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POPULAR VERSES



BY

HENRY LAWSON

Author of *When the World Was Wide, and Other Verses* ;

While the Billy Boils ; Joe Wilson and His Mates ;

On the Track and Over the Sliprails ; When I Was King, and Other Verses

Children of the Bush ; Humorous Verses

SYDNEY

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PREFACE

My acknowledgments of the courtesy of the editors and proprietors of the newspapers in which most of these verses were first published are due and are gratefully discharged on the eve of my departure for England. Chief among them is the *Sydney Bulletin*; others are the *Sydney Town and Country Journal*, *Freeman's Journal*, and *Truth*, and the *New Zealand Mail*.

A few new pieces are included in the collection.

H. L.

Sydney, March 17th, 1900.

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THE PORTS OF THE OPEN SEA

Down here where the ships loom large in
The gloom when the sea-storms veer,
Down here on the south-west margin
Of the western hemisphere,
Where the might of a world-wide ocean
Round the youngest land rolls free—
Storm-bound from the world's commotion,
Lie the Ports of the Open Sea.

By the bluff where the grey sand reaches
To the kerb of the spray-swept street,
By the sweep of the black sand beaches
From the main-road travellers' feet,
By the heights like a work Titanic,
Begun ere the gods' work ceased,
By a bluff-lined coast volcanic
Lie the Ports of the wild South-east.

By the steeps of the snow-capped ranges,
By the scarped and terraced hills—
Far away from the swift life-changes,
From the wear of the strife that kills—
Where the land in the Spring seems younger
Than a land of the Earth might be—
Oh! the hearts of the rovers hunger
For the Ports of the Open Sea.

But the captains watch and hearken
For a sign of the South Sea wrath—
Let the face of the South-east darken,
And they turn to the ocean path.
Ay, the sea-boats dare not linger,
Whatever the cargo be ;
When the South-east lifts a finger
By the Ports of the Open Sea.

South by the bleak Bluff faring,
North where the Three Kings wait,
South-east the tempest daring—
Flight through the storm-tossed strait ;
Yonder a white-winged roamer
Struck where the rollers roar—
Where the great green froth-flaked comber
Breaks down on a black-ribbed shore.

For the South-east lands are dread lands
To the sailor in the shrouds,
Where the low clouds loom like headlands,
And the black bluffs blur like clouds.
When the breakers rage to windward
And the lights are masked a-lee,
And the sunken rocks run inward
To a Port of the Open Sea.

But oh! for the South-east weather—
The sweep of the three-days' gale—
When, far through the flax and heather,
The spindrift drives like hail.
Glory to man's creations
That drive where the gale grows gruff,
When the homes of the sea-coast stations
Flash white from the dark'ning bluff!
When the swell of the South-east rouses
The wrath of the Maori sprite,
And the brown folk flee their houses
And crouch in the flax by night,
And wait as they long have waited—
In fear as the brown folk be—
The wave of destruction fated
For the Ports of the Open Sea.

.

Grey cloud to the mountain bases,
Wild boughs that rush and sweep ;
On the rounded hills the tussocks
Like flocks of flying sheep ;
A lonely storm-bird soaring
O'er tussock, fern and tree ;
And the boulder beaches roaring
The Hymn of the Open Sea.

THE THREE KINGS *

THE East is dead and the West is done, and again
our course lies thus :—

South-east by Fate and the Rising Sun where the
Three Kings wait for us.

*When our hearts are young and the world is wide, and
the heights seem grand to climb—*

*We are off and away to the Sydney-side ; but the Three
Kings bide their time.*

‘I’ve been to the West,’ the digger said : he was
bearded, bronzed and old :

‘Ah, the smothering curse of the East is wool, and
the curse of the West is gold.

‘I went to the West in the golden boom, with Hope
and a life-long mate,

‘They sleep in the sand by the Boulder Soak, and
long may the Three Kings wait.’

* Three sea-girt pinnacles off North Cape, New Zealand.

'I've had my fling on the Sydney-side,' said a black-sheep to the sea,

'Let the young fool learn when he can't be taught:
I've learnt what's good for me.'

And he gazed ahead on the sea-line dim—grown dim
in his softened eyes—

With a pain in his heart that was good for him—as
he saw the Three Kings rise.

A pale girl sits on the foc'sle head—she is back,
Three Kings! so soon;

But it seems to her like a life-time dead since she fled
with him 'saloon.'

There is refuge still in the old folks' arms for the child
that loved too well;

They will hide her shame on the Southern farm—and
the Three Kings will not tell.

'Twas a restless heart on the tide of life, and a false
star in the skies

That led me on to the deadly strife where the
Southern London lies;

But I dream in peace of a home for me, by a glorious
southern sound,

As the sunset fades from a moonlit sea, and the
Three Kings show us round.

*Our hearts are young and the old hearts old, and life on
the farms is slow,*

*And away in the world there is fame and gold—and the
Three Kings watch us go.*

*Our heads seem wise and the world seems wide, and its
heights are ours to climb,*

*So it's off and away in our youthful pride—but the
Three Kings bide our time.*

THE OUTSIDE TRACK

THERE were ten of us there on the moonlit quay,
And one on the for'ard hatch ;
No straighter mate to his mates than he
Had ever said : ' Len's a match !'
'Twill be long, old man, ere our glasses clink,
'Twill be long ere we grip your hand !—
And we dragged him ashore for a final drink
Till the whole wide world seemed grand.

For they marry and go as the world rolls back,
They marry and vanish and die ;
But their spirit shall live on the Outside Track
As long as the years go by.

The port-lights glowed in the morning mist
That rolled from the waters green ;
And over the railing we grasped his fist
As the dark tide came between.

THE OUTSIDE TRACK

9

We cheered the captain and cheered the crew,
And our mate, times out of mind ;
We cheered the land he was going to
And the land he had left behind.

We roared Lang Syne as a last farewell,
But my heart seemed out of joint ;
I well remember the hush that fell
When the steamer had passed the point
We drifted home through the public bars,
We were ten times less by one
Who sailed out under the morning stars,
And under the rising sun.

And one by one, and two by two,
They have sailed from the wharf since then ;
I have said good-bye to the last I knew,
The last of the careless men.
And I can't but think that the times we had
Were the best times after all,
As I turn aside with a lonely glass
And drink to the bar-room wall.

But I'll try my luck for a cheque Out Back,
Then a last good-bye to the bush ;
For my heart's away on the Outside Track,
On the track of the steerage push.

SYDNEY-SIDE

WHERE'S the steward?—Bar-room steward? Berth?

Oh, any berth will do—

I have left a three-pound billet just to come along
with you.

Brighter shines the Star of Rovers on a world that's
growing wide,

But I think I'd give a kingdom for a glimpse of
Sydney-Side.

Run of rocky shelves at sunrise, with their base on
ocean's bed ;

Homes of Coogee, homes of Bondi, and the lighthouse
on South Head ;

For in loneliness and hardship—and with just a
touch of pride—

Has my heart been taught to whisper, ' You belong
to Sydney-Side.'

Oh, there never dawned a morning, in the long and
lonely days,

But I thought I saw the ferries streaming out across
the bays—

And as fresh and fair in fancy did the picture rise
again

As the sunrise flushed the city from Woollahra to
Balmain :

And the sunny water frothing round the liners black
and red,

And the coastal schooners working by the loom of
Bradley's Head ;

And the whistles and the sirens that re-echo far and
wide—

All the life and light and beauty that belong to
Sydney-Side.

And the dreary cloud-line never veiled the end of one
day more,

But the city set in jewels rose before me from 'The
Shore.'

Round the sea-world shine the beacons of a thousand
ports o' call,

But the harbour-lights of Sydney are the grandest of
them all !

Toiling out beyond Coolgardie—heart and back and
spirit broke,

Where the Rover's Star gleams redly in the desert by
the 'soak'—

But says one mate to the other, 'Brace your lip and
do not fret,

'We will laugh on trams and 'buses—Sydney's in the
same place yet.'

Working in the South in winter, to the waist in
dripping fern,

Where the local spirit hungers for each 'saxpence'
that we earn—

We can stand it for a season, for our world is
growing wide,

And they all are friends and strangers who belong to
Sydney-Side.

'T'other-siders! T'other-siders!' Yet we wake the
dusty dead;

It is we that send the backward province fifty years
ahead;

We it is that 'trim' Australia—making narrow
country wide—

Yet we're always T'other-siders till we sail for
Sydney-side.

THE ROVERS

SOME born of homely parents
For ages settled down—
The steady generations
Of village, farm, and town ;
And some of dusky fathers
Who wandered since the flood—
The fairest skin or darkest
Might hold the roving blood—

Some born of brutish peasants,
And some of dainty peers,
In poverty or plenty
They pass their early years ;
But, born in pride of purple,
Or straw and squalid sin,
In all the far world corners
The wanderers are kin.

A rover or a rebel,
 Conceived and born to roam,
As babies they will toddle
 With faces turned from home ;
They've fought beyond the vanguard
 Wherever storm has raged,
And home is but a prison
 They pace like lions caged.

They smile and are not happy ;
 They sing and are not gay ;
They weary, yet they wander ;
 They love, and cannot stay ;
They marry, and are single
 Who watch the roving star,
For, by the family fireside,
 Oh, lonely men *they* are !

They die of peace and quiet—
 The deadly ease of life ;
They die of home and comfort ;
 They *live* in storm and strife ;
No poverty can tie them,
 Nor wealth nor place restrain—
Girl, wife, or child might draw them,
 But they'll be gone again !

Across the glowing desert ;
 Through naked trees and snow ;
Across the rolling prairies
 The skies have seen them go ;
They fought to where the ocean
 Receives the setting sun ;—
But where shall fight the rovers
 When all the lands are won ?

They thirst on Greenland snowfields,
 On Never-Never sands ;
Where man is not to conquer
 They conquer barren lands ;
They feel that most are cowards,
 That all depends on ' nerve,'
They lead who cannot follow,
 They rule who cannot serve.

Across the plains and ranges,
 Away across the seas,
On blue and green horizons
 They camp by twos and threes ;
They hold on stormy borders
 Of states that trouble earth
The honour of the country
 That only gave them birth.

Unlisted, uncommissioned,
 Untaught of any school,
In far-away world corners
 Unconquered tribes they rule ;
The lone hand and revolver—
 Sad eyes that never quail—
The lone hand and the rifle
 That win where armies fail.

They slumber sound where murder
 And treachery are bare—
The pluck of self-reliance,
 The pluck of past despair ;
Thin brown men in pyjamas—
 The thin brown wiry men !—
The helmet and revolver
 That lie beside the pen.

Through drought and desolation
 They won the way Out Back ;
The commonplace and selfish
 Have followed on their track ;
They conquer lands for others,
 For others find the gold,—
But where shall go the rovers
 When all the lands are old ?

A rover and a rebel—
And so the worlds commence !
Their hearts shall beat as wildly
Ten generations hence ;
And when the world is crowded—
'Tis signed and sealed by Fate—
The roving blood will rise to make
The countries desolate.

FOREIGN LANDS

You may roam the wide seas over, follow, meet, and
cross the sun,

Sail as far as ships can sail, and travel far as trains
can run ;

You may ride and tramp wherever range or plain or
sea expands,

But the crowd has been before you, and you'll not
find ' Foreign Lands ;'

For the Early Days are over,

And no more the white-winged rover

Sinks the gale-worn coast of England bound for bays
in Foreign Lands.

Foreign Lands are in the distance dim and dream-
like, faint and far,

Long ago, and over yonder, where our boyhood
fancies are,

For the land is by the railway cramped as though
with iron bands,
And the steamship and the cable did away with
Foreign Lands.

Ah ! the days of blue and gold !

When the news was six months old—

But the news was worth the telling in the days of
Foreign Lands.

*Here we slave the dull years hopeless for the sake of Wool
and Wheat—*

*Here the homes of ugly Commerce—niggard farm and
haggard street ;*

*Yet our mothers and our fathers won the life the heart
demands—*

*Less than fifty years gone over, we were born in Foreign
Lands.*

When the gipsies stole the children still, in village
tale and song,

And the world was wide to travel, and the roving
spirit strong ;

When they dreamed of South Sea Islands, summer
seas and coral strands—

Then the bravest hearts of England sailed away to
Foreign Lands,
 'Fitting foreign'—flood and field—
 Half the world and orders sealed—
And the first and best of Europe went to fight in
Foreign Lands.

Canvas towers on the ocean—homeward bound and
 outward bound—
Glint of topsails over islands—splash of anchors in
 the sound ;
Then they landed in the forests, took their strong lives
 in their hands,
And they fought and toiled and conquered—making
 homes in Foreign Lands,
 Through the cold and through the drought—
 Further on and further out—
Winning half the world for England in the wilds of
 Foreign Lands.

Love and pride of life inspired them when the simple
 village hearts
Followed Master Will and Harry—gone abroad to
 'furrin parts'—

By our townships and our cities, and across the desert
sands

Are the graves of those who fought and died for us
in Foreign Lands—

Gave their young lives for our sake

(Was it all a grand mistake?)

Sons of Master Will and Harry born abroad in
Foreign Lands!

*Ah, my girl, our lives are narrow, and in sordid days
like these,*

*I can hate the things that banished 'Foreign Lands
across the seas,'*

*But with all the world before us, God above us—hearts
and hands,*

I can sail the seas in fancy far away to Foreign Lands.

MARY LEMAINÉ

JIM DUFF was a 'native,' as wild as could be ;
A stealer and duffer of cattle was he,
But back in his youth he had stolen a pearl—
Or a diamond rather—the heart of a girl ;
She served with a squatter who lived on the plain,
And the name of the girl it was Mary Lemaine.

'Twas a drear, rainy day and the twilight was done,
When four mounted troopers rode up to the run.
They spoke to the squatter—he asked them all in.
The homestead was small and the walls they were thin ;
And in the next room, with a cold in her head,
Our Mary was sewing on buttons—in bed.

She heard a few words, but those words were
enough—

The troopers were all on the track of Jim Duff.

The super, his rival, was planning a trap
To capture the scamp in Maginnis's Gap.
'I've warned him before, and I'll do it again ;—
'*I'll* save him to-night,' whispered Mary Lemaine.

No petticoat job—there was no time to waste,
The suit she was mending she slipped on in haste,
And five minutes later they gathered in force,
But Mary was off, on the squatter's best horse ;
With your hand on your heart, just to deaden the
 pain,
Ride hard to the ranges, brave Mary Lemaine !

She rode by the ridges all sullen and strange,
And far up long gullies that ran through the range,
Till the rain cleared away, and the tears in her eyes
Caught the beams of the moon from Maginnis's Rise.
A fire in the depths of the gums she espied—
'Who's there ?' shouted Jim. 'It is Mary !' she cried.

Next morning the sun rose in splendour again,
And two loving sinners rode out on the plain ;
And baffled, and angry, and hungry and damp,
The four mounted troopers rode back to the camp.
But they hushed up the business—the reason is plain
They all had been 'soft' on fair Mary Lemaine.

The squatter got back all he lost from his mob,
And old Sergeant Kennedy winked at the job ;
Jim Duff keeps a shanty far out in the west,
And the sundowners call it the ' Bushranger's Rest.'
But the bushranger lives a respectable life,
And the law never troubles Jim Duff or his wife.

THE SHAKEDOWN ON THE FLOOR

SET me back for twenty summers—
For I'm tired of cities now—
Set my feet in red-soil furrows
And my hands upon the plough,
With the two 'Black Brothers' trudging
On the home stretch through the loam—
While, along the grassy siding,
Come the cattle grazing home.

And I finish ploughing early,
And I hurry home to tea—
There's my black suit on the stretcher,
And a clean white shirt for me ;
There's a dance at Rocky Rises,
And, when all the fun is o'er,
For a certain favoured party
There's a shake-down on the floor.

You remember Mary Carey,
 Bushmen's favourite at the Rise ?
With her sweet small freckled features,
 Red-gold hair, and kind grey eyes ;
Sister, daughter, to her mother,
 Mother, sister, to the rest—
And of all my friends and kindred,
 Mary Carey loved me best.

Far too shy, because she loved me,
 To be dancing oft with me ;
What cared I, because she loved me,
 If the world were there to see ?
But we lingered by the slip-rails
 While the rest were riding home,
Ere the hour before the dawning,
 Dimmed the great star-clustered dome.

Small brown hands that spread the mattress
 While the old folk winked to see
How she'd find an extra pillow
 And an extra sheet for me.
For a moment shyly smiling,
 She would grant me one kiss more—
Slip away and leave me happy
 By the shake-down on the floor.

Rock me hard in steerage cabins,
 Rock me soft in wide saloons,
Lay me on the sand-hill lonely
 Under waning western moons ;
But wherever night may find me
 Till I rest for evermore—
I will dream that I am happy
 On the shake-down on the floor.

Ah ! she often watched at sunset—
 For her people told me so—
Where I left her at the slip-rails
 More than fifteen years ago.
And she faded like a flower,
 And she died, as such girls do,
While, away in Northern Queensland,
 Working hard, I never knew,

And we suffer for our sorrows,
 And we suffer for our joys,
From the old bush days when mother
 Spread the shake-down for the boys.
But to cool the living fever,
 Comes a cold breath to my brow,
And I feel that Mary's spirit
 Is beside me, even now.

REEDY RIVER

TEN miles down Reedy River

A pool of water lies,

And all the year it mirrors

The changes in the skies,

And in that pool's broad bosom

Is room for all the stars ;

Its bed of sand has drifted

O'er countless rocky bars.

Around the lower edges

There waves a bed of reeds,

Where water rats are hidden

And where the wild duck breeds ;

And grassy slopes rise gently

To ridges long and low,

Where groves of wattle flourish

And native bluebells grow.

Beneath the granite ridges
The eye may just discern
Where Rocky Creek emerges
From deep green banks of fern ;
And standing tall between them,
The grassy sheoaks cool
The hard, blue-tinted waters
Before they reach the pool.

Ten miles down Reedy River
One Sunday afternoon,
I rode with Mary Campbell
To that broad bright lagoon ;
We left our horses grazing
Till shadows climbed the peak,
And strolled beneath the sheoaks
On the banks of Rocky Creek.

Then home along the river
That night we rode a race,
And the moonlight lent a glory
To Mary Campbell's face ;
And I pleaded for my future
All thro' that moonlight ride,
Until our weary horses
Drew closer side by side.

Ten miles from Ryan's crossing
And five below the peak,
I built a little homestead
On the banks of Rocky Creek ;
I cleared the land and fenced it
And ploughed the rich red loam,
And my first crop was golden
When I brought Mary home.

Now still down Reedy River
The grassy sheoaks sigh,
And the waterholes still mirror
The pictures in the sky ;
And over all for ever
Go sun and moon and stars,
While the golden sand is drifting
Across the rocky bars ;

But of the hut I builded
There are no traces now.
And many rains have levelled
The furrows of the plough ;
And my bright days are olden,
For the twisted branches wave
And the wattle blossoms golden
On the hill by Mary's grave.

OLD STONE CHIMNEY

THE rising moon on the peaks was blending
Her silver light with the sunset glow,
When a swagman came as the day was ending
Along a path that he seemed to know.
But all the fences were gone or going—
The hand of ruin was everywhere ;
The creek unchecked in its course was flowing,
For none of the old clay dam was there.

Here Time had been with his swiftest changes,
And husbandry had westward flown ;
The cattle tracks in the rugged ranges
Were long ago with the scrub o'ergrown.
It must have needed long years to soften
The road, that as hard as rock had been ;
The mountain path he had trod so often
Lay hidden now with a carpet green.

He thought at times from the mountain courses
 He heard the sound of a bullock bell,
The distant gallop of stockmen's horses,
 The stockwhip's crack that he knew so well :
But these were sounds of his memory only,
 And they were gone from the flat and hill,
For when he listened the place was lonely,
 The range was dumb and the bush was still.

The swagman paused by the gap and faltered,
 For down the gully he feared to go,
The scene in memory never altered—
 The scene before him had altered so.
But hope is strong, and his heart grew bolder,
 And over his sorrows he raised his head,
He turned his swag to the other shoulder,
 And plodded on with a firmer tread.

Ah, hope is always the keenest hearer,
 And fancies much when assailed by fear ;
The swagman thought, as the farm drew nearer,
 He heard the sounds that he used to hear.
His weary heart for a moment bounded,
 For a moment brief he forgot his dread ;
For plainly still in his memory sounded
 The welcome bark of a dog long dead.

A few steps more and his face grew ghostly,
Then white as death in the twilight grey ;
Deserted wholly, and ruined mostly,
The Old Selection before him lay.
Like startled spectres that paused and listened,
The few white posts of the stockyard stood ;
And seemed to move as the moonlight glistened
And paled again on the whitened wood.

And thus he came, from a life long banished
To other lands, and of peace bereft,
To find the farm and the homestead vanished,
And only the old stone chimney left.
The field his father had cleared and gardened
Was overgrown with saplings now ;
The rain had set and the drought had hardened
The furrows made by a vanished plough.

And this, and this was the longed-for haven
Where he might rest from a life of woe ;
He read a name on the mantel graven—
The name was his ere he stained it so.
' And so remorse on my care encroaches—
' I have not suffered enough,' he said ;
' That name is pregnant with deep reproaches—
' The past won't bury dishonoured dead !'

OLD STONE CHIMNEY

Ah, now he knew it was long years after,
And felt how swiftly a long year speeds ;
The hardwood post and the beam and rafter
Had rotted long in the tangled weeds.
He found that time had for years been sowing
The coarse wild scrub on the homestead path,
And saw young trees by the chimney growing,
And mountain ferns on the wide stone hearth.

He wildly thought of the evil courses
That brought disgrace on his father's name ;
The escort robbed, and the stolen horses,
The felon's dock with its lasting shame.
' Ah, God ! Ah, God ! is there then no pardon ?'
He cried in a voice that was strained and hoarse ;
He fell on the weeds that were once a garden,
And sobbed aloud in his great remorse.

But grief must end, and his heart ceased aching
When pitying sleep to his eye-lids crept,
And home and friends who were lost in waking,
They all came back while the stockman slept.
And when he woke on the empty morrow,
The pain at his heart was a deadened pain ;
And bravely bearing his load of sorrow,
He wandered back to the world again.

SONG OF THE OLD BULLOCK-DRIVER

FAR back in the days when the blacks used to ramble

In long single file 'neath the evergreen tree,

The wool-teams in season came down from Coonamble,

And journeyed for weeks on their way to the sea,

'Twas then that our hearts and our sinews were
stronger,

For those were the days when the bushman was
bred.

We journeyed on roads that were rougher and longer

Than roads where the feet of our grandchildren
tread.

With mates who have gone to the great Never-
Never,

And mates whom I've not seen for many a day,

I camped on the banks of the Cudgegong River

And yarned at the fire by the old bullock-dray.

I would summon them back from the far Riverina,
From days that shall be from all others distinct,
And sing to the sound of an old concertina
Their rugged old songs where strange fancies were
linked.

We never were lonely, for, camping together,
We yarned and we smoked the long evenings away,
And little I cared for the signs of the weather
When snug in my hammock slung under the dray.
We rose with the dawn, were it ever so chilly,
When yokes and tarpaulins were covered with
frost,
And toasted the bacon and boiled the black billy,
Where high on the camp-fire the branches were
tossed.

On flats where the air was suggestive of 'possums,
And homesteads and fences were hinting of change,
We saw the faint glimmer of appletree blossoms,
And far in the distance the blue of the range ;
And here in the rain, there was small use in flogging
The poor, tortured bullocks that tugged at the
load,
When down to the axles the waggons were bogging
And traffic was making a marsh of the road.

'Twas hard on the beasts on the terrible pinches,
 Where two teams of bullocks were yoked to a load,
 And tugging and slipping, and moving by inches,
 Half-way to the summit they clung to the road.
 And then, when the last of the pinches was bested,
 (You'll surely not say that a glass was a sin ?)
 The bullocks lay down 'neath the gum trees and
 rested—

The bullockies steered for the bar of the inn.

Then slowly we crawled by the trees that kept tally
 Of miles that were passed on the long journey
 down.

We saw the wild beauty of Capertee Valley,
 As slowly we rounded the base of the Crown.
 But, ah ! the poor bullocks were cruelly goaded
 While climbing the hills from the flats and the
 vales ;

'Twas here that the teams were so often unloaded
 That all knew the meaning of ' counting your bales.'

And, oh ! but the best-paying load that I carried
 Was one to the run where my sweetheart was
 nurse.

We courted awhile, and agreed to get married,
 And couple our futures for better or worse.

And as my old feet grew too weary to drag on
 The miles of rough metal they met by the way,
My eldest grew up and I gave him the waggon—
 He's plodding along by the bullocks to-day.

THE LIGHTS OF COBB AND CO.

FIRE LIGHTED, on the table a meal for sleepy men,
A lantern in the stable, a jingle now and then ;
The mail coach looming darkly by light of moon
and star,

The growl of sleepy voices—a candle in the bar ;
A stumble in the passage of folk with wits abroad ;
A swear-word from a bedroom—the shout of ‘All
aboard !’

‘Tchk-tchk ! Git-up !’ ‘Hold fast, there !’ and
down the range we go ;

Five hundred miles of scattered camps will watch for
Cobb and Co.

Old coaching towns already ‘decaying for their sins,’
Uncounted ‘Half-Way Houses,’ and scores of ‘Ten
Mile Inns ;’

The riders from the stations by lonely granite peaks ;

The black-boy for the shepherds on sheep and cattle
creeks ;

The roaring camps of Gulgong, and many a ' Digger's
Rest ;'

The diggers on the Lachlan ; the huts of Furthest
West ;

Some twenty thousand exiles who sailed for weal or
woe ;

The bravest hearts of twenty lands will wait for Cobb
and Co.

The morning star has vanished, the frost and fog are
gone,

In one of those grand mornings which but on moun-
tains dawn ;

A flask of friendly whisky—each other's hopes we
share—

And throw our top-coats open to drink the mountain
air.

The roads are rare to travel, and life seems all com-
plete ;

The grind of wheels on gravel, the trot of horses' feet,
The trot, trot, trot and canter, as down the spur we go—

The green sweeps to horizons blue that call for Cobb
and Co.

We take a bright girl actress through western dust
and damp,

To bear the home-world message, and sing for sinful
camps,

To wake the hearts and break them, wild hearts that
hope and ache—

(Ah! when she thinks of *those* days her own must
nearly break!)

Five miles this side the gold-field, a loud, triumphant
shout:

Five hundred cheering diggers have snatched the
horses out:

With 'Auld Lang Syne' in chorus through roaring
camps they go—

That cheer for her, and cheer for Home, and cheer
for Cobb and Co.

Three lamps above the ridges and gorges dark and
deep,

A flash on sandstone cuttings where sheer the sidings
sweep,

A flash on shrouded waggons, on water ghastly
white;

Weird bush and scattered remnants of 'rushes in
the night;'

Across the swollen river a flash beyond the ford :
' Ride hard to warn the driver ! He's drunk or mad,
good Lord !'
But on the bank to westward a broad, triumphant
glow—
A hundred miles shall see to-night the lights of Cobb
and Co. !

Swift scramble up the siding where teams climb inch
by inch ;
Pause, bird-like, on the summit—then breakneck
down the pinch
Past haunted half-way houses—where convicts made
the bricks—
Scrub-yards and new bark shanties, we dash with five
and six—
By clear, ridge-country rivers, and gaps where tracks
run high,
Where waits the lonely horseman, cut clear against
the sky ;
Through stringy-bark and blue-gum, and box and
pine we go ;
New camps are stretching 'cross the plains the routes
of Cobb and Co.

.

Throw down the reins, old driver—there's no one left
to shout ;

The ruined inn's survivor must take the horses out.

A poor old coach hereafter!—we're lost to all such
things—

No bursts of songs or laughter shall shake your
leathern springs

When creeping in unnoticed by railway sidings
drear,

Or left in yards for lumber, decaying with the year—
Oh, who'll think how in those days when distant
fields were broad

You raced across the Lachlan side with twenty-five
on board.

Not all the ships that sail away since Roaring Days
are done—

Not all the boats that steam from port, nor all the
trains that run,

Shall take such hopes and loyal hearts—for men shall
never know

Such days as when the Royal Mail was run by Cobb
and Co.

The 'greyhounds' race across the sea, the 'special'
cleaves the haze,

But these seem dull and slow to me compared with
Roaring Days!

The eyes that watched are dim with age, and souls
are weak and slow,

The hearts are dust or hardened now that broke for
Cobb and Co.

HOW THE LAND WAS WON

THE future was dark and the past was dead
As they gazed on the sea once more—
But a nation was born when the immigrants said
‘ Good-bye ! ’ as they stepped ashore !
In their loneliness they were parted thus
Because of the work to do,
A wild wide land to be won for us
By hearts and hands so few.

The darkest land 'neath a blue sky's dome,
And the widest waste on earth ;
The strangest scenes and the least like home
In the lands of our fathers' birth ;
The loneliest land in the wide world then,
And away on the furthest seas,
A land most barren of life for men—
And they won it by twos and threes !

With God, or a dog, to watch, they slept
By the camp-fires' ghastly glow,
Where the scrubs were dark as the blacks that crept
With 'nulla' and spear held low ;
Death was hidden amongst the trees,
And bare on the glaring sand
They fought and perished by twos and threes—
And that's how they won the land !

It was two that failed by the dry creek bed,
While one reeled on alone—
The dust of Australia's greatest dead
With the dust of the desert blown !
Gaunt cheek-bones cracking the parchment skin
That scorched in the blazing sun,
Black lips that broke in a ghastly grin—
And that's how the land was won !

Starvation and toil on the tracks they went,
And death by the lonely way ;
The childbirth under the tilt or tent,
The childbirth under the dray !
The childbirth out in the desolate hut
With a half-wild gin for nurse—
That's how the first were born to bear
The brunt of the first man's curse !

They toiled and they fought through the shame of it—

Through wilderness, flood, and drought ;

They worked, in the struggles of early days,

Their sons' salvation out.

The white girl-wife in the hut alone,

The men on the boundless run,

The miseries suffered, unvoiced, unknown—

And that's how the land was won.

No armchair rest for the old folk then—

But, ruined by blight and drought,

They blazed the tracks to the camps again

In the big scrubs further out.

The worn haft, wet with a father's sweat,

Gripped hard by the eldest son,

The boy's back formed to the hump of toil—

And that's how the land was won !

And beyond Up Country, beyond Out Back,

And the rainless belt, they ride,

The currency lad and the ne'er-do-weel

And the black sheep, side by side ;

In wheeling horizons of endless haze

That disk through the Great North-west,

They ride for ever by twos and by threes—

And that's how they win the rest.

THE BOSS OVER THE BOARD

WHEN he's over a rough and unpopular shed,
With the sins of the bank and the men on his head ;
When he musn't look black or indulge in a grin,
And thirty or forty men hate him like Sin—
I am moved to admit—when the total is scored—
That it's just a bit off for the Boss-of-the-board.

I have battled a lot,
But my dream's never soared
To the lonely position of Boss-of-the-board.

'Twas a black-listed shed down the Darling : the
Boss
Was a small man to see—though a big man to
cross—
We had nought to complain of—except what we
thought,
And the Boss didn't boss any more than he ought ;

But the Union was booming, and Brotherhood soared,
So we hated like poison the Boss-of-the-board.

We could tolerate 'hands'—

We respected the cook ;

But the name of a Boss was a blot in our book.

He'd a row with Big Duggan—a rough sort of
Jim—

Or, rather, Jim Duggan was 'laying for' him !

His hate of Injustice and Greed was so deep

That his shearing grew rough—and he ill-used the
sheep.

And I fancied that Duggan his manliness lower'd

When he took off his shirt to the Boss-of-the-board,

For the Boss was ten stone,

And the shearer full-grown,

And he might have, they said, let the crawler
alone.

Though some of us there wished the fight to the
strong,

Yet we knew in our hearts that the shearer was
wrong.

And the crawler was plucky, it can't be denied,

For he had to fight Freedom and Justice beside,

But he came up so gamely, as often as floored,
That a blackleg stood up for the Boss-of-the-board!

And the fight was a sight,

And we pondered that night—

‘It’s surprising how some of those blacklegs can
fight!’

Next day at the office, when sadly the wreck
Of Jim Duggan came up like a lamb for his cheque,
Said the Boss, ‘Don’t be childish! It’s all past and
gone;

‘I am short of good shearers. You’d *better* stay on.’
And we fancied Jim Duggan *our* dignity lower’d
When he stopped to oblige a damned Boss-of-the-
board.

We said nothing to Jim,

For a joke might be grim,

And the subject, we saw, was distasteful to him.

The Boss just went on as he’d done from the first,
And he favoured Big Duggan no more than the
worst;

And when we’d cut out and the steamer came
down—

With the hawkers and spielers—to take us to town,

And we'd all got aboard, 'twas Jim Duggan, good
Lord!

Who yelled for three cheers for the Boss-of-the-board.

'Twas a bit off, no doubt—

And with Freedom about—

But a lot is forgot when a shed is cut out.

With Freedom of Contract maintained in his shed,
And the curse of the Children of Light on his head,
He's apt to long sadly for sweetheart or wife,
And his views be inclined to the dark side of life.
The Truth must be spread and the Cause must be
shored—

But it's just a bit rough on the Boss-of-the-board.

I am all for the Right,

But perhaps (out of sight)

As a son or a husband or father he's white.



WHEN THE LADIES COME TO THE
SHEARING SHED

‘THE ladies are coming,’ the super says
To the shearers sweltering there,
And ‘the ladies’ means in the shearing shed :
‘Don’t cut ’em too bad. Don’t swear.’
The ghost of a pause in the shed’s rough heart,
And lower is bowed each head ;
And nothing is heard, save a whispered word,
And the roar of the shearing-shed.

The tall, shy rouser has lost his wits,
And his limbs are all astray ;
He leaves a fleece on the shearing-board,
And his broom in the shearer’s way.
There’s a curse in store for that jackaroo
As down by the wall he slants—
And the ringer bends with his legs askew
And wishes he’d ‘patched them pants.’

They are girls from the city. (Our hearts rebel

As we squint at their dainty feet.)

And they gush and say in a girly way

That 'the dear little lambs' are 'sweet.'

And Bill, the ringer, who'd scorn the use

Of a childish word like 'damn,'

Would give a pound that his tongue were loose

As he tackles a lively lamb.

Swift thoughts of homes in the coastal towns—

Or rivers and waving grass—

And a weight on our hearts that we cannot define

That comes as the ladies pass.

But the rouser ventures a nervous dig

In the ribs of the next to him ;

And Barcoo says to his pen-mate : 'Twig

'The style of the last un, Jim.'

Jim Moonlight gives her a careless glance—

Then he catches his breath with pain—

His strong hand shakes and the sunlights dance

As he bends to his work again.

But he's well disguised in a bristling beard,

Bronzed skin, and his shearer's dress ;

And whatever Jim Moonlight hoped or feared

Were hard for his mates to guess.

Jim Moonlight, wiping his broad, white brow,
Explains, with a doleful smile :
' A stitch in the side,' and ' he's all right now '—
But he leans on the beam awhile,
And gazes out in the blazing noon
On the clearing, brown and bare—
She has come and gone, like a breath of June,
In December's heat and glare.

The bushmen are big rough boys at the best,
With hearts of a larger growth ;
But they hide those hearts with a brutal jest,
And the pain with a reckless oath.
Though the Bills and Jims of the bush-bard sing
Of their life loves, lost or dead,
The love of a girl is a sacred thing
Not voiced in a shearing-shed.

THE BALLAD OF THE ROUSEABOUT

A ROUSEABOUT of rouseabouts, from any land—or
none—

I bear a nick-name of the bush, and I'm—a woman's
son ;

I came from where I camp'd last night, and, at the
day-dawn glow,

I rub the darkness from my eyes, roll up my swag,
and go.

Some take the track for bitter pride, some for no
pride at all—

(But—to us all the world is wide when driven
to the wall)

Some take the track for gain in life, some take the
track for loss—

And some of us take up the swag as Christ took up
the Cross.

Some take the track for faith in men—some take the
track for doubt—

Some flee a squalid home to work their own salvation
out.

Some dared not see a mother's tears nor meet a
father's face—

Born of good Christian families some leap, head-long,
from Grace.

Oh we are men who fought and rose, or fell from
many grades ;

Some born to lie, and some to pray, we're men of
many trades ;

We're men whose fathers were and are of high and
low degree—

The sea was open to us and we sailed across the
sea.

And—were our quarrels wrong or just?—has no
place in my song—

We seared our souls in puzzling as to what was right
or wrong ;

We judge not and we are not judged—'tis our
philosophy—

There's something wrong with every ship that sails
upon the sea.

From shearing shed to shearing shed we tramp to
make a cheque—

Jack Cornstalk and the ne'er-do-weel—the tar-boy
and the wreck.

We learn the worth of man to man—and this we
learn too well—

The shanty and the shearing shed are warmer spots
in hell!

I've humped my swag to Bawley Plain, and further
out and on;

I've boiled my billy by the Gulf, and boiled it by the
Swan—

I've thirsted in dry lignum swamps, and thirsted on
the sand,

And eked the fire with camel dung in Never-Never
Land.

I know the track from Spencer's Gulf and north of
Cooper's Creek—

Where falls the half-caste to the strong, 'black velvet'
to the weak—

(From gold-top Flossie in the Strand to half-caste and
the gin—

If they had brains, poor animals! we'd teach them
how to sin.)

I've tramped, and camped, and 'shore' and drunk
with many mates Out Back—

And every one to me is Jack because the first was
Jack—

A 'lifer' sneaked from jail at home—the 'straightest'
mate I met—

A 'ratty' Russian Nihilist—a British Baronet!

I know the tucker tracks that feed—or leave one in
the lurch—

The 'Burgoo' (Presbyterian) track—the 'Murphy'
(Roman Church)—

But more the *man*, and not the *track*, so much as it
appears,

For 'battling' is a trade to learn, and I've served
seven years.

We're haunted by the past at times—and this is very
bad,

And so we drink till horrors come, lest, sober, we go
mad—

So much is lost Out Back, so much of hell is
realised—

A man might skin himself alive and no one be
surprised.

A rouseabout of rouseabouts, above—beneath regard,
I know how soft is this old world, and I have learnt
how hard—

A rouseabout of rouseabouts—I know what men can
feel,

I've seen the tears from hard eyes slip as drops from
polished steel.

I learned what college had to teach, and in the school
of men

By camp-fires I have learned, or, say, unlearned it all
again ;

But this I've learned, that truth is strong, and if a
man go straight

He'll live to see his enemy struck down by time and
fate !

We hold him true who's true to one however false
he be

(There's something wrong with every ship that lies
beside the quay) ;

We lend and borrow, laugh and joke, and when the
past is drowned,

We sit upon our swags and smoke and watch the
world go round.

YEARS AFTER THE WAR IN AUSTRALIA

THE big rough boys from the runs out back were first
where the balls flew free,
And yelled in the slang of the Outside Track: 'By
God, it's a Christmas spree!'
'It's not too rusty'—and 'Wool away!—stand clear
of the blazing shoots!'
'Sheep O! Sheep O!'—'We'll cut out to-day'—
'Look out for the boss's boots!'—
'What price the tally in camp to-night!'—'What
price the boys Out Back!'—
'Go it, you tigers, for Right or Might and the pride
of the Outside Track!'—
'Needle and thread!'—'I have broke my comb!'—
'Now ride, you flour-bags, ride!'—
'Fight for your mates and the folk at home!'—
'Here's for the Lachlan side!'

Those men of the West would sneer and scoff at the
gates of hell ajar,
And oft the sight of a head cut off was hailed by a
yell for 'Tar !'

.

I heard the push in the Red Redoubt, irate at a
luckless shot :

'Look out for the blooming shell, look out !'—'Gor'
bli' me, but that's red-hot !'—

'It's Bill the Slogger—poor bloke—he's done. A
chunk of the shell was his ;

'I wish the beggar that fired that gun could get
within reach of Liz.'

'Those foreign gunners will give us rats, but I wish
it was Bill they missed.'

'I'd like to get at their bleeding hats with a rock in
my (something) fist.'

'Hold up, Billy ; I'll stick to you ; they've hit you
under the belt ;

'If we get the waddle I'll swag you through, if the
blazing mountains melt ;

'You remember the night when the traps got me for
stoushing a bleeding Chow,

‘And you went for ’em proper and laid out three,
and I won’t forget it now.’

And, groaning and swearing, the pug replied: ‘I’m
done . . . they’ve knocked me out!

‘I’d fight them all for a pound a-side, from the boss
to the rouseabout.

‘My nut is cracked and my legs is broke, and it gives
me worse than hell;

‘I trained for a scrap with a twelve-stone bloke, and
not with a bursting shell.

‘You needn’t mag, for I knowed, old chum, I *knowed*,
old pal, you’d stick;

‘But you can’t hold out till the reg’lars come, and
you’d best be nowhere quick.

‘They’ve got a force and a gun ashore, both of our
wings is broke;

‘They’ll storm the ridge in a minute more, and the
best you can do is smoke.’

And Jim exclaimed: ‘You can smoke, you chaps,
but me—Gor’ bli’ me, no!

‘The push that ran from the George-street traps
won’t run from a foreign foe.

‘I’ll stick to the gun while she makes them sick, and
I’ll stick to what’s left of Bill.’

And they hiss through their blackened teeth : ‘ We’ll
stick ! by the blazing flame, we will ! ’

And long years after the war was past, they told in
the town and bush

How the ridge of death to the bloody last was held
by a Sydney push ;

How they fought to the end in a sheet of flame, how
they fought with their rifle-stocks,

And earned, in a nobler sense, the name of their
ancient weapons—‘ rocks.’

.

In the western camps it was ever our boast, when
’twas bad for the kangaroo :

‘ If the enemy’s forces take the coast, they must take
the mountains, too ;

‘ They may force their way by the western line or
round by a northern track,

‘ But they won’t run short of a decent spree with the
men who are left out back ! ’

When we burst the enemy’s ironclads and won by a
run of luck,

We whooped as loudly as Nelson’s lads when a
French three-decker struck ;

And when the enemy's troops prevailed the truth
was never heard—

We lied like heroes who never failed explaining how
that occurred.

You bushmen sneer in the old bush way at the new-
chum jackeroo,

But 'cuffs-'n'-collers' were out that day, and they
stuck to their posts like glue ;

I never believed that a dude could fight till a Johnny
led us then ;

We buried his bits in the rear that night for the
honour of George-street men.

And Jim the Ringer—he fought, he did. The
regiment nicknamed Jim,

'Old Heads a Caser' and 'Heads a Quid,' but it
never was 'tails' with him.

The way that he rode was a racing rhyme, and the
way that he finished grand ;

He backed the enemy every time, and died in a
hand-to-hand !

I'll never forget when the ringer and I were first in
the Bush Brigade,

With Warrego Bill, from the Live-till-you-Die, in the
last grand charge we made.

And Billy died—he was full of sand—he said, as I raised his head :

‘ I’m full of love for my native land, but a lot too full of lead.

‘ Tell ’em,’ said Billy, ‘ and tell old dad, to look after the cattle pup ;’

But his eyes grew bright, though his voice was sad, and he said, as I held him up :

‘ I have been happy on western farms. And once, when I first went wrong,

‘ Around my neck were the trembling arms of the girl I’d loved so long.

‘ Far out on the southern seas I’ve sailed, and ridden where brumbies roam,

‘ And oft, when all on the station failed, I’ve driven the outlaw home.

‘ I’ve spent a cheque in a day and night, and I’ve made a cheque as quick ;

‘ I struck a nugget when times were tight, and the stores had stopped our tick.

‘ I’ve led the field on the old bay mare, and I hear the cheering still,

‘ When mother and sister and *she* were there, and the old man yelled for Bill ;

'But, save for *her*, could I live my while again in
the old bush way,

'I'd give it all for the last half-mile in the race we
rode to-day!'

-And he passed away as the stars came out—he died
as old heroes die—

I heard the sound of the distant rout, and the
Southern Cross was high.

THE OLD JIMMY WOODSER

THE old Jimmy Woodser comes into the bar,
Unwelcomed, unnoticed, unknown,
Too old and too odd to be drunk with, by far ;
And he glides to the end where the lunch baskets are
And they say that he tipples alone.

His frock-coat is green and the nap is no more,
And the style of his hat is at rest.
He wears the peaked collar our grandfathers wore,
The black-ribboned tie that was legal of yore,
And the coat buttoned over his breast.

When first he came in, for a moment I thought
That my vision or wits were astray ;
For a picture and page out of Dickens he brought,
'Twas an 'old file dropped in from the Chancery Court
To a wine-vault just over the way.

But I dreamed as he tasted his bitters to-night,
And the lights in the bar-room grew dim,
That the shades of the friends of that other day's light,
And of girls that were bright in our grandfathers'
sight,
Lifted shadowy glasses to him.

And I opened the door as the old man passed out,
With his short, shuffling step and bowed head ;
And I sighed, for I felt as I turned me about,
An odd sense of respect—born of whisky no doubt—
For the life that was fifty years dead.

And I thought—there are times when our memory
trends
Through the future, as 'twere, on its own—
That I, out of date ere my pilgrimage ends,
In a new fashioned bar to dead loves and dead friends
Might drink like the old man alone :
While they whisper, ' He boozes alone.'

THE CHRIST OF THE 'NEVER'

WITH eyes that seem shrunken to pierce
To the awful horizons of land,
Through the haze of hot days, and the fierce
White heat-waves that flow on the sand ;
Through the Never Land westward and nor'ward,
Bronzed, bearded and gaunt on the track,
Quiet-voiced and hard-knuckled, rides forward
The Christ of the Outer Out-back.

For the cause that will ne'er be relinquished
Spite of all the great cynics on earth—
In the ranks of the bush undistinguished
By manner or dress—if by birth—
God's preacher, of churches unheeded—
God's vineyard, though barren the sod—
Plain spokesman where spokesman is needed—
Rough link 'twixt the bushman and God.

He works where the hearts of all nations
Are withered in flame from the sky,
Where the sinners work out their salvations
In a hell-upon-earth ere they die.
In the camp or the lonely hut lying
In a waste that seems out of God's sight,
He's the doctor—the mate of the dying
Through the smothering heat of the night.

By his work in the hells of the shearers,
Where the drinking is ghastly and grim,
Where the roughest and worst of his hearers
Have listened bareheaded to him.
By his paths through the parched desolation
Hot rides and the terrible tramps ;
By the hunger, the thirst, the privation
Of his work in the furthest camps ;

By his worth in the light that shall search men
And prove—ay ! and justify each—
I place him in front of all churchmen
Who feel not, who *know* not—but preach !

THE CATTLE-DOG'S DEATH

THE plains lay bare on the homeward route,
And the march was heavy on man and brute ;
For the Spirit of Drouth was on all the land,
And the white heat danced on the glowing sand.

The best of our cattle-dogs lagged at last,
His strength gave out ere the plains were passed,
And our hearts grew sad when he crept and laid
His languid limbs in the nearest shade.

He saved our lives in the years gone by,
When no one dreamed of the danger nigh,
And the treacherous blacks in the darkness crept
On the silent camp where the drovers slept.

'The dog is dying,' a stockman said,
As he knelt and lifted the shaggy head ;
'Tis a long day's march ere the run be near,
'And he's dying fast ; shall we leave him here ?'

But the super cried, 'There's an answer there !'
As he raised a tuft of the dog's grey hair ;
And, strangely vivid, each man descried
The old spear-mark on the shaggy hide.

We laid a 'bluey' and coat across
The camping pack of the lightest horse,
And raised the dog to his deathbed high,
And brought him far 'neath the burning sky.

At the kindly touch of the stockmen rude
His eyes grew human with gratitude ;
And though we parched in the heat that fags,
We gave him the last of the water-bags.

The super's daughter we knew would chide
If we left the dog in the desert wide ;
So we brought him far o'er the burning sand
For a parting stroke of her small white hand.

But long ere the station was seen ahead,
His pain was o'er, for the dog was dead ;
And the folks all knew by our looks of gloom
'Twas a comrade's corpse that we carried home.

THE SONG OF THE DARLING RIVER

The only national work of the blacks was a dam or dyke of stones across the Darling River at Brewarrina. The stones they carried from Lord knows where—and the Lord knows how. The people of Bourke kept up navigation for months above the town by a dam of sand-bags. The Darling rises in blazing droughts from the Queensland rains. There are banks and beds of good clay and rock along the river.

THE skies are brass and the plains are bare,
Death and ruin are everywhere—
And all that is left of the last year's flood
Is a sickly stream on the grey-black mud ;
The salt-springs bubble and quagmires quiver,
And—this is the dirge of the Darling River :

'I rise in the drought from the Queensland rain,
'I fill my branches again and again ;
'I hold my billabongs back in vain,
'For my life and my peoples the South Seas drain ;
'And the land grows old and the people never
'Will see the worth of the Darling River.

' I drown dry gullies and lave bare hills,
 ' I turn drought-ruts into rippling rills—
 ' I form fair island and glades all green
 ' Till every bend is a sylvan scene.
 ' I have watered the barren land ten leagues wide !
 ' But in vain I have tried, ah ! in vain I have tried
 ' To show the sign of the Great All Giver,
 ' The Word to a people : O ! lock your river.

' I want no blistering barge aground,
 ' But racing steamers the seasons round ;
 ' I want fair homes on my lonely ways,
 ' A people's love and a people's praise—
 ' And rosy children to dive and swim—
 ' And fair girls' feet in my rippling brim ;
 ' And cool, green forests and gardens ever '—
 Oh, this is the hymn of the Darling River.

*The sky is brass and the scrub-lands glare,
 Death and ruin are everywhere ;
 Thrown high to bleach, or deep in the mud
 The bones lie buried by last year's flood,
 And the Demons dance from the Never Never
 To laugh at the rise of the Darling River.*

RAIN IN THE MOUNTAINS

THE valley's full of misty cloud,
Its tinted beauty drowning,
The Eucalypti roar aloud,
The mountain fronts are frowning.

The mist is hanging like a pall
From many granite ledges,
And many a little waterfall
Starts o'er the valley's edges.

The sky is of a leaden grey,
Save where the north is surly,
The driven daylight speeds away,
And night comes o'er us early.

But, love, the rain will pass full soon,
Far sooner than my sorrow,
And in a golden afternoon
The sun may set to-morrow.

A MAY NIGHT ON THE MOUNTAINS

'Tis a wonderful time when these hours begin,
These long 'small hours' of night,
When grass is crisp, and the air is thin,
And the stars come close and bright.
The moon hangs caught in a silvery veil,
From clouds of a steely grey,
And the hard, cold blue of the sky grows pale
In the wonderful Milky Way.

There is something wrong with this star of ours,
A mortal plank unsound,
That cannot be charged to the mighty powers
Who guide the stars around.
Though man is higher than bird or beast,
Though wisdom is still his boast,
He surely resembles Nature least,
And the things that vex her most.

Oh, say, some muse of a larger star,
Some muse of the Universe,
If they who people those planets far
Are better than we, or worse ?
Are they exempted from deaths and births,
And have they greater powers,
And greater heavens, and greater earths,
And greater Gods than ours ?

Are our lies theirs, and our truth their truth,
Are they cursed for pleasure's sake,
Do they make their hells in their reckless youth
Ere they know what hells they make ?
And do they toil through each weary hour
Till the tedious day is o'er,
For food that gives but the fleeting power
To toil and strive for more ?

THE NEW CHUM JACKAROO

LET bushmen think as bushmen will,
And say whate'er they choose,
I hate to hear the stupid sneer
At New Chum Jackaroos.

He may not ride as you can ride,
Or do what you can do ;
But sometimes you'd seem small beside
The New Chum Jackaroo.

His share of work he never shirks,
And through the blazing drought,
He lives the old things down, and works
His own salvation out.

When older, wiser chums despond
He battles brave of heart—
'Twas he who sailed of old beyond
The margin of the chart.

'Twas he who proved the world was round—
In crazy square canoes ;
The lands you're living in were found
By New Chum Jackaroos.

He crossed the deserts hot and bare,
From barren, hungry shores—
The plains that you would scarcely dare
With all your tanks and bores.

He fought a way through stubborn hills
Towards the setting sun—
Your fathers all and Burke and Wills
Were New Chums, every one.

When England fought with all the world
In those brave days gone by,
And all its strength against her hurled,
He held her honour high.

By Southern palms and Northern pines—
Where'er was life to lose—
She held her own with thin red lines
Of New Chum Jackaroos.

THE NEW CHUM JACKAROO

Through shot and shell and solitudes,
Wherever feet have gone,
The New Chums fought while eye-glass dudes
And Johnnies led them on.

And though he wear a foppish coat,
And these old things forget,
In stormy times I'd give a vote
For Cuffs and Collars yet.

THE DONS OF SPAIN

THE Eagle screams at the beck of trade, so Spain, as
the world goes round,
Must wrestle the right to live or die from the sons of
the land she found ;
For, as in the days when the buccaneer was abroad
on the Spanish Main,
The national honour is one thing dear to the hearts
of the Dons of Spain.

She has slaughtered thousands with fire and sword,
as the Christian world might know ;
We murder millions, but, thank the Lord ! we only
starve 'em slow.
The times have changed since the days of old, but
the same old facts remain—
We fight for Freedom, and God, and Gold, and the
Spaniards fight for Spain.

We fought with the strength of the moral right, and
they, as their ships went down,
They only fought with the grit to fight and their
armour to help 'em drown.

It mattered little what chance or hope, for ever their
path was plain,
The Church was the Church, and the Pope the Pope
—but the Spaniards fought for Spain.

If Providence struck for the honest thief at times in
the battle's din—

If ever it struck at the hypocrite—well, that's where
the Turks came in ;

But this remains ere we leave the wise to argue it
through in vain—

There's something great in the wrong that dies as the
Spaniards die for Spain.

The foes of Spain may be kin to us who are English
heart and soul,

And proud of our national righteousness and proud
of the lands we stole ;

But we yet might pause while those brave men die
and the death-drink pledge again —

For the sake of the past, if you're doomed, say I,
may your death be a grand one, Spain !

Then here's to the bravest of Freedom's foes who ever
with death have stood—
For the sake of the courage to die on steel as their
fathers died on wood ;
And here's a cheer for the flag unfurled in a hopeless
cause again,
For the sake of the days when the Christian world
was saved by the Dons of Spain.

THE BURSTING OF THE BOOM

THE shipping-office clerks are 'short,' the manager is
gruff—

'They cannot make reductions,' and 'the fares are
low enough.'

They ship us West with cattle, and we go like
cattle too ;

And fight like dogs three times a day for what we
get to chew. . . .

We'll have the pick of empty bunks and lots of
stretching room,

And go for next to nothing at the Bursting of the
Boom.

So wait till the Boom bursts!—we'll all get a
show :

Then when the Boom bursts is our time to go.

We'll meet 'em coming back in shoals, with looks of
deepest gloom,
But we're the sort that battle through at the
Bursting of the Boom.

The captain's easy-going when Fremantle comes in
sight ;

He can't say when you'll get ashore—'perhaps to-
morrow night ;'

Your coins are few , the charges high ; you must not
linger here—

You'll get your boxes from the hold 'when she's
'longside the pier.' . . .

The launch will foul the gangway, and the trembling
bulwarks loom

Above a fleet of harbour craft—at the Bursting of
the Boom.

So wait till the Boom bursts !—we'll all get a show ;
He'll 'take you for a bob, sir,' and where you want
to go.

He'll 'take the big portmanteau, sir, if he might so
presume'—

You needn't hump your luggage at the Bursting of
the Boom.

It's loafers—Customs-loafers—and you pay and pay
again ;

They hinder you and cheat you from the gangway to
the train ;

The pubs and restaurants are full—they haven't
room for more ;

They charge us each three shillings for a shakedown
on the floor ;

But, 'Show this gentleman upstairs—the first front
parlour room.

'We'll see about your luggage, sir'—at the Bursting
of the Boom.

So wait till the Boom bursts!—we'll all get a show ;
And wait till the Boom bursts, and swear mighty
low.

'We mostly charge a pound a week. How do you
like the room?'

And 'Show this gentleman the bath'—at the Burst-
ing of the Boom.

I go down to the timber-yard (I cannot face the
rent)

To get some strips of oregon to frame my hessian
tent ;

To buy some scraps of lumber for a table or a shelf :

The boss comes up and says I might just look round for myself ;

The foreman grunts and turns away as silent as the tomb—

The boss himself will wait on me at the Bursting of the Boom.

So wait till the Boom bursts !—we'll all get a load.

'You had better take those scraps, sir, they're only in the road.'

'Now, where the hell's the carter ?' you'll hear the foreman fume ;

And, 'Take that timber round at once !' at the Bursting of the Boom.

Each one-a-penny grocer, in his box of board and tin,

Will think it condescending to consent to take you in ;

And not content with twice as much as what is just and right,

They charge and cheat you doubly, for the Boom is at its height.

It's 'Take it now or leave it now ;' 'your money or
your room ;'—

But 'Who's attending Mr. Brown?' at the Bursting
of the Boom.

So wait till the Boom bursts!—and take what you
can get,

'There's not the slightest hurry, and your bill ain't
ready yet.'

They'll call and get your orders until the crack o'
doom,

And send them round directly, at the Bursting of
the Boom.

No Country and no Brotherhood—such things are
dead and cold ;

A camp from all the lands or none, all mad for love
of gold ;

Where T'othersider number one makes slave of
number two,

And the vilest women of the world the vilest ways
pursue ;

And men go out and slave and bake and die in
agony

In western hells that God forgot, where never man
should be.

I feel a prophet in my heart that speaks the one
word 'Doom!'

And aye you'll hear the Devil laugh at the Bursting
of the Boom.

ANTONY VILLA

A Ballad of Ninety-three

OVER there, above the jetty, stands the mansion of
the Vardens,
With a tennis ground and terrace, and a flagstaff in
the gardens :
They are gentlemen and ladies—they've been 'toffs'
for generations,
But old Varden's been unlucky—lost a lot in specu-
lations.

Troubles gathered fast upon him when the mining
bubble 'busted,'
Then the bank suspended payment, where his little
all he trusted ;
And the butcher and the baker sent their bills in
when they read it,
Even John, the Chow that served him, has refused to
give him 'cledit.'

And the daughters of the Vardens—they are beautiful
as Graces—

But the balcony's deserted, and they rarely show
their faces ;

And the swells of their acquaintance never seem to
venture near them,

And the bailiff says they seldom have a cup of tea to
cheer them.

They were butterflies—I always was a common
caterpillar,

But I'm sorry for the ladies over there in 'Tony Villa,
Shut up there in 'Tony Villa with the bailiff and
their trouble ;

And the dried-up reservoir, where my tears were
seems to bubble.

Mrs. Rooney thinks it nothing when she sends a brat
to 'borry'

Just a pinch of tea and sugar till the grocer comes
'temorry ;'

But it's dif'rent with the Vardens—they would starve
to death as soon as

Knuckle down. You know, they weren't raised
exactly like the Rooneys !

.

There is gossip in the 'boxes' and the drawing-rooms
and gardens—

'Have you heard of Varden's failure? Have you
heard about the Vardens?'

And no doubt each toney mother on the Point across
the water's

Mighty glad about the downfall of the rivals of her
daughters.

(Tho' the poets and the writers say that man to man's
inhuman,

I'm inclined to think it's nothing to what woman is
to woman,

More especially, the ladies, save perhaps a fellow's
mother;

And I think that men are better—they are kinder to
each other.)

There's a youngster by the jetty gathering cinders
from the ashes,

He was known as 'Master Varden' ere the great
financial crashes.

And his manner shows the difference 'twixt the nurs'ry
and gutter —

But I've seen him at the grocer's buying half a pound
of butter.

And his mother fights her trouble in the house across
the water,

She is just as proud as Varden, though she was a
'cocky's' daughter ;

And at times I think I see her with the flick'ring
firelight o'er her,

Sitting pale and straight and quiet, gazing vacantly
before her.

There's a slight and girlish figure—Varden's youngest
daughter, Nettie—

On the terrace after sunset, when the boat is near
the jetty ;

She is good and pure and pretty, and her rivals don't
deny it,

Though they say that Nettie Varden takes in sewing
on the quiet.

(How her sister graced the 'circle,' all unconscious of
a lover

In the seedy 'god' who watched her from the gallery
above her !

Shade of Poverty was on him, and the light of Wealth
upon her,

But perhaps he loved her better than the swells
attending on her.)

There's a white man's heart in Varden, spite of all
the blue blood in him,

There are working men who wouldn't stand and hear
a word agin' him ;

But his name was never printed by the side of his
'donations,'

Save on hearts that have—in this world—very
humble circulations.

He was never stiff or hoggish—he was affable and
jolly,

And he'd always say 'Good morning' to the deck
hand on the 'Polly ;'

He would 'barrack' with the newsboys on the Quay
across the ferry,

And he'd very often tip 'em coming home a trifle
merry.

But his chin is getting higher, and his features daily
harden

(He will not 'give up possession'—there's a lot of
fight in Varden) ;

And the way he steps the gangway ! oh, you couldn't
but admire it !

Just as proud as ever hero walked the plank aboard
a pirate !

He will think about the hardships that his girls were
never 'useter,'

And it must be mighty heavy on the thoroughbred
old rooster ;

But he'll never strike his colours, and I tell a
lying tale if

Varden's pride don't kill him sooner than the bankers
or the bailiff.

You remember when we often had to go without our
dinners,

In the days when Pride and Hunger fought a finish
out within us ;

And how Pride would come up groggy—Hunger
whooping loud and louder—

And the swells are proud as we are ; they are just
as proud—and prouder.

Yes, the toffs have grit, in spite of all our sneering
and our scorning—

What's the crowd ? What's that ? God help us !—

Varden shot himself this morning !

There'll be gossip in the 'circle,' in the drawing-
rooms and gardens ;

But I'm sorry for the family ; yes—I'm sorry for the
Vardens.

SECOND CLASS WAIT HERE

ON suburban railway stations—you may see them as
you pass—

There are signboards on the platforms saying, 'Wait
here second class ;'

And to me the whirr and thunder and the cluck of
running gear

Seem to be for ever saying, saying 'Second class wait
here'—

 ' Wait here second class,

 ' Second class wait here.'

Seem to be for ever saying, saying 'Second class
wait here.'

And the second class were waiting in the days of
serf and prince,

And the second class are waiting—they've been
waiting ever since.

There are gardens in the background, and the line is
bare and drear,

Yet they wait beneath a signboard, sneering 'Second
class wait here.'

I have waited oft in winter, in the mornings dark
and damp,

When the asphalt platform glistened underneath the
lonely lamp.

Ghastly on the brick-faced cutting 'Sellum's Soap'
and 'Blower's Beer ;'

Ghastly on enamelled signboards with their 'Second
class wait here.

And the others seemed like burglars, slouched and
muffled to the throats,

Standing round apart and silent in their shoddy
overcoats,

And the wind among the wires, and the poplars
bleak and bare,

Seemed to be for ever snarling, snarling 'Second class
wait there.'

Out beyond the further suburb, 'neath a chimney
stack alone,

Lay the works of Grinder Brothers, with a platform
of their own ;

And I waited there and suffered, waited there for
many a year,
Slaved beneath a phantom signboard, telling our class
to wait here.

Ah! a man must feel revengeful for a boyhood such
as mine.

God! I hate the very houses near the workshop by
the line;

And the smell of railway stations, and the roar of
running gear,

And the scornful-seeming signboards, saying 'Second
class wait here.'

There's a train with Death for driver, which is ever
going past,

And there are no class compartments, and we all
must go at last

To the long white jasper platform with an Eden in
the rear;

And there won't be any signboards, saying 'Second
class wait here.

THE SHIPS THAT WON'T GO DOWN

WE hear a great commotion
'Bout the ship that comes to grief,
That founders in mid-ocean,
Or is driven on a reef ;
Because it's cheap and brittle
A score of sinners drown.
But we hear but mighty little
Of the ships that won't go down.

Here's honour to the builders—
The builders of the past ;
Here's honour to the builders
That builded ships to last ;
Here's honour to the captain,
And honour to the crew ;
Here's double-column head-lines
To the ships that battle through.

They make a great sensation
About famous men that fail,
That sink a world of chances
In the city morgue or gaol,
Who drink, or blow their brains out,
Because of ' Fortune's frown.'
But we hear far too little
Of the men who won't go down.

The world is full of trouble,
And the world is full of wrong,
But the heart of man is noble,
And the heart of man is strong !
They say the sea sings dirges,
But I would say to you
That the wild wave's song's a pæan
For the men that battle through.



THE MEN WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN

WHEN God's wrath-cloud is o'er me,
 Affrighting heart and mind ;
When days seem dark before me,
 And days seem black behind ;
Those friends who think they know me—
 Who deem their insight keen—
They ne'er forget to show me
 The man I might have been.

He's rich and independent,
 Or rising fast to fame ;
His bright star is ascendant,
 The country knows his name ;
His houses and his gardens
 Are splendid to be seen ;
His fault the wise world pardons—
 The man I might have been.

His fame and fortune haunt me ;
His virtues wave me back ;
His name and prestige daunt me
When I would take the track ;
But you, my friend true-hearted—
God keep our friendship green i—
You know how I was parted
From all I might have been.

But what avails the ache of
Remorse or weak regret ?
We'll battle for the sake of
The men we might be yet !
We'll strive to keep in sight of
The brave, the true, and clean,
And triumph yet in spite of
The men we might have been.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

WHEN fairer faces turn from me,
And gayer friends grow cold,
And I have lost through poverty
The friendship bought with gold ;
When I have served the selfish turn
Of some all-worldly few,
And Folly's lamps have ceased to burn,
Then I'll come back to you.

When my admirers find I'm not
The rising star they thought,
And praise or blame is all forgot
My early promise brought ;
When brighter rivals lead a host
Where once I led a few,
And kinder times reward their boast,
Then I'll come back to you.

You loved me, not for what I had
Or what I might have been.
You saw the good, but not the bad,
Was kind, for that between.
I know that you'll forgive again—
That you will judge me true;
I'll be too tired to explain
When I come back to you.

THE BATTLING DAYS

So, sit you down in a straight-backed chair, with your
pipe and your wife content,
And cross your knees with your wisest air, and preach
of the 'days mis-spent;'
Grown fat and moral apace, old man! you prate of
the change 'since then'—
In spite of all, I'd as lief be back in those hard old
days again.

They were hard old days; they were battling days;
they were cruel at times—but then,
In spite of all, I would rather be back in those hard
old days again.
The land was barren to sow wild oats in the days
when we sowed our own—
(’Twas little we thought or our friends believed that
ours would ever be sown)

But the wild oats wave on their stormy path, and
they speak of the hearts of men—
I would sow a crop if I had my time in those hard old
days again.

We travel first, or we go saloon—on the planned-out
trips we go,
With those who are neither rich nor poor, and we
find that the life is slow ;
It's 'a pleasant trip' where they cried, 'Good luck!
There was fun in the steerage then—
In spite of all, I would fain be back in those vaga-
bond days again.

On Saturday night we've a pound to spare—a pound
for a trip down town—
We took more joy in those hard old days for a hardly
spared half-crown ;
We took more pride in the pants we patched than
the suits we have had since then—
In spite of all, I would rather be back in those
comical days again.

'Twas We and the World—and the rest go hang—as
the Outside tracks we trod ;
Each thought of himself as a man and mate, and not
as a martyred god ;

The world goes wrong when your heart is strong—and
this is the way with men—

The world goes right when your liver is white, and
you preach of the change 'since then.'

They were hard old days ; they were battling days ;
they were cruel times—but then,

In spite of all, we shall live to-night in those hard
old days again.

WRITTEN AFTERWARDS

So the days of my tramping are over,
And the days of my riding are done—
I'm about as content as a rover
Will ever be under the sun ;
I write, after reading your letter—
My pipe with old memories rife—
And I feel in a mood that had better
Not meet the true eyes of the wife.

You must never admit a suggestion
That old things are good to recall ;
You must never consider the question :
' Was I happier then, after all ?'
You must banish the old hope and sorrow
That make the sad pleasures of life,
You must live for To-day and To-morrow
If you want to be just to the wife.

I have changed since the first day I kissed her.

Which is due—Heaven bless her !—to her ;

I'm respected and trusted—I'm ' Mister,'

Addressed by the children as ' Sir.'

And I feel the respect without feigning—

But you'd laugh the great laugh of your life

If you only saw me entertaining

An old lady friend of the wife.

By-the-way, when you're writing, remember

That you never went drinking with me,

And forget our last night of December,

Lest our sev'ral accounts disagree.

And, for my sake, old man, you had better

Avoid the old language of strife,

For the technical terms of your letter

May be misunderstood by the wife.

Never hint of the girls appertaining

To the past (when you're writing again),

For they take such a lot of explaining,

And you know how I hate to explain.

There are some things, we know to our sorrow,

That cut to the heart like a knife,

And your past is To-day and To-morrow

If you want to be true to the wife.

I believe that the creed we were chums in
Was grand, but too abstract and bold,
And the knowledge of life only comes in
When you're married and fathered and old.
And it's well. You may travel as few men,
You may stick to a mistress for life ;
But the world, as it is, born of woman
Must be seen through the eyes of the wife.

No doubt you are dreaming as *I* did
And going the careless old pace,
While my future grows dull and decided,
And the world narrows down to the Place.
Let it be. If my 'treason's' resented,
You may do worse, old man, in your life ;
Let me dream, too, that I am contented—
For the sake of a true little wife.

THE UNCULTURED RHYMER TO HIS
CULTURED CRITICS

FIGHT through ignorance, want, and care—

Through the griefs that crush the spirit ;

Push your way to a fortune fair,

And the smiles of the world you'll merit.

Long, as a boy, for the chance to learn—

For the chance that Fate denies you ;

Win degrees where the Life-lights burn,

And scores will teach and advise you.

My cultured friends ! you have come too late

With your bypath nicely graded ;

I've fought thus far on my track of Fate,

And I'll follow the rest unaided.

Must I be stopped by a college gate

On the track of Life encroaching ?

Be dumb to Love, and be dumb to Hate,

For the lack of a college coaching ?

You grope for Truth in a language dead—

In the dust 'neath tower and steeple!

What know you of the tracks we tread?

And what know you of our people?

'I must read this, and that, and the rest,'

And write as the cult expects me?—

I'll read the book that may please me best,

And write as my heart directs me!

You were quick to pick on a faulty line

That I strove to put my soul in:

Your eyes were keen for a 'dash' of mine

In the place of a semi-colon—

And blind to the rest. And is it for such

As you I must brook restriction?

'I was taught too little?' I learnt too much

To care for a pedant's diction!

Must I turn aside from my destined way

For a task your Joss would find me?

I come with strength of the living day,

And with half the world behind me;

I leave you alone in your cultured halls

To drivel and croak and cavil:

Till your voice goes further than college walls,

Keep out of the tracks we travel!

THE WRITER'S DREAM

A WRITER wrote of the hearts of men, and he
followed their tracks afar ;

For his was a spirit that forced his pen to write of
the things that are.

His heart grew tired of the truths he told, for his
life was hard and grim ;

His land seemed barren, its people cold — yet the
world was dear to him ;—

So he sailed away from the Streets of Strife, he
travelled by land and sea,

In search of a people who lived a life as life in the
world should be.

And he reached a spot where the scene was fair, with
forest and field and wood,

And all things came with the seasons there, and each
of its kind was good ;

There were mountain-rivers and peaks of snow, there
were lights of green and gold,
And echoing caves in the cliffs below, where a world-
wide ocean rolled.

The lives of men from the wear of Change and the
strife of the world were free—

For Steam was barred by the mountain-range and the
rocks of the Open Sea.

And the last that were born of a noble race—when
the page of the South was fair—

The last of the conquered dwelt in peace with the last
of the victors there.

He saw their hearts with the author's eyes who had
written their ancient lore,

And he saw their lives as he'd dreamed of such—ah!
many a year before.

And 'I'll write a book of these simple folk ere I to
the world return,

'And the cold who read shall be kind for these—and
the wise who read shall learn.

'Never again in a song of mine shall a jarring note
be heard :

'Never again shall a page or line be marred by a
bitter word ;

'But love and laughter and kindly hours will the
book I'll write recall,
'With chastening tears for the loss of one, and sighs
for their sorrows all.
'Old eyes will light with a kindly smile, and the
young eyes dance with glee—
'And the heart of the cynic will rest awhile for my
simple folk and me.'

The lines ran on as he dipped his pen—ran true to his
heart and ear—

Like the brighter pages of memory when every line
is clear.

The pictures came and the pictures passed, like days
of love and light—

He saw his chapters from first to last, and he thought
it grand to write.

And the writer kissed his girlish wife, and he kissed
her twice for pride :

'Tis a book of love, though a book of life! and a
book *you'll* read!' he cried.

He was blind at first to each senseless slight (for
shabby and poor he came)

From local 'Fashion' and mortgaged pride that
scarce could sign its name.

What dreamer would dream of such paltry pride in a
scene so fresh and fair ?

But the local spirit intensified—with its pitiful shams
—was there ;

There were cliques wherever two houses stood (no
rest for a family ghost !)

They hated each other as women could—but they
hated the stranger most.

The writer wrote by day and night and he cried in
the face of Fate—

I'll cleave to my dream of life in spite of the cynical
ghosts that wait.

'Tis the shyness born of their simple lives,' he said
to the paltry pride—

(The homely tongues of the simple wives ne'er erred
on the generous side)—

'They'll prove me true and they'll prove me kind ere
the year of grace be passed,'

But the ignorant whisper of 'axe to grind !' went
home to his heart at last.

The writer sat by his drift-wood fire three nights of
the South-east gale,

His pen lay idle on pages vain, for his book was a
fairy tale.

The world-wise lines of an elder age were plain on
his aching brow,

As he sadly thought of each brighter page that would
never be written now.

'I'll write no more!' But he bowed his head, for
his heart was in Dreamland yet—

'The pages written I'll burn,' he said, 'and the pages
thought forget.'

But he heard the hymn of the Open Sea, and the
old fierce anger burned,

And he wrenched his heart from its dreamland free
as the fire of his youth returned :—

'The weak man's madness, the strong man's scorn—
the rebellious hate of youth

'From a deeper love of the world are born! And
the cynical ghost is Truth!'

And the writer rose with a strength anew wherein
Doubt could have no part ;

'I'll write my book and it *shall* be true—the truth of
a writer's heart.

'Ay! cover the wrong with a fairy tale—who never
knew want or care—

'A bright green scum on a stagnant pool that will
reek the longer there.

- ' You may starve the writer and buy the pen—you
may drive it with want and fear—
' But the lines run false in the hearts of men—and
false to the writer's ear.
' The bard's a rebel and strife his part, and he'll burst
from his bonds anew,
' Till all pens write from a single heart! And so may
the dream come true.
.
' 'Tis ever the same in the paths of men where money
and dress are all,
' The crawler will bully whene'er he can, and the bully
who can't will crawl.
' And this is the creed in the local hole, where the
souls of the selfish rule ;
' Borrow and cheat while the stranger's green, then
sneer at the simple fool.
' Spit your spite at the men whom Fate has placed in
the head-race first,
' And hate till death, with a senseless hate, the man
you have injured worst !
' There are generous hearts in the grinding street, but
the Hearts of the World go west ;
' For the men who toil in the dust and heat of the
barren lands are best !

'The stranger's hand to the stranger, yet—for a
roving folk are mine—

'The stranger's store for the stranger set—and the
camp-fire glow the sign!

'The generous hearts of the world, we find, thrive best
on the barren sod,

'And the selfish thrive where Nature's kind (they'd
bully or crawl to God!)

'I was born to write of the things that are! and the
strength was given to me;

'I was born to strike at the things that mar the world
as the world should be!

'By the dumb heart-hunger and dreams of youth, by
the hungry tracks I've trod—

'I'll fight as a man for the sake of truth, nor pose as
a martyred god.

'By the heart of "Bill" and the heart of "Jim," and
the men that *their* hearts deem "white,"

'By the handgrips fierce, and the hard eyes dim with
forbidden tears!—I'll write!

'I'll write untroubled by cultured fools, or the dense
that fume and fret—

For against the wisdom of all their schools I would
stake mine instinct yet!

- ' For the cynical strain in the writer's song is the
 world, not *he*, to blame,
- ' And I'll write as I think, in the knowledge strong
 that thousands think the same ;
- ' And the men who fight in the Dry Country grim
 battles by day, by night,
- ' Will believe in me, and will stand by me, and will
 say to the world, " He's right ! " '

THE JOLLY DEAD MARCH

IF I ever be worthy or famous—

Which I'm sadly beginning to doubt—

When the angel whose place 'tis to name us

Shall say to my spirit, 'Pass out!'

I wish for no sniv'ling about me

(My work was the work of the land),

But I hope that my country will shout me

The price of a decent brass band.

Thump! thump! of the drum and 'Ta-ra-rit,'

Thump! thump! and the music—it's grand,

If only in dreams, or in spirit,

To ride or march after the band!

And myself and my mourners go straying,

And strolling and drifting along

With a band in the front of us playing

The tune of an old battle song!

I ask for no 'turn-out' to bear me ;
I ask not for railings or slabs,
And spare me ! my country—oh, spare me !
The hearse and the long string of cabs !
I ask not the baton or 'starts' of
The bore with the musical ear,
But the music that's blown from the hearts of
The men who work hard and drink beer.

And let 'em strike up 'Annie Laurie,'
And let them burst out with 'Lang Syne'—
Twin voices of sadness and glory,
That have ever been likings of mine.
And give the French war-hymn deep-throated
The Watch of the Germans between,
And let the last mile be devoted
To 'Britannia' and 'Wearing the Green.'

And if, in the end—more's the pity—
There is fame more than money to spare—
There's a van-man I know in the city
Who'll convey me, right side up with care.
True sons of Australia, and noble,
Have gone from the long dusty way,

While the sole mourner fought down his trouble
With his pipe on the shaft of the dray.
But let them strike up 'Annie Laurie,' &c.

And my spirit will join the procession—
Will pause, if it may, on the brink—
Nor feel the least shade of depression
When the mourners drop out for a drink ;
It may be a hot day in December,
Or a cold day in June it may be,
And the drink will but help them remember
The good points the world missed in me.
And help 'em to love 'Annie Laurie,'
And help 'em to raise 'Auld Lang Syne,' &c.

'Unhook the West Port' for an orphan,
An old digger chorus revive—
If you don't hear a whoop from the coffin,
I am *not* being buried alive.
But I'll go with a spirit less bitter
Than mine own on the earth may have been,
And, perhaps, to save trouble, Saint Peter
Will pass me, two comrades between.

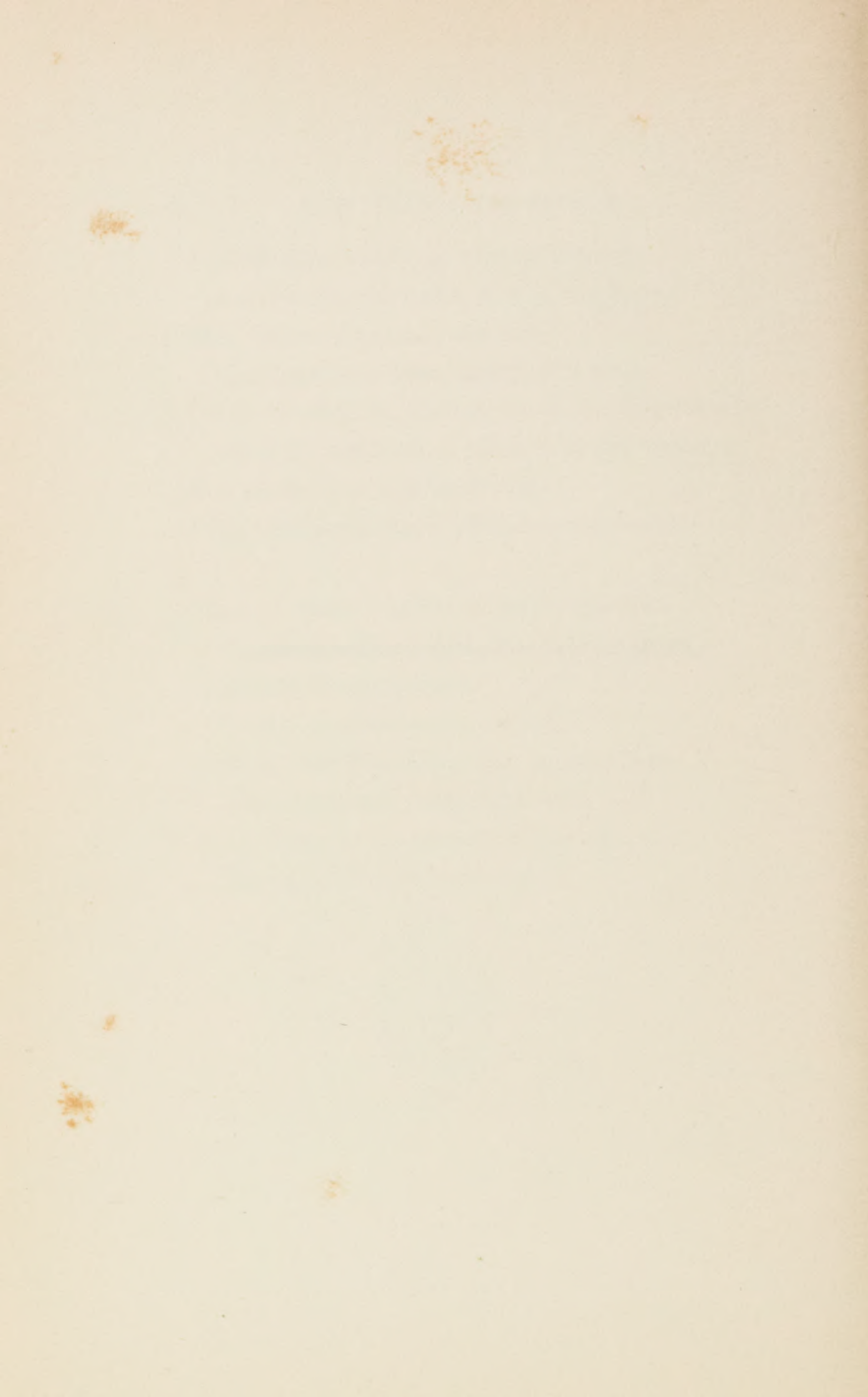
And let them strike up 'Annie Laurie,'
 And let 'em burst out with 'Lang Syne,'
 Twin voices of sadness and glory
 That have ever been likings of mine.
 Let them swell the French war-hymn deep-throated
 (And I'll not buck at 'God Save the Queen'),
 But let the last mile be devoted
 To 'Britannia' and 'Wearing the Green.'

Thump! thump! of the drums we inherit—
 War-drums of my dreams! Oh it's grand,
 If only in fancy or spirit,
 To ride or march after a band!
 And we, the World-Battlers, go straying
 And loving and laughing along—
 With Hope in the lead of us playing
 The tune of a life-battle song!



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December, 1908.

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