaps a college black-sheep, and, maybe, of ancient blood —  
Ah! his devil grips him sometimes as he reaches for a spud  
(And he jerks his head and sadly gouges dry-rot from a spud).

And his brave heart hopes and sickens as the weary days go round;  
There is lots o' time for blue-lights ere they reach King George's Sound.  
But he gets his best suit ready — two white shirts and three bone studs!  
He will face the new world bravely when he's finished with the spuds  
(And next week, perhaps, he'll gladly take a job at peeling spuds).

There were heroes in Australia went exploring long ago;  
There are heroes in Australia that the world shall never know;  
And the men we use for heroes in the land of droughts and floods  
Often win their way to Sydney scrubbing pots and peeling spuds  
(Plucky beggars! brave, poor devils! gouging dry-rot from their spuds).

## Jack Cornstalk

I MET with Jack Cornstalk in London to-day,  
He saw me and coo-eed from over the way.  
Oh! the solemn-faced Londoners stared with surprise  
At his hair and his height as compared with his size!  
For his trousers were short and his collar was low,  
And — there's not room to coo-ee in London, I know

But I said to him, 'Jack!' as he gripped my hand fast,  
'Oh, I hear that our Country's a nation at last!  
'I hear they have launched the new ship of the State,  
'And with men at the wheel who are steering it straight.  
'I hear 'twas the vote of your Bush mates and you;  
'And, oh, tell me, Jack Cornstalk, if this can be true?

'I hear that the bitter black strike times are o'er,  
'And that Grabbitt and Co. shall crush Labour no more;  
'That Australians are first where Australia was last,  
'And the day of the foreign adventurer's past;  
'That all things are coming we fought for so long;  
'And, oh, tell me, Jack Cornstalk, if I have heard wrong?'

For a moment he dropped the old grin that he wore —  
He'd a light in his eyes that was not there before —  
And he reached for my hand, which I gave, nothing loth,  
And replied in two words, and those words were 'My Oath!  
'They are standing up grand, Toby Barton and See,  
And Australia's all right, you can take it from me.'

## The Men Who Made Australia

(WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE ROYAL  
VISIT TO AUSTRALIA, 1901)

THERE'LL be royal times in Sydney for the Cuff and Collar Push,  
There'll be lots of dreary drivel and clap-trap  
From the men who own Australia, but who never knew the Bush,  
And who could not point their runs out on the map.  
Oh, the daily Press will grovel as it never did before,  
There'll be many flags of welcome in the air,  
And the Civil Service poet, he shall write odes by the score —  
But the men who made the land will not be there.

You shall meet the awful Lady of the latest Birthday Knight —  
(She is trying to be English, don't-cher-know?)  
You shall hear the empty mouthing of the champion blatherskite,  
You shall hear the boss of local drapers blow.  
There'll be 'majahs' from the counter, tailors' dummies from the fleet,  
And to represent Australia here to-day,  
There's the today with his card-case and his cab in Downing-street;  
But the men who made Australia — where are they?

Call across the blazing sand wastes of the Never-Never Land!  
There are some who will not answer yet awhile,  
Some whose bones rot in the mulga or lie bleaching on the sand,  
Died of thirst to win the land another mile.  
Thrown from horses, ripped by cattle, lost on deserts; and the weak,  
Mad through loneliness or drink (no matter which),  
Drowned in floods or dead of fever by the sluggish slimy creek —  
These are men who died to make the Wool-Kings rich.

Call across the scrubby ridges where they clear the barren soil,  
And the gaunt Bush-women share the work of men —  
Toil and loneliness for ever — hardship, loneliness and toil —  
Where the brave drought-ruined farmer starts again!  
Call across the boundless sheep-runs of a country cursed for sheep —  
Call across the awful scrublands west of Bourke!  
But they have no time to listen — they have scarcely time to sleep —

For the men who conquer deserts have to work.

Dragged behind the crawling sheep-flock on the hot and dusty plain,  
They must make a cheque to feed the wife and kids —  
Riding night-watch round the cattle in the pelting, freezing rain,  
While world-weariness is pressing down the lids.  
And away on far out-stations, seldom touched by Heaven's breath,  
In a loneliness that smothers love and hate —  
Where they never take white women — there they live the living death  
With a half-caste or a black-gin for a mate.

They must toil to save the gaunt stock in the blazing months of drought,  
When the stinging, blinding blight is in men's eyes —  
On the wretched, burnt selections, on the big runs further out  
Where the sand-storm rises lurid to the skies.  
Not to profit when the grass is waving waist-high after rain,  
And the mighty clip of wool comes rolling in —  
For the Wool-King goes to Paris with his family again  
And the gold that souls are sacrificed to win.

There are carriages in waiting for the swells from over-sea,  
There are banquets in the latest London style,  
While the men who made Australia live on damper, junk and tea —  
But the quiet voices whisper, 'Wait a while!'  
For the sons of all Australia, they were born to conquer fate —  
And, where charity and friendship are sincere,  
Where a sinner is a brother and a stranger is a mate,  
There the future of a nation's written clear.

Aye, the cities claim the triumphs of a land they do not know,  
But all empty is the day they celebrate!  
For the men who made Australia federated long ago,  
And the men to rule Australia — they can wait.  
Though the bed may be the rough bunk or the gum leaves or the sand,  
And the roof for half the year may be the sky —  
There are men amongst the Bushmen who were born to save the land!  
And they'll take their places sternly by-and-by.

There's a whisper on the desert though the sunset breeze hath died  
In the scrubs, though not a breath to stir a bough,  
There's a murmur, not of waters, down the Lachlan River side,  
'Tis the spirit of Australia waking now!  
There's the weird hymn of the drought-night on the western water-shed,  
Where the beds of unlocked rivers crack and parch;  
'Tis the dead that we have buried, and our great unburied dead,

Who are calling now on living men to march!

Round the camp fire of the fencers by the furthest panel west,  
In the men's hut by the muddy billabong,  
On the Great North-Western Stock-routes where the drovers never rest,  
They are sorting out the right things from the wrong.  
In the shearers' hut the slush lamp shows a haggard, stern-faced man  
Preaching war against the Wool-King to his mates;  
And wherever go the billy, water-bag and frying-pan,  
They are drafting future histories of states!

## The Bulletin Hotel

I WAS drifting in the drizzle past the Cecil in the Strand —  
Which, I'm told, is very tony — and its front looks very grand;  
And I somehow fell a-thinking of a pub I know so well,  
Of a palace in Australia called The Bulletin Hotel.

Just a little six-room'd shanty built of corrugated tin,  
And all round a blazing desert — land of camels, thirst and sin;  
And the landlord is 'the Spider' — Western diggers know him well —  
Charlie Webb! — Ah, there you have it! — of the Bulletin Hotel.

'Tis a big soft-hearted spider in a land where life is grim,  
And a web of great good-nature that brings worn-out flies to him:  
'Tis the club of many lost souls in the wide Westralian hell,  
And the stage of many Mitchells is the Bulletin Hotel.

But the swagman, on his uppers, pulls an undertaker's mug,  
And he leans across the counter and he breathes in Charlie's lug —  
Tale of thirst and of misfortune. Charlie knows it, and — ah, well!  
But it's very bad for business at the Bulletin Hotel.

'What's a drink or two?' says Charlie, 'and you can't refuse a feed;'  
But there's many a drink unpaid for, many sticks of 'borrowed' weed;  
And the poor old spineless bummer and the broken-hearted swell  
Know that they are sure of tucker at the Bulletin Hotel.

There's the liquor and the license and the 'carriage' and the rent,  
And the sea or grave 'twixt Charlie and the fivers he has lent;  
And I'm forced to think in sorrow, for I know the country well,  
That the end will be the bailiff in the Bulletin Hotel.

But he'll pack up in a hurry and he'll seek a cooler clime,  
If I make a rise in England and I get out there in time.  
For a mate o' mine is Charlie and I stayed there for a spell,  
And I owe more than a jingle to the Bulletin Hotel.

But there's lots of graft between us, there are many miles of sea,  
So, if you should drop on Charlie, just shake hands with him for me;  
Say I think the Bush less lonely than the great town where I dwell,  
And — a grander than the Cecil is the Bulletin Hotel.

## ‘Sacred to the Memory Of “Unknown”

Who Was Found Dead  
Near This Tree

DURING THE GREAT DROUGHT OF '96.

*(Don't Cut Down this Tree, for a White Man Lies Beneath It).'*

OH, the wild black swans fly westward still,  
While the sun goes down in glory —  
And away o'er lonely plain and hill  
Still runs the same old story:  
The sheoaks sigh it all day long —  
It is safe in the Big Scrub's keeping —  
'Tis the butcher-birds' and the bell-birds' song  
In the gum where 'Unknown' lies sleeping —  
(It is heard in the chat of the soldier-birds  
O'er the grave where 'Unknown' lies sleeping).

Ah! the Bushmen knew not his name or land,  
Or the shame that had sent him here —  
But the Bushmen knew by the dead man's hand  
That his past life lay not near.  
The law of the land might have watched for him,  
Or a sweetheart, wife, or mother;  
But they bared their heads, and their eyes were dim,  
For he might have been a brother!  
(Ah! the death he died brought him near to them,  
For he might have been a brother.)

Oh, the wild black swans to the westward fade,  
And the sunset burns to ashes,  
And three times bright on an eastern range  
The light of a big star flashes,  
Like a signal sent to a distant strand  
Where a dead man's love sits weeping.  
And the night comes grand to the Great Lone Land  
O'er the grave where 'Unknown' lies sleeping,  
And the big white stars in their clusters blaze  
O'er the Bush where 'Unknown' lies sleeping.

## The Shearers

No church-bell rings them from the Track,  
No pulpit lights their blindness —  
'Tis hardship, drought and homelessness  
That teach those Bushmen kindness:  
The mateship born of barren lands,  
Of toil and thirst and danger —  
The camp-fare for the stranger set,  
The first place to the stranger.

They do the best they can to-day —  
Take no thought of the morrow;  
Their way is not the old-world way —  
They live to lend and borrow.  
When shearing's done and cheques gone wrong,  
They call it 'time to slither' —  
They saddle up and say 'So-long!'  
And ride — the Lord knows whither.

And though he may be brown or black,  
Or wrong man there or right man,  
The mate that's honest to his mates  
They call that man a 'white man'!  
They tramp in mateship side by side —  
The Protestant and 'Roman' —  
They call no biped lord or 'sir,'  
And touch their hats to no man!

They carry in their swags, perhaps,  
A portrait and a letter —  
And, maybe, deep down in their hearts,  
The hope of 'something better.'  
Where lonely miles are long to ride,  
And all days seem recurrent,  
There's lots of time to think of men  
They might have been — but weren't.

They turn their faces to the west  
And leave the world behind them —

(Their drought-dried graves are seldom green  
Where even mates can find them).  
They know too little of the world  
To rise to wealth or greatness:  
But in this book of mine I pay  
My tribute to their straightness.

## **‘Knocking Around’**

WEARY old wife, with the bucket and cow,  
‘How's your son Jack? and where is he now?’  
Haggard old eyes that turn to the west —  
‘Boys will be boys, and he's gone with the rest!’  
Grief without tears and grief without sound;  
‘Somewhere up-country he's knocking around.’

Knocking around with a vagabond crew,  
Does for himself what a mother would do;  
Maybe in trouble and maybe hard-up,  
Maybe in want of a bite or a sup;  
Dead of the fever, or lost in the drought,  
Lonely old mother! he's knocking about.

Wiry old man at the tail of the plough,  
‘Heard of Jack lately? and where is he now?’  
Pauses a moment his forehead to wipe,  
Drops the rope reins while he feels for his pipe,  
Scratches his grey head in sorrow or doubt:  
‘Somewheers or others he's knocking about.’

Knocking about on the runs of the West,  
Holding his own with the worst and the best  
Breaking in horses and risking his neck,  
Droving or shearing and making a cheque;  
Straight as a sapling — six-foot and sound,  
Jack is all right when he's knocking around

## The Shearer's Dream

'Oh, I dreamt I shore in a shearin' shed, and it was a dream of joy,  
For every one of the rouseabouts was a girl dressed up as a boy —  
Dressed up like a page in a pantomime, and the prettiest ever seen —  
They had flaxen hair, they had coal black hair — and every shade  
between.'

'There was short, plump girls, there was tall, slim girls, and the  
handsomest ever seen —

They was four-foot-five, they was six-foot high, and every size  
between.'

'The shed was cooled by electric fans that was over every shoot;  
The pens was of polished ma-ho-gany, and ev'rything else to suit;  
'The huts was fixed with spring-mattresses, and the tucker was simply  
grand,  
And every night by the biller-bong we darnced to a German band.'

'Our pay was the wool on the jumbucks' backs, so we shore till all was  
blue —  
The sheep was washed afore they was shore (and the rams was scented  
too);  
And we all of us cried when the shed cut out, in spite of the long, hot  
days,  
For every hour them girls waltzed in with whisky and beer on tr-a-a-a-  
ys!'

'There was three of them girls to every chap, and as jealous as they could  
be —

There was three of them girls to every chap, and six of 'em picked on me;  
We was draftin' 'em out for the homeward track and sharin' 'em round  
like steam,

When I woke with my head in the blazin' sun to find 'twas a shearer's  
dream.'

'They had kind grey eyes, they had coal-black eyes, and the  
grandest ever seen —

They had plump pink hands, they had slim white hands, and every  
shape be-tw-e-e-n.'

## The Never-Never Country

BY homestead, hut, and shearing-shed,  
By railroad, coach, and track —  
By lonely graves of our brave dead,  
Up-Country and Out-Back:  
To where 'neath glorious clustered stars  
The dreamy plains expand —  
My home lies wide a thousand miles  
In the Never-Never Land.

It lies beyond the farming belt,  
Wide wastes of scrub and plain,  
A blazing desert in the drought,  
A lake-land after rain;  
To the sky-line sweeps the waving grass,  
Or whirls the scorching sand —  
A phantom land, a mystic land!  
The Never-Never Land.

Where lone Mount Desolation lies,  
Mounts Dreadful and Despair —  
'Tis lost beneath the rainless skies  
In hopeless deserts there;  
It spreads nor'-west by No-Man's-Land —  
Where clouds are seldom seen —  
To where the cattle-stations lie  
Three hundred miles between.

The drovers of the Great Stock Routes  
The strange Gulf country know —  
Where, travelling from the southern droughts,  
The big lean bullocks go;  
And camped by night where plains lie wide,  
Like some old ocean's bed,  
The watchmen in the starlight ride  
Round fifteen hundred head.

And west of named and numbered days  
The shearers walk and ride —

Jack Cornstalk and the Ne'er-do-well  
And the grey-beard side by side;  
They veil their eyes from moon and stars,  
And slumber on the sand —  
Sad memories sleep as years go round  
In Never-Never Land.

By lonely huts north-west of Bourke,  
Through years of flood and drought,  
The best of English black-sheep work  
Their own salvation out:  
Wild fresh-faced boys grown gaunt and brown —  
Stiff-lipped and haggard-eyed —  
They live the Dead Past grimly down!  
Where boundary-riders ride.

The College Wreck who sank beneath,  
Then rose above his shame,  
Tramps West in mateship with the man  
Who cannot write his name.  
'Tis there where on the barren track  
No last half-crust's begrudged —  
Where saint and sinner, side by side,  
Judge not, and are not judged.

Oh rebels to society!  
The Outcasts of the West —  
Oh hopeless eyes that smile for me,  
And broken hearts that jest!  
The pluck to face a thousand miles —  
The grit to see it through!  
The communism perfected! —  
And — I am proud of you!

The Arab to true desert sand,  
The Finn to fields of snow,  
The Flax-stick turns to Maoriland,  
Where the seasons come and go;  
And this old fact comes home to me —  
And will not let me rest —  
However barren it may be,  
Your own land is the best!

And, lest at ease I should forget  
True mateship after all,

My water-bag and billy yet  
Are hanging on the wall;  
And if my fate should show the sign,  
I'd tramp to sunsets grand  
With gaunt and stern-eyed mates of mine  
In the Never-Never Land.

## With Dickens

IN Windsor Terrace, number four,  
I've taken my abode —  
A little crescent from the street,  
A bight from City Road;  
And, hard up and in exile, I  
To many fancies yield;  
For it was here Micawber lived  
And David Copperfield.

A bed, a table, and a chair,  
A bottle and a cup.  
The landlord's waiting even now  
For something to turn up.  
The landlady is spiritless —  
They both seem tired of life;  
They cannot fight the battle like  
Micawber and his wife.

But in the little open space  
That lies back from the street,  
The same old ancient, shabby clerk  
Is sitting on a seat.  
The same sad characters go by,  
The ragged children play —  
And things have very little changed  
Since Dickens passed away.

Some seek religion in their grief,  
And some for friendship yearn;  
Some fly to liquor for relief,  
But I to Dickens turn.  
I find him ever fresh and new,  
His lesson ever plain;  
And every line that Dickens wrote  
I've read and read again.

The tavern's just across the 'wye,'  
And frowsy women there

Are gossiping and drinking gin,  
And twisting up their hair.  
And grubby girls go past at times,  
And furtive gentry lurk —  
I don't think anyone has died  
Since Dickens did his work.

There's Jingle, Tigg, and Chevy Slyme,  
And Weevle — whom you will;  
And hard-up virtue proudly slinks  
Into the pawnshop still.  
Go east a bit from City Road,  
And all the rest are there —  
A friendly whistle might produce  
A Chicken anywhere.

My favourite author's heroes I  
Should love, but somehow can't.  
I don't like David Copperfield  
As much as David's Aunt,  
And it may be because my mind  
Has been in many fogs —  
I don't like Nicholas Nickleby  
So well as Newman Noggs.

I don't like Richard Carstone, Pip,  
Or Martin Chuzzlewit,  
And for the rich and fatherly  
I scarcely care a bit.  
The honest, sober clods are bores  
Who cannot suffer much,  
And with the Esther Summersons  
I never was in touch.

The 'Charleys' and the haggard wives,  
Kind hearts in poverty —  
And yes! the Lizzie Hexams, too —  
Are very near to me;  
But men like Brothers Cheeryble,  
And Madeline Bray divine,  
And Nell, and Little Dorrit live  
In a better world than mine.

The Nicklebys and Copperfields,  
They do not stand the test;

And in my heart I don't believe  
That Dickens loved them best.  
I can't admire their ways and talk,  
I do not like their looks —  
Those selfish, injured sticks that stalk  
Through all the Master's books.

They're mostly selfish in their love,  
And selfish in their hate,  
They marry Dora Spenlows, too,  
While Agnes Wickfields wait;  
And back they come to poor Tom Pinch  
When hard-up for a friend;  
They come to wrecks like Newman Nogga  
To help them in the end.

And — well, maybe I am unjust,  
And maybe I forget;  
*Some* of us marry dolls and jilt  
Our Agnes Wickfields yet.  
We seek our friends when fortune frowns —  
It has been ever thus —  
And we neglect Joe Gargery  
When fortune smiles on us.

They get some rich old grandfather  
Or aunt to see them through,  
And you can trace self-interest  
In nearly all they do.  
And scoundrels like Ralph Nickleby,  
In spite of all their crimes,  
And crawlers like Uriah Heep  
Told bitter truths at times.

But — yes, I love the vagabonds  
And failures from the ranks,  
And hard old files with hidden hearts  
Like Wemmick and like Pancks.  
And Jaggers had his 'poor dreams, too,'  
And fond hopes like the rest —  
But, somehow, somehow, all my life  
I've loved Dick Swiveller best!

But, let us peep at Snagsby first  
As softly he lays down

Beside the bed of dying Joe  
Another half-a-crown.  
And Nemo's wretched pauper grave —  
But we can let them be,  
For Joe has said to Heaven: 'They  
Wos werry good to me.'

And Wemmick with his aged P — —  
No doubt has his reward;  
And Jagers, hardest nut of all,  
Will be judged by the Lord.  
And Pancks, the rent-collecting screw,  
With laurels on his brow,  
Is loved by all the bleeding hearts  
In Bleeding Heart Yard now.

Tom Pinch is very happy now,  
And Magwitch is at rest,  
And Newman Noggs again might hold  
His head up with the best;  
Micawber, too, when all is said,  
Drank bravely Sorrow's cup —  
Micawber worked to right them all,  
And something *did* turn up.

How do 'John Edward Nandy, Sir!'  
And Plornish get along?  
Why! if the old man is in voice  
We'll hear him pipe a song.  
We'll have a look at Baptiste, too,  
While still the night is young —  
With Mrs. Plornish to explain  
In the Italian tongue.

Before we go we'll ask about  
Poor young John Chivery:  
'There never was a gentleman  
In all his family.'  
His hopeless love, his broken heart,  
But to his rival true;  
He came of Nature's gentlemen,  
But young John never knew.

We'll pass the little midshipman  
With heart that swells and fills,

Where Captain Ed'ard Cuttle waits  
For Wal'r and Sol Gills.  
Jack Bunsby stands by what he says  
(Which isn't very clear),  
And Toots with his own hopeless love —  
As true as any here.

And who that read has never felt  
The sorrow that it cost  
When Captain Cuttle read the news  
The 'Son and Heir' was lost?  
And who that read has not rejoiced  
With him and 'Heart's Delight,'  
And felt as Captain Cuttle felt  
When Wal'r came that night?

And yonder, with a broken heart,  
That people thought was stone,  
Deserted in his ruined home,  
Poor Dombey sits alone.  
Who has not gulped a something down,  
Whose eye has not grown dim  
While feeling glad for Dombey's sake  
When Florence came to him?

\* \* \* \* \*

(A stately house in Lincolnshire —  
The scene is bleak and cold —  
The footsteps on the terrace sound  
To-night at Chesney Wold.  
One who loved honour, wife, and truth,  
If nothing else besides,  
Along the dreary Avenue  
Sir Leicester Dedlock rides.)

\* \* \* \* \*

We'll go round by Poll Sweedlepipe's,  
The bird and barber shop;  
If Sairey Gamp is so disposed  
We'll send her up a drop.  
We'll cross High Holborn to the Bull,  
And, if he cares to come,  
By streets that are not closed to him

We'll see Dick Swiveller home.

He's looking rather glum to-night,  
The why I will not ask —  
No matter how we act the goat,  
We mostly wear a mask.  
Some wear a mask to hide the false  
(And some the good and true) —  
I wouldn't be surprised to know  
Mark Tapley wore one too.

We wear a mask called cheerfulness  
While feeling sad inside;  
And men like Dombey, who was shy,  
Oft wear a mask called pride.  
A front of pure benevolence  
The grinding 'Patriarch' bore;  
And kind men often wear a mask  
Like that which Jagers wore.

\* \* \* \* \*

But, never mind, Dick Swiveller!  
We'll see it out together  
Beneath the wing of friendship, Dick,  
That never moults a feather.  
We'll look upon the rosy yet  
Full many a night, old friend,  
And tread the mazy ere we woo  
The balmy in the end.

Our palace walls are rather bare,  
The floor is somewhat damp,  
But, while there's liquor, anywhere  
Is good enough to camp.  
What ho! mine host! bring forth thine ale  
And let the board be spread! —  
It is the hour when churchyards yawn  
And wine goes to the head.

'Twas you who saved poor Kit, old chap,  
When he was in a mess —  
But, what ho! Varlet! bring us wine!  
Here's to the Marchioness!  
'We'll make a scholar of her yet,'  
She'll be a lady fair,

‘And she shall go in silk attire  
And siller have to spare.’

From sport to sport they hurry her  
To banish her regrets,  
And when we win a smile from her  
We cannot pay our debts!  
Left orphans at a tender age,  
We're happiest in the land —  
We're Glorious Apollos, Dick,  
And you're Perpetual Grand!

You're king of all philosophers,  
And let the Godly rust;  
Here's to the obscure citizen  
Who sent the beer on trust?  
It sure would be a cheerful world  
If never man got tight;  
You spent your money on your friends,  
Dick Swiveller! Good night!

‘A dissolute and careless man —  
An idle, drunken path;’  
But see where Sidney Carton spills  
His last drink on the hearth!  
A ruined life! He lived for drink  
And but one thing beside —  
And Oh! it was a glorious death  
That Sidney Carton died.

\* \* \* \* \*

And ‘Which I meantersay is Pip’ —  
The voices hurry past —  
‘Not to deceive you, sir’ — ‘Stand by!’  
‘Awast, my lass, awast!’  
‘Beware of widders, Samivel,’  
And shun strong drink, my friend;  
And, ‘not to put too fine a point  
Upon it,’ I must end.

## **The Things We Dare Not Tell**

THE fields are fair in autumn yet, and the sun's still shining there,  
But we bow our heads and we brood and fret, because of the masks we wear;

Or we nod and smile the social while, and we say we're doing well,  
But we break our hearts, oh, we break our hearts! for the things we must not tell.

There's the old love wronged ere the new was won, there's the light of long ago;

There's the cruel lie that we suffer for, and the public must not know.  
So we go through life with a ghastly mask, and we're doing fairly well,  
While they break our hearts, oh, they kill our hearts! do the things we must not tell.

We see but pride in a selfish breast, while a heart is breaking there;  
Oh, the world would be such a kindly world if all men's hearts lay bare!  
We live and share the living lie, we are doing very well,  
While they eat our hearts as the years go by, do the things we dare not tell.

We bow us down to a dusty shrine, or a temple in the East,  
Or we stand and drink to the world-old creed, with the coffins at the feast;

We fight it down, and we live it down, or we bear it bravely well,  
But the best men die of a broken heart for the things they cannot tell.

## The Drums of Battersea

THEY can't hear in West o' London, where the worst dine with the best —

Deaf to all save lies and laughter, they can't hear in London West —

Tailored brutes and splendid harlots, and the parasites that be —

They can't hear the warning thunder of the Drums of Battersea.

More drums! War drums!

Drums of Misery —

Beating from the hearts of men — the Drums of Battersea.

Where the hearses hurry ever, and where man lives like a beast,

They can feel the war-drums beating — men of Hell! and London East.

And the far-off foreign farmers, fighting fiercely to be free,

Found new courage in the echo of the Drums of Battersea.

More drums! War drums!

Beating for the free —

Beating on the hearts of men — the Drums of Battersea.

And the drummers! Ah! the drummers! — stern and haggard men are those

Standing grimly at their meetings; and their washed and mended clothes

Speak of worn-out wives behind them and of grinding poverty —

But the English of the English beat the Drums of Battersea!

More drums! War drums!

Drums of agony —

The big bruised heart of England's in the Drums of Battersea.

Where in fields slave Englishwomen, Oh! the sound of drums is there:

I have heard it in the laughter of the nights of Leicester Square —

Sailing southward with the summer, London but a dream to me,

Still I feel the distant thunder of the Drums of Battersea!

More drums! War drums!

Drums of Liberty —

Rolling round the English world — the Drums of Battersea.

Oh! I heard them in the Queen's Hall — aye! and London heard that night —

While we formed up round the leaders while they struck one blow for right!

And the old strength, that old fire, that I thought was dead in me,  
Blazed up fiercely at the beating of the Drums of Battersea!

More drums! War drums!

They beat for victory —

When above the roar of Jingoers rolled the Drums of Battersea.

And where'er my feet may wander, and howe'er I lay my head,  
I shall hear them while I'm dreaming — I shall hear them when I'm dead!

For they beat for men and women, beat for Christ, and you and me:

There is hope and there is terror in the Drums of Battersea!

More drums! War drums!

Drums of destiny —

There's hope! — there's hope for England in the Drums of Battersea.

## **As Far as Your Rifles Cover**

Do you think, you slaves of a thousand years to poverty, wealth and  
pride,  
You can crush the spirit that has been free in a land that's new and wide?  
When you've scattered the last of the farmer bands, and the war for a  
while is over,  
You will hold the land — ay, you'll hold the land — the land that your  
rifles cover.

Till your gold has levelled each mountain range where a wounded man  
can hide,  
Till your gold has lighted the moonless night on the plains where the  
rebels ride;  
Till the future is proved, and the past is bribed from the son of the land's  
dead lover —  
You may hold the land — you may hold the land just as far as your rifles  
cover

## Gipsy Too

IF they missed my face in Farmers' Arms  
When the landlord lit the lamp,  
They would grin and say in their country way,  
'Oh! he's down at the Gipsy camp!'  
But they'd read of things in the *Daily Mail*  
That the wild Australians do,  
And I cared no day what the world might say,  
For I came of the Gipsies too.

'Oh! the Gipsy crowd are a mongrel lot,  
'And a thieving lot and sly!'  
But I'd dined on fowls in the far-off south,  
And a mongrel lot was I.  
'Oh! the Gipsy crowd are a roving gang,  
'And a sulky, silent crew!'  
But they managed a smile and a word for me,  
For I came of the Gipsies too.

And the old queen looked in my palm one day —  
And a shrewd old dame was she:  
'My pretty young gent, you may say your say,  
'You may laugh your laugh at me;  
'But I'll tell you the tale of your dead, dead past!'  
And she told me all too true;  
And she said that I'd die in a camp at last,  
For I came of the Gipsies too.

And the young queen looked in my eyes that night,  
In a nook where the hedge grew tall,  
And the sky was swept and the stars were bright,  
But her eyes had the sheen of all.  
The spring was there, and the fields were fair,  
And the world to my heart seemed new.  
'Twas 'A Romany lass to a Romany lad!'  
But I came of the Gipsies too.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now a Summer and Winter have gone between  
And wide, wild oceans flow;  
And they camp again by the sad old Thames,  
Where the blackberry hedges grow.  
'Twas a roving star on a land afar  
That proved to a maid untrue,  
But we'll meet when they gather the Gipsy souls,  
For I came of the Gipsies too.

## The Wander-Light

AND they heard the tent-poles clatter,  
And the fly in twain was torn —  
Tis the soiled rag of a tatter  
Of the tent where I was born.  
And what matters it, I wonder?  
Brick or stone or calico —  
Or a bush you were born under,  
When it happened long ago?

And my beds were camp beds and tramp beds and damp beds,  
And my beds were dry beds on drought-stricken ground,  
Hard beds and soft beds, and wide beds and narrow —  
For my beds were strange beds the wide world round.

And the old hag seemed to ponder  
('Twas my mother told me so),  
And she said that I would wander  
Where but few would think to go.  
'He will fly the haunts of tailors,  
'He will cross the ocean wide,  
'For his fathers, they were sailors  
'All on his good father's side.'

Behind me, before me, Oh! my roads are stormy —  
The thunder of skies and the sea's sullen sound,  
The coaster or liner, the English or foreign,  
The state-room or steerage the wide world round.

And the old hag she seemed troubled  
As she bent above the bed,  
'He will dream things and he'll see things  
'To come true when he is dead.  
'He will see things all too plainly,  
'And his fellows will deride,  
'For his mothers they were gipsies  
'All on his good mother's side.'

And my dreams are strange dreams, are day dreams, are grey dreams,

And my dreams are wild dreams, and old dreams and new;  
They haunt me and daunt me with fears of the morrow —  
My brothers they doubt me — but my dreams come true.

And so I was born of fathers  
From where ice-bound harbours are —  
Men whose strong limbs never rested  
And whose blue eyes saw afar.  
Till, for gold, one left the ocean,  
Seeking over plain and hill;  
And so I was born of mothers  
Whose deep minds were never still.

I rest not, 'tis best not, the world is a wide one —  
And, caged for an hour, I pace to and fro;  
I see things and dree things and plan while I'm sleeping,  
I wander for ever and dream as I go.

I have stood by Table Mountain,  
On the Lion at Capetown,  
And I watched the sunset fading  
From the roads that I marked down;  
And I looked out with my brothers  
From the heights behind Bombay,  
Gazing north and west and eastward,  
Over roads I'll tread some day.

For my ways are strange ways and new ways and old ways,  
And deep ways and steep ways and high ways and low;  
I'm at home and at ease on a track that I know not,  
And restless and lost on a road that I know.

## Genoa

A LONG farewell to Genoa  
That rises to the skies,  
Where the barren coast of Italy  
Like our own coastline lies.  
A sad farewell to Genoa,  
And long my heart shall grieve,  
The only city in the world  
That I was loath to leave.

No sign of rush or strife is there,  
No war of greed they wage.  
The deep cool streets of Genoa  
Are rock-like in their age.  
No garish signs of commerce there  
Are flaunting in the sun.  
A rag hung from a balcony  
Is by an artist done.

And she was fair in Genoa,  
And she was very kind,  
Those pale blind-seeming eyes that seem  
Most beautifully blind.  
Oh they are sad in Genoa,  
Those poor soiled singing birds.  
I had but three Italian words  
And she three English words.

But love is cheap in Genoa,  
Aye, love and wine are cheap,  
And neither leaves an aching head,  
Nor cuts the heart too deep;  
Save when the knife goes straight, and then  
There's little time to grieve —  
The only city in the world  
That I was loath to leave.

I've said farewell to tinted days  
And glorious starry nights,

I've said farewell to Naples with  
Her long straight lines of lights;  
But it is not for Naples but  
For Genoa that I grieve,  
The only city in the world  
That I was loath to leave.

## The Tracks That Lie by India

Now this is not a dismal song, like some I've sung of late,  
When I've been brooding all day long about my muddled fate;  
For though I've had a rocky time I'll never quite forget,  
And though I never was so deep in trouble and in debt,  
And though I never was so poor nor in a fix so tight —  
The tracks that run by India are shining in my sight.

The roads that run by India, and all the ports of call —  
I'm going back to London first to raise the wherewithal.  
I'll call at Suez and Port Said as I am going past  
(I was too worried to take notes when I was that way last),  
At Naples and at Genoa, and, if I get the chance,  
Who knows but I might run across the pleasant land of France.

The track that runs by India goes up the hot Red Sea —  
The other side of Africa is far too dull for me.  
(I fear that I have missed a chance I'll never get again  
To see the land of chivalry and bide awhile in Spain.)  
I'll graft a year in London, and if fortune smiles on me  
I'll take the track to India by France and Italy.

'Tis sweet to court some foreign girl with eyes of lustrous glow,  
Who does not know my language and whose language I don't know;  
To loll on gently-rolling decks beneath the softening skies,  
While she sits knitting opposite, and make love with our eyes —  
The glance that says far more than words, the old half-mystic smile —  
The track that runs by India will wait for me awhile.

The tracks that run by India to China and Japan,  
The tracks where all the rovers go — the tracks that call a Man!  
I'm wearied of the formal lands of parson and of priest,  
Of dollars and of fashions, and I'm drifting towards the East;  
I'm tired of cant and cackle, and of sordid jobbery —  
The mystery of the East hath cast its glamour over me.

## **Say Good-Bye When Your Chum is Married**

NOW this is a rhyme that might well be carried  
Gummed in your hat till the end of things:  
Say Good-bye when your chum is married;  
Say Good-bye while the church-bell rings;  
Say Good-bye — if you ask why must you,  
'Tis for the sake of old friendship true,  
For as sure as death will his wife distrust you  
And lead him on to suspect you, too.

Say Good-bye, though he be a brother,  
Seek him not when you're married, too —  
Things that you never would tell each other  
The wives will carry as young wives do.  
Say Good-bye ere their tongues shall strangle  
The friendship pledged ere the lights grew dim,  
For, as sure as death, will those young wives wrangle,  
And drag you into it, you and him.

## The Separation

WE knew too little of the world,  
And you and I were good —  
'Twas paltry things that wrecked our lives  
As well I knew they would.  
The people said our love was dead,  
But how were they to know?  
Ah! had we loved each other less  
We'd not have quarrelled so.

We knew too little of the world,  
And you and I were kind,  
We listened to what others said  
And both of us were blind.  
The people said 'twas selfishness,  
But how were they to know?  
Ah! had we both more selfish been  
We'd not have parted so.

But still when all seems lost on earth  
Then heaven sets a sign —  
Kneel down beside your lonely bed,  
And I will kneel by mine,  
And let us pray for happy days —  
Like those of long ago.  
Ah! had we knelt together then  
We'd not have parted so.

## Ruth

ALL is well — in a prison — to-night, and the warders are crying ‘All's Well!’

I must speak, for the sake of my heart — if it's but to the walls of my cell.

For what does it matter to me if to-morrow I go where I will?

I'm as free as I ever shall be — there is naught in my life to fulfil.

I am free! I am haunted no more by the question that tortured my brain:

‘Are you sane of a people gone mad? or mad in a world that is sane?’

I have had time to rest — and to pray — and my reason no longer is vexed

By the spirit that hangs you one day, and would hail you as martyr the next.

Are the fields of my fancy less fair through a window that's narrowed and barred?

Are the morning stars dimmed by the glare of the gas-light that flares in the yard?

No! And what does it matter to me if to-morrow I sail from the land?

I am free, as I never was free! I exult in my loneliness grand!

Be a saint and a saviour of men — be a Christ, and they'll slander and rail!

Only Crime's understood in the world, and a man is respected — in gaol.

But I find in my raving a balm — in the worst that has come to the worst —

Let me think of it all — I grow calm — let me think it all out from the first.

\* \* \* \* \*

Beyond the horizon of Self do the walls of my prison retreat,

And I stand in a gap of the hills with the scene of my life at my feet;

The range to the west, and the Peak, and the marsh where the dark ridges end,

And the spurs running down to the Creek, and the she-oaks that sigh in the bend.

The hints of the river below; and, away on the azure and green,

The old goldfield of Specimen Flat, and the township — a blotch on the scene;

The store, the hotels, and the bank — and the gaol and the people who come

With the weatherboard box and the tank — the Australian idea of home:

The scribe — spirit-broken; the 'wreck,' in his might-have-been or shame;

The townsman 'respected' or worthy; the workman respectful and tame;

The boss of the pub with his fine sense of honour, grown moral and stout,

Like the spielers who came with the 'line,' on the cheques that were made farther out.

The clever young churchman, despised by the swaggering, popular man;

The doctor with hands clasped behind, and bowed head, as if under a ban;

The one man with the brains — with the power to lead, unsuspected and dumb,

Whom Fate sets apart for the Hour — the man for the hour that *might* come.

The old local liar whose story was ancient when Egypt was young,

And the gossip who hangs on the fence and poisons God's world with her tongue;

The haggard bush mother who'd nag, though a husband or child be divine,

And who takes a fierce joy in a rag of the clothes on the newcomer's line.

And a lad with a cloud on his heart who was lost in a world vague and dim —

No one dreamed as he drifted apart that 'twas genius the matter with him;

Who was doomed, in that ignorant hole, to its spiritless level to sink,

Till the iron had entered his soul, and his brain found a refuge in drink.

\* \* \* \* \*

Perhaps I was bitter because of the tongues of disgrace in the town —

Of a boy-nature misunderstood and its nobler ambitions sneered

Of the sense of injustice that stings till it ends in the creed of the push —

I was born in that shadow that clings to the old gully homes in the bush.

And I was ambitious. Perhaps as a boy I could see things too plain —

How I wished I could write of the truths — of the visions — that haunted my brain!

Of the bush-buried toiler denied e'en the last loving comforts of all —  
Of my father who slaved till he died in the scrub by his wedges and  
maul.

Twenty years, and from daylight till dark — twenty years it was split,  
fence, and grub,  
And the end was a tumble-down hut and a bare, dusty patch in the scrub.  
'Twas the first time he'd rested, they said, but the knit in his forehead was  
deep,  
And to me the scarred hands of the dead seemed to *work* as I'd seen them  
in sleep.

And the mother who toiled by his side, through hardship and trouble and  
drought,  
And who fought for the home when he died till her heart — not her  
spirit — wore out:  
I am shamed for Australia and haunted by the face of the haggard bush  
wife —  
She who fights her grim battle undaunted because she knows nothing of  
life.

By the barren track travelled by few men — poor victims of commerce,  
unknown —  
E'en the troubles that woman tells woman she suffers, unpitied, alone;  
Heart-dumbed and mind-dulled and benighted, Eve's beauty in girlhood  
destroyed!  
Till the wrongs never felt shall be righted — and the peace never missed  
be enjoyed.

There was no one to understand me. I was lonely and shy as a lad,  
Or I lived in a world that was wider than ours; so of course I was 'mad.'  
Who is not understood is a 'crank' — so I suffered the tortures of men  
Doomed to think in the bush, till I drank and went wrong — I grew  
popular *then*.

There was Doctor Lebenski, my friend — and the friend, too, of all who  
were down —  
Clever, gloomy, and generous drunkard — the pride and disgrace of the  
town.  
He had been through the glory and shame of a wild life by city and sea,  
And the tales of the land whence he came had a strong fascination for  
me.

And often in yarning or fancy, when she-oaks grew misty and dim,  
From the forest and straight for the camp of the Cossack I've ridden with  
him:

Ridden out in the dusk with a score, ridden back ere the dawning with ten —

Have struck at three kingdoms and Fate for the fair land of Poland again!

He'd a sorrow that drink couldn't drown — that his great heart was powerless to fight —

And I gathered the threads 'twixt the long, pregnant puffs of his last pipe at night;

For he'd say to me, sadly: 'Jack Drew' — then he'd pause, as to watch the smoke curl —

'If a good girl should love you, be true — though you die for it — true to the girl!

'A man may be false to his country — a man may be false to his friend:

'Be a vagabond, drunkard, a spieler — yet his soul may come right in the end;

'But there is no prayer, no atonement, no drink that can banish the shade

'From your side, if you've one spark of manhood, of a dead girl that you have betrayed.'

\* \* \* \* \*

'One chance for a fortune,' we're told, in the lives of the poorest of men —

There's a chance for a heaven on earth that comes over and over again!

'Twas for Ruth, the bank manager's niece, that the wretched old goldfield grew fair,

And she came like an angel of peace in an hour of revengeful despair.

A girl as God made her, and wise in a faith that was never estranged —

From childhood neglected and wronged, she had grown with her nature unchanged;

And she came as an angel of Hope as I crouched on Eternity's brink,

And the loaded revolver and rope were parts of the horrors of drink.

I was not to be trusted, they said, within sight of a cheque or a horse,

And the worst that was said of my name all the gossips were glad to endorse.

But she loved me — she loved me! And why? Ask the she-oaks that sighed in the bends —

We had suffered alike, she and I, from the blindness of kinsfolk and friends.

A girlhood of hardship and care, for she gave the great heart of a child

To a brother whose idol was Self, and a brother good-natured but 'wild;'

—

And a father who left her behind when he'd suffered too much from the  
moan  
Of a mother grown selfish and blind in her trouble — 'twas always her  
own.

She was brave, and she never complained, for the hardships of youth that  
had driven  
My soul to the brink of perdition, but strengthened the girl's faith in  
Heaven.

In the home that her relatives gave she was tortured each hour of her life.  
By her cruel dependence — the slave of her aunt, the bank-manager's  
wife.

Does the world know how easy to lead and how hard to be driven are  
men?

She was leading me back with her love, to the faith of my childhood  
again!

To my boyhood's neglected ideal — to the hopes that were strangled at  
birth,

To the good and the truth of the real — to the good that was left on the  
earth.

And the sigh of the oaks seemed a hymn, and the waters had music for  
me

As I sat on the grass at her feet, and rested my head on her knee;

And we seemed in a dreamland apart from the world's discontent and  
despair,

For the cynic went out of my heart at the touch of her hand on my hair.

\* \* \* \* \*

She would talk like a matron at times, and she prattled at times like a  
child:

'I will trust you — I know you are good — you have only been careless  
and wild —

'You are clever — you'll rise in the world — you must think of your  
future and me —

'You will give up the drink for my sake, and you don't know how happy  
we'll be!'

'I can work, I will help you,' she said, and she'd plan out our future and  
home,

But I found no response in my heart save the hungry old craving to roam.  
Would I follow the paths of the dead? I was young yet. Would I settle  
down To the life that our parents had led by the dull, paltry-spirited  
town?

For the ghost of the cynic was there, and he waited and triumphed at last —

One night — I'd been drinking, because of a spectre that rose from the past —

My trust had so oft been betrayed: that at last I had turned to distrust —  
My sense of injustice so keen that my anger was always unjust.

Would I sacrifice all for a wife, who was free now to put on my hat  
And to go far away from the life — from the home life of Specimen Flat?

Would I live as our fathers had lived to the finish? And what was it worth?

A woman's reproach in the end — of all things most unjust on the earth.

The old rebel stirred in my blood, and he whispered, 'What matter?'  
'Why not?'

And she trembled and paled, for the kiss that I gave her was reckless and hot.

And the angel that watched o'er her slept, and the oaks sighed aloud in the creek

As we sat in a shadow that crept from a storm-cloud that rose on the Peak.

There's a voice warns the purest and best of their danger in love or in strife,

But that voice is a knell to her honour who loves with the love of her life!

And 'Ruth — Ruth!' I whispered at last in a voice that was not like my own —

She trembled and clung to me fast with a sigh that was almost a moan.

While you listen and doubt, and incline to the devil that plucks at your sleeve —

When the whispers of angels have failed — then Heaven speaks once I believe.

The lightning leapt out — in a flash only seen by those ridges and creeks,  
And the darkness shut down with a crash that I thought would have riven the peaks.

By the path through the saplings we ran, as the great drops came pattering down,

To the first of the low-lying ridges that lay between us and the town;

Where she suddenly drew me aside with that beautiful instinct of love

As the clatter of hoofs reached our ears — and a horseman loomed darkly above.

'Twas the Doctor: he reined up and sat for the first moment pallid and mute,  
Then he lifted his hand to his hat with his old-fashioned martial salute,  
And he said with a glance at the ridge, looming black with its pine-tops  
awhirl,  
'Take my coat, you are caught in the storm!' and he whispered, 'Be true  
to the girl!'

\* \* \* \* \*

He rode on — to a sick bed, maybe some twenty miles back in the bush,  
And we hurried on through the gloom, and I still seemed to hear in the  
'woosh'  
Of the wind in the saplings and oaks, in the gums with their top boughs  
awhirl —  
In the voice of the gathering tempest — the warning, 'Be true to the  
girl!'

And I wrapped the coat round her, and held her so close that I felt her  
heart thump  
When the lightning leapt out, as we crouched in the lee of the shell of a  
stump —  
And there seemed a strange fear in her eyes and the colour had gone  
from her cheek —  
And she scarcely had uttered a word since the hot brutal kiss by the  
creek.

The storm rushed away to the west — to the ridges drought-stricken and  
dry —  
To the eastward loomed far-away peaks 'neath the still starry arch of the  
sky;  
By the light of the full moon that swung from a curtain of cloud like a  
lamp,  
I saw that my tent had gone down in the storm, as we passed by the  
camp.

'Tis a small thing, or chance, such as this, that decides between hero and  
cur  
In one's heart. I was wet to the skin, and my comfort was precious to her.  
And her aunt was away in the city — the dining-room fire was alight,  
And the uncle was absent — he drank with some friends at the Royal  
that night.

He came late, and passed to his room without glancing at her or at me —  
Too straight and precise, be it said, for a man who was sober to be.  
Then the drop of one boot on the floor (there was no wife to witness his

guilt),

And a moment thereafter a snore that proclaimed that he slept on the quilt.

Was it vanity, love, or revolt? Was it joy that came into my life?

As I sat there with her in my arms, and caressed her and called her 'My wife!'

Ah, the coward! But my heart shall bleed, though I live on for fifty long years,

For she could not cry out, only plead with eyes that were brimming with tears.

Not the passion so much brings remorse, but the thought of the treacherous part

I'd have played in a future already planned out — ay! endorsed in my heart!

When a good woman falls for the sake of a love that has blinded her eyes,

There is pardon, perhaps, for his lust; but what heaven could pardon the lies?

And 'What does it matter?' I said. 'You are mine, I am yours — and for life.

'He is drunk and asleep — he won't hear, and to morrow you shall be my wife!'

There's an hour in the memory of most that we hate ever after and loathe —

'Twas the daylight that came like a ghost to her window that startled us both.

\* \* \* \* \*

Twixt the door of her room and the door of the office I stood for a space, When a treacherous board in the floor sent a crack like a shot through the place! —

Then the creak of a step and the click of a lock in the manager's room — I grew cold to the stomach and sick, as I trembled and shrank in the gloom.

He faced me, revolver in hand — 'Now I know you, you treacherous whelp!

'Stand still, where you are, or I'll fire!' and he suddenly shouted for help. 'Help! Burglary!' Yell after yell — such a voice would have wakened the tomb;

And I heard her scream once, and she fell like a log on the floor of her room!

And I thought of her then like a flash — of the foul fiend of gossip that drags

A soul to perdition — I thought of the treacherous tongues of the hags;  
She would sacrifice all for my sake — she would tell the whole township the truth.

I'd escape, send the Doctor a message and die — ere they took me — for Ruth!

Then I rushed him — a struggle — a flash — I was down with a shot in my arm —

Up again, and a desperate fight — hurried footsteps and cries of

A mad struggle, a blow on the head — and the gossips will fill in the blank

With the tale of the capture of Drew on the night he broke into the bank.

In the cell at the lock-up all day and all night, without pause through my brain

Whirled the scenes of my life to the last one — and over and over again  
I paced the small cell, till exhaustion brought sleep — and I woke to the past

Like a man metamorphosed — clear-headed, and strong in a purpose at last.

She would sacrifice all for my sake — she would tell the whole township the truth —

In the mood I was in I'd have given my life for a moment with Ruth;  
But still, as I thought, from without came the voice of the constable's wife;

'They say it's brain fever, poor girl, and the doctor despairs of her life.'

'He has frightened the poor girl to death — such a pity — so pretty and young,'

So the voice of a gossip chimed in: 'And the wretch! he deserves to be hung.

'They were always a bad lot, the Drews, and I knowed he was more rogue than crank,

'And he only pretended to court her so's to know his way into the bank!'

Came the doctor at last with his voice hard and cold and a face like a stone —

Hands behind, but it mattered not then — 'twas a fight I must fight out alone:

'You have cause to be thankful,' he said, as though speaking a line from the past —

'She was conscious an hour; she is dead, and she called for you, Drew,

till the last!

‘Ay! And I knew the truth, but I lied. She fought for the truth, but I lied;  
‘And I said you were well and were coming, and, listening and waiting,  
she died.

‘God forgive you! I warned you in time. You will suffer while reason  
endures:

‘For the rest, you will know only I have the key of her story — and  
yours.’

\* \* \* \* \*

The curious crowd in the court seemed to me but as ghosts from the past,  
As the words of the charge were read out, like a hymn from the first to  
the last;

I repeated the words I'd rehearsed — in a voice that seemed strangely  
away —

In their place, ‘I am guilty,’ I said; and again, ‘I have nothing to say.’

I realised then, and stood straight — would I shrink from the eyes of the  
clown —

From the eyes of the sawney who'd boast of success with a girl of the  
town?

But there is human feeling in men which is easy, or hard, to define:

Every eye, as I glanced round the court, was cast down, or averted from  
mine.

Save the doctor's — it seemed to me then as if he and I stood there  
alone —

For a moment he looked in my eyes with a wonderful smile in his own,  
Slowly lifted his hand in salute, turned and walked from the court-room,  
and then

From the rear of the crowd came the whisper: ‘The Doctor's been  
boozing again!’

I could laugh at it then from the depth of the bitterness still in my heart,

At the ignorant stare of surprise, at the constables' ‘Arder in Car-rt!’

But I know. Oh, I understand now how the poor tortured heart cries  
aloud

For a flame from High Heaven to wither the grin on the face of a crowd.

Then the Judge spoke harshly; I stood with my fluttering senses awlirl:

My crime, he said sternly, had cost the young life of an innocent girl;

I'd brought sorrow and death to a home, I was worse than a murderer  
now;

And the sentence he passed on me there was the worst that the law would

allow. ...

\* \* \* \* \*

Let me rest — I grow weary and faint. Let me breathe — but what value is breath?

Ah! the pain in my heart — as of old; and I know what it is — it is death. It is death — it is rest — it is sleep. 'Tis the world and I drifting apart. I have been through a sorrow too deep to have passed without breaking my heart.

There's a breeze! And a light without bars! Let me drink the free air till I drown.

'Tis the she-oaks — the Peak — and the stars. Lo, a dead angel's spirit floats down!

This will pass — aye, and all things will pass. Oh, my love, have you come back to me?

I am tired — let me lie on the grass at your feet, with my head on your knee.

'I was wrong' — the words lull me to sleep, like the words of a lullaby song —

I was wrong — but the iron went deep in my heart ere I knew I was wrong.

I rebelled, but I suffered in youth, and I suffer too deeply to live:

You'll forgive me, and pray for me, Ruth — for you loved me — and God will forgive.

## The Cliffs

THEY sing of the grandeur of cliffs inland,  
But the cliffs of the ocean are truly grand;  
And I long to wander and dream and doubt  
Where the cliffs by the ocean run out and out.

To the northward far as the eye can reach  
Are sandhill, boulder, and sandy beach;  
But southward rises the track for me,  
Where the cliffs by the ocean run out to sea.

Friends may be gone in the morning fair,  
But the cliffs by the ocean are always there;  
Lovers may leave when the wind is chill,  
But the cliffs by the ocean are steadfast still.

They watch the sea and they ward the land,  
And they warn the ships from the treacherous sand;  
And I sadly think in the twilight hour  
What I might have been had I known my power.

Where the smoke-cloud blurs and the white sails fill,  
They point the ships to keep seaward still;  
And I think — Ah, me! — and I think — Ah, me!  
Of the wreck I'd saved had I kept to sea.

Oh! the cliffs are old and the cliffs are sad,  
And they know me sane, while men deem me mad.  
Oh! the cliffs are firm and the cliffs are strong,  
And they know me right, while men deem me wrong

And I sometimes think in the dawning gray,  
I am old as they, I am old as they;  
And I think, I think that in field and town  
My spirit shall live till the cliffs come down.

## Bourke

I'VE followed all my tracks and ways, from old bark school to Leicester Square,  
I've been right back to boyhood's days, and found no light or pleasure there.  
But every dream and every track — and there were many that I knew —  
They all lead on, or they lead back, to Bourke in Ninety-one, and two.

No sign that green grass ever grew in scrubs that blazed beneath the sun;  
The plains were dust in Ninety-two, that baked to bricks in Ninety-one.  
On glaring iron-roofs of Bourke, the scorching, blinding sandstorms blew,  
And there was nothing beautiful in Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

Save grit and generosity of hearts that broke and healed again —  
The hottest drought that ever blazed could never parch the hearts of men;  
And they were men in spite of all, and they were straight, and they were true,  
The hat went round at trouble's call, in Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

They drank, when all is said and done, they gambled, and their speech was rough —  
You'd only need to say of one — 'He was my mate!' that was enough.  
To hint a bushman was not white, nor to his Union straight and true,  
Would mean a long and bloody fight in Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

The yard behind the Shearers' Arms was reckoned best of battle grounds,  
And there in peace and quietness they fought their ten or fifteen rounds;  
And then they washed the blood away, and then shook hands, as strong men do —  
And washed away the bitterness — in Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

The Army on the grand old creek was mighty in those days gone by,  
For they had sisters who could shriek, and brothers who could testify;  
And by the muddy waterholes, they tackled sin till all was blue —  
They took our bobs and damned our souls in Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

By shanty bars and shearing sheds, they took their toll and did their work —

But now and then they lost their heads, and raved of hotter hells than Bourke:

The only message from the dead that ever came distinctly through —  
Was — ‘Send my overcoat to hell’ — it came to Bourke in Ninety-two.

I know they drank, and fought, and died — some fighting fiends on blazing tracks —

I don't remember that they lied, or crawled behind each others' backs;  
I don't remember that they loafed, or left a mate to battle through —  
Ah! men knew how to stick to men in Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

They're scattered wide and scattered far — by fan-like tracks, north, east, and west —

The cruel New Australian star drew off the bravest and the best.  
The Cape and Klondyke claim their bones, the streets of London damned a few,  
And jingo-cursed Australia mourns for Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

For ever westward in the land, Australians hear — and will not heed —  
The murmur of the board-room, and the sure and stealthy steps of greed —

Bourke was a fortress on the track! and garrisons were grim and true  
To hold the spoilers from Out Back, in Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

I hear it in the ridges lone, and in the dread drought-stricken wild —  
I hear at times a woman's moan — the whimper of a hungry child:  
And — let the cynics say the word: ‘a godless gang, a drunken crew’ —  
But these were things I never heard in Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

\* \* \* \* \*

They say that things have changed out there, and western towns have altered quite:

They don't know how to drink and swear, they've half forgotten how to fight;

They've almost lost the strength to trust, the faith in mateship to be true —

The heart that grew in drought and dust in Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

We've learned to laugh the bitter laugh since then — we've travelled, you and I;

The sneaking little paragraph, the dirty trick, the whispered lie  
Are known to us — the little men — whose souls are rotten through and through —

We called them scabs and crawlers then, in Ninety-one and Ninety-two.

And could I roll the summers back, or bring the dead time on again;  
Or from the grave or world-wide track, call back to Bourke the vanished  
men,  
With mind content I'd go to sleep, and leave those mates to judge me  
true,  
And leave my name to Bourke to keep — the Bourke of Ninety-one and  
two.

## The Stringy-Bark Tree

THERE'S the whitebox and pine on the ridges afar,  
Where the iron-bark, blue-gum, and peppermint are;  
There is many another, but dearest to me,  
And the king of them all was the stringy-bark tree.

Then of stringy-bark slabs were the walls of the hut,  
And from stringy-bark saplings the rafters were cut;  
And the roof that long sheltered my brothers and me  
Was of broad sheets of bark from the stringy-bark tree.

And when sawn-timber homes were built out in the West,  
Then for walls and for ceilings its wood was the best;  
And for shingles and palings to last while men be,  
There was nothing on earth like the stringy-bark tree.

Far up the long gullies the timber-trucks went,  
Over tracks that seemed hopeless, by bark hut and tent;  
And the gaunt timber-finder, who rode at his ease,  
Led them on to a gully of stringy-bark trees.

Now still from the ridges, by ways that are dark,  
Come the shingles and palings they call stringy-bark;  
Though you ride through long gullies a twelve months you'll see  
But the old whitened stumps of the stringy-bark tree.

## The Bush Fire

AH, better the thud of the deadly gun, and the crash of the bursting shell,  
Than the terrible silence where drought is fought out there in the western  
hell;

And better the rattle of rifles near, or the thunder on deck at sea,  
Than the sound — most hellish of all to hear — of a fire where it should  
not be.

On the runs to the west of the Dingo Scrubs there was drought, and ruin,  
and death,

And the sandstorm came from the dread north-east with the blast of a  
furnace-breath;

Till at last one day, at the fierce sunrise, a boundary-rider woke,

And saw, in the place of the distant haze, a curtain of light blue smoke.

There is saddling-up by the cockey's hut, and out in the station yard,

And away to the north, north-east, north-west, the bushmen are riding  
hard.

The pickets are out and many a scout, and many a mulga wire,

While Bill and Jim, with their faces grim, are riding to meet the fire.

It roars for days in the hopeless scrubs, and across, where the ground  
seems bare,

With a cackle and hiss, like the hissing of snakes, the fire is travelling  
there;

Till at last, exhausted by sleeplessness, and the terrible toil and heat,

The squatter is crying, 'My God! the wool!' and the farmer, 'My God!  
the wheat!'

But there comes a drunkard (who reels as he rides), with the news from  
the roadside pub: —

'Pat Murphy — the cockey — cut off by the fire! — way back in the  
Dingo Scrub!'

'Let the wheat and the woolshed go to' — — Well, they do as each great  
heart bids;

They are riding a race for the Dingo Scrub — for Pat and his wife and  
kids.

And who is leading the race with death? An ill-matched three, you'll

allow;

Flash Jim the breaker and Boozing Bill (who is riding steadily now),  
And Constable Dunn, of the Mounted Police, is riding between the two  
(He wants Flash Jim, but the job can wait till they get the Murphys  
through).

As they strike the track through the blazing scrub, the trooper is heard to  
shout:

'We'll take them on to the Two-mile Tank, if we cannot bring them out!'  
A half-mile more, and the rest rein back, retreating, half-choked, half-  
blind;  
And the three are gone from the sight of men, and the bush fire roars  
behind.

The Bushman wiped the tears of smoke, and like Bushmen wept and  
swore;

'Poor Bill will be wanting his drink to-night as never he did before.  
'And Dunn was the best in the whole damned force!' says a client of  
Dunn's, with pride;  
I reckon he'll serve his summons on Jim — when they get to the other  
side.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is daylight again, and the fire is past, and the black scrub silent and  
grim,

Except for the blaze of an old dead tree, or the crash of a falling limb;  
And the Bushmen are riding again on the run, with hearts and with eyes  
that fill,  
To look for the bodies of Constable Dunn, Flash Jim, and Boozing Bill.

They are found in the mud of the Two-mile Tank, where a fiend might  
scarce survive,

But the Bushmen gather from words they hear that the bodies are much  
alive.

There is Swearing Pat, with his grey beard singed, and his language of  
lurid hue,

And his tough old wife, and his half-baked kids, and the three who  
dragged them through.

Old Pat is deploring his burnt-out home, and his wife the climate warm;

And Jim the loss of his favourite horse, and Dunn his uniform;

And Boozing Bill, with a raging thirst, is cursing the Dingo Scrub —

He'll only ask for the loan of a flask and a lift to the nearest pub.

\* \* \* \* \*

Flash Jim the Breaker is lying low — blue-paper is after him,  
And Dunn, the trooper, is riding his rounds with a blind eye out for Jim,  
And Boozing Bill is fighting D.Ts. in the township of Sudden Jerk —  
When they're wanted again in the Dingo Scrubs, they'll be there to do the  
work.

## The Bill of the Ages

HE shall live to the end of this mad old world, he has lived since the world began,

He never has done any good for himself, but was good to every man.

He never has done any good for himself, and I'm sure that he never will,

He drinks and he swears and he fights at times, and his name is mostly Bill.

He carried a freezing mate to his cave, and nursed him, for all I know,

When Europe was mostly a sheet of ice, thousands of years ago.

He has stuck to many a mate since then, he is with us everywhere still

(He loves and gambles when he is young, and the girls stick up for Bill.)

He has rowed to a wreck, when the lifeboat failed, with Jim in a crazy boat;

He has given his lifebelt many a time, and sunk that another might float.

He has 'stood 'em off' while others escaped, when the niggers rushed from the hill,

And rescue parties who came too late have found what was left of Bill.

He has thirsted on deserts that others might drink, he has given lest others should lack,

He has staggered half-blinded through fire or drought with a sick man on his back.

He is first to the rescue in tunnel or shaft, from Newcastle to Broken Hill,

When the water breaks in or the fire breaks out, Oh! a leader of men is Bill.

No humane societies' medals he wears for the fearful deaths he braved;

He seems ashamed of the good he did, and ashamed of the lives he saved.

If you chance to know of a noble deed he has done, you had best keep still;

If you chance to know of a kindly act, you mustn't let on to Bill.

He is fierce at a wrong, he is firm in right, he is kind to the weak and mild;

He will slave all day and sit up all night by the side of a neighbour's

child.

For a woman in trouble he'd lay down his life, nor think as another man will;  
He's a man all through, but no other man's wife has ever been worse for Bill.

He is good for the noblest sacrifice, he can do what few other men can;  
He can break his heart that the girl he loves may marry a better man.  
There's many a mother and wife to-night whose heart and whose eyes will fill  
When she thinks of the days of the long ago when she well might have stuck to Bill.

Maybe he's in trouble or hard up now, and travelling far for work,  
Or fighting a dead past down to-night in a lone camp west of Bourke.  
When he's happy and flush, take your sorrow to him and borrow as much as you will;  
But when he's in trouble or stony-broke, you never will hear from Bill.

And when, because of its million sins, this earth is cracked like a shell,  
He will stand by a mate at the Judgment Seat! — and comfort him down in — Well,  
I haven't much sentiment left, but let the cynic sneer as he will;  
Perhaps God will fix up the world again for the sake of the likes of Bill.

## Waratah and Wattle

THOUGH poor and in trouble I wander alone,  
    With a rebel cockade in my hat;  
Though friends may desert me, and kindred disown,  
    My country will never do that!  
You may sing of the Shamrock, the Thistle, and Rose,  
    Or the three in a bunch if you will;  
But I know of a country that gathered all those,  
And I love the great land where the Waratah grows,  
    And the Wattle-bough blooms on the hill.

Australia! Australia! so fair to behold —  
    While the blue sky is arching above;  
The stranger should never have need to be told,  
That the Wattle-bloom means that her heart is of gold,  
    And the Waratah red blood of love.

Australia! Australia! most beautiful name,  
    Most kindly and bountiful land;  
I would die every death that might save her from shame,  
    If a black cloud should rise on the strand;  
But whatever the quarrel, whoever her foes,  
    Let them come! Let them come when they will!  
Though the struggle be grim, 'tis Australia that knows,  
That her children shall fight while the Waratah grows,  
    And the Wattle blooms out on the hill.

## My Land and I

THEY have eaten their fill at your tables spread,  
Like friends since the land was won;  
And they rise with a cry of 'Australia's dead!' —  
With the wheeze of 'Australia's done!' —  
Oh, the theme is stale, but they tell the tale  
(How the weak old tale will keep!)  
Like the crows that croak on a splintered rail,  
That have gorged on a rotten sheep.

I would sing a song in your darkest hour —  
In your darkest hour and mine —  
For I see the dawn of your wealth and power,  
And I see your bright star shine.  
The little men yelp and the little men lie,  
And they spread the lies afar;  
But we heed them never, my Land and I,  
For we know how small they are.

They know you not in a paltry town —  
In the streets where great hopes die —  
Oh, heart that never a flood could drown,  
And never a drought could dry!  
Stand forth from the rim where the red sun dips,  
Strong son of the land's own son —  
With the grin of grit on your drought-chapped lips  
And say, is your country done?

Stand forth from the land where the sunset dies,  
By the desolate lonely shed,  
With the smile of faith in your blighted eyes,  
And say, is your country dead?  
They see no future, they know no past —  
The parasite cur and clown,  
Who talk of ruin and death to last  
When a man or a land is down.

God sends for answer the rain, the rain,  
And away on the western lease,

The limitless plain grows green again,  
And the fattening stock increase.  
We'll lock your rivers, my land, my land,  
Dig lakes on the furthest run —  
While down in the corners where houses stand,  
They drivel, 'Australia's done!'

The parasites dine at your tables spread  
(As my enemies did at mine),  
And they croak and gurgle, 'Australia's dead  
While they guzzle Australian wine.  
But we heed them never, my land, my land,  
For we know how small they are,  
And we see the signs of a future grand.  
As we gaze on a rising star.

## The Men Who Live It Down

I HAVE sinned, like others, blindly, without thought and without fear,  
And my best friends say it kindly, 'You should go away from here.'  
Shall I fly the paltry spirit of a narrow little town,  
While the battle-drums are beating for the men who live it down?

Down the street where all men know me I can walk with level eyes,  
They believe the lies about me, they can sneer, but I despise.  
From my black and bitter childhood, from my dull and joyless youth,  
It is I who — it is I who — I and Christ who know the truth!

I have sinned, but as a man might; like a man I'll rise again  
From long nights of mental torture, from long days of care and pain.  
Pass me by with eyes averted, with a shrug or with a frown,  
But their heads shall bow in ashes long ere my head shall go down!

Ah! the curs, who dare not trespass, quick to sneer and quick to blame;  
But the wider world is kinder — it takes long to damn a name.  
There's a heart that's worth a million and a head that's worth a crown,  
And the flash of bright eyes sometimes for the men who live it down.

There's a hand-grip close and silent, firm in trust and sympathy,  
Sends the old thrill through my being, sends the old hopes up in me.  
There is one who'll stand beside me when the screen is round my bed,  
And the godly pass their stricture on the sinner who is dead.

When the crape is round my picture and my mad, wild spirit's free —  
And you realise how little you have ever known of me  
When the worst is said and printed by the coward and the clown,  
Then, I trust, a friend might answer — 'There lies one who lived it  
down.'

## When Your Pants Begin to Go

WHEN you wear a cloudy collar and a shirt that isn't white,  
And you cannot sleep for thinking how you'll reach to-morrow night,  
You may be a man of sorrows, and on speaking terms with Care,  
But as yet you're unacquainted with the Demon of Despair;  
For I rather think that nothing heaps the trouble on your mind  
Like the knowledge that your trousers badly need a patch behind.

I have noticed, when misfortune strikes the hero of the play,  
That his clothes are worn and tattered in a most unlikely way;  
And the gods applaud and cheer him while he whines and loafs around,  
And they never seem to notice that his pants are mostly sound;  
But, of course, he cannot help it, for our mirth would mock his care,  
If the ceiling of his trousers showed the patches of repair.

You are none the less a hero if you elevate your chin  
When you feel the pavement wearing through the leather, sock, and skin;  
You are rather more heroic than are ordinary folk  
If you scorn to fish for pity under cover of a joke;  
You will face the doubtful glances of the people that you know;  
But — of course, you're bound to face them when your pants begin to go.

If, when flush, you took your pleasures — failed to make a god of Pelf,  
Some will say that for your troubles you can only thank yourself —  
Some will swear you'll die a beggar, but you only laugh at that  
While your garments hang together and you wear a decent hat;  
You may laugh at their predictions while your soles are wearing low,  
But — a man's an awful coward when his pants begin to go.

Though the present and the future may be anything but bright,  
It is best to tell the fellows that you're getting on all right.  
And a man prefers to say it — 'tis a manly lie to tell,  
For the folks may be persuaded that you're doing very well;  
But it's hard to be a hero, and it's hard to wear a grin,  
When your most important garment is in places very thin.

Get some sympathy and comfort from the chum who knows you best,  
That your sorrows won't run over in the presence of the rest;  
There's a chum that you can go to when you feel inclined to whine,

He'll declare your coat is tidy, and he'll say: 'Just look at mine!'  
Though you may be patched all over he will say it doesn't show,  
And he'll swear it can't be noticed when your pants begin to go.

Brother mine, and of misfortune! times are hard, but do not fret,  
Keep your courage up and struggle, and we'll laugh at these things yet.  
Though there is no corn in Egypt, surely Africa has some —  
Keep your smile in working order for the better days to come!  
We will often laugh together at the hard times that we know,  
And get measured by the tailor when our pants begin to go.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now the lady of refinement, in the lap of comfort rocked,  
Chancing on these rugged verses, will pretend that she is shocked.  
Leave her to her smelling-bottle; 'tis the wealthy who decide  
That the world should hide its patches 'neath the cruel cloak of pride;  
And I think there's something noble, and I'll swear there's nothing low,  
In the pride of Human Nature when its pants begin to go.

## Robbie's Statue

GROWN tired of mourning for my sins —

And brooding over merits —

The other night with bothered brow

I went amongst the spirits;

And I met one that I knew well:

‘Oh, Scotty's Ghost, is that you?

And did you see the fearsome crowd

‘At Robbie Burns's statue?

‘They hurried up in hansom cabs,

‘Tall-hatted and frock-coated;

‘They trained it in from all the towns,

‘The weird and hairy-throated;

‘They spoke in some outlandish tongue,

‘They cut some comic capers,

‘And ilka man was wild to get

‘His name in all the papers.

‘They showed no gleam of intellect,

‘Those frauds who rushed before us;

‘They knew one verse of “Auld Lang Syne — ”

‘The first one and the chorus:

‘They clacked the clack o' Scotlan's Bard,

‘They glibly talked of “Rabby;”

‘But what if he had come to them

‘Without a groat and shabby?

‘They drank and wept for Robbie's sake,

‘They stood and brayed like asses

‘(The living bard's a drunken rake,

‘The dead one loved the lasses);

‘If Robbie Burns were here, they'd sit

‘As still as any mouse is;

‘If Robbie Burns should come their way,

‘They'd turn him out their houses.

‘Oh, weep for bonny Scotland's bard!

‘And praise the Scottish nation,

'Who made him spy and let him die  
'Heart-broken in privation:  
'Exciseman, so that he might live  
'Through northern winters' rigours —  
'Just as in southern lands they give  
'The hard-up rhymer figures.

'We need some songs of stinging fun  
'To wake the States and light 'em;  
'I wish a man like Robert Burns  
'Were here to-day to write 'em!  
'But still the mockery shall survive  
'Till the Day o' Judgment crashes —  
'The men we scorn when we're alive  
'With praise insult our ashes.'

And Scotty's ghost said: 'Never mind  
'The fleas that you inherit;  
'The living bard can flick them off —  
'They cannot hurt his spirit.  
'The crawlers round the bardie's name  
'Shall crawl through all the ages;  
'His work's the living thing, and they  
'Are fly-dirt on the pages.'

## The Ballad of the Elder Son

A SON of elder sons I am,  
Whose boyhood days were cramped and scant,  
Through ages of domestic sham  
And family lies and family cant.  
Come, elder brothers mine, and bring  
Dull loads of care that you have won,  
And gather round me while I sing  
The ballad of the elder son.

'Twas Christ who spake in parables —  
To picture man was his intent;  
A simple tale He simply tells,  
And He Himself makes no comment.  
A morbid sympathy is felt  
For prodigals — the selfish ones —  
The crooked world has ever dealt  
Unjustly by the elder sons.

The elder son on barren soil,  
Where life is crude and lands are new,  
Must share the father's hardest toil,  
And share the father's troubles too.  
With no child-thoughts to meet his own  
His childhood is a lonely one:  
The youth his father might have known  
Is seldom for the eldest son.

It seems so strange, but fate is grim,  
And Heaven's ways are hard to track,  
Though ten young scamps come after him  
The rod falls heaviest on his back.  
And, well I'll say it might be caused  
By a half-sense of injustice done —  
That vague resentment parents feel  
So oft towards the eldest son.

He, too, must bear the father's name,  
He loves his younger brother, too,

And feels the younger brother's shame  
As keenly as his parents do.  
The mother's prayers, the father's curse,  
The sister's tears have all been done —  
We seldom see in prose or verse  
The prayers of the elder son.

But let me to the parable  
With eyes on facts but fancy free;  
And don't belie me if I tell  
The story as it seems to me —  
For, mind, I do not mean to sneer  
(I was religious when a child),  
I wouldn't be surprised to hear  
That Christ himself had sometimes smiled.

A certain squatter had two sons  
Up Canaan way some years ago.  
The graft was hard on those old runs,  
And it was hot and life was slow.  
The younger brother coolly claimed  
The portion that he hadn't earned,  
And sought the 'life' for which untamed  
And high young spirits always yearned.

A year or so he knocked about,  
And spent his cheques on girls and wine,  
And, getting stony in the drought,  
He took a job at herding swine,  
And though he is a hog that swigs  
And fools with girls till all is blue —  
'Twas rather rough to shepherd pigs  
And have to eat their tucker too.

“When he came to himself,” he said  
(I take my Bible from the shelf:  
There's nothing like a feed of husks  
To bring a young man to himself.  
And when you're done with wine and girls —  
Right here a moral seems to shine —  
And are hard up, you'll find no pearls  
Are cast by friends before your swine) —

When he came to himself, he said —  
He reckoned pretty shrewdly, too —

'The rousers in my father's shed  
    'Have got more grub than they can chew;  
'I've been a fool, but such is fate —  
    'I guess I'll talk the guv'nor round:  
' "I've acted cronk," I'll tell him straight;  
    '(He's had his time too, I'll be bound).

'I'll tell him straight I've had my fling,  
    'I'll tell him "I've been on the beer,  
' "But put me on at anything,  
    ' "I'll graft with any bounder here." '   
He rolled his swag and struck for home —  
    He was by this time pretty slim  
And, when the old man saw him come —  
    Well, you know how he welcomed him.

They've brought the best robe in the house,  
    The ring, and killed the fatted calf,  
And now they hold a grand carouse,  
    And eat and drink and dance and laugh:  
And from the field the elder son —  
    Whose character is not admired —  
Comes plodding home when work is done,  
    And very hot and very tired.

He asked the meaning of the sound  
    Of such unwonted revelry,  
They said his brother had been 'found'  
    (He'd found himself it seemed to me);  
'Twas natural in the elder son  
    To take the thing a little hard  
And brood on what was past and done  
    While standing outside in the yard.

Now he was hungry and knocked out  
    And would, if they had let him be,  
Have rested and cooled down, no doubt,  
    And hugged his brother after tea,  
And welcomed him and hugged his dad  
    And filled the wine cup to the brim —  
But, just when he was feeling bad  
    The old man came and tackled him.

He well might say with bitter tears  
    While music swelled and flowed the wine —

'Lo, I have served thee many years  
    'Nor caused thee one grey hair of thine.  
'Whate'er thou bad'st me do I did  
    'And for my brother made amends;  
'Thou never gavest me a kid  
    'That I might make merry with my friends.'

(He was no honest clod and glum  
    Who could not trespass, sing nor dance —  
He could be merry with a chum,  
    It seemed, if he had half a chance;  
Perhaps, if further light we seek,  
    He knew — and herein lay the sting —  
His brother would clear out next week  
    And promptly pop the robe and ring).

The father said, 'The wandering one,  
    'The lost is found, this son of mine,  
'But thou art always with me, son —  
    'Thou knowest all I have is thine.'  
(It seemed the best robe and the ring,  
    The love and fatted calf were not;  
But this was just a little thing  
    The old man in his joy forgot.)

The father's blindness in the house,  
    The mother's fond and foolish way  
Have caused no end of ancient rows  
    Right back to Cain and Abel's day.  
The world will blame the eldest born —  
    But — well, when all is said and done,  
No coat has ever yet been worn  
    That had no colour more than one.

Oh! if I had the power to teach —  
    The strength for which my spirit craves —  
The cant of parents I would preach  
    Who slave and make their children slaves.  
For greed of gain, and that alone  
    Their youth they steal, their hearts they break  
And then, the wretched misers moan —  
    'We did it for our children's sake.'

'And all I have' — the paltry bribe  
    That he might slave contented yet

While envied by his selfish tribe  
The birthright he might never get:  
The worked-out farm and endless graft,  
The mortgaged home, the barren run —  
The heavy, hopeless overdraft —  
The portion of the elder son.

He keeps his parents when they're old,  
He keeps a sister in distress,  
His wife must work and care for them  
And bear with all their pettishness.  
The mother's moan is ever heard,  
And, whining for the worthless one,  
She seldom has a kindly word  
To say about her eldest son.

'Tis he, in spite of sneer and jibe,  
Who stands the friend when others fail:  
He bears the burdens of his tribe  
And keeps his brother out of jail.  
He lends the quid and pays the fine,  
And for the family pride he smarts —  
For reasons I cannot divine  
They hate him in their heart of hearts.

A satire on this world of sin —  
Where parents seldom understand —  
That night the angels gathered in  
The firstborn of that ancient land.  
Perhaps they thought, in those old camps,  
While suffering for the blow that fell,  
They might have better spared the scamps  
And Josephs that they loved so well.

Sometimes the Eldest takes the track  
When things at home have got too bad —  
He comes not crawling, canting back  
To seek the blind side of his dad.  
He always finds a knife and fork  
And meat between on which to dine,  
And, though he sometimes deals in pork,  
You'll never catch him herding swine.

The happy home, the overdraft,  
His birthright and his prospects gay,

And likewise his share of the graft,  
He leaves the rest to grab. And they —  
Who'd always do the thing by halves,  
If anything for him was done —  
Would kill a score of fatted calves  
To welcome home the eldest son.

## The Pride That Comes After

IT knows it all, it knows it all,  
The world of groans and laughter,  
It sneers of pride before a fall,  
But the bitter pride comes after:  
So leave me and I'll seek you not,  
So seek me and you'll find me —  
But till I know your hand-grip's true  
I'll stand with hands behind me.

It knows it all, it knows it all,  
The world of lies and sorrow —  
It prates of pride before a fall,  
And of the humble morrow;  
But shame and blame are but a name,  
Oh, heart that's hurt past curing!  
We'll drink to-night the sinner's pride,  
The pride that's most enduring.

They know it all, they know it all,  
The curs that pass the sentence.  
They preach of pride before a fall  
And bitter black repentance:  
So leave me when my star is set,  
I'll glory that you leave me,  
While one has pride to love me yet  
There's nought on earth shall grieve me.

## A Voice from the City

ON western plain and eastern hill  
Where once my fancy ranged,  
The station hands are riding still  
And they are little changed.  
But I have lost in London gloom  
The glory of the day,  
The grand perfume of wattle bloom  
Is faint and far away.

Brown faces under broad-brimmed hats  
The grip of wiry hands,  
The gallops on the frosty flats,  
Seem dreams of other lands;  
The camp fire and the stars that blaze  
Above the mystic plain  
Are but the thoughts of vanished days  
That never come again.

The evening star I seldom view —  
That led me on to roam —  
I never see the morning star  
That used to draw me home.  
But I have often longed for day  
To hide the few I see,  
Because they only point and say  
Most bitter things to me.

I wear my life on pavement stones  
That drag me ever down,  
A paltry slave to little things,  
By custom chained to town.  
I've lost the strength to strike alone,  
The heart to do and dare —  
I mind the day I'd roll my swag  
And tramp to — God-knows-where.

When I should wait I wander out,  
When I should go I bide —

I scarcely dare to think about  
The days when I could ride.  
I would not mount before his eyes,  
‘Straight’ Bushman tall and tan —  
I mind the day when I stood up  
And fought him like a man.

I mind the time when I was shy  
To meet the brown Bush girls —  
I’ve lunched with lords since then and I  
Have been at home with earls:  
I learned to smile and learned to bow  
And lie to ladies gay —  
But to a gaunt Bushwoman now  
I’d not know what to say.

And if I sought her hard bare home  
From scenes of show and sham,  
I’d sit all ill at ease and fell  
The poor weak thing I am.  
I could not meet her hopeless eyes  
That look one through and through,  
The haggard woman of the past  
Who once thought I was true.

But nought on earth can last for aye,  
And wild with care and pain,  
Some day by chance I’ll break away  
And seek the Bush again.  
And find awhile from bitter years  
The rest the Bush can bring,  
And hear, perhaps, with truer ears  
The songs it has to sing.

## To-Morrow

WHEN you're suffering hard for your sins, old man,  
When you wake to trouble and sleep ill —  
Oh, this is the clack of the middle class,  
‘Win back the respect of the people!’  
You are weak, you're a fool, or a drunken brute  
When you're deep in trouble and sorrow;  
But walk down the street in a decent suit,  
And their hats will be off to-morrow! Old Chap —  
And their hats will be off to-morrow!

They cant and they cackle — ‘Redeem the Past!’  
Who never had past worth redeeming:  
Your soul seems dead, but you'll find at last  
That somewhere your soul lay dreaming.  
You may stagger down-hill in a beer-stained coat,  
You may loaf, you may cadge and borrow —  
But walk down the street with a ten-pound note  
And their hats will be off to-morrow! Old Man —  
Yes, their hats will be off to-morrow!

But stick to it, man! for your old self's sake,  
Though to brood on the past is human;  
Hold up for the sake of the mate who was true,  
And the sake of the Other Woman.  
And as for the rest, you may take off your hat  
And banish all signs of sorrow;  
You may take their hands, but in spite of that,  
Can they win your respect to-morrow? Old Man —  
Can they win your respect to-morrow?

## The Light on the Wreck

OUT there by the rocks, at the end of the bank,  
In the mouth of the river, the *Wanderer* sank.  
She is resting where meet the blue water and green,  
And only her masts and her funnel are seen;  
And you see, when is fading the sunset's last fleck,  
On her foremast a lantern — a light on a wreck.

'Tis a light on a wreck, warning ships to beware  
Of the drowned iron hull of the *Wanderer* there;  
And the ships that come in and go out in the night  
Keep a careful lookout for the *Wanderer's* light.  
There are rules for the harbour and rules for the wave;  
But all captains steer clear of the *Wanderer's* grave.

And the stories of strong lives that ended in wrecks  
Might be likened to lights over derelict decks;  
Like the light where, in sight of the streets of the town,  
In the mouth of the channel the *Wanderer* went down.  
Keep a watch from the desk, as they watch from the deck;  
Keep a watch from your home for the light on the wreck.

But the lights on the wrecks since creation began  
Have been shining in vain for the vagabond clan.  
They will never take warning, they will not beware,  
For they hold for their mottoes 'What matter?' 'What care?'  
And they sail without compass, they sail without check,  
Till they steer to their grave 'neath a light on a wreck.

## The Secret Whisky Cure

'TIS no tale of heroism, 'tis no tale of storm and strife,  
But of ordinary boozing, and of dull domestic life —  
Of the everlasting friction that most husbands must endure —  
Tale of nagging and of drinking — and a secret whisky cure.

Name of Jones — perhaps you know him — small house-agent here in town —  
(Friend of Smith, you know him also — likewise Robinson and Brown),  
Just a hopeless little husband, whose deep sorrows were obscure,  
And a bitter nagging Missis — and death seemed the only cure.

'Twas a common sordid marriage, and there's little new to tell —  
Save the pub to him was Heaven and his own home was a hell:  
With the office in between them — purgatory to be sure —  
And, as far as Jones could make out — well, there wasn't any cure.

'Twas drink and nag — or nag and drink — whichever you prefer —  
Till at last she couldn't stand him any more than he could her.  
Friends and relatives assisted, telling her (with motives pure)  
That a legal separation was the only earthly cure.

So she went and saw a lawyer, who, in accents soft and low,  
Asked her firstly if her husband had a bank account or no;  
But he hadn't and she hadn't, they in fact were very poor,  
So he bowed her out suggesting she should try some liquor cure.

She saw a drink cure advertised in the *Sydney Bulletin* —  
Cure for brandy, cure for whisky, cure for rum and beer and gin,  
And it could be given secret, it was tasteless, swift and sure —  
So she purchased half a gallon of that Secret Whisky Cure.

And she put some in his coffee, smiling sweetly all the while,  
And he started for the office rather puzzled by the smile —  
Smile or frown he'd have a whisky, and you'll say he was a boor —  
But perhaps his wife had given him an overdose of Cure.

And he met a friend he hadn't seen for seven years or more —  
It was just upon the threshold of a private bar-room door —  
And they coalised and entered straight away, you may be sure —

But of course they hadn't reckoned with a Secret Whisky Cure.

Jones, he drank, turned pale, and, gasping, hurried out the back way quick,

Where, to his old chum's amazement, he was violently sick;  
Then they interviewed the landlord, but he swore the drink was pure —  
It was only the beginning of the Secret Whisky Cure.

For Jones couldn't stand the smell of even special whisky blends,  
And shunned bar-rooms to the sorrow of his trusty drinking friends:  
And they wondered, too, what evil genius had chanced to lure  
Him from paths of booze and friendship — never dreaming of a Cure.

He had noticed, too, with terror that a something turned his feet,  
When a pub was near, and swung him to the other side the street,  
Till he thought the devils had him, and his person they'd immure  
In a lunatic asylum where there wasn't any Cure.

He consulted several doctors who were puzzled by the case —  
As they mostly are, but never tell the patient to his face —  
Some advised him 'Try the Mountains for this malady obscure:'  
But there wasn't one could diagnose a Secret Whisky Cure.

And his wife, when he was sober? — Well, she nagged him all the more!  
And he couldn't drown his sorrow in the pewter as of yore:  
So he shot himself at Manly and was sat upon by Woore,  
And found rest amongst the spirits from the Secret Whisky Cure.

\* \* \* \* \*

And the moral? — well, 'tis funny — or 'tis woman's way with men —  
She's remarried to a publican who whacks her now and then,  
And they get on fairly happy, he's a brute and he's a boor,  
But she's never tried her second with a Secret Whisky Cure.

## The Alleys

I WAS welcome in a palace when the ball was at my feet,  
I was petted in a garden and my triumph was complete.  
But for me above the alleys there forever shone a star,  
Where the third-rate public houses and the dens of Venus are.  
    Where the third-rate public houses  
    And the fourth-rate lodging houses,  
And the rag-shops and the pawn-shops and the dens of Venus are.

I was born among the alleys, bred in darkness and in doubt,  
And I wrote the truth in blindness and I struggled up and out;  
And the world was fair before me and the way was wide and plain,  
But the spirit of the alleys ever dragged me back again.

    'Tis a madness I inherit  
    And a blind and reckless spirit.  
Oh! the spirit of the alleys ever drags me down again!

There were fair girls in the garden where the spring came in a day,  
But the barmaids in the alleys know a wider world than they.  
There were wise men in the palace who were born to rule the earth,  
But the wrecks amongst the alleys know the world for what it's worth.  
    To the pewter from the chalice,  
    To the slum from the palace,  
Aye! the wrecks sunk in the alleys know the world for what it's worth!

Poets who have done with puzzling — men who talk but dare not  
think —

Men who might have moulded nations had it not been for the drink!  
Wicked stories full of humour — shafts of wit that seldom miss,  
Shot from blighted lips of women that the bravest dare not kiss?

    Let the worst girl lead the revels  
    Of the reckless alley devils! —  
Pure and virtuous women often, often drive men down to this.

In the days of mental torture when my life was all a hell,  
It was down amongst the alleys that I learnt the tales I tell,  
From the black-sheep out from England, from the boozier in from  
Bourke,  
From the tired haggard women bending over needle-work:

Tales of wrongs, that fire the spirit,  
Tales of more than human merit,  
Told in quiet tones and measured, bending over needle-work.

Oh! the pathos and the humour of the shifts of poverty,  
Oh! the sympathy of drunkards, wit and truth and charity,  
Oh! the worn-out working women and the lives that they endure,  
And the hard and callous kindness of the poor unto the poor!  
(Where they blame not — those who labour —  
And the prostitute's a neighbour)  
Ah! the humour and the courage and the kindness of the poor!

There is fire down in the alleys that has smouldered very long;  
There is hatred in the alleys born of centuries of wrong;  
And no prayer wins to heaven like a prayer from the slums,  
And the thrones of empire totter when the alleys beat their drums.  
(Ah! the world is very rotten!  
But my sins shall be forgotten  
And my work shall be remembered when the alleys beat their drums.)

It is down amongst the alleys, in the alleys dull and damp,  
They find kindness in a scoundrel, they find good points in a scamp.  
It is down amongst the alleys, now my star has ceased to shine,  
I find sympathy with sinners and can hide what shame is mine,  
For we trust and shield each other  
And a sinner is a brother —  
There are souls amongst the alleys who were lost the same as mine.

And if you should some day miss me, and should care to wonder why,  
Ask for me amongst the alleys by the name they knew me by:  
Mind your head and pick your footsteps for you'll grope in alley gloom,  
And the stairs are steep and narrow where they'll lead you to a room.  
What if floors are foul and dusty  
And the air is close and musty?  
In the days when I was noble then I wrote in such a room.

You will see a chair and table dimly shown by candle light,  
And the pen I dropped for ever from the last line I shall write;  
And some poor attempts at comfort, and a bottle — and maybe  
You will find a bad girl crying over what is left of me:  
Call no friends — I shall not need them;  
Call no priests — I shall not heed them —  
Let the bad girl do the praying over what is left of me.

## The Scamps

OF home, name and wealth and ambition bereft —  
We are children of fortune and luck:  
They deny there's a shred of our characters left,  
But they cannot deny us the pluck!  
We are vagabond scamps, we are kings over all —  
There is little on earth we desire —  
We are devils who stand with our backs to the wall,  
And who call on the cowards to fire!

There are some of us here who were noble and good,  
And who learnt in ingratitude's schools —  
They were born of the selfish and misunderstood,  
They were soft, they were 'smoodgers' or fools.  
With their hands in their pockets to help every friend  
In a fix — and they never asked how:  
Beware of them you who have money to lend,  
For it's little you'd get from them now.

There are some of us here who were lovers of old —  
In the days that were nearer to God;  
The girl was more precious than honour or gold,  
And they worshipped the ground where she trod;  
But she trampled their hearts and they suffered and knew  
How the soul of a woman to read —  
They will never again to a woman be true;  
Let the girls who may meet them take heed!

There are some of us here who were devils from birth,  
Who would steal the eye out of a friend —  
But we judge not or blame not the worst on the earth,  
For it comes to the same in the end.  
There are some of us here who were ruined by wrong —  
To whom justice and love came too late —  
And they threw them aside and go singing a song,  
And they know that their mistress is fate.

We were some of us failures at suicide, too —  
We are most of us back from the dead —

But we've all found the courage to battle it through,  
Till the strength of our bodies is sped:  
With a flag that is dyed with our hearts'-blood unfurled,  
We are marching and marching afar —  
We are comrades of all who are fighting the world,  
For the world made us all what we are.

## Break O' Day

YOU love me, you say, and I think you do,  
But I know so many who don't,  
And how can I say I'll be true to you  
When I know very well that I won't?  
I have journeyed long and my goal is far,  
I love, but I cannot bide,  
For as sure as rises the morning star,  
With the break of day I'll ride.

I was doomed to ruin or doomed to mar  
The home wherever I stay,  
But I'll think of you as the morning star  
And they call me Break o' Day.

They well might have named me the Fall o' Night,  
For drear is the track I mark,  
But I love fair girls and I love the light,  
For I and my tribe were dark.  
You may love me dear, for a day and night,  
You may cast your life aside;  
But as sure as the morning star shines bright  
With the break of day I'll ride.

There was never a lover so proud and kind,  
There was never a friend so true;  
But the song of my life I have left behind  
In the heart of a girl like you.  
There was never so deep or cruel a wrong  
In the land that is far away,  
There was never so bitter a broken heart  
That rode at the break of day.

God bless you, dear, with your red-gold hair  
And your pitying eyes of grey —  
Oh! my heart forbids that a star so fair  
Should be marred by the Break o' Day.  
Live on, my girl, as the girl you are,  
Be a good and a true man's bride,

For as sure as beckons the evening star  
With the fall o' night I'll ride.

I was born to ruin or born to mar  
The home wherever I light.  
Oh! I wish that you were the Evening Star  
And that I were the Fall o' Night.

## The Women of the Town

IT is up from out the alleys, from the alleys dark and vile —  
It is up from out the alleys I have struggled for a while —  
Just to breathe the breath of Heaven ere my devil drags me down,  
And to sing a song of pity for the women of the town.

Johnnies in the private bar room, weak and silly, vain and blind —  
Even they would shrink and shudder if they knew the hell behind,  
And the meanest wouldn't grumble when he's bilked of half-a-crown  
If he knew as much as I do of the women of the town.

For I see the end too plainly of the golden-headed star  
Who is smiling like an angel in the gilded private bar —  
Drifting to the third-rate houses, drifting, sinking lower down  
Till she raves in some foul parlour with the women of the town.

To the dingy beer-stained parlour all day long the outcasts come —  
Draggled, dirty, bleared, repulsive, shameless, aye, and rotten some —  
They have sold their bodies and would sell their souls for drink to drown  
Memories of wrong that haunt them — haunt the women of the town.

I have seen the haunting terror of the 'horrors' in their eyes,  
Heard them cry to Christ to help them as the mansoul never cries,  
While the smirking landlord listened with a grin or with a frown.  
Oh, they suffer hell in drinking, do the women of the town.

I have known too well, God help me! to what depths a man can sink,  
Sacrificing wife and children, fame and honour, all for drink.  
Deeper, deeper sink the women, for the veriest drunken clown  
Has his feet upon the shoulders of the women of the town.

There's a heavy cloud that's lying on my spirit like a pall —  
'Tis the horror and injustice and the hopelessness of all —  
There's the love of one for ever that no sea of sin can drown,  
And she loves a brute, God help her! does the woman of the town.

O my sisters, O my sisters, I am powerless to aid;  
'Tis a world of prostitution, it is business, it is trade,  
And they profit from the brewer and the smirking landlord down  
To the bully and the bludger, on the women of the town.

Oh, the heart of one great poet called to heaven in a line —  
Crying, 'Mary, pity women!' — You have whiter souls than mine.  
And if in the grand Hereafter there is one shall wear a crown —  
For the hell that men made for her — 'tis the Woman of the Town.

## The Afterglow

OH, for the fire that used to glow  
In those my days of old!  
I never thought a man could grow  
So callous and so cold.  
Ah, for the heart that used to ache  
For those in sorrow's ways;  
I often wish my heart could break  
As it did in those dead days.

Along my track of storm and stress,  
And it is plain to trace,  
I look back from the loneliness  
And the depth of my disgrace.  
'Twas fate and only fate I know,  
But all mistakes are plain,  
'Tis sadder than the afterglow,  
More dreary than the rain.

But still there lies a patch of sun  
That ne'er will come again,  
Those golden days when I was one  
Of Nature's gentlemen.  
And if there is a memory  
Could break me down at last,  
It sure would be the thought of this,  
The sunshine in the past.

But 'spite of sunshine on the track —  
And well the sun might shine —  
My heart grows hard when I look back  
From these dark days of mine.  
A nobler child was never born  
In all the Southern land —  
The slave of selfish ignorance  
That could not understand.

Oh, I had lived for many years  
In a world of my ideal,

With no false laughter, no false tears,  
And it seemed very real.  
But I was wakened from my dreams,  
And learnt with hardening eyes  
A world of selfish treachery,  
Of paltry shame and lies.

I left the truest friends on earth  
Who did not need my aid,  
And worked for those who were not worth  
The sacrifice I made.  
And while I blindly strove to raise  
The coward and the clown,  
They sneaked behind by shady ways  
And tore my palace down.

But let those faithless friends of mine  
Who'd think of me with scorn,  
Remember that for many years  
A heavy load I've borne.  
And my true friends when all is done,  
And my sad soul is gone,  
Will think of battles I have won  
When I lead rivals on.

And though from spite and worldly things  
I well should be exempt,  
For little men and paltry men  
I scarce can feel contempt.  
They followed me with flattery  
In the days when I was brave —  
But for those who have been true to me  
I'll strike back from the grave!

## Written Out

SING the song of the reckless, who care not what they do;  
Sing the song of a sinner and the song of a writer, too —  
Down in a pub in the alleys, in a dark and dirty hole,  
With every soul a drunkard and the boss with never a soul.

Uncollared, unkempt, unshaven, sat the writer whose fame was fair,  
And the girls of the streets were round him, and the bullies and bludgers  
there;  
He was one of themselves and they told him the things that they had to  
tell —  
He was studying human nature with his brothers and sisters in hell.

He was neither poor nor lonely, for a place in the world he'd won,  
And up in the heights of the city he'd a thousand friends or none;  
But he knew that his chums could wait awhile, that he'd reckon with foes  
at last,  
For he lived far into a future that he knew because of the past.

They remembered the man he had been, they remembered the songs he  
wrote,  
And some of them came to pity and some of them came to gloat:  
Some of them shouted exulting — some whispered with bated breath  
That down in a den in the alleys he was drinking himself to death.

Thus said the voice of the hypocrites — and the true hearts sighed with  
pain,  
'Oh! he never will write as he used to write! He never will write again;'  
A poet had written his epitaph in numbers of sad regret,  
And the passing-notice was pigeon-holed, and the last review was set.

But the strength was in him to rise again to a greater height, he knew,  
For the sake of the friends who were true to him and the work that he had  
to do;  
He was sounding the depths that he had to know, he was gathering truths  
for his craft,  
And he heard the chatter of little men — and he turned to his beer and  
laughed.

## **New Life, New Love**

THE breezes blow on the river below,  
And the fleecy clouds float high,  
And I mark how the dark green gum trees match  
The bright blue dome of the sky.  
The rain has been, and the grass is green  
Where the slopes were bare and brown,  
And I see the things that I used to see  
In the days ere my head went down.

I have found a light in my long dark night,  
Brighter than stars or moon;  
I have lost the fear of the sunset drear,  
And the sadness of afternoon.  
Here let us stand while I hold your hand,  
Where the light's on your golden head —  
Oh! I feel the thrill that I used to feel  
In the days ere my heart was dead.

The storm's gone by, but my lips are dry  
And the old wrong rankles yet —  
Sweetheart or wife, I must take new life  
From your red lips warm and wet!  
So let it be, you may cling to me,  
There is nothing on earth to dread,  
For I'll be the man that I used to be  
In the days ere my heart was dead!

## The King and Queen and I

OH, Scotty, have you visited the Picture Gallery,  
And did you see the portraits of the King and Queen and me?  
The portraits made by Longstaff, and the pictures done by Jack,  
Of the King and Queen and Lawson and the lady all in black?

The King is robed in royal state, with medals on his breast,  
And, like the mother Queen she is, Her Majesty is dressed.  
The lady's dressed in simple black and sports no precious stones,  
And I a suit of reach-me-downs I bought from Davy Jones.

We're strangers two to two, and each unto the other three —  
I do not know the lady and I don't think she knows me.  
We're strangers to each other here, and to the other two,  
And they themselves are strangers yet, if all we hear is true.

I s'pose we're just as satisfied as folks have ever been:  
The lady would much rather be her own self than the Queen;  
And though I'm down and precious stiff and I admire King Ned,  
I'd sooner just be Harry, with his follies on his head.

We four may meet together — stranger folk have met, I ween,  
Than a rhymer and a monarch and a lady and a queen.  
Ned and I might talk it over on the terrace, frank and free,  
With cigars, while Alexandra and the lady's having tea.

Anyway, we'll never quarrel while we're hanging on the wall —  
Friends! we all have had our troubles — we are human, one and all!  
If by chance we hang together — hang together on the line,  
And the thing should shock the Godly — then it's Longstaff's fault, not  
mine.

## To Hannah

SPIRIT girl to whom 'twas given  
To revisit scenes of pain,  
From the hell I thought was Heaven  
You have lifted me again;  
Through the world that I inherit,  
Where I loved her ere she died,  
I am walking with the spirit  
Of a dead girl by my side.

Through my old possessions only  
For a very little while,  
And they say that I am lonely,  
And they pity, but I smile:  
For the brighter side has won me  
By the calmness that it brings,  
And the peace that is upon me  
Does not come of earthly things.

Spirit girl, the good is in me,  
But the flesh you know is weak,  
And with no pure soul to win me  
I might miss the path I seek;  
Lead me by the love you bore me  
When you trod the earth with me,  
Till the light is clear before me  
And my spirit too is free.

## The Water Lily

A LONELY young wife  
In her dreaming discerns  
A lily-decked pool  
With a border of ferns,  
And a beautiful child,  
With butterfly wings,  
Trips down to the edge of the water and sings:  
'Come, mamma! come!  
'Quick! follow me —  
'Step out on the leaves of the water-lily!'

And the lonely young wife,  
Her heart beating wild,  
Cries, 'Wait till I come,  
'Till I reach you, my child!'  
But the beautiful child  
With butterfly wings  
Steps out on the leaves of the lily and sings:  
'Come, mamma! come!  
'Quick! follow me!  
'And step on the leaves of the water-lily!'

And the wife in her dreaming  
Steps out on the stream,  
But the lily leaves sink  
And she wakes from her dream.  
Ah, the waking is sad,  
For the tears that it brings,  
And she knows 'tis her dead baby's spirit that sings:  
'Come, mamma! come!  
'Quick! follow me!  
Step out on the leaves of the water-lily!'

## Barta

WIDE solemn eyes that question me,  
Wee hand that pats my head —  
Where only two have stroked before,  
And both of them are dead.  
'Ah, poo-ah Daddy mine,' she says,  
With wondrous sympathy —  
Oh, baby girl, you don't know how  
You break the heart in me!

Let friends and kinsfolk work their worst,  
And the world say what it will,  
Your baby arms go round my neck —  
I'm your own Daddy still!  
And you kiss me and I kiss you,  
Fresh kisses frank and free —  
Ah, baby girl, you don't know how  
You break the heart in me!

I dreamed when I was good that when  
The snow showed in my hair,  
A household angel in her teens  
Would flit about my chair,  
To comfort me as I grew old;  
But that shall never be —  
Ah, baby girl, you don't know how  
You break the heart in me!

But one shall love me while I live  
And soothe my troubled head,  
And never hear an unkind word  
Of me when I am dead.  
Her eyes shall light to hear my name  
Howe'er disgraced it be —  
Ah, baby girl, you don't know how  
You help the heart in me!

## To Jim

I GAZE upon my son once more,  
With eyes and heart that tire,  
As solemnly he stands before  
The screen drawn round the fire;  
With hands behind clasped hand in hand,  
Now loosely and now fast —  
Just as his fathers used to stand  
For generations past.

A fair and slight and childish form,  
And big brown thoughtful eyes —  
God help him! for a life of storm  
And stress before him lies:  
A wanderer and a gipsy wild,  
I've learnt the world and know,  
For I was such another child —  
Ah, many years ago!

But in those dreamy eyes of him  
There is no hint of doubt —  
I wish that you could tell me, Jim,  
The things you dream about.  
Dream on, my son, that all is true  
And things not what they seem —  
'Twill be a bitter day for you  
When wakened from your dream.

You are a child of field and flood,  
But with the gipsy strains  
A strong Norwegian sailor's blood  
Is running through your veins.  
Be true, and slander never stings,  
Be straight, and all may frown —  
*You'll* have the strength to grapple things  
That dragged your father down.

These lines I write with bitter tears  
And failing heart and hand,

But you will read in after years,  
And you will understand:  
You'll hear the slander of the crowd,  
They'll whisper tales of shame,  
But days will come when you'll be proud  
To bear your father's name.

But oh! beware of bitterness  
When you are wronged, my lad —  
I wish I had the faith in men  
And women that I had!  
'Tis better far (for I have felt  
The sadness in my song)  
To trust all men and still be wronged  
Than to trust none and wrong.

Be generous and still do good  
And banish while you live  
The spectre of ingratitude  
That haunts the ones who give.  
But if the crisis comes at length  
That your future might be marred,  
Strike hard, my son, with all your strength!  
For your own self's sake, strike hard!

## The Drunkard's Vision

A PUBLIC parlour in the slums,  
The haunt of vice and villainy,  
Where things are said unfit to hear,  
And things are done unfit to see;  
Mid ribald jest and reckless song,  
That mock at all that's pure and right,  
The drunkard drinks the whole day long,  
And raves through half the dreadful night.

And in the morning now he sits,  
With staring eyes and trembling limb;  
The harbour in the sunlight laughs,  
But morning is as night to him.  
And, staring blankly at the wall,  
He sees the tragedy complete —  
He sees the man he used to be  
Go striding proudly up the street

He turns the corner with a swing,  
And, at the vine-framed cottage gate,  
The father sees, with laughing eyes,  
His little son and daughter wait:  
They race to meet him as he comes —  
And — Oh! this memory is worst —  
Her dimpled arms go round his neck,  
She pants, 'I dot my daddy first!'

He sees his bright-eyed little wife;  
He sees the cottage neat and clean —  
He sees the wrecking of his life  
And all the things that might have been!  
And, sunk in hopeless, black despair,  
That drink no more has power to drown,  
Upon the beer-stained table there  
The drunkard's ruined head goes down.

\* \* \* \* \*

But even I, a fearful wreck,  
Have drifted long before the storm:  
I know, when all seems lost on earth,  
How hard it can be to reform.  
I, too, have sinned, and we have both  
Drunk to the dregs the bitter cup —  
Give me your hand, Oh brother mine,  
And even I might help you up.

## In the Storm That is to Come

*If the Bourke people, with a dyke of sandbags across the Darling River, could keep the steamers running above that town for months in the drought, what could not the Government do? The Darling rises mostly from the Queensland rains, and feeds her billabongs, and the floods waste into the sea.*

BY our place in the midst of the furthest seas we were fated to stand alone —

When the nations fly at each other's throats let Australia look to her own;  
Let her spend her gold on the barren west, let her keep her men at home;  
For the South must look to the South for strength in the storm that is to come.

Now who shall gallop from cape to cape, and who shall defend our shores —

The crowd that stands on the kerb agape and glares at the cricket scores?  
And who will hold the invader back when the shells tear up the ground —

The weeds that yelp by the cycling track while a nigger scorches round?

There may be many to man the forts in the big towns by the sea —

But the East will call to the West for scouts in the storm that is to be:  
The West cries out to the East in drought, but the coastal towns are dumb;

And the East must look to the West for food in the war that is to come.

The rain comes down on the Western land and the rivers run to waste,  
While the city folk rush for the special tram in their childless, senseless haste,

And never a pile of a lock we drive — but a few mean tanks we scratch —

For the fate of a nation is nought compared with the turn of a cricket match!

There's a gutter of mud where there spread a flood from the land-long western creeks,

There is dust and drought on the plains far out where the water lay for

weeks,  
There's a pitiful dam where a dyke should stretch and a tank where a lake  
should be,  
And the rain goes down through the silt and sand and the floods waste  
into the seas.

We'll fight for Britain or for Japan, we will fling the land's wealth out;  
While every penny and every man should be used to fight the drought.  
God helps the nation that helps itself, and the water brings the rain,  
And a deadlier foe than the world could send is loose on the western  
plain.

I saw a vision in days gone by and would dream that dream again  
Of the days when the Darling shall not back her billabongs up in vain.  
There were reservoirs and grand canals where the Dry Country had been,  
And a glorious network of aqueducts, and the fields were always green.

I have seen so long in the land I love what the land I love might be,  
Where the Darling rises from Queensland rains and the floods run into  
the sea.  
And is it our fate that we'll wake too late to the truth that we were blind,  
With a foreign foe at our harbour gate and a blazing drought behind!

## Australian Engineers

AH, well! but the case seems hopeless, and the pen might write in vain;  
The people gabble of old things over and over again.  
For the sake of the sleek importer we slave with the pick and the shears,  
While hundreds of boys in Australia long to be engineers.

A new generation has risen under Australian skies,  
Boys with the light of genius deep in their dreamy eyes —  
Not as of artists or poets with their vain imaginings,  
But born to be thinkers and doers, and makers of wonderful things.

Born to be builders of vessels in the Harbours of Waste and Loss,  
That shall carry our goods to the nations, flying the Southern Cross;  
And fleets that shall guard our seaboard — while the East is backed by  
the Jews —  
Under Australian captains, and manned by Australian crews.

Boys who are slight and quiet, but boys who are strong and true,  
Dreaming of great inventions — always of something new;  
With brains untrammelled by training, but quick where reason directs —  
Boys with imagination and unclouded intellects.

They long for the crank and the belting, the gear and the whirring wheel,  
The stamp of the giant hammer, the glint of the polished steel.  
For the mould and the vice and the lathe — they are boys who long for  
the keys  
To the doors of the world's Mechanics and Science's mysteries.

They would be makers of fabrics, of cloth for the continents —  
Makers of mighty engines and delicate instruments;  
It is they who would set fair cities on the western plains far out,  
They who would garden the deserts — it is they who would conquer the  
drought!

They see the dykes to the skyline, where a dust-waste blazes to-day,  
And they hear the lap of the waters on the miles of sand and clay;  
They see the rainfall increasing, and the boundless sweeps of grass,  
And all the year on the rivers the strings of barges pass.

\* \* \* \* \*

But still the steamers sail out with our timber and wool and gold,  
And back with the costly shoddy stacked high in the foreign hold;  
With the cardboard boots for our leather; and the Brummagem goods and  
the slops  
For stunted and white-faced Australians to sell in our sordid shops.

## The Drovers

SHRIVELLED leather, rusty buckles, and the rot is in our knuckles,  
Scorched for months upon the pommel while the brittle rein hung free;  
Shrunken eyes that once were lighted with fresh boyhood, dull and  
blighted —

And the sores upon our eyelids are unpleasant sights to see.  
And our hair is thin and dying from the ends, with too long lying  
In the night dews on the ashes of the Dry Countree.

Yes, we've seen 'em 'bleaching whitely' where the salt-bush sparkles  
brightly,

But their grins were over-friendly, so we passed and let them be.  
And we've seen them 'rather recent,' and we've stopped to hide 'em  
decent

When they weren't nice to handle and they weren't too nice to see;  
We have heard the dry bones rattle under fifteen hundred cattle —  
Seen the rags go up in dust-clouds and the brittle joints kicked free;  
But there's little time to tarry, if you wish to live and marry,  
When the cattle shy at something in the Dry Countree.

No, you needn't fear the blacks on the Never Never tracks —  
For the Myall in his freedom's an uncommon sight to see;  
Oh! we do not stick at trifles — and the trackers sneak their rifles,  
And go strolling in the gloaming while the sergeant's yarning free:  
Round the Myalls creep the trackers — there's a sound like firing  
crackers

And — the blacks are getting scarcer in the Dry Countree  
(Goes an unprotected maiden-'cross the clearing carrion-laden —  
Oh they ride 'em down on horseback in the Dry Countree.)

But you don't know what might happen when a tank is but a trap on  
Roofs of hell, and there is nothing but the blaze of hell to see;  
And the phantom water's lapping — and no limb for saddle-strapping —  
Better carry your revolver through the Dry Countree.  
But I'm feeling gay and frisky, come with me and have a whisky!  
Change of hells is all we live for (that's my mate that's got D.T.);  
We have fought through hell's own weather, he and I and death  
together —

Oh, the devil grins to greet us from the Dry Countree!

## Those Foreign Engineers

OLD Ivan McIvanovitch, with knitted brow of care,  
Has climbed up from the engine-room to get a breath of air;  
He slowly wipes the grease and sweat from hairy face and neck.  
And from beneath his bushy brows he glowers around the deck.

The weirdest Russian in the fleet, whose words are strange to hear,  
He seems to run the battleship, though but an engineer.  
He is not great, he has no rank, and he is far from rich —  
'Tis strange the admiral salutes old McIvanovitch.

He gives the order 'Whusky!' ere he goes below once more —  
And 'Whusky' is a Russian word I never heard before;  
Perhaps some Tartar dialect, because, you know, you'll meet  
Some very various Muscovites aboard the Baltic fleet.

And on another battleship that sailed out from Japan  
The boss of all the engineers, you'll find another man  
With flaming hair and eyes like steel, and he is six-foot three —  
His name is Jock McNogo, and a fearsome Jap is he.

He wears a beard upon his chest, his face you won't forget,  
His like was never found amongst the heathen idols yet;  
His words are awesome words to hear, his lightest smile is grim,  
And daily in the engine-room the heathen bow to him.

Now, if the fleets meet in the North and settle matters there,  
Say, how will McIvanovitch and Jock McNogo fare?  
But if you ken that Russian and that Jap, you needn't fret,  
They'll hae a drap, or maybe twa, some nicht in Glesca yet.

Those foreigners will ship again aboard some foreign boat,  
And do their best to drive her through and keep the tub afloat.  
They'll stir the foreign greasers up and prove from whence they came —  
And all to win the bawbees for the wife and bairns at hame.

## Skaal

*“I haf peen all through der Russland, Meester Larsen,  
and I nefer see der wrongs you says aboutt. Der people  
dey have der lands and dey are happy.” — Finnish friend  
of mine.*

WHILE they struggle on exhausted,  
While they plough through bog and flood,  
While they drag their sick and wounded  
Where the tracks are drenched with blood;  
While the Fates seemed joined to crush her  
And her bravest hearts lie low,  
I might sing one song for Russia,  
Even though she be our foe.

Still be generous to foemen,  
And have charity for all —  
Right or wrong, fill up the wine cup;  
‘Skaal!’ unto all brave men — ‘Skaal!’

While they suffer, cold and hungry,  
All the heart-break of defeat,  
And the twice heroic rearguard  
Grimly holds the grim retreat;  
While they fight the last alive on  
Fields where countless corpses are,  
We might drop one tear for Ivan,  
Dead for Russia and the Czar!

Sullen grief of boorish brother,  
Sister's scalding tears that flow,  
Choking grief of grey-haired mother,  
Father's stony face bent low:  
Hopeless stare of wife or daughter,  
And the sweetheart dumb and white,  
And the far-off fields of slaughter  
Where their Ivan lies to-night.

Even England feared disaster,

With all Europe in despair,  
In the days when Europe's master  
Baited Bruin in his lair.  
Greater nations made submission,  
And a tyrant's yoke they earned;  
But The Man with curbed ambition  
Staggered back while Moscow burned, —

Burned to save the world from ruin  
That dark winter long ago;  
Ah! the gaunt and hunted Bruin  
Hugged the tyrant in the snow!  
We can cry the crimes of Russia,  
Who know naught of Russia's work —  
We who died to conquer freemen,  
We who fought to save the Turk.

Ah! we well may cant and cackle,  
In the streets and in the clubs,  
While the Russia that we know not  
Licks her wounds and feeds her cubs.  
But the Fates for ever beckon —  
Every nation has its debt,  
And her foes may have to reckon,  
Reckon with 'der Russland' yet.

Through long ages slept the Dragon,  
We have roused the ugly beast —  
Russia still may stand the vanguard  
Of the West against the East.  
And though Ivan sees no farther  
Than to-night through lurid gloom  
Every hour he holds Port Arthur  
May postpone the White Man's doom.

Right or wrong — whate'er in future  
May this blundering world befall,  
Human kindness will survive it —  
Brothers! '*Skaal!*' to brave men, '*Skaal!*'

## The Firing-Line

*“Many of the soldiers were so exhausted that they fell asleep in the firing-line.”*

THEY are creeping on through the cornfields yet, and they clamber amongst the rocks,  
Ere they rush to stab with the bayonet and smash with the rifle-stocks.  
And many are wounded, many are dead — some reel as if drunk with wine,  
And fling them down on a blood-stained bed, and sleep in the firing-line.

And they dream, perhaps, of the days shut back, while the shrapnel shrieks and crashes,  
And field-guns hammer and rifles crack, and the blood of a comrade splashes.  
In horrible shambles they rest a while from murder by right divine;  
They curse or jest, and they frown or smile — and they dream in the firing-line.

In the dreadful din of a ghastly fight they are shooting, murdering, men;  
In the smothering silence of ghastly peace we murder with tongue and pen.  
Where is heard the tap of the typewriter — where the track of reform they mine —  
Where they stand to the frame or the linotype — we are all in the firing-line.

Weary and parched in the world-old war we are fighting with quivering nerves;  
The dead are our fathers who charged before, and the children are our reserves.  
In the world-old war, with the world-old wrongs that shall last while the stars still shine,  
My comrades and I, who would sing their songs, are all in the firing-line.

There are some of us cowards who hug the ground, and some of us reckless who jest;  
And some of us careless who slumber sound, and some of us weary who rest.

There are some of us dreamers, whose beds seem soft, and O heart! O  
friend of mine!

The brightest and bravest of earth too oft lie drunk in the firing-line.

But the sleeper may wake ere the fort we storm, and the coward be first  
to dare,

And the weak grow strong, and the drunkard reform, and the dreamer  
strike hardest there.

God give me strength in my country's need, though shame and disgrace  
be mine,

And death be certain, to rise and lead when we charge from the firing-  
line.

## Riding round the Lines

DUST and smoke against the sunrise out where grim disaster lurks  
And a broken sky-line looming like unfinished railway works,  
And a trot, trot, trot and canter down inside the belt of mines:  
It is General Greybeard Shrapnel who is riding round his lines.

And the scarecrows from the trenches, haggard eyes and hollow cheeks,  
War-stained uniforms and ragged that have not been off for weeks;  
They salute him and they cheer him and they watch his face for signs;  
Ah! they try to read old Greybeard while he's riding round the lines.

There's a crack, crack, crack and rattle; there's a thud and there's a crash;  
In the battery over yonder there is something gone to smash,  
Then a hush and sudden movement, and its meaning he divines,  
And he patches up a blunder while he's riding round his lines.

Pushing this position forward, bringing that position back,  
While his officers, with orders, ride like hell down hell's own track;  
Making hay — and to what purpose? — while his sun of winter shines,  
But his work is just beginning when he's ridden round his lines.

There are fifty thousand rifles and a hundred batteries  
All a-playing battle music, with his fingers on the keys,  
And if for an hour, exhausted, on his camp bed he reclines,  
In his mind he still is riding — he is riding round his lines.

He's the brains of fifty thousand, blundering at their country's call;  
He's the one hope of his nation, and the loneliest man of all;  
He is flesh and blood and human, though he never shews the signs:  
He is General Greybeard Shrapnel who is fixing up his lines.

It is thankless work and weary, and, for all his neighbour knows,  
He may sometimes feel as if he doesn't half care how it goes;  
But for all that can be gathered from his eyes of steely blue  
He might be a great contractor who has some big job to do.

There's the son who died in action — it may be a week ago;  
There's the wife and other troubles that most men have got to know —  
(And we'll say the grey-haired mother underneath the porch of vines):  
Does he ever think of these things while he's riding round his lines?

He is bossed by bitter boobies who can never understand;  
He is hampered by the asses and the robbers of the land,  
And I feel inclined to wonder what his own opinions are  
Of the Government, the country, of the war and of the Czar.

He's the same when he's advancing, he's the same in grim retreat;  
For he wears one mask in triumph and the same mask in defeat;  
Of the brave he is the bravest, he is strongest of the strong:  
General Greybeard Shrapnel never shows that anything is wrong.

But we each and all are lonely, and we have our work to do;  
We must fight for wife and children or our country and our screw  
In the everlasting struggle to the end that fate destines;  
In the war that men call living we are riding round our lines.

I ride round my last defences, where the bitter jibes are flung,  
I am patching up the blunders that I made when I was young,  
And I may be digging pitfalls and I may be laying mines;  
For I sometimes feel like Shrapnel while I'm riding round my lines.

## When the Bear Comes Back Again

*(Written during the Russian Retreat.)*

OH, the scene is wide an' dreary an' the sun is settin' red,  
An' the grey-black sky of winter's comin' closer overhead.  
Oh, the sun is settin' bloody with a blood-line on the snow,  
An' across it to the westward you can see old Bruin go;  
    You can see old Shaggy go,  
    You can see the brown Bear go,  
An' he's draggin' one leg arter, an' he's travellin' pretty slow.

We can send a long shot arter, but he doesn't seem to know —  
There's a thin red line behind him where it's dripped across the snow;  
He is weary an' he's wounded, with his own blood he's half-blind,  
He is licked an' he's defeated, an' he's left some cubs behind;  
    Yes, he's left some cubs behind;  
    Oh, he's left some cubs behind;  
To the tune of sixty thousand he has left some cubs behind.

Oh, they've pulled him by the nose-ring and they've baited him in pits,  
An' they bluffed him, an' they bruised him, an' they mostly gave him fits;  
But he hugged 'em badly one time when they tried him in his den —  
An' he'll make it warm for someone when he comes back East again;  
    When the Bear comes back again,  
    When he's lopin' round again,  
There'll be lively times for Jacko when the Bear comes back again.

Oh, we chased him out of Turkey — I don't know for what idea,  
It took two dogs an' a lion for to beat him in Crimea;  
He's goin' home to lick his wounds, he's goin' to his den,  
But he'll make it warm for someone when he comes South-East again,  
    When the Bear comes back again,  
    When old Bruin comes again,  
He will make some dead to die on when he comes back from his den.

Keep a sharp look-out behind you, every way you turn, my lad,  
It don't matter who you might be, for you bet the Bear is mad;  
Keep a sharp look-out to Nor'ard, to the South an' West an' East,  
For he mostly always finds you where you most expect him least;

Where you most expect him leastest,  
Where you most expect him least,  
Oh, you'll catch him grabbin' for yer where you most expect him least.

## The Little Czar

OH, Great White Czar of Russia, who hid your face and ran,  
You've flung afar the grandest chance that ever came to man!  
You might have been, and could have been — ah, think it to your  
shame! —

The Czar of all the Russias, in fact as well as name.

'The Father of your People,' your children called to you  
To do the things to save them which only you could do.  
Your soldiers whipped their faces — the trodden snow is red  
With the blood of men and women; and the blood is on your head!

I saw in dreams a monarch, of his power all unaware,  
Step down amongst his people from off his palace stair:  
The Grand Dukes shrank and trembled, the traitors fled afar —  
Through all the mighty Russias rang the order of the Czar!

You might have journeyed freely, wherever path is made,  
Through all your vast dominions, alone and unafraid;  
And, in the eyes of subjects, the cultured and the rude,  
Have seen, instead of hatred, the tears of gratitude.

Oh, little Czar of Russia, a weak man and a fool,  
At the mercy of your nobles — their prisoner and their tool —  
Your freedom and your people's and their love was to be won:  
Ah, me! it would have been a deed a coward might have done.

Yet we who know so little might say one word for you:  
How many in our weakness have lost our kingdoms, too!  
And facing death and exile, when all the world seemed black,  
How many in our after-strength have won our kingdoms back!

## The Vanguard

WHILE the crippled cruisers stagger where the blind horizon dips,  
And the ocean ooze is rising round the sunken battle-ships,  
While the battered wrecks, unnoticed, with their mangled crews drift  
past —

Let me fire one gun for Russia, though that gun should be the last.

'Tis a struggle of the Ages, and the White Man's star is dim,  
There is little jubilation, for the game has got too grim;  
But though Russia's hope seems shattered, and the Russian star seems  
set,

It may mean the Dawn for Russia — and my hope's in IVAN yet!

Let the Jingo in his blindness cant and cackle as he will;  
But across the path from Asia run the Russian trenches still!  
And the sahib in his rickshaw may loll back and smoke at ease,  
While the haggard, ragged heroes man the battered batteries.

'Tis the first round of the struggle of the East against the West,  
Of the fearful war of races — for the White Man could not rest.  
Hold them, IVAN! staggering bravely underneath your gloomy sky;  
Hold them, IVAN! we shall want you pretty badly by-and-bye!

Fighting for the Indian empire, when the British pay their debt;  
Never Britain watched for BLUCHER as he'll watch for IVAN yet!  
It means all to young Australia — it means life or death to us,  
For the vanguard of the White Man is the vanguard of the Russ!

## And the Bairns Will Come

SO you've seen at last what we have seen so long through scalding tears:  
You have found what we — the People — we have known for twenty  
years:

And Australia's hymn is swelling till the furthest fence-wires hum —  
Save your country, Legislators — and the bairns will come.

You would put the blame upon us — we are women, we are men;  
And our fathers and our mothers gave the country nine and ten.  
They had honest work and wages, and the ways to win a home —  
Give us half the chances they had — and the bairns will come.

Try the ranks of wealth and fashion, ask the rich and well-to-do,  
With their nurseries and their nurses and their children one and two,  
Will they help us bear the burden? — but their purse-proud lips are  
dumb.

Let us earn a decent living — and the bairns will come.

Young men, helpless in the city's wheel of greed that never stops,  
Tramp the streets for work while sweethearts slave in factories and  
shops.

Shall they marry and bear children to their parents' martyrdom?  
Make the city what it should be — and the bairns will come.

Shall we give you sons and daughters to a life of never-rest,  
Sacrificing all for nothing in the desert of the West,  
To be driven to the city's squalid suburb and the slum?  
Make the city what it should be — and the bairns will come.

Don't you hear Australia calling for her children unconceived?  
Don't you hear them calling to her while her heart is very grieved?  
Give the best land to the farmers, make the barren West a home,  
Save the rainfall, lock the rivers — and the bairns will come.

## The Heart of Australia

WHEN the wars of the world seemed ended, and silent the distant drum,  
Ten years ago in Australia, I wrote of a war to come:  
And I pictured Australians fighting as their fathers fought of old  
For the old things, pride or country, for God or the Devil or gold.

And they lounged on the rim of Australia in the peace that had come to  
last,  
And they laughed at my 'cavalry charges' for such things belonged to the  
past;  
Then our wise men smiled with indulgence — ere the swift years proved  
me right —  
Saying: 'What shall Australia fight for? And whom shall Australia  
fight?'

I wrote of the unlocked rivers in the days when my heart was full,  
And I pleaded for irrigation where they sacrifice all for wool.  
I pictured Australia fighting when the coast had been lost and won —  
With arsenals west of the mountains and every spur its gun.

And what shall Australia fight for? The reason may yet be found,  
When strange shells scatter the wickets and burst on the football ground.  
And 'Who shall invade Australia?' let the wisdom of ages say  
'The friend of a further future — or the ally of yesterday!'

Aye! What must Australia fight for? In the strife that never shall cease,  
She must fight for her work unfinished: she must fight for her life and  
peace,  
For the sins of the older nations. She must fight for her own reward.  
*She has taken the sword in her blindness and shall live or die by the  
sword.*

But the statesman, the churchman, the scholar still peer through their  
glasses dim  
And they see no cloud on the future as they roost on Australia's rim:  
Where the farmer works with the lumpers and the drover drives a dray,  
And the shearer on Garden Island is shifting a hill to-day.

Had we used the wealth we have squandered and the land that we kept

from the plough,  
A prosperous Federal City would be over the mountains now,  
With farms that sweep to horizons and gardens where plains lay bare,  
And the bulk of the population and the Heart of Australia there.

Had we used the time we have wasted and the gold we have thrown  
away,  
The pick of the world's mechanics would be over the range to-day —  
In the Valley of Coal and Iron where the breeze from the bush comes  
down,  
And where thousands of makers of all things should be happy in Factory  
Town.

They droned on the rim of Australia, the wise men who never could  
learn;  
Our substance we sent to the nations, and their shoddy we bought in  
return.  
In the end, shall our soldiers fight naked, no help for them under the  
sun —  
And never a cartridge to stick in the breech of a Brummagem gun?

With the Wars of the World coming near us the wise men are waking to-  
day.  
Hurry out ammunition from England! Mount guns on the cliffs while you  
may!  
And God pardon our sins as a people if Invasion's unmerciful hand  
Should strike at the heart of Australia drought-cramped on the verge of  
the land.

## The Good Samaritan

HE comes from out the ages dim —  
The good Samaritan;  
I somehow never pictured him  
A fat and jolly man;  
But one who'd little joy to glean,  
And little coin to give —  
A sad-faced man, and lank and lean,  
Who found it hard to live.

His eyes were haggard in the drought,  
His hair was iron-grey —  
His dusty gown was patched, no doubt,  
Where we patch pants to-day.  
His faded turban, too, was torn —  
But darned and folded neat,  
And leagues of desert sand had worn  
The sandals on his feet.

He's been a fool, perhaps, and would  
Have prospered had he tried,  
But he was one who never could  
Pass by the other side.  
An honest man whom men called soft,  
While laughing in their sleeves —  
No doubt in business ways he oft  
Had fallen amongst thieves.

And, I suppose, by track and tent,  
And other ancient ways,  
He drank, and fought, and loved, and went  
The pace in his young days.  
And he had known the bitter year  
When love and friendship fail —  
I wouldn't be surprised to hear  
That he had been in jail.

A silent man, whose passions slept,  
Who had no friends or foes —

A quiet man, who always kept  
His hopes and sorrows close.  
A man who very seldom smiled,  
And one who could not weep  
Be it for death of wife or child  
Or sorrow still more deep.

But sometimes when a man would rave  
Of wrong, as sinners do,  
He'd say to cheer and make him brave  
'I've had my troubles too.'  
(They might be twittered by the birds,  
And breathed high Heaven through,  
There's beauty in those world-old words:  
'I've had my sorrows too.')

And if he was a married man,  
As many are that roam,  
I guess that good Samaritan  
Was rather glum at home,  
Impatient when a child would fret,  
And strict at times and grim —  
A man whose kinsmen never yet  
Appreciated him.

Howbeit — in a study brown —  
He had for all we know,  
His own thoughts as he journeyed down  
The road to Jericho,  
And pondered, as we puzzle yet,  
On tragedies of life —  
And maybe he was deep in debt  
And parted from his wife.

(And so 'by chance there came that way,'  
It reads not like romance —  
The truest friends on earth to-day,  
They mostly come by chance.)  
He saw a stranger left by thieves  
Sore hurt and like to die —  
He also saw (my heart believes)  
The others pass him by.

(Perhaps that good Samaritan  
Knew Levite well, and priest)

He lifted up the wounded man  
And sat him on his beast,  
And took him on towards the inn —  
All Christ-like unawares —  
Still pondering, perhaps, on sin  
And virtue — and his cares.

He bore him in and fixed him right  
(Helped by the local drunk),  
And wined and oiled him well all night,  
And thought beside his bunk.  
And on the morrow ere he went  
He left a quid and spoke  
Unto the host in terms which meant —  
'Look after that poor bloke.'

He must have known them at the inn,  
They must have known him too —  
Perhaps on that same track he'd seen  
Some other sick mate through;  
For 'Whatsoe'er thou spendest more'  
(The parable is plain)  
'I will repay,' he told the host,  
'When I return again.'

He seemed to be a good sort, too,  
The boss of that old pub —  
(As even now there are a few  
At shanties in the scrub).  
The good Samaritan jogged on  
Through Canaan's dust and heat,  
And pondered over various schemes  
And ways to make ends meet.

\* \* \* \* \*

He was no Christian, understand,  
For Christ had not been born —  
*He* journeyed later through the land  
To hold the priests to scorn;  
And tell the world of 'certain men'  
Like that Samaritan,  
And preach the simple creed again —  
Man's duty! Man to man!

\* \* \* \* \*

'Once on a time there lived a man,'  
    But he has lived alway,  
And that gaunt, good Samaritan  
    Is with us here to-day;  
He passes through the city streets  
    Unnoticed and unknown,  
He helps the sinner that he meets —  
    His sorrows are his own.

He shares his tucker on the track  
    When things are at their worst  
(And often shouts in bars outback  
    For souls that are athirst).  
To-day I see him staggering down  
    The blazing water-course,  
And making for the distant town  
    With a sick man on his horse.

He'll live while nations find their graves  
    And mortals suffer pain —  
When colour rules and whites are slaves  
    And savages again.  
And, after all is past and done,  
    He'll rise up, the Last Man,  
From tending to the last but one —  
    The good Samaritan.

## Will Yer Write It down for Me?

IN the parlour of the shanty where the lives have all gone wrong,  
When a singer or reciter gives a story or a song,  
Where the poet's heart is speaking to their hearts in every line,  
Till the hardest curse and blubber at the thoughts of Auld Lang Syne;  
Then a boozier lurches forward with an oath for all disguise —  
Prayers and curses in his soul, and tears and liquor in his eyes —  
Grasps the singer or reciter with a death-grip by the hand:  
'That's the truth, bloke! Sling it at 'em! Oh! Gorbli'me, that was grand!  
'Don't mind me; I've got 'em. *You* know! What's yer name, bloke! Don't  
yer *see*?  
'Who's the bloke what wrote the po'try? *Will* yer write it down fer me?'

And the backblocks' bard goes through it, ever seeking as he goes  
For the line of least resistance to the hearts of men he knows;  
And he tracks their hearts in mateship, and he tracks them out alone —  
Seeking for the power to sway them, till he finds it in his own,  
Feels what they feel, loves what they love, learns to hate what they  
condemn,  
Takes his pen in tears and triumph, and he writes it down for them.

## Andy's Return

WITH pannikins all rusty,  
And billy burnt and black,  
And clothes all torn and dusty,  
That scarcely hide his back;  
With sun-cracked saddle-leather,  
And knotted greenhide rein,  
And face burnt brown with weather,  
Our Andy's home again!

His unkempt hair is faded  
With sleeping in the wet,  
He's looking old and jaded;  
But he is hearty yet.  
With eyes sunk in their sockets —  
But merry as of yore;  
With big cheques in his pockets,  
Our Andy's home once more!

Old Uncle's bright and cheerful;  
He wears a smiling face;  
And Aunty's never tearful  
Now Andy's round the place.  
Old Blucher barks for gladness;  
He broke his rusty chain,  
And leapt in joyous madness  
When Andy came again.

With tales of flood and famine,  
On distant northern tracks,  
And shady yarns — 'baal gammon!'  
Of dealings with the blacks,  
From where the skies hang lazy  
On many a northern plain,  
From regions dim and hazy  
Our Andy's home again!

His toil is nearly over;  
He'll soon enjoy his gains.

Not long he'll be a drover,  
And cross the lonely plains.  
We'll happy be for ever  
When he'll no longer roam,  
But by some deep, cool river  
Will make us all a home.

## Pigeon Toes

A DUSTY clearing in the scrubs  
Of barren, western lands —  
Where, out of sight, or sign of hope  
The wretched school-house stands;  
A roof that glares at glaring days,  
A bare, unshaded wall,  
A fence that guards no blade of green —  
A dust-storm over all.

The books and slates are packed away,  
The maps are rolled and tied,  
And for an hour I breathe, and lay  
My ghastly mask aside;  
I linger here to save my head  
From voices shrill and thin,  
That rasp for ever in the shed,  
The 'home' I'm boarding in.

The heat and dirt and wretchedness  
With which their lives began —  
Bush mother nagging day and night,  
And sullen, brooding man;  
The minds that harp on single strings,  
And never bright by chance,  
The rasping voice of paltry things,  
The hopeless ignorance.

I had ideals when I came here,  
A noble purpose had,  
But all that they can understand  
Is 'axe to grind' or 'mad.'  
I brood at times till comes a fear  
That sets my brain awirl —  
I fight a strong man's battle here,  
And I am but a girl.

I hated paltriness and deemed  
A breach of faith a crime;

I listen now to scandal's voice  
In sewing-lesson time.  
There is a thought that haunts me so,  
And gathers strength each day —  
Shall I as narrow-minded grow,  
As mean of soul as they?

The feuds that rise from paltry spite,  
Or from no cause at all;  
The brooding, dark, suspicious minds —  
I suffer for it all.  
They do not dream the 'Teacher' knows,  
What brutal thoughts are said;  
The children call me 'Pigeon Toes,'  
'Green Eyes' and 'Carrot Head.'

On phantom seas of endless change  
My thoughts to madness roam —  
The only thing that keeps me here,  
The thoughts of those at home —  
The hearts that love and cling to me,  
That I love best on earth,  
My mother left in poverty,  
My brother blind from birth.

On burning West Australian fields  
In that great dreadful land,  
Where all day long the heat waves flow  
O'er the seas of glowing sand.  
My elder brother toils and breaks  
That great true heart of his  
To rescue us from poverty —  
To rescue me from this.

And one is with him where he goes,  
My brother's mate and mine;  
He never called me Pigeon Toes —  
He said my eyes were 'fine';  
And his face comes before me now,  
And hope and courage rise,  
The lines of life — the troubled brow,  
Firm mouth and kind grey eyes.

I preach content and gentleness,  
And mock example give;

They little think the Teacher hates  
And loathes the life they live.  
I told the infants fairy tales  
But half an hour since —  
They little dream how Pigeon Toes  
Prays for a fairy Prince.

I have one prayer (and God forgive  
A selfish prayer and wild);  
I kneel down by the infants' stool  
(For I am but a child),  
And pray as I've prayed times untold  
That Heaven will set a sign,  
To guide my brother to the gold,  
For mother's sake and mine.

A dust cloud on the lonely road,  
And I am here alone;  
I lock the door till it be past,  
For I have nervous grown.

\* \* \* \* \*

God spare me disappointment's blow.  
He stops beside the gate;  
A voice, thrill-feeling that I know.  
My brother! No! His mate!

\* \* \* \* \*

His eyes — a proud, triumphant smile,  
His arms outstretched, and 'Come,  
'For Jack and I have made our pile,  
'And I'm here to take you home'!

## On the Wallaby

Now the tent poles are rotting, the camp fires are dead,  
And the possums may gambol in trees overhead;  
I am humping my bluey far out on the land,  
And the prints of my bluchers sink deep in the sand:  
I am out on the wallaby humping my drum,  
And I came by the tracks where the sundowners come.

It is nor'-west and west o'er the ranges and far  
To the plains where the cattle and sheep stations are,  
With the sky for my roof and the grass for my bunk,  
And a calico bag for my damper and junk;  
And scarcely a comrade my memory reveals,  
Save the spiritless dingo in tow of my heels.

But I think of the honest old light of my home  
When the stars hang in clusters like lamps from the dome,  
And I think of the hearth where the dark shadows fall,  
When my camp fire is built on the widest of all;  
But I'm following Fate, for I know she knows best,  
I follow, she leads, and its nor'-west by west.

When my tent is all torn and my blankets are damp,  
And the rising flood waters flow fast by the camp,  
When the cold water rises in jets from the floor,  
I lie in my bunk and I list to the roar,  
And I think how to-morrow my footsteps will lag  
When I tramp 'neath the weight of a rain-sodden swag.

Though the way of the swagman is mostly up-hill,  
There are joys to be found on the wallaby still.  
When the day has gone by with its tramp or its toil,  
And your camp-fire you light, and your billy you boil,  
There is comfort and peace in the bowl of your clay  
Or the yarn of a mate who is tramping that way.

But beware of the town — there is poison for years  
In the pleasure you find in the depths of long beers;  
For the bushman gets bushed in the streets of a town,

Where he loses his friends when his cheque is knocked down;  
He is right till his pockets are empty, and then —  
He can hump his old bluey up country again.

## The Brass Well

'TIS a legend of the bushmen from the days of Cunningham,  
When he opened up the country and the early squatters came.  
Tis the old tale of a fortune missed by men who did seek,  
And, perhaps, you haven't heard it — The Brass Well on Myall Creek.

They were north of running rivers, they were south of Queensland rains,  
And a blazing drought was scorching every grass-blade from the plains;  
So the stockmen drove the cattle to the range where there was grass,  
And a couple sunk a well and found what they believed was brass.

'Here's some bloomin' brass!' they muttered when they found it in the  
clay,

And they thought no more about it and in time they went away;  
But they heard of gold, and saw it, somewhere down by Inverell,  
And they felt and weighed it, crying: 'Why! we found it in the well!'

And they worked about the station and at times they took the track,  
Always meaning to save money, always meaning to go back —  
'Always meanin',' like the bushmen, who go drifting round like wrecks,  
And they'd get half way to Myall, strike a pub and blew their cheques.

Then they told two more about it and those other two grew old,  
And they never found the brass well and they never found the gold.  
For the scrub grows dense and quickly and, though many went to seek,  
No one ever struck the lost track to the Well on Myall Creek.

And the story is forgotten and I'm sitting here, alas!  
With a woeful load of trouble and a woeful lack of brass;  
But I dream at times that I might find what many went to seek,  
And my luck might lead my footsteps to the Well at Myall Creek.

# Eureka

(A FRAGMENT.)

ROLL up, Eureka's heroes, on that grand Old Rush afar,  
For Lalor's gone to join you in the big camp where you are;  
Roll up and give him welcome such as only diggers can,  
For well he battled for the rights of miner and of man.  
And there, in that bright, golden land that lies beyond our sight,  
The record of his honest life shall be his Miner's Right.  
Here many a bearded mouth shall twitch, and many a tear be shed,  
And many a grey old digger sigh to hear that Lalor's dead.  
But wipe your eyes, old fossickers, o'er worked-out fields that roam,  
You need not weep at parting from a digger going home.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now from the strange wild seasons past, the days of golden strife,  
Now from the Roaring Fifties comes a scene from Lalor's life:  
All gleaming white amid the shafts o'er gully, hill, and flat  
Again I see the tents that form the camp at Ballarat.  
I hear the shovels and the picks, and all the air is rife  
With the rattle of the cradles and the sounds of digger-life;  
The clatter of the windlass-boles, as spinning round they go,  
And then the signal to his mate, the digger's cry, 'Below!'  
From many a busy pointing forge the sound of labour swells,  
The tinkling at the anvils is as clear as silver bells.

I hear the broken English from the mouth at least of one  
From every state and nation that is known beneath the sun;  
The homely tongue of Scotland and the brogue of Ireland blend  
With the dialects of England, from Berwick to Land's End;  
And to the busy concourse here the West has sent a part,  
The land of gulches that has been immortalised by Harte;  
The land where long from mining-camps the blue smoke upward curled;  
The land that gave that 'Partner' true and 'Miss' unto the world;  
The men from all the nations in the New World and the Old,  
All side by side, like brethren here, are delving after gold;  
But suddenly the warning cries are heard on every side

As, closing in around the field, a ring of troopers ride;  
Unlicensed diggers are the game, their class and want are sins,  
And so, with all its shameful scenes, the digger-hunt begins;  
The men are seized who are too poor the heavy tax to pay,  
And they are chained, as convicts were, and dragged in gangs away;  
While in the eye of many a mate is menace scarcely hid —  
The digger's blood was slow to boil, but scalded when it did.

\* \* \* \* \*

But now another match is held that sure must light the charge,  
A digger murdered in the camp! his murderer at large!  
Roll up! Roll up! the pregnant cry awakes the evening air,  
And angry faces surge like waves around the speakers there.  
'What are our sins that we should be an outlawed class?' they say,  
'Shall we stand by while mates are seized and dragged like "lags," away?  
'Shall insult be on insult heaped? Shall we let these things go?  
And on a roar of voices comes the diggers' answer — 'No!  
The day has vanished from the scene, but not the air of night  
Can cool the blood that, ebbing back, leaves brows in anger white.  
Lo! from the roof of Bentley's inn the flames are leaping high;  
They write 'Revenge!' in letters red across the smoke-dimmed sky.  
Now the oppressed will drink no more humiliation's cup;  
Call out the troops! Read martial law! — the diggers' blood is up!

\* \* \* \* \*

'To arms! To arms!' the cry is out; 'To arms if man thou art;  
'For every pike upon a pole will find a tyrant's heart!'  
Now Lalor comes to take the lead, the spirit does not lag,  
And down the rough, wild diggers kneel beneath the Diggers' Flag,  
And, rising to their feet, they swear, while rugged hearts beat high,  
To stand beside their leader and to conquer or to die!  
Around Eureka's stockade now the shades of night close fast,  
Three hundred sleep beside their arms, and thirty sleep their last.

\* \* \* \* \*

Around about fair Melbourne town the sounds of bells are borne  
That call the citizens to prayer this fateful Sabbath morn;  
But there, upon Eureka's hill, a hundred miles away,  
The diggers' forms lie white and still above the blood-stained clay.  
The bells that ring the diggers' death might also ring a knell  
For those few gallant soldiers, dead, who did their duty well.  
There's many a 'someone's' heart shall ache, and many a someone care,

For many a 'someone's darling' lies all cold and pallid there.  
And now in smoking ruins lie the huts and tents around,  
The diggers' gallant flag is down and trampled in the ground.

\* \* \* \* \*

The sight of murdered heroes is to hero hearts a goad,  
A thousand men are up in arms upon the Creswick road,  
And wildest rumours in the air are flying up and down,  
'Tis said the men of Ballarat will march upon the town.  
But not in vain those diggers died. Their comrades may rejoice,  
For o'er the voice of tyranny is heard the people's voice;  
It says: 'Reform your rotten law, the diggers' wrongs make right,  
'Or else with them, our brothers now, we'll gather in the fight.'  
And now before my vision flash the scenes that followed fast —  
The trials, and the triumph of the diggers' cause at last.  
Twas of such stuff the men were made who saw our nation born,  
And such as Lalor were the men who led their foot-steps on;  
And of such men there'll many be, and of such leaders some,  
In the roll-up of Australians on some dark day yet to come.

## The Last Review

TURN the light down, nurse, and leave me, while I hold my last review,  
For the Bush is slipping from me, and the town is going too:  
Draw the blinds, the streets are lighted, and I hear the tramp of feet —  
And I'm weary, very weary, of the Faces in the Street.

In the dens of Grind and Heartbreak, in the streets of Never-Rest,  
I have lost the scent and colour and the music of the West:  
And I would recall old faces with the memories they bring —  
Where are Bill and Jim and Mary and the Songs They used to Sing?

They are coming! They are coming! they are passing through the room  
With the smell of gum leaves burning, and the scent of Wattle bloom!  
And behind them in the timber, after dust and heat and toil,  
Others sit beside the camp fire yarning while the billies boil.

In the Gap above the ridges there's a flash and there's a glow —  
Swiftly down the scrub-clad siding come the Lights of Cobb and Co.:  
Red face from the box-seat beaming — Oh, how plain those faces come!  
From his 'Golden-Hole' 'tis Peter M'Intosh who's going home.

Dusty patch in desolation, bare slab walls and earthen floor,  
And a blinding drought is blazing from horizons to the door:  
Milkless tea and ration sugar, damper junk and pumpkin mash —  
And a Day on our Selection passes by me in a flash.

Rush of big wild-eyed store bullocks while the sheep crawl

And the loaded wool teams rolling, lurching on like ships at sea:  
With his whip across his shoulder (and the wind just now abeam),  
There goes Jimmy Nowlett ploughing through the dust beside his team!

Sunrise on the diggings! (Oh! what life and hearts and hopes are here)  
From a hundred pointing forges comes a tinkle, tinkle clear —  
Strings of drays with wash to puddle, clack of countless windlass boles,  
Here and there the red flag flying, flying over golden holes.

Picturesque, unreal, romantic, chivalrous, and brave and free;  
Clean in living, true in mateship — reckless generosity.  
Mates are buried here as comrades who on fields of battle fall —

And — the dreams, the aching, hoping lover hearts beneath it all!

Rough-built theatres and stages where the world's best actors trod —  
Singers bringing reckless rovers nearer boyhood, home and God;  
Paid in laughter, tears and nuggets in the play that fortune plays —  
'Tis the palmy days of Gulgong — Gulgong in the Roaring Days.

Pass the same old scenes before me — and again my heart can ache —  
There the Drover's Wife sits watching (not as Eve did) for a snake.  
And I see the drear deserted goldfields when the night is late,  
And the stony face of Mason watching by his Father's Mate.

And I see my Haggard Women plainly as they were in life,  
'Tis the form of Mrs. Spicer and her friend, Joe Wilson's wife,  
Sitting hand in hand 'Past Carin', not a sigh and not a moan,  
Staring steadily before her and the tears just trickle down.

It was No Place for a Woman — where the women worked like men —  
From the Bush and Jones' Alley come their haunting forms again.  
And, let this thing be remembered when I've answered to the roll,  
That I pitied haggard women — wrote for them with all my soul.

Narrow bed-room in the City in the hard days that are dead —  
An alarm clock on the table, and a pale boy on the bed:  
Arvie Aspinalls Alarm Clock with its harsh and startling call  
Never more shall break his slumbers — *I was Arvie Aspinall.*

Maoriland and Steelman, cynic, spieler, stiff-lipped, battler-through  
(Kept a wife and child in comfort, but of course they never knew —  
Thought he was an honest bagman) — Well, old man, you needn't  
hug —  
Sentimental; you of all men! — Steelman, Oh! *I was a mug!*

Ghostly lines of scrub at daybreak — dusty daybreak in the drought —  
And a lonely swagman tramping on the track to Further Out:  
Like a shade the form of Mitchell, nose-bag full and bluey up  
And between the swag and shoulders lolls his foolish cattle-pup.

Kindly cynic, sad comedian! Mitchell! when you've left the Track,  
And have shed your load of sorrow as we slipped our swags out back,  
We shall have a yarn together in the land of Rest Awhile —  
And across his ragged shoulder Mitchell smiles his quiet smile.

Shearing sheds and tracks and shanties — girls that wait at homestead  
gates —  
Camps and stern-eyed Union leaders, and Joe Wilson and his Mates  
True and straight, and to my fancy, each one as he passes through

Deftly down upon the table slips a dusty 'note' or two.

\* \* \* \* \*

So at last the end has found me — (end of all the human push)  
And again in silence round me come my Children of the Bush! —  
Listen, who are young, and let them — if I in late and bitter days  
Wrote some reckless lines — forget them — there is little there to praise.

I was human, very human, and if in the days misspent  
I have injured man or woman, it was done without intent.  
If at times I blundered blindly — bitter heart and aching brow —  
If I wrote a line unkindly — I am sorry for it now.

Days in London like a nightmare — dreams of foreign lands and sea —  
And Australia is the only land that seemeth real to me.  
Tell the Bushmen to Australia and each other to be true —  
'Tell the boys to stick together!' I have held my Last Review.

## As Good as New

OH, this is a song of the old lights, that came to my heart like a hymn;  
And this is a song for the old lights — the lights that we thought grew  
dim,  
That came to my heart to comfort me, and I pass it along to you;  
And here is a hand to the good old friend who turns up as good as new.

And this is a song for the camp-fire out west where the stars shine  
bright —  
Oh, this is a song for the camp-fire where the old mates yarn to-night;  
Where the old mates yarn of the old days, and their numbers are all too  
few,  
And this is a song for the good old times that will turn up as good as  
new.

Oh, this is a song for the old foe — we have both grown wiser now,  
And this is a song for the old foe, and we're sorry we had that row;  
And this is a song for the old love — the love that we thought untrue —  
Oh, this is a song of the dear old love that comes back as good as new.

Oh, this is a song for the black sheep, for the black sheep that fled from  
town,  
And this is a song for the brave heart, for the brave heart that lived it  
down;  
And this is a song for the battler, for the battler who sees it through —  
And this is a song for the broken heart that turns up as good as new.

Ah, this is a song for the brave mate, be he Bushman, Scot, or Russ,  
A song for the mates we will stick to — for the mates who have stuck to  
us;  
And this is a song for the old creed, to do as a man should do,  
Till the Lord takes us all to a wider world — where we'll turn up as good  
as new.

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