Henry Lawson's "Bogan" Stories

edited with an introduction by David Rathbone.

Book proposal...
July 2010

rejected by...
scribe
text
affirm
overland
black inc
etc. etc.

“bugger it I'll just bung it on the web”
5 September 2011

introduction, appendix and selection

CONTENTS

The Bogan Myth Busted.

According to the ANU's on-line dictionary of idiomatic Australian English, the origin of the Australian colloquialism "bogan" (meaning a coarse, rude and uncultivated person) is unknown.[1] Both Australia's authoritative Macquarie Dictionary and the Australian Oxford Dictionary concur: why we Australians call each other 'bogans' is, according to these three dictionaries, a mystery. But the real mystery is why this myth of obscurity surrounds the origins of the word 'bogan.'

In post-war Australia, a small set of canonical stories and poems were taken to represent the whole of Henry Lawson's extensive body of work, and were anthologized repeatedly. While these stories and poems inevitably met the sad fate of growing tired through over-familiarity, the remainder were ignored to such an extent that barely a century later, our authorities have forgotten the character behind the word 'bogan,' One-eyed Bogan Bill. Their neglect has at least in part been an unconscious repression of this character. Not discouraged by this neglect, Bogan has burrowed his way back into the Australian English idiom of the 21st century, and transformed his own name into a moniker of laconic low-brow pride.

The character "Bogan Bill" first appears in a poem Lawson wrote in January 1897 entitled "The Shearing Shed." That poem is a re-working in verse of a prose piece which had appeared in the *Worker* magazine in November 1893 under the title "Ladies in the Shed," in which a shearer called Bill is advised by his mate to "twig the walk of her" as a lady walks by on a visit to see the shearing. Four years later Lawson changed this character's name from "Bill" to "Bogan," and so the name Bogan first appears as such in Lawson's work in January 1897. However this poem did not appear in print in the *Bulletin* until 11th December 1897, and in the meantime Lawson had written a second poem in which Bogan Bill was the central character, entitled "The Bosses Boots." That poem appeared in the *Bulletin* of the 20th February 1897, which is thus the date upon which the character of Bogan Bill first appears in print.

Bogan also has two other early appearances as a minor character in short stories: in "The Man Who Forgot" in *The Country I Come From* (London: Blackwood, 1901), and in "He'd Come Back" in

1 http://www.anu.edu.au/ANDC/res/aus_words/aewords/aewords_ab.php#bogan

While The Billy Boils (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1896). The poem "The Shearing Shed" was also later re-worked a third time for its inclusion in the volume *Verses Popular and Humorous* in 1900. In its third draft, Lawson changed the title of the poem to "When the Ladies Come to the Shearing Shed," and also changed Bogan Bill's name to "Barcoo" - a slip to another character, which Lawson later asks Robinson to correct in a letter of 1917. This letter is significant, for Lawson ends it with the line: "Bogan is and sounds better than Barcoo. Besides, Bogan *was* there." This demonstrates that Lawson based the character of Bogan Bill upon an actual person, as was his practice with much of his fiction (as he says of himself in *That Pretty Girl in the Army*, he was "cursed with an obstinate inclination to write the truth"); and furthermore, that Bogan Bill himself was still alive in 1917.

In chapters eight and nine of their book *Henry Lawson: A Stranger on the Darling* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1996), Robyn Burrows and Alan Barton identify the very sheds in which these poems are set as the shearing shed of the Toorale station, near Bourke in north-western NSW. At the suggestion of E.J. Brady, Lawson had traveled to this district in September 1892 in order to gather material to use as the basis for his fiction under the sponsorship of J.F. Archibald, the *Bulletin* editor, not returning to Sydney until June 1893. Burrows and Barton provide many details of his time with the Shearer's Union members in Bourke, and his stint as a roustabout in the Toorale shed, which was to provide such a rich source of inspiration for Lawson's characters throughout the subsequent decades. But although Burrows and Barton identify the real-life models for many of Lawson's characters, they provide no clue as to the identity of Bogan Bill.

The poem "Ladies in the Shed" revolves around the fact that shearers at work are able to see only the feet of those walking by as they bend over shearing. The shearers are able to tell if they are being watched by the boss only if they can tell his boots - and "when the boss is looking on, they like to be aware." The boss is watching to see that the shearers do not do a sloppy job of their shearing - neither shearing too long and leaving too much wool behind on the sheep, nor too close, making the sheep's skin bleed. Getting this balance just right is called "pinking" - i.e. leaving the sheep's pink skin visible, but intact. Thus - "pink 'em nice and pretty when you see the boss's boots." The comedy of the poem revolves around the fact that the boss one day had sprained his ankle, and so wore one shoe and one boot that day. But the odd boot was found by a "green" roustabout (perhaps Lawson himself?), who tries it on for size, so to speak. Thus both the Rouser's and the Boss's feet pass by Bogan's down-turned face, and he, unable to distinguish, thinks that the boss is watching him much more than he actually is, and spends the day working extra-hard. That is, until he realizes:

> And Bogan Bill was hurt and mad to see that rouseabout;
> And Bogan laid his 'Wolseley' down and knocked that rouser out;
> He knocked him right across the board, he tumbled through the shoot -
> 'I'll learn the fool,' said Bogan Bill, 'to flash the Boss's boot!'

Having made this battling debut, "Bogan Bill" then quickly evolves under Lawson's pen into the character of "One-eyed Bogan," the roughest of the rough cast of shearers in the book of short stories published by Methuen in London in 1902 under the title *Children of the Bush.* This volume was subsequently split in two and re-published in Sydney by Angus and Robertson in 1907, who issued the first half under the title *Send Round The Hat,* and the second half under the title *The Romance of the Swag.* The first four stories of *Children of the Bush* (the ones concerning One-eyed Bogan), thus also become the first four stories of the book *Send Round the Hat*: the title story, "Send Round the Hat," plus "That Pretty Girl in the Army," "'Lord Douglas'," and "The Blindness of One-eyed Bogan." Lawson later added two further stories to the Bogan cannon: one in the book *The Triangles of Life* published in Melbourne by Lothian in 1913 (from a bundle of manuscripts Lawson sold them in 1906), and another called "Their Mates Honour" published in the *Bulletin* in 1908.

The central character of the stories in *Send Round The Hat* is named Bob Brothers, and as Burrows and Barton point out on page 51 of their book, this character is drawn from one of the Shearer's Union organizers without so much as a name change, although the authors do not mention if Lawson's nickname is an invention or not: "The Giraffe" on account of his height. The Giraffe's moral fiber is pure gold, spinning out from his solid gold heart. He is a kind of one-man salvation army for his rag-tag bunch of shearer mates, although Bob Brothers is not in fact at all religious, unless love of your fellow man can be called a religion: "I ain't a churchgoer meself. I ain't what you might call a religious cove..." he says. He comes from Bendigo, but the stories of *Pass Round The Hat* are set in Bourke, amongst shearers in that outback town in north-west New South Wales. Lawson tells us that the Giraffe:

> ... was almost a teetotaller, but he stood his shout in reason. He mostly drank ginger-beer. 'I ain't a feller that boozes, but I ain't got nothin' agen chaps enjoyin' themselves, so long as they don't go too far.' It was common for a man on a spree to say to him: 'Here! here's five quid. Look after it for me, Giraffe, will yer, till I get off the booze.' His real name was Bob Brothers, and his bush names Long-'un, The Giraffe, Send-round-the-hat, Chuck-in-a-bob, and Ginger-ale.

Send Round The Hat is populated by a cast of characters as poignant and perfect as Steinbeck's bums of *Cannery Row*, with that extra edge struggle gives a person. Their nicknames express not only the renowned Australian genius for linguistic creativity, but also afford the strength and integrity of an informal bond, as compared to the formal fetters tied to titles and rank. "Gentleman-once" (because he was one); "Barcoo-Rot" (known behind his back as "The Mean Man" - and credit where credit's due, the ANU dictionary will explain Barcoo Rot to you, a very nasty affliction); "German Charlie"; "Jack Moonlight", "Box-o-Tricks," "Man-without-a-shirt," (alias "Shirty" or "The-dirty-man"); and Mitchell, the exception to the rule, demonstrating that for some, surname and nickname are one and the same.

And the roughest of this rough bunch, "the worst swearer in a rough shed" is "One-eyed" or "Wall-eyed" Bogan, variously described as "a hard case" and "a bad egg," a drunkard and a con artist and a wife-deserter on the run from overdue alimony payments. He had a broken nose and a face scarred from a life of public brawling, but with characteristic kindness, The Giraffe says of Bogan: "He ain't half a bad sort of feller when he ain't drinkin'." Bogan "was the most casual, easy-going, and pipe-lighting, and water-bag-seeking worker in that hell's vineyard — as well as the strongest and least nervous man in camp." Bogan was able even to inspire sublime experience at times, as he suffers and survives the most horrendous injuries: "there was something of a blind god about him as he stood there naked by the fire on the day he saved Campbell's life — something that reminded me of a statue I saw once in the Art Gallery" writes Lawson, adding, in a nice example of his potent but implicit philosophizing: "(Pity the world isn't blinder to a man's worst points)." Bob Brother's (and by extension Lawson's) generosity is not only material, but extends also to always giving people the benefit of the doubt: the pre-condition for his implicit dialogical philosophy. "I like a good thinking mate, and I believe that thinking in company is a lot more healthy and more comfortable, as well as less risky, than thinking alone" he writes in *That Pretty Girl in the Army.* This story also expresses Lawson's critique of Christianity, and raises the interesting possibility that Lawson could have been influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy, through the likes of Arthur Desmond, Tommy Walker, Alfred Deakin, all friends of his mother's, and part of the anarchistic but influential circle surrounding the bookshop run by his future father-in-law, W.H.T. McNamara, at 221 Castlereagh Street in Sydney in the early 1890s.[2]

2 see Colin Roderick *The Real Henry Lawson* (Rigby, 1982) chapter three; also, Manning Clarke *In Search of Henry Lawson* MacMillan, 1978) chapters one and two; and Bruce Scates "Radical Bookshops" pp.146-149 in Lyons & Arnold eds. *A History of the Book in Australia 1891-1945* (University of Queensland Press, 2001). Desmond's "Might Is Right" is explicitly, if not accurately, Nietzschean, and Lawson published a poem in defense of Desmond when Desmond was

Eventually, Bogan ends up losing his second eye as well, while saving Police Officer Cambell's life - and what's more, while Cambell founders crossing a river in pursuit trying to arrest Bogan. As if in testament to the power of The Giraffe's faith in this anti-Oedipal anti-hero, Bogan's wife then returns to nurse him in his blindness, even making him a father yet again when she falls pregnant. Lawson's whole ethic is captured in this synthesis of Leibniz's "best of all possible worlds" optimism with Voltaire's skepticism about that very faith, which is defended despite disbelief when the benefit of the doubt is the only thing we he have. The upshot of this dialectic is the core of the Australian ethic, encapsulated in the motto: "she'll be right." Oedipus dug his own eyes out when he realized that he had obeyed his fate despite trying deliberately to defy it. Bogan as antipodean anti-Oedipus finds that it is only once fate has taken his eyes from him that is there a kind of salvation, and that although having been the target of fate's most outrageous slings and arrows, "she'll be right." The discontinuities punctuating Bogan's face are not ultimately amenable to any rational explanation, but are the traces of an otherwise invisible story of pain which never appears in any text; “the face of a freethinker” and even more a “freetalker.”

Bogan Bill hales from the Bogan River district to the north of Bourke. The Bogan River is a tributary of the Darling River, which has its headwaters near Parkes, and flows into the Darling just upstream of Bourke. The name "Bogan" is Aboriginal, the explorer Charles Sturt initially referring to it as the "New Year's Creek."[3] In the language of the local Wiradhuri people, Bogan means 'swamp rush,' a water plant characteristic of the Bogan River. The word also occurs in tribes as far away as Victoria in connection with swamps, lakes and water-holes. Lawson mentions the Bogan River specifically in three stories, "The Mystery of Dave Regan," "Poisonous Jimmy Gets Left" and "The Babies in the Bush." Tom Collins (i.e. Joseph Furphy) also mentions the Bogan River in *Such Is Life* (Published in 1902 but written in Shepparton[4] in 1896-97), speaking of swagmen "having a choice of two evils - the

---

publically vilified. Deakin records in his letters that he read and was influenced by Nietzsche in the 1890s. The Alfred Deakin - Tommy Walker - Arthur Desmond - Louisa Lawson - William McNamara - George Black circle of the 1890s were probably a motivating force behind the *Bulletin* deciding to publish *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in installments in 1900.

3 *The London Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts and Sciences* No. 1002, Saturday April 2nd, 1836, pp.219-220: "Major Mitchell's Recent Explorative Expedition to the Interior of New South Wales: ... He reached, without any difficulty to his carts, the left bank of the river, near the junction of Sturt's New Year's Creek - the Bogan of the natives."

4 In Welsford Street, backing on to the Goulburn River, "on the allotment on the south side of the Infant Welfare Centre to-day. The cottage has gone, but the stones of its fireplace are in the pergola of the new abode that has replaced it." Miles Franklin, *Joseph Furphy: The Legend of a Man and his Book* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1944) p. 49.

long, uninviting track southward to the Murrumbidgee, and the badly watered route eastward to the Bogan" (p. 4). Then towards the end of the book, Furphy[5] describes vividly the experience of a dust storm - what he calls a "Wilcannia Shower" - in which "the air was thick with skipping crumbs of hard dirt" (pp.331ff). Banjo Patterson also caught onto this idiom in his 1902 poem "City of Dreadful Thirst," when he speaks of a "Bogan shower" as "three raindrops and some dust"; and again thirty years later in the children's poem "An Emu Hunt" in *The Animals Noah Forgot* (1933), when he mentions "the Bogan shower, that is mostly dust." (p. 38)[6]

In his *Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms* of 1978, G.A. Wilkes lists "Bogan Shower" along with "Darling Shower," "Bedourie Shower" and Furphy's "Wilcannia Shower" as slang terms for a dust-storm in his entry under "shower (dust storm)" (p.297), but it should be noted that he has no entry for a common noun "bogan." Nor does Eric Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* which went through 5 editions between 1937 and 1961. Having grown up in Brisbane, Partridge would surely have been aware of the word if it were in common use, so the lack of an entry for "bogan" in his dictionary clearly indicates that the term had probably not yet mutated from that of a fictional character to that of a general designator of roughness of character prior to 1961. And its absence in Wilkes shows that this had probably not changed by 1978. This is where the ANU dictionary's account takes up the thread. The ANU entry maintains:

> Some lexicographers have suspected that the term may derive from the Bogan River and district in western New South Wales, but this is far from certain, and it seems more likely to be an unrelated coinage. The term became widespread after it was used in the late 1980s by the fictitious schoolgirl 'Kylie Mole' in the television series The Comedy Company.

The proper noun 'Bogan' referring to either the river and surrounding district in western New South Wales, or to Lawson's fictional character hailing from that district, would indeed appear to change into the ubiquitous derogatory common noun 'bogan' only in the wake of the word's use as a common noun

---

5 Franklin explains Furphy's choice of a pen-name: "Tom Collins was a synonym for idle rumour. This Tom was a mendacious fellow at whose door was laid the leg-pulling that flourished in hotel bars and wherever men gathered to gossip. A newcomer, breasting the bar of a hotel in Little Collins or Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, would be greeted with the latest scandal uttered against him. The victim, trying to run it to earth, would be told that Tom Collins said it, and Tom had always just gone to do the block in the pub line" (*ibid.* p. 42). In an interesting loop of linguistic evolution, "a furphy" is now a common noun in colloquial Australian meaning an idle rumor, while "Tom Collins" is now dead as an idiom.

6 It must be said that Lawson's profound philosophy must be carefully distinguished from Patterson's jingoistic rhymes. Lawson writes for example in 1894: "That egoistic word 'mateship' - which was born of New Australian imagination, and gushed about to a sickening extent - implies a state of things which never existed any more than the glorious old unionism which was going to bear us on to freedom on one wave. The one was all together too glorious, and the other too angelic to exist amongst mortals." - from "The Cant and Dirt of Labor Literature" in Colin Roderick ed. *Henry Lawson: Autobiographical and Other Writings 1887-1922* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972), p. 27.

by Mary-Anne Fahey's "Kylie Mole" character on the Comedy Company TV show, first broadcast in 1981. In interviews Fahey has reported that she got the term from her own children, who brought it home from school, and that she has no idea of the word's origin beyond that.

Fahey's children and their school friends are most likely to have picked the term up from Cliff Green's adaptation and dramatization of Henry Lawson's stories under the title *Lawson's Mates: Six Television Plays*,[7] recorded and broadcast in 1979, with John Wood in the role of One-eyed Bogan. This probability is increased by the fact that none of the numerous anthologies of Lawson's works published between his death in 1922 and Green's 1979 T.V. adaptations reprinted the Bogan stories. This is a notable oversight, but the reason for this persistent omission is not hard to guess. Perhaps more than any other writer, Lawson has represented "Australianness" to the world, and we Australians have been very reluctant indeed to include the trait of "boganness" in our self-image as we represent it on the world stage, and so also to ourselves. Thus neglected and ignored, Bogan was repressed - only to return today with a vengeance.

Bob Brothers sees the good in all people, nonjudgmental of their shortcomings, and sympathetic across all class, gender and race boundaries. And one of the great merits of *Send Round The Hat* is that it clearly documents just how multi-cultural pioneer days in Australia were. For example, The Giraffe almost gets beaten up by a pub full of unemployed Bullock drivers who had been undercut by more efficient Afghan camel drivers, when he bowls into the pub to pass the hat around for "a poor, sick Afghan in the camp down there..." - his plea cut off forcibly and the hat remaining in this instance empty - "but about dusk, he was seen slipping down towards the Afghan camp with a billy of soup." Or again, when German Charlie's leg is crushed by a log, "The Giraffe caught up the hint and the hat with alacrity; the hat went all round town, so to speak, and as soon as his leg was firm enough not to come loose on the road, German Charlie went home [to Germany]." The Giraffe also exhibits some degree of sensitivity to the contradictions of sexual politics (reflecting the influence of Lawson's mother, the poet and feminist editor of Australia's first feminist newspaper, *The Dawn*) – when he helps a group of ostracized prostitutes, for example, The Giraffe refrains from passing judgment, saying "I s'pose they're bad, but I don't suppose they're worse than men has made them."

7 published in book form in 1980 by Hyland House Publishing with the assistance of the Literature Board of the Australia Council - ISBN 0 908090 20 x.

Lawson's own father was Norwegian, and in the Australia of the nineteenth century, the Scandinavians, the Dutch, the Swiss and the Italians, the Greeks and the Poles and the Hungarians and the Germans and the Albanians and the English and the Chinese and the Scots and the Irish and Welsh and many others[8] all mixed and mingled and fought and talked and sang and recited with and to and at one another, and between them they hammered out the distinct mix of accents and attitudes we now call Australian. As Lawson says in his poem "Mostly Slavonic" : "let Kosciusko slumber - we've immortalized his name." This was especially so of Melbourne, a free settlement rather than penal colony from the outset, as representatives of almost every nation were drawn by the gold-rushes which began in the 1860s. Hugh McCrae in his book of 1935, *My Father and My Father's Friends* records in his piece on "Melbourne in the Sixties" that

> Bourke Street, packed with foreign cafés, represented a cosmopolis by night. Fashionable women accompanied by bucks of the period emerged from the Scandinavian Music Hall, among barrowmen selling oysters across gutters that frequently stank. There were brawls: doors flying open, drunkards crashing on to footpaths, figures silhouetted against squares of light, sailors with their doxies, constables in belltopper hats, diggers, soldiers, ticket-of-leave-men, and aboriginals. (p.31)

The list above of the Giraffe's charitable deeds could be extended tenfold, but Bob Brother's main merit lies in an innocence concerning his own benevolence, which verges upon sheer unselfconsciousness. "We all loved the Giraffe. He was very innocent and very humorous, especially when he meant to be most serious and philosophical." Other's thanks embarrassed him; for example, when his collection pays the train fares of the homeless sex-workers, their tears of gratitude make The Giraffe uncomfortable - he dodges their kisses and flees: "besides, they was cryin', and I can't stand women cryin'," he says, adding unselfconsciously that "some of the chaps" who stepped up in his wake to help the women onto the train and gladly accepted the gratitude which was by rights due to him were "terribly good-hearted fellows".

The only character expressing racism in Lawson is the cynical shearer Jack Mitchell, who, unlike his mates, doesn't think it matters if a Chinaman gets beaten up. But then Jack Mitchell is cynical about Bob Brothers too:

> Well, I don't think there's so much to his credit after all. You see, the Giraffe is ambitious; he like public life, and that accounts for him shoving himself forward with his collections. As for bothering about people

---

8 Including many Jewish Australians, as documented in Levi and Bergman's *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers 1788-1850* (Rigby, 1974). The census of 1901 also records 4,500 Indians; 3,500 Japanese; 1,800 Syrians along with 30,000 Chinese. See Michael Cannon *Who's Master? Who's Man?* (Nelson: Melbourne, 1971) p.247

> in trouble, that's only common curiosity; he's one of those chaps that are always shoving their noses into other people's troubles. And as for looking after sick men - why! there's nothing the Giraffe likes better than pottering around a sick man, and watching him and studying him. He's awfully interested in sick men, and they're pretty scarce out here. I tell you there's nothing he likes better - except maybe its pottering round a corpse. I believe he'd ride forty miles to help and sympathize and potter round a funeral. The fact of the matter is that the Giraffe is only enjoying himself with other people's troubles - that's all it is. It's only vulgar curiosity and selfishness. I set it down to his ignorance; its the way he was brought up.

Lawson lets this diatribe hang in mid-air, and moves immediately to yet another yarn concerning Bob Brother's generosity, thus demonstrating that although Lawson is not such an uncritical idealist as to ignore the fact that racist, cynical people do exist, his strategy of critical idealism is to ignore what Jack Mitchell says about Bob Brothers, while at the same time acknowledging his right to say it - the Voltaire half of Lawson's Leibniz-Voltaire synthesis. But Lawson does not allow Jack Mitchell the right of a racist diatribe - there is no racist diatribe in any character's mouth anywhere in Lawson, thereby demonstrating Henry Lawson's comprehension of the fact that, like everything else, free speech has its limits too.

It would be an act of uncritical idealism to deny that Henry Lawson himself had his limits, and the spirit of Lawson's critical idealism requires that we do not exempt Lawson from critical examination.[9] For although multicultural to the core in his vision of Australia, two ethnicities in particular are not accorded sufficient respect at one or two points by Lawson: namely, the Aboriginal and the Chinese. These two tendencies converge for example in the aptly-named prose piece "His Mistake" from *Triangles of Life* bought from Lawson in 1906 and eventually published by Lothian in Melbourne in 1913 in which there does remain a trace of the nineteenth-century goldfields' racism of the White Australia Policy,[10] as also, for example, in his piece in the *Australian Star* printed in 1899.[11] Such lamentable slips are lapses from Lawson's basic attitude, which was stated unambiguously in print in the *Albany Observer* in 1890: "Class, creed, and nationality are words which should find no place in the vocabulary of Australians, because these words are synonymous with everything that is hostile to the peace and happiness of the world." (*ibid* p.13). This idealism was itself a remarkable stance against English monoculturalism which was taking root in Australia at the time, along with blackberries, rabbits and foxes, all deliberately introduced with a spectacular lack of understanding of the dangers of monocultures, and no foresight whatsoever concerning their unintended consequences. Lawson's

9 Far too much has been made by pious types of Lawson's alcoholism in later life, however Lawson's own voice does poignantly ring through the text when in *The Babies in the Bush* he has his narrator say " 'I wish I could take a glass or leave it.' And I meant it."

10 see Myra Willard *History of the White Australia Policy to1920* (Melbourne University Press, 1923, second ed. 1967).

11 in Roderick ed. *Henry Lawson: Autobiographical and Other Writings* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1972) p.92

perspectival and pluralistic multiculturalism fights against this insular English tendency with its celebration of European diversity. But Lawson also epitomizes the vicissitudes of Australia's world-historic mission in its extreme difficulty: to extend this multicultural thinking to include real diplomacy with indigenous inhabitants, and to facilitate the east-west dialogue which is unfolding today, as China and the USA come to share the balance of world power between them.

Lawson is ambiguous on women, too. His complex relation to questions concerning gender, power and love are far too subtle to be captured adequately in broad brush-strokes here, but there can be no doubt that his mother Louisa was a formative influence. Louisa Lawson was herself a poet, and founder of Australia's earliest feminist magazine *The Dawn,* printed in her own home with her 18 year old son Henry operating the antique printing press. Henry Lawson clearly understood that the problems of exploitation and slavery were continuous with questions of the subjugation of women by men, but he also understood that these were continuous with the subjugation of men by women. The demented grief of the deserted wife in the poem "Past Carin'" forms a pair with the evocation of the jilted man "with a cracked heart in a sling" in the poem "Rejected." All of these anxieties clash within One-eyed Bogan, transforming him eventually into No-Eyed Bogan, the Aussie Oedipus, his life pulverized like his face into a patchwork of scar tissue, rescued despite his failings by a woman whose love he hardly deserves.

Lawson is wary of the naive idealization of either women or of men because he is aware that such uncritical idealization is in fact a kind of condescension, and because he is aware of the crucial importance of a critical idealism as practiced by Bob Brothers – a "benefit of the doubt" idealism grounded in actual respect and in recognition of difference, rather than the "deficit of doubt" idealism of the uncritical. Through understanding that recognition of difference is a higher form of respect than is the presumptuous assumption of identity under the mask of "equality," we can come to realize that what is unique about Australia is the unique mixture constituting it, and the uniquely mixed nature of its inhabitants, and not any national or ethnic "identity" or "purity." Our somewhat chaotic but nevertheless specific mix has given rise to our unique cultural fingerprint, a fingerprint whose pattern is traced out by the lines of descent that our many cultural traditions trace. And Lawson remains a living source of more than one of these lines of inheritance today.

Bogan's weird fate is an aspect of that legacy, and he needs to be reclaimed as a figure of significance in the literary history of Australia. Enabling the resurrection of the personal origins of the impersonal word 'bogan' reactivates the power of a degree of pride in a specific tradition to sublimate the destructive potential of this cultural identity into something more creative. When depersonalized into a 'class', a spiral of disrespect and misrecognition is begun which can only end with public drunken brawling. But when re-personalized into a set of differences increasing the possibility of creative cultural contrast, a certain degree of Bogan pride can acknowledge that many of the contradictions of modern Australia can also turn into engines of creative dialogue if contained within sufficiently strong fields of recognition and respect.

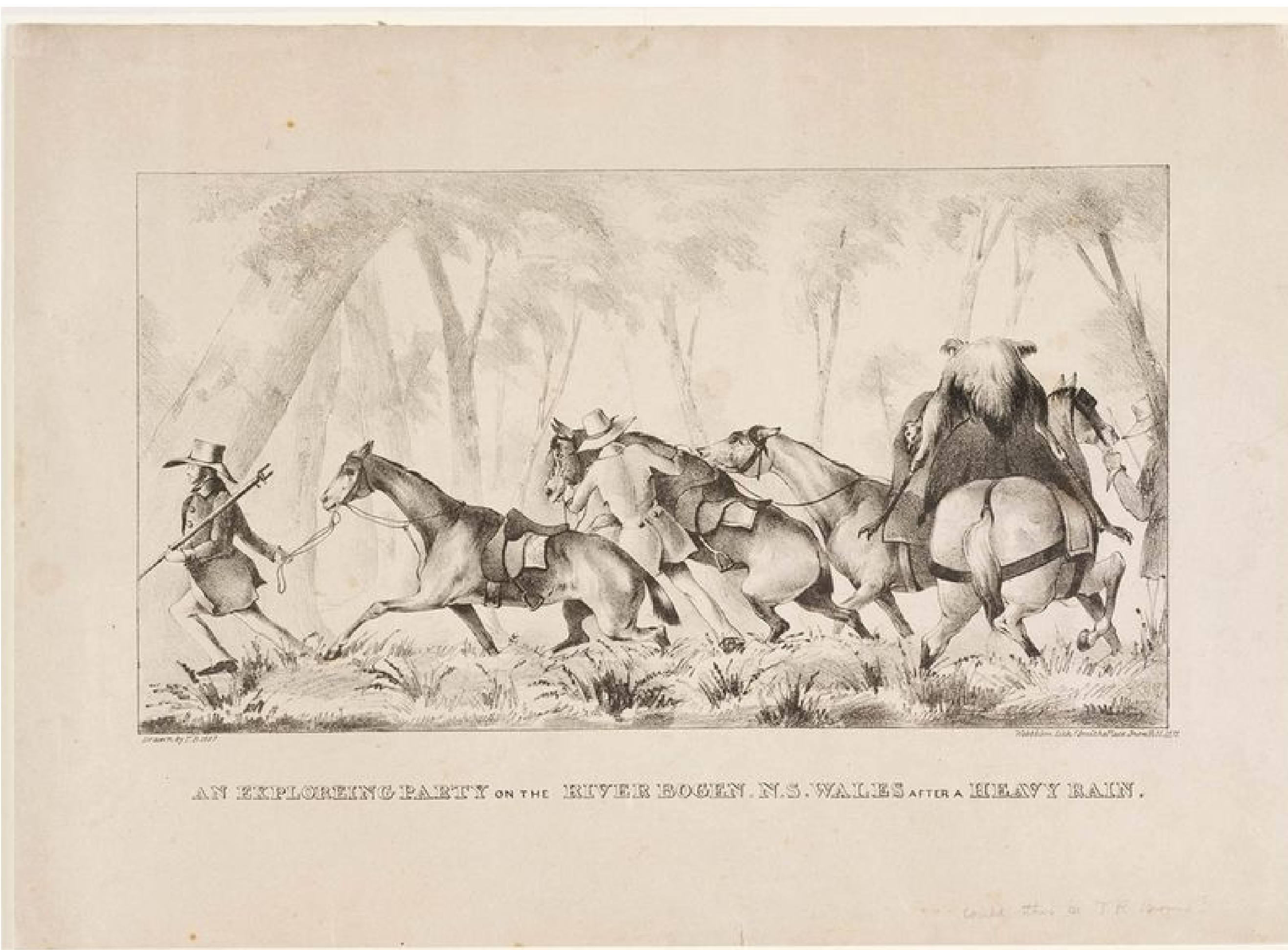
David Rathbone, 2010.

Homestead Lease on Toorale Station, Darling River-1886

I: Bogan as place-name

1. The Mystery of Dave Regan.
 (from *On the Track* Angus & Robertson, 1900)

2. Poisonous Jimmy Gets Left
3. The Babies in the Bush
 (both from *Joe Wilson and His Mates* London: Blackwood, 1901)



"Major Mitchell's Recent Explorative Expedition to the Interior of New South Wales ... reached, without any difficulty to his carts, the left bank of the river, near the junction of Sturt's New Year's Creek - the Bogan of the natives."
The London Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts and Sciences
No. 1002, Saturday April 2nd, 1836, pp.219-220

The Mystery of Dave Regan

"And then there was Dave Regan," said the traveller. "Dave used to die oftener than any other bushman I knew. He was always being reported dead and turnin' up again. He seemed to like it — except once, when his brother drew his money and drank it all to drown his grief at what he called Dave's 'untimely end'. Well, Dave went up to Queensland once with cattle, and was away three years and reported dead, as usual. He was drowned in the Bogan this time while tryin' to swim his horse acrost a flood — and his sweetheart hurried up and got spliced to a worse man before Dave got back.

"Well, one day I was out in the bush lookin' for timber, when the biggest storm ever knowed in that place come on. There was hail in it, too, as big as bullets, and if I hadn't got behind a stump and crouched down in time I'd have been riddled like a — like a bushranger. As it was, I got soakin' wet. The storm was over in a few minutes, the water run off down the gullies, and the sun come out and the scrub steamed — and stunk like a new pair of moleskin trousers. I went on along the track, and presently I seen a long, lanky chap get on to a long, lanky horse and ride out of a bush yard at the edge of a clearin'. I knowed it was Dave d'reckly I set eyes on him.

"Dave used to ride a tall, holler-backed thoroughbred with a body and limbs like a kangaroo dog, and it would circle around you and sidle away as if it was frightened you was goin' to jab a knife into it.

""Ello! Dave!' said I, as he came spurrin' up. 'How are yer!'

""Ello, Jim!' says he. 'How are you?'

"'All right!' says I. 'How are yer gettin' on?'

"But, before we could say any more, that horse shied away and broke off through the scrub to the right. I waited, because I knowed Dave would come back again if I waited long enough; and in about ten minutes he came sidlin' in from the scrub to the left.

"'Oh, I'm all right,' says he, spurrin' up sideways; 'How are you?'

"'Right!' says I. 'How's the old people?'

"'Oh, I ain't been home yet,' says he, holdin' out his hand; but, afore I could grip it, the cussed horse sidled off to the south end of the clearin' and broke away again through the scrub.

"I heard Dave swearin' about the country for twenty minutes or so, and then he came spurrin' and cursin' in from the other end of the clearin'.

"'Where have you been all this time?' I said, as the horse came curvin' up like a boomerang.

"'Gulf country,' said Dave.

"'That was a storm, Dave,' said I.

"'My oath!' says Dave.

"'Get caught in it?'

"'Yes.'

"'Got to shelter?'

"'No.'

"'But you're as dry's a bone, Dave!'

"Dave grinned. ' —— and —— and ——— the ———— !' he yelled.

"He said that to the horse as it boomeranged off again and broke away through the scrub. I waited; but he didn't come back, and I reckoned he'd got so far away before he could pull up that he didn't think it worth while comin' back; so I went on. By-and-bye I got thinkin'. Dave was as dry as a bone, and I knowed that he hadn't had time to get to shelter, for there wasn't a shed within twelve miles. He wasn't only dry, but his coat was creased and dusty too — same as if he'd been sleepin' in a holler log; and when I come to think of it, his face seemed thinner and whiter than it used ter, and so did his hands and wrists, which always stuck a long way out of his coat-sleeves; and there was blood on his face — but I thought he'd got scratched with a twig. (Dave used to wear a coat three or four sizes too small for him, with sleeves that didn't come much below his elbows and a tail that scarcely reached his waist behind.) And his hair seemed dark and lank, instead of bein' sandy and stickin' out like an old fibre brush, as it used ter. And then I thought his voice sounded different, too. And, when I enquired next day, there was no one heard of Dave, and the chaps reckoned I must have been drunk, or seen his ghost.

"It didn't seem all right at all — it worried me a lot. I couldn't make out how Dave kept dry; and the horse and saddle and saddle-cloth was wet. I told the chaps how he talked to me and what he said, and how he swore at the horse; but they only said it was Dave's ghost and nobody else's. I told 'em about him bein' dry as a bone after gettin' caught in that storm; but they only laughed and said it was a dry place where Dave went to. I talked and argued about it until the chaps began to tap their foreheads and wink — then I left off talking. But I didn't leave off thinkin' — I always hated a mystery. Even Dave's father told me that Dave couldn't be alive or else his ghost wouldn't be round — he said he knew Dave better than that. One or two fellers did turn up afterwards that had seen Dave about the time that I did — and then the chaps said they was sure that Dave was dead.

"But one fine day, as a lot of us chaps was playin' pitch and toss at the shanty, one of the fellers yelled out:

"'By Gee! Here comes Dave Regan!'

"And I looked up and saw Dave himself, sidlin' out of a cloud of dust on a long lanky horse. He rode into the stockyard, got down, hung his horse up to a post, put up the rails, and then come slopin' towards us with a half-acre grin on his face. Dave had long, thin bow-legs, and when he was on the ground he moved as if he was on roller skates.

""El-lo, Dave!' says I. 'How are yer?'

"'Ello, Jim!' said he. 'How the blazes are you?'

"'All right!' says I, shakin' hands. 'How are yer?'

"'Oh! I'm all right!' he says. 'How are yer poppin' up!'

"Well, when we'd got all that settled, and the other chaps had asked how he was, he said: 'Ah, well! Let's have a drink.'

"And all the other chaps crawfished up and flung themselves round the corner and sidled into the bar after Dave. We had a lot of talk, and he told us that he'd been down before, but had gone away without seein' any of us, except me, because he'd suddenly heard of a mob of cattle at a station two hundred miles away; and after a while I took him aside and said:

"'Look here, Dave! Do you remember the day I met you after the storm?'

"He scratched his head.

"'Why, yes,' he says.

"'Did you get under shelter that day?'

"'Why — no.'

"'Then how the blazes didn't yer get wet?'

"Dave grinned; then he says:

"'Why, when I seen the storm coming I took off me clothes and stuck 'em in a holler log till the rain was over.'

"'Yes,' he says, after the other coves had done laughin', but before I'd done thinking; 'I kept my clothes dry and got a good refreshin' shower-bath into the bargain.'

"Then he scratched the back of his neck with his little finger, and dropped his jaw, and thought a bit; then he rubbed the top of his head and his shoulder, reflective-like, and then he said:

"'But I didn't reckon for them there blanky hailstones.'"

Poisonous Jimmy Gets Left.

I. Dave Regan's Yarn.

'When we got tired of digging about Mudgee-Budgee, and getting no gold,' said Dave Regan, Bushman, 'me and my mate, Jim Bently, decided to take a turn at droving; so we went with Bob Baker, the drover, overland with a big mob of cattle, way up into Northern Queensland.

'We couldn't get a job on the home track, and we spent most of our money, like a pair of fools, at a pub at a town way up over the border, where they had a flash barmaid from Brisbane. We sold our pack-horses and pack-saddles, and rode out of that town with our swags on our riding-horses in front of us. We had another spree at another place, and by the time we got near New South Wales we were pretty well stumped.

'Just the other side of Mulgatown, near the border, we came on a big mob of cattle in a paddock, and a party of drovers camped on the creek. They had brought the cattle down from the north and were going no farther with them; their boss had ridden on into Mulgatown to get the cheques to pay them off, and they were waiting for him.

'"And Poisonous Jimmy is waiting for us," said one of them.

'Poisonous Jimmy kept a shanty a piece along the road from their camp towards Mulgatown. He was called "Poisonous Jimmy" perhaps on account of his liquor, or perhaps because he had a job of poisoning dingoes on a station in the Bogan scrubs at one time. He was a sharp publican. He had a girl, and they said that whenever a shearing-shed cut-out on his side and he saw the shearers coming along the road, he'd say to the girl, "Run and get your best frock on, Mary! Here's the shearers comin'." And if a chequeman wouldn't drink he'd try to get him into his bar and shout for him till he was too drunk to keep his hands out of his pockets.

'"But he won't get us," said another of the drovers. "I'm going to ride straight into Mulgatown and send my money home by the post as soon as I get it."

'"You've always said that, Jack," said the first drover.

'We yarned a while, and had some tea, and then me and Jim got on our horses and rode on. We were burned to bricks and ragged and dusty and parched up enough, and so were our horses. We only had a few shillings to carry us four or five hundred miles home, but it was mighty hot and dusty, and we felt that we must have a drink at the shanty. This was west of the sixpenny-line at that time — all drinks were a shilling along here.

'Just before we reached the shanty I got an idea.

'"We'll plant our swags in the scrub," I said to Jim.

'"What for?" said Jim.

'"Never mind — you'll see," I said.

'So we unstrapped our swags and hid them in the mulga scrub by the side of the road; then we rode on to the shanty, got down, and hung our horses to the verandah posts.

'"Poisonous" came out at once, with a smile on him that would have made anybody home-sick.

'He was a short nuggety man, and could use his hands, they said; he looked as if he'd be a nasty, vicious, cool customer in a fight — he wasn't the sort of man you'd care to try and swindle a second time. He had a monkey shave when he shaved, but now it was all frill and stubble — like a bush fence round a stubble-field. He had a broken nose, and a cunning, sharp, suspicious eye that squinted, and a cold stony eye that seemed fixed. If you didn't know him well you might talk to him for five minutes, looking at him in the cold stony eye, and then discover that it was the sharp cunning little eye that was watching you all the time. It was awful embarrassing. It must have made him awkward to deal with in a fight.

'"Good day, mates," he said.

'"Good day," we said.

'"It's hot."

'"It's hot."

'We went into the bar, and Poisonous got behind the counter.

'"What are you going to have?" he asked, rubbing up his glasses with a rag.

'We had two long-beers.

'"Never mind that," said Poisonous, seeing me put my hand in my pocket; "it's my shout. I don't suppose your boss is back yet? I saw him go in to Mulgatown this morning."

'"No, he ain't back," I said; "I wish he was. We're getting tired of waiting for him. We'll give him another hour, and then some of us will have to ride in to see whether he's got on the booze, and get hold of him if he has."

'"I suppose you're waiting for your cheques?" he said, turning to fix some bottles on the shelf.

'"Yes," I said, "we are;" and I winked at Jim, and Jim winked back as solemn as an owl.

'Poisonous asked us all about the trip, and how long we'd been on the track, and what sort of a boss we had, dropping the questions offhand now an' then, as for the sake of conversation. We could see that he was trying to get at the size of our supposed cheques, so we answered accordingly.

'"Have another drink," he said, and he filled the pewters up again. "It's up to me," and he set to work boring out the glasses with his rag, as if he was short-handed and the bar was crowded with customers, and screwing up his face into what I suppose he considered an innocent or unconscious expression. The girl began to sidle in and out with a smart frock and a see-you-after-dark smirk on.

'"Have you had dinner?" she asked. We could have done with a good meal, but it was too risky — the drovers' boss might come along while we were at dinner and get into conversation with Poisonous. So we said we'd had dinner.

'Poisonous filled our pewters again in an offhand way.

'"I wish the boss would come," said Jim with a yawn. "I want to get into Mulgatown to-night, and I want to get some shirts and things before I go in. I ain't got a decent rag to me back. I don't suppose there's ten bob amongst the lot of us."

'There was a general store back on the creek, near the drovers' camp.

'"Oh, go to the store and get what you want," said Poisonous, taking a sovereign from the till and tossing it on to the counter. "You can fix it up with me when your boss comes. Bring your mates along."

'"Thank you," said Jim, taking up the sovereign carelessly and dropping it into his pocket.

'"Well, Jim," I said, "suppose we get back to camp and see how the chaps are getting on?"

'"All right," said Jim.

'"Tell them to come down and get a drink," said Poisonous; "or, wait, you can take some beer along to them if you like," and he gave us half a gallon of beer in a billy-can. He knew what the first drink meant with Bushmen back from a long dry trip.

'We got on our horses, I holding the billy very carefully, and rode back to where our swags were.

'"I say," said Jim, when we'd strapped the swags to the saddles, "suppose we take the beer back to those chaps: it's meant for them, and it's only a fair thing, anyway — we've got as much as we can hold till we get into Mulgatown."

'"It might get them into a row," I said, "and they seem decent chaps. Let's hang the billy on a twig, and that old swagman that's coming along will think there's angels in the Bush."

'"Oh! what's a row?" said Jim. "They can take care of themselves; they'll have the beer anyway and a lark with Poisonous when they take the can back and it comes to explanations. I'll ride back to them."

'So Jim rode back to the drovers' camp with the beer, and when he came back to me he said that the drovers seemed surprised, but they drank good luck to him.

'We rode round through the mulga behind the shanty and came out on the road again on the Mulgatown side: we only stayed at Mulgatown to buy some tucker and tobacco, then we pushed on and camped for the night about seven miles on the safe side of the town.'

II. Told by One of the Other Drovers.

'Talkin' o' Poisonous Jimmy, I can tell you a yarn about him. We'd brought a mob of cattle down for a squatter the other side of Mulgatown. We camped about seven miles the other side of the town, waitin' for the station hands to come and take charge of the stock, while the boss rode on into town to draw our money. Some of us was goin' back, though in the end we all went into Mulgatown and had a boose up with the boss. But while we was waitin' there come along two fellers that had been drovin' up north. They yarned a while, an' then went on to Poisonous Jimmy's place, an' in about an hour one on 'em come ridin' back with a can of beer that he said Poisonous had sent for us. We all knew Jimmy's little games — the beer was a bait to get us on the drunk at his place; but we drunk the beer, and reckoned to have a lark with him afterwards. When the boss come back, an' the station hands to take the bullocks, we started into Mulgatown. We stopped outside Poisonous's place an' handed the can to the girl that was grinnin' on the verandah. Poisonous come out with a grin on him like a parson with a broken nose.

'"Good day, boys!" he says.

'"Good day, Poisonous," we says.

'"It's hot," he says.

'"It's blanky hot," I says.

'He seemed to expect us to get down. "Where are you off to?" he says.

'"Mulgatown," I says. "It will be cooler there," and we sung out, "So-long, Poisonous!" and rode on.

'He stood starin' for a minute; then he started shoutin', "Hi! hi there!" after us, but we took no notice, an' rode on. When we looked back last he was runnin' into the scrub with a bridle in his hand.

'We jogged along easily till we got within a mile of Mulgatown, when we heard somebody gallopin' after us, an' lookin' back we saw it was Poisonous.

'He was too mad and too winded to speak at first, so he rode along with us a bit gasping: then he burst out.

'"Where's them other two carnal blanks?" he shouted.

'"What other two?" I asked. "We're all here. What's the matter with you anyway?"

'"All here!" he yelled. "You're a lurid liar! What the flamin' sheol do you mean by swiggin' my beer an' flingin' the coloured can in me face? without as much as thank yer! D'yer think I'm a flamin' —— !"

'Oh, but Poisonous Jimmy was wild.

'"Well, we'll pay for your dirty beer," says one of the chaps, puttin' his hand in his pocket. "We didn't want yer slush. It tasted as if it had been used before."

'"Pay for it!" yelled Jimmy. "I'll —— well take it out of one of yer bleedin' hides!"

'We stopped at once, and I got down an' obliged Jimmy for a few rounds. He was a nasty customer to fight; he could use his hands, and was cool as a cucumber as soon as he took his coat off: besides, he had one squirmy little business eye, and a big wall-eye, an', even if you knowed him well, you couldn't help watchin' the stony eye — it was no good watchin' his eyes, you had to watch his hands, and he might have managed me if the boss hadn't stopped the fight. The boss was a big, quiet-voiced man, that didn't swear.

'"Now, look here, Myles," said the boss (Jimmy's name was Myles) — "Now, look here, Myles," sez the boss, "what's all this about?"

'"What's all this about?" says Jimmy, gettin' excited agen. "Why, two fellers that belonged to your party come along to my place an' put up half-a-dozen drinks, an' borrered a sovereign, an' got a can o' beer on the strength of their cheques. They sez they was waitin' for you — an' I want my crimson money out o' some one!"

'"What was they like?" asks the boss.

'"Like?" shouted Poisonous, swearin' all the time. "One was a blanky long, sandy, sawny feller, and the other was a short, slim feller with black hair. Your blanky men knows all about them because they had the blanky billy o' beer."

'"Now, what's this all about, you chaps?" sez the boss to us.

'So we told him as much as we knowed about them two fellers.

'I've heard men swear that could swear in a rough shearin'-shed, but I never heard a man swear like Poisonous Jimmy when he saw how he'd been left. It was enough to split stumps. He said he wanted to see those fellers, just once, before he died.

'He rode with us into Mulgatown, got mad drunk, an' started out along the road with a tomahawk after the long sandy feller and the slim dark feller; but two mounted police went after him an' fetched him back. He said he only wanted justice; he said he only wanted to stun them two fellers till he could give 'em in charge.

'They fined him ten bob.'

The Babies in the Bush.

'Oh, tell her a tale of the fairies bright —
That only the Bushmen know —
Who guide the feet of the lost aright,
Or carry them up through the starry night,
Where the Bush-lost babies go.'

He was one of those men who seldom smile. There are many in the Australian Bush, where drift wrecks and failures of all stations and professions (and of none), and from all the world. Or, if they do smile, the smile is either mechanical or bitter as a rule — cynical. They seldom talk. The sort of men who, as bosses, are set down by the majority — and without reason or evidence — as being proud, hard, and selfish, — 'too mean to live, and too big for their boots.'

But when the Boss did smile his expression was very, very gentle, and very sad. I have seen him smile down on a little child who persisted in sitting on his knee and prattling to him, in spite of his silence and gloom. He was tall and gaunt, with haggard grey eyes — haunted grey eyes sometimes — and hair and beard thick and strong, but grey. He was not above forty-five. He was of the type of men who die in harness, with their hair thick and strong, but grey or white when it should be brown. The opposite type, I fancy, would be the soft, dark-haired, blue-eyed men who grow bald sooner than they grow grey, and fat and contented, and die respectably in their beds.

His name was Head — Walter Head. He was a boss drover on the overland routes. I engaged with him at a place north of the Queensland border to travel down to Bathurst, on the Great Western Line in New South Wales, with something over a thousand head of store bullocks for the Sydney market. I am an Australian Bushman (with city experience) — a rover, of course, and a ne'er-do-well, I suppose. I was born with brains and a thin skin — worse luck! It was in the days before I was married, and I went by the name of 'Jack Ellis' this trip, — not because the police were after me, but because I used to tell yarns about a man named Jack Ellis — and so the chaps nicknamed me.

The Boss spoke little to the men: he'd sit at tucker or with his pipe by the camp-fire nearly as silently as he rode his night-watch round the big, restless, weird-looking mob of bullocks camped on the dusky starlit plain. I believe that from the first he spoke oftener and more confidentially to me than to any other of the droving party. There was a something of sympathy between us — I can't explain what it was. It seemed as though it were an understood thing between us that we understood each other. He sometimes said things to me which would have needed a deal of explanation — so I thought — had he said them to any other of the party. He'd often, after brooding a long while, start a sentence, and break off with 'You know, Jack.' And somehow I understood, without being able to explain why. We had never met before I engaged with him for this trip. His men respected him, but he was not a popular boss: he was too gloomy, and never drank a glass nor 'shouted' on the trip: he was reckoned a 'mean boss', and rather a nigger-driver.

He was full of Adam Lindsay Gordon, the English-Australian poet who shot himself, and so was I. I lost an old copy of Gordon's poems on the route, and the Boss overheard me inquiring about it; later on he asked me if I liked Gordon. We got to it rather sheepishly at first, but by-and-by we'd quote Gordon freely in turn when we were alone in camp. 'Those are grand lines about Burke and Wills, the explorers, aren't they, Jack?' he'd say, after chewing his cud, or rather the stem of his briar, for a long while without a word. (He had his pipe in his mouth as often as any of us, but somehow I fancied he didn't enjoy it: an empty pipe or a stick would have suited him just as well, it seemed to me.) 'Those are great lines,' he'd say —

'"In Collins Street standeth a statue tall —
A statue tall on a pillar of stone —
Telling its story to great and small
Of the dust reclaimed from the sand-waste lone.

*****

Weary and wasted, worn and wan,
Feeble and faint, and languid and low,
He lay on the desert a dying man,
Who has gone, my friends, where we all must go."

That's a grand thing, Jack. How does it go? —

"With a pistol clenched in his failing hand,
And the film of death o'er his fading eyes,
He saw the sun go down on the sand,"' —

The Boss would straighten up with a sigh that might have been half a yawn —

'"And he slept and never saw it rise,"'

— speaking with a sort of quiet force all the time.

Then maybe he'd stand with his back to the fire roasting his dusty leggings, with his hands behind his back and looking out over the dusky plain.

'"What mattered the sand or the whit'ning chalk,
The blighted herbage or blackened log,
The crooked beak of the eagle-hawk,
Or the hot red tongue of the native dog?"

They don't matter much, do they, Jack?'

'Damned if I think they do, Boss!' I'd say.

'"The couch was rugged, those sextons rude,
But, in spite of a leaden shroud, we know
That the bravest and fairest are earth-worms' food
Where once they have gone where we all must go."'

Once he repeated the poem containing the lines —

"'Love, when we wandered here together,
Hand in hand through the sparkling weather —
God surely loved us a little then."

Beautiful lines those, Jack.

"Then skies were fairer and shores were firmer,
And the blue sea over the white sand rolled —
Babble and prattle, and prattle and murmur' —

How does it go, Jack?' He stood up and turned his face to the light, but not before I had a glimpse of it. I think that the saddest eyes on earth are mostly women's eyes, but I've seen few so sad as the Boss's were just then.

It seemed strange that he, a Bushman, preferred Gordon's sea poems to his horsey and bushy rhymes; but so he did. I fancy his favourite poem was that one of Gordon's with the lines —

'I would that with sleepy soft embraces
The sea would fold me, would find me rest
In the luminous depths of its secret places,
Where the wealth of God's marvels is manifest!'

He usually spoke quietly, in a tone as though death were in camp; but after we'd been on Gordon's poetry for a while he'd end it abruptly with, 'Well, it's time to turn in,' or, 'It's time to turn out,' or he'd give me an order in connection with the cattle. He had been a well-to-do squatter on the Lachlan river-side, in New South Wales, and had been ruined by the drought, they said. One night in camp, and after smoking in silence for nearly an hour, he asked —

'Do you know Fisher, Jack — the man that owns these bullocks?'

'I've heard of him,' I said. Fisher was a big squatter, with stations both in New South Wales and in Queensland.

'Well, he came to my station on the Lachlan years ago without a penny in his pocket, or decent rag to his back, or a crust in his tucker-bag, and I gave him a job. He's my boss now. Ah, well! it's the way of Australia, you know, Jack.'

The Boss had one man who went on every droving trip with him; he was 'bred' on the Boss's station, they said, and had been with him practically all his life. His name was 'Andy'. I forget his other name, if he really had one. Andy had charge of the 'droving-plant' (a tilted two-horse waggonette, in which we carried the rations and horse-feed), and he did the cooking and kept accounts. The Boss had no head for figures. Andy might have been twenty-five or thirty-five, or anything in between. His hair stuck up like a well-made brush all round, and his big grey eyes also had an inquiring expression. His weakness was girls, or he theirs, I don't know which (half-castes not barred). He was, I think, the most innocent, good-natured, and open-hearted scamp I ever met. Towards the middle of the trip Andy spoke to me one night alone in camp about the Boss.

'The Boss seems to have taken to you, Jack, all right.'

'Think so?' I said. I thought I smelt jealousy and detected a sneer.

'I'm sure of it. It's very seldom HE takes to any one.'

I said nothing.

Then after a while Andy said suddenly —

'Look here, Jack, I'm glad of it. I'd like to see him make a chum of some one, if only for one trip. And don't you make any mistake about the Boss. He's a white man. There's precious few that know him — precious few now; but I do, and it'll do him a lot of good to have some one to yarn with.' And Andy said no more on the subject for that trip.

The long, hot, dusty miles dragged by across the blazing plains — big clearings rather — and through the sweltering hot scrubs, and we reached Bathurst at last; and then the hot dusty days and weeks and months that we'd left behind us to the Great North-West seemed as nothing, — as I suppose life will seem when we come to the end of it.

The bullocks were going by rail from Bathurst to Sydney. We were all one long afternoon getting them into the trucks, and when we'd finished the boss said to me —

'Look here, Jack, you're going on to Sydney, aren't you?'

'Yes; I'm going down to have a fly round.'

'Well, why not wait and go down with Andy in the morning? He's going down in charge of the cattle. The cattle-train starts about daylight. It won't be so comfortable as the passenger; but you'll save your fare, and you can give Andy a hand with the cattle. You've only got to have a look at 'em every other station, and poke up any that fall down in the trucks. You and Andy are mates, aren't you?'

I said it would just suit me. Somehow I fancied that the Boss seemed anxious to have my company for one more evening, and, to tell the truth, I felt really sorry to part with him. I'd had to work as hard as any of the other chaps; but I liked him, and I believed he liked me. He'd struck me as a man who'd been quietened down by some heavy trouble, and I felt sorry for him without knowing what the trouble was.

'Come and have a drink, Boss,' I said. The agent had paid us off during the day.

He turned into a hotel with me.

'I don't drink, Jack,' he said; 'but I'll take a glass with you.'

'I didn't know you were a teetotaller, Boss,' I said. I had not been surprised at his keeping so strictly from the drink on the trip; but now that it was over it was a different thing.

'I'm not a teetotaller, Jack,' he said. 'I can take a glass or leave it.' And he called for a long beer, and we drank 'Here's luck!' to each other.

'Well,' I said, 'I wish I could take a glass or leave it.' And I meant it.

Then the Boss spoke as I'd never heard him speak before. I thought for the moment that the one drink had affected him; but I understood before the night was over. He laid his hand on my shoulder with a grip like a man who has suddenly made up his mind to lend you five pounds. 'Jack!' he said, 'there's worse things than drinking, and there's worse things than heavy smoking. When a man who smokes gets such a load of trouble on him that he can find no comfort in his pipe, then it's a heavy load. And when a man who drinks gets so deep into trouble that he can find no comfort in liquor, then it's deep trouble. Take my tip for it, Jack.'

He broke off, and half turned away with a jerk of his head, as if impatient with himself; then presently he spoke in his usual quiet tone —

'But you're only a boy yet, Jack. Never mind me. I won't ask you to take the second drink. You don't want it; and, besides, I know the signs.'

He paused, leaning with both hands on the edge of the counter, and looking down between his arms at the floor. He stood that way thinking for a while; then he suddenly straightened up, like a man who'd made up his mind to something.

'I want you to come along home with me, Jack,' he said; 'we'll fix you a shake-down.'

I forgot to tell you that he was married and lived in Bathurst.

'But won't it put Mrs Head out?'

'Not at all. She's expecting you. Come along; there's nothing to see in Bathurst, and you'll have plenty of knocking round in Sydney. Come on, we'll just be in time for tea.'

He lived in a brick cottage on the outskirts of the town — an old-fashioned cottage, with ivy and climbing roses, like you see in some of those old settled districts. There was, I remember, the stump of a tree in front, covered with ivy till it looked like a giant's club with the thick end up.

When we got to the house the Boss paused a minute with his hand on the gate. He'd been home a couple of days, having ridden in ahead of the bullocks.

'Jack,' he said, 'I must tell you that Mrs Head had a great trouble at one time. We — we lost our two children. It does her good to talk to a stranger now and again — she's always better afterwards; but there's very few I care to bring. You — you needn't notice anything strange. And agree with her, Jack. You know, Jack.'

'That's all right, Boss,' I said. I'd knocked about the Bush too long, and run against too many strange characters and things, to be surprised at anything much.

The door opened, and he took a little woman in his arms. I saw by the light of a lamp in the room behind that the woman's hair was grey, and I reckoned that he had his mother living with him. And — we do have odd thoughts at odd times in a flash — and I wondered how Mrs Head and her mother-in-law got on together. But the next minute I was in the room, and introduced to 'My wife, Mrs Head,' and staring at her with both eyes.

It was his wife. I don't think I can describe her. For the first minute or two, coming in out of the dark and before my eyes got used to the lamp-light, I had an impression as of a little old woman — one of those fresh-faced, well-preserved, little old ladies — who dressed young, wore false teeth, and aped the giddy girl. But this was because of Mrs Head's impulsive welcome of me, and her grey hair. The hair was not so grey as I thought at first, seeing it with the lamp-light behind it: it was like dull-brown hair lightly dusted with flour. She wore it short, and it became her that way. There was something aristocratic about her face — her nose and chin — I fancied, and something that you couldn't describe. She had big dark eyes — dark-brown, I thought, though they might have been hazel: they were a bit too big and bright for me, and now and again, when she got excited, the white showed all round the pupils — just a little, but a little was enough.

She seemed extra glad to see me. I thought at first that she was a bit of a gusher.

'Oh, I'm so glad you've come, Mr Ellis,' she said, giving my hand a grip. 'Walter — Mr Head — has been speaking to me about you. I've been expecting you. Sit down by the fire, Mr Ellis; tea will be ready presently. Don't you find it a bit chilly?' She shivered. It was a bit chilly now at night on the Bathurst plains. The table was set for tea, and set rather in swell style. The cottage was too well furnished even for a lucky boss drover's home; the furniture looked as if it had belonged to a tony homestead at one time. I felt a bit strange at first, sitting down to tea, and almost wished that I was having a comfortable tuck-in at a restaurant or in a pub. dining-room. But she knew a lot about the Bush, and chatted away, and asked questions about the trip, and soon put me at my ease. You see, for the last year or two I'd taken my tucker in my hands, — hunk of damper and meat and a clasp-knife mostly, — sitting on my heel in the dust, or on a log or a tucker-box.

There was a hard, brown, wrinkled old woman that the Heads called 'Auntie'. She waited at the table; but Mrs Head kept bustling round herself most of the time, helping us. Andy came in to tea.

Mrs Head bustled round like a girl of twenty instead of a woman of thirty-seven, as Andy afterwards told me she was. She had the figure and movements of a girl, and the impulsiveness and expression too — a womanly girl; but sometimes I fancied there was something very childish about her face and talk. After tea she and the Boss sat on one side of the fire and Andy and I on the other — Andy a little behind me at the corner of the table.

'Walter — Mr Head — tells me you've been out on the Lachlan river, Mr Ellis?' she said as soon as she'd settled down, and she leaned forward, as if eager to hear that I'd been there.

'Yes, Mrs Head. I've knocked round all about out there.'

She sat up straight, and put the tips of her fingers to the side of her forehead and knitted her brows. This was a trick she had — she often did it during the evening. And when she did that she seemed to forget what she'd said last.

She smoothed her forehead, and clasped her hands in her lap.

'Oh, I'm so glad to meet somebody from the back country, Mr Ellis,'she said. 'Walter so seldom brings a stranger here, and I get tired of talking to the same people about the same things, and seeing the same faces. You don't know what a relief it is, Mr Ellis, to see a new face and talk to a stranger.'

'I can quite understand that, Mrs Head,' I said. And so I could. I never stayed more than three months in one place if I could help it.

She looked into the fire and seemed to try to think. The Boss straightened up and stroked her head with his big sun-browned hand, and then put his arm round her shoulders. This brought her back.

'You know we had a station out on the Lachlan, Mr Ellis. Did Walter ever tell you about the time we lived there?'

'No,' I said, glancing at the Boss. 'I know you had a station there; but, you know, the Boss doesn't talk much.'

'Tell Jack, Maggie,' said the Boss; 'I don't mind.'

She smiled. 'You know Walter, Mr Ellis,' she said. 'You won't mind him. He doesn't like me to talk about the children; he thinks it upsets me, but that's foolish: it always relieves me to talk to a stranger.' She leaned forward, eagerly it seemed, and went on quickly: 'I've been wanting to tell you about the children ever since Walter spoke to me about you. I knew you would understand directly I saw your face. These town people don't understand. I like to talk to a Bushman. You know we lost our children out on the station. The fairies took them. Did Walter ever tell you about the fairies taking the children away?'

This was a facer. 'I — I beg pardon,' I commenced, when Andy gave me a dig in the back. Then I saw it all.

'No, Mrs Head. The Boss didn't tell me about that.'

'You surely know about the Bush Fairies, Mr Ellis,' she said, her big eyes fixed on my face — 'the Bush Fairies that look after the little ones that are lost in the Bush, and take them away from the Bush if they are not found? You've surely heard of them, Mr Ellis? Most Bushmen have that I've spoken to. Maybe you've seen them? Andy there has?' Andy gave me another dig.

'Of course I've heard of them, Mrs Head,' I said; 'but I can't swear that I've seen one.'

'Andy has. Haven't you, Andy?'

'Of course I have, Mrs Head. Didn't I tell you all about it the last time we were home?'

'And didn't you ever tell Mr Ellis, Andy?'

'Of course he did!' I said, coming to Andy's rescue; 'I remember it now. You told me that night we camped on the Bogan river, Andy.'

'Of course!' said Andy.

'Did he tell you about finding a lost child and the fairy with it?'

'Yes,' said Andy; 'I told him all about that.'

'And the fairy was just going to take the child away when Andy found it, and when the fairy saw Andy she flew away.'

'Yes,' I said; 'that's what Andy told me.'

'And what did you say the fairy was like, Andy?' asked Mrs Head, fixing her eyes on his face.

'Like. It was like one of them angels you see in Bible pictures, Mrs Head,' said Andy promptly, sitting bolt upright, and keeping his big innocent grey eyes fixed on hers lest she might think he was telling lies. 'It was just like the angel in that Christ-in-the-stable picture we had at home on the station — the right-hand one in blue.'

She smiled. You couldn't call it an idiotic smile, nor the foolish smile you see sometimes in melancholy mad people. It was more of a happy childish smile.

'I was so foolish at first, and gave poor Walter and the doctors a lot of trouble,' she said. 'Of course it never struck me, until afterwards, that the fairies had taken the children.'

She pressed the tips of the fingers of both hands to her forehead, and sat so for a while; then she roused herself again —

'But what am I thinking about? I haven't started to tell you about the children at all yet. Auntie! bring the children's portraits, will you, please? You'll find them on my dressing-table.'

The old woman seemed to hesitate.

'Go on, Auntie, and do what I ask you,' said Mrs Head. 'Don't be foolish. You know I'm all right now.'

'You mustn't take any notice of Auntie, Mr Ellis,' she said with a smile, while the old woman's back was turned. 'Poor old body, she's a bit crotchety at times, as old women are. She doesn't like me to get talking about the children. She's got an idea that if I do I'll start talking nonsense, as I used to do the first year after the children were lost. I was very foolish then, wasn't I, Walter?'

'You were, Maggie,' said the Boss. 'But that's all past. You mustn't think of that time any more.'

'You see,' said Mrs Head, in explanation to me, 'at first nothing would drive it out of my head that the children had wandered about until they perished of hunger and thirst in the Bush. As if the Bush Fairies would let them do that.'

'You were very foolish, Maggie,' said the Boss; 'but don't think about that.'

The old woman brought the portraits, a little boy and a little girl: they must have been very pretty children.

'You see,' said Mrs Head, taking the portraits eagerly, and giving them to me one by one, 'we had these taken in Sydney some years before the children were lost; they were much younger then. Wally's is not a good portrait; he was teething then, and very thin. That's him standing on the chair. Isn't the pose good? See, he's got one hand and one little foot forward, and an eager look in his eyes. The portrait is very dark, and you've got to look close to see the foot. He wants a toy rabbit that the photographer is tossing up to make him laugh. In the next portrait he's sitting on the chair — he's just settled himself to enjoy the fun.

But see how happy little Maggie looks! You can see my arm where I was holding her in the chair. She was six months old then, and little Wallyhad just turned two.'

She put the portraits up on the mantel-shelf.

'Let me see; Wally (that's little Walter, you know) — Wally was five and little Maggie three and a half when we lost them. Weren't they, Walter?'

'Yes, Maggie,' said the Boss.

'You were away, Walter, when it happened.'

'Yes, Maggie,' said the Boss — cheerfully, it seemed to me — 'I was away.'

'And we couldn't find you, Walter. You see,' she said to me, 'Walter — Mr Head — was away in Sydney on business, and we couldn't find his address. It was a beautiful morning, though rather warm, and just after the break-up of the drought. The grass was knee-high all over the run. It was a lonely place; there wasn't much bush cleared round the homestead, just a hundred yards or so, and the great awful scrubs ran back from the edges of the clearing all round for miles and miles — fifty or a hundred miles in some directions without a break; didn't they, Walter?'

'Yes, Maggie.'

'I was alone at the house except for Mary, a half-caste girl we had, who used to help me with the housework and the children. Andy was out on the run with the men, mustering sheep; weren't you, Andy?'

'Yes, Mrs Head.'

'I used to watch the children close as they got to run about, because if they once got into the edge of the scrub they'd be lost; but this morning little Wally begged hard to be let take his little sister down under a clump of blue-gums in a corner of the home paddock to gather buttercups. You remember that clump of gums, Walter?'

'I remember, Maggie.'

'"I won't go through the fence a step, mumma," little Wally said. I could see Old Peter — an old shepherd and station-hand we had — I could see him working on a dam we were making across a creek that ran down there. You remember Old Peter, Walter?'

'Of course I do, Maggie.'

'I knew that Old Peter would keep an eye to the children; so I told little Wally to keep tight hold of his sister's hand and go straight down to Old Peter and tell him I sent them.'

She was leaning forward with her hands clasping her knee, and telling me all this with a strange sort of eagerness.

'The little ones toddled off hand in hand, with their other hands holding fast their straw hats. "In case a bad wind blowed," as little Maggie said. I saw them stoop under the first fence, and that was the last that any one saw of them.'

'Except the fairies, Maggie,' said the Boss quickly.

'Of course, Walter, except the fairies.'

She pressed her fingers to her temples again for a minute.

'It seems that Old Peter was going to ride out to the musterers' camp that morning with bread for the men, and he left his work at the dam and started into the Bush after his horse just as I turned back into the house, and before the children got near him. They either followed him for some distance or wandered into the Bush after flowers or butterflies —— ' She broke off, and then suddenly asked me, 'Do you think the Bush Fairies would entice children away, Mr Ellis?'

The Boss caught my eye, and frowned and shook his head slightly.

'No. I'm sure they wouldn't, Mrs Head,' I said — 'at least not from what I know of them.'

She thought, or tried to think, again for a while, in her helpless puzzled way. Then she went on, speaking rapidly, and rather mechanically, it seemed to me —

'The first I knew of it was when Peter came to the house about an hour afterwards, leading his horse, and without the children. I said — I said, "O my God! where's the children?"' Her fingers fluttered up to her temples.

'Don't mind about that, Maggie,' said the Boss, hurriedly, stroking her head. 'Tell Jack about the fairies.'

'You were away at the time, Walter?'

'Yes, Maggie.'

'And we couldn't find you, Walter?'

'No, Maggie,' very gently. He rested his elbow on his knee and his chin on his hand, and looked into the fire.

'It wasn't your fault, Walter; but if you had been at home do you think the fairies would have taken the children?'

'Of course they would, Maggie. They had to: the children were lost.'

'And they're bringing the children home next year?'

'Yes, Maggie — next year.'

She lifted her hands to her head in a startled way, and it was some time before she went on again. There was no need to tell me about the lost children. I could see it all. She and the half-caste rushing towards where the children were seen last, with Old Peter after them. The hurried search in the nearer scrub. The mother calling all the time for Maggie and Wally, and growing wilder as the minutes flew past. Old Peter's ride to the musterers' camp. Horsemen seeming to turn up in no time and from nowhere, as they do in a case like this, and no matter how lonely the district. Bushmen galloping through the scrub in all directions. The hurried search the first day, and the mother mad with anxiety as night came on. Her long, hopeless, wild-eyed watch through the night; starting up at every sound of a horse's hoof, and reading the worst in one glance at the rider's face. The systematic work of the search-parties next day and the days following. How those days do fly past. The women from the next run or selection, and some from the town, driving from ten or twenty miles, perhaps, to stay with and try to comfort the mother. ('Put the horse to the cart, Jim: I must go to that poor woman!') Comforting her with improbable stories of children who had been lost for days, and were none the worse for it when they were found. The mounted policemen out with the black trackers. Search-parties cooeeing to each other about the Bush, and lighting signal-fires. The reckless break-neck rides for news or more help. And the Boss himself, wild-eyed and haggard, riding about the Bush with Andy and one or two others perhaps, and searching hopelessly, days after the rest had given up all hope of finding the children alive. All this passed before me as Mrs Head talked, her voice sounding the while as if she were in another room; and when I roused myself to listen, she was on to the fairies again.

'It was very foolish of me, Mr Ellis. Weeks after — months after, I think — I'd insist on going out on the verandah at dusk and calling for the children. I'd stand there and call "Maggie!" and "Wally!" until Walter took me inside; sometimes he had to force me inside. Poor Walter! But of course I didn't know about the fairies then, Mr Ellis. I was really out of my mind for a time.'

'No wonder you were, Mrs Head,' I said. 'It was terrible trouble.'

'Yes, and I made it worse. I was so selfish in my trouble. But it's all right now, Walter,' she said, rumpling the Boss's hair. 'I'll never be so foolish again.'

'Of course you won't, Maggie.'

'We're very happy now, aren't we, Walter?'

'Of course we are, Maggie.'

'And the children are coming back next year.'

'Next year, Maggie.'

He leaned over the fire and stirred it up.

'You mustn't take any notice of us, Mr Ellis,' she went on. 'Poor Walter is away so much that I'm afraid I make a little too much of him when he does come home.'

She paused and pressed her fingers to her temples again. Then she said quickly —

'They used to tell me that it was all nonsense about the fairies, but they were no friends of mine. I shouldn't have listened to them, Walter. You told me not to. But then I was really not in my right mind.'

'Who used to tell you that, Mrs Head?' I asked.

'The Voices,' she said; 'you know about the Voices, Walter?'

'Yes, Maggie. But you don't hear the Voices now, Maggie?' he asked anxiously. 'You haven't heard them since I've been away this time, have you, Maggie?'

'No, Walter. They've gone away a long time. I hear voices now sometimes, but they're the Bush Fairies' voices. I hear them calling Maggie and Wally to come with them.' She paused again. 'And sometimes I think I hear them call me. But of course I couldn't go away without you, Walter. But I'm foolish again. I was going to ask you about the other voices, Mr Ellis. They used to say that it was madness about the fairies; but then, if the fairies hadn't taken the children, Black Jimmy, or the black trackers with the police, could have tracked and found them at once.'

'Of course they could, Mrs Head,' I said.

'They said that the trackers couldn't track them because there was rain a few hours after the children were lost. But that was ridiculous. It was only a thunderstorm.'

'Why!' I said, 'I've known the blacks to track a man after a week's heavy rain.'

She had her head between her fingers again, and when she looked up it was in a scared way.

'Oh, Walter!' she said, clutching the Boss's arm; 'whatever have I been talking about? What must Mr Ellis think of me? Oh! why did you let me talk like that?'

He put his arm round her. Andy nudged me and got up.

'Where are you going, Mr Ellis?' she asked hurriedly. 'You're not going to-night. Auntie's made a bed for you in Andy's room. You mustn't mind me.'

'Jack and Andy are going out for a little while,' said the Boss. 'They'll be in to supper. We'll have a yarn, Maggie.'

'Be sure you come back to supper, Mr Ellis,' she said. 'I really don't know what you must think of me, — I've been talking all the time.'

'Oh, I've enjoyed myself, Mrs Head,' I said; and Andy hooked me out.

'She'll have a good cry and be better now,' said Andy when we got away from the house. 'She might be better for months. She has been fairly reasonable for over a year, but the Boss found her pretty bad when he came back this time. It upset him a lot, I can tell you. She has turns now and again, and always ends up like she did just now. She gets a longing to talk about it to a Bushman and a stranger; it seems to do her good. The doctor's against it, but doctors don't know everything.'

'It's all true about the children, then?' I asked.

'It's cruel true,' said Andy.

'And were the bodies never found?'

'Yes;' then, after a long pause, 'I found them.'

'You did!'

'Yes; in the scrub, and not so very far from home either — and in a fairly clear space. It's a wonder the search-parties missed it; but it often happens that way. Perhaps the little ones wandered a long way and came round in a circle. I found them about two months after they were lost. They had to be found, if only for the Boss's sake. You see, in a case like this, and when the bodies aren't found, the parents never quite lose the idea that the little ones are wandering about the Bush to-night (it might be years after) and perishing from hunger, thirst, or cold. That mad idea haunts 'em all their lives. It's the same, I believe, with friends drowned at sea. Friends ashore are haunted for a long while with the idea of the white sodden corpse tossing about and drifting round in the water.'

'And you never told Mrs Head about the children being found?'

'Not for a long time. It wouldn't have done any good. She was raving mad for months. He took her to Sydney and then to Melbourne — to the best doctors he could find in Australia. They could do no good, so he sold the station — sacrificed everything, and took her to England.'

'To England?'

'Yes; and then to Germany to a big German doctor there. He'd offer a thousand pounds where they only wanted fifty. It was no good. She got worse in England, and raved to go back to Australia and find the children. The doctors advised him to take her back, and he did. He spent all his money, traveling saloon, and with reserved cabins, and a nurse, and trying to get her cured; that's why he's droving now.

She was restless in Sydney. She wanted to go back to the station and wait there till the fairies brought the children home. She'd been getting the fairy idea into her head slowly all the time. The Boss encouraged it. But the station was sold, and he couldn't have lived there anyway without going mad himself. He'd married her from Bathurst. Both of them have got friends and relations here, so he thought best to bring her here. He persuaded her that the fairies were going to bring the children here. Everybody's very kind to them. I think it's a mistake to run away from a town where you're known, in a case like this, though most people do it. It was years before he gave up hope. I think he has hopes yet — after she's been fairly well for a longish time.'

'And you never tried telling her that the children were found?'

'Yes; the Boss did. The little ones were buried on the Lachlan river at first; but the Boss got a horror of having them buried in the Bush, so he had them brought to Sydney and buried in the Waverley Cemetery near the sea. He bought the ground, and room for himself and Maggie when they go out. It's all the ground he owns in wide Australia, and once he had thousands of acres. He took her to the grave one day. The doctors were against it; but he couldn't rest till he tried it. He took her out, and explained it all to her. She scarcely seemed interested. She read the names on the stone, and said it was a nice stone, and asked questions about how the children were found and brought here. She seemed quite sensible, and very cool about it. But when he got her home she was back on the fairy idea again. He tried another day, but it was no use; so then he let it be. I think it's better as it is. Now and again, at her best, she seems to understand that the children were found dead, and buried, and she'll talk sensibly about it, and ask questions in a quiet way, and make him promise to take her to Sydney to see the grave next time he's down. But it doesn't last long, and she's always worse afterwards.'

We turned into a bar and had a beer. It was a very quiet drink. Andy 'shouted' in his turn, and while I was drinking the second beer a thought struck me.

'The Boss was away when the children were lost?'

'Yes,' said Andy.

'Strange you couldn't find him.'

'Yes, it was strange; but HE'LL have to tell you about that. Very likely he will; it's either all or nothing with him.'

'I feel damned sorry for the Boss,' I said.

'You'd be sorrier if you knew all,' said Andy. 'It's the worst trouble that can happen to a man. It's like living with the dead. It's — it's like a man living with his dead wife.'

When we went home supper was ready. We found Mrs Head, bright and cheerful, bustling round. You'd have thought her one of the happiest and brightest little women in Australia. Not a word about children or the fairies. She knew the Bush, and asked me all about my trips. She told some good Bush stories too. It was the pleasantest hour I'd spent for a long time.

'Good night, Mr Ellis,' she said brightly, shaking hands with me when Andy and I were going to turn in.

'And don't forget your pipe. Here it is! I know that Bushmen like to have a whiff or two when they turn in. Walter smokes in bed. I don't mind. You can smoke all night if you like.'

'She seems all right,' I said to Andy when we were in our room.

He shook his head mournfully. We'd left the door ajar, and we could hear the Boss talking to her quietly. Then we heard her speak; she had a very clear voice.

'Yes, I'll tell you the truth, Walter. I've been deceiving you, Walter, all the time, but I did it for the best. Don't be angry with me, Walter! The Voices did come back while you were away. Oh, how I longed for you to come back! They haven't come since you've been home, Walter. You must stay with me a while now. Those awful Voices kept calling me, and telling me lies about the children, Walter! They told me to kill myself; they told me it was all my own fault — that I killed the children. They said I was a drag on you, and they'd laugh — Ha! ha! ha! — like that. They'd say, "Come on, Maggie; come on, Maggie." They told me to come to the river, Walter.'

Andy closed the door. His face was very miserable.

We turned in, and I can tell you I enjoyed a soft white bed after months and months of sleeping out at night, between watches, on the hard ground or the sand, or at best on a few boughs when I wasn't too tired to pull them down, and my saddle for a pillow.

But the story of the children haunted me for an hour or two. I've never since quite made up my mind as to why the Boss took me home. Probably he really did think it would do his wife good to talk to a stranger; perhaps he wanted me to understand — maybe he was weakening as he grew older, and craved for a new word or hand-grip of sympathy now and then.

When I did get to sleep I could have slept for three or four days, but Andy roused me out about four o'clock. The old woman that they called Auntie was up and had a good breakfast of eggs and bacon and coffee ready in the detached kitchen at the back. We moved about on tiptoe and had our breakfast quietly.

'The wife made me promise to wake her to see to our breakfast and say Good-bye to you; but I want her to sleep this morning, Jack,' said the Boss. 'I'm going to walk down as far as the station with you. She made up a parcel of fruit and sandwiches for you and Andy. Don't forget it.'

Andy went on ahead. The Boss and I walked down the wide silent street, which was also the main road; and we walked two or three hundred yards without speaking. He didn't seem sociable this morning, or any way sentimental; when he did speak it was something about the cattle.

But I had to speak; I felt a swelling and rising up in my chest, and at last I made a swallow and blurted out —

'Look here, Boss, old chap! I'm damned sorry!'

Our hands came together and gripped. The ghostly Australian daybreak was over the Bathurst plains.

We went on another hundred yards or so, and then the Boss said quietly — 'I was away when the children were lost, Jack. I used to go on a howling spree every six or nine months. Maggie never knew. I'd tell her I had to go to Sydney on business, or Out-Back to look after some stock. When the children were lost, and for nearly a fortnight after, I was beastly drunk in an out-of-the-way shanty in the Bush — a sly grog-shop. The old brute that kept it was too true to me. He thought that the story of the lost children was a trick to get me home, and he swore that he hadn't seen me. He never told me. I could have found those children, Jack. They were mostly new chums and fools about the run, and not one of the three policemen was a Bushman. I knew those scrubs better than any man in the country.'

I reached for his hand again, and gave it a grip. That was all I could do for him.

'Good-bye, Jack!' he said at the door of the brake-van. 'Good-bye, Andy! — keep those bullocks on their feet.'

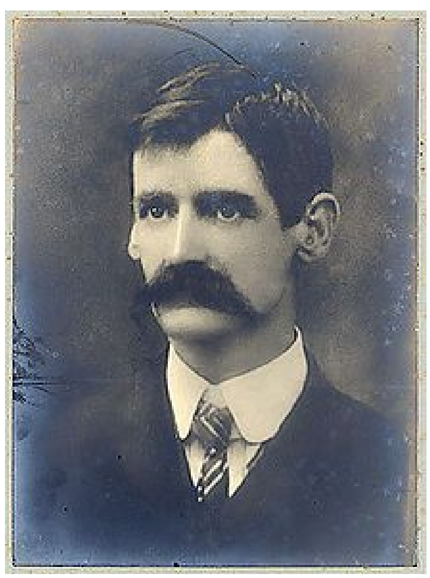
The cattle-train went on towards the Blue Mountains. Andy and I sat silent for a while, watching the guard fry three eggs on a plate over a coal-stove in the centre of the van.

'Does the boss never go to Sydney?' I asked.

'Very seldom,' said Andy, 'and then only when he has to, on business. When he finishes his business with the stock agents, he takes a run out to Waverley Cemetery perhaps, and comes home by the next train.'

After a while I said, 'He told me about the drink, Andy — about his being on the spree when the children were lost.'

'Well, Jack,' said Andy, 'that's the thing that's been killing him ever since, and it happened over ten years ago.'



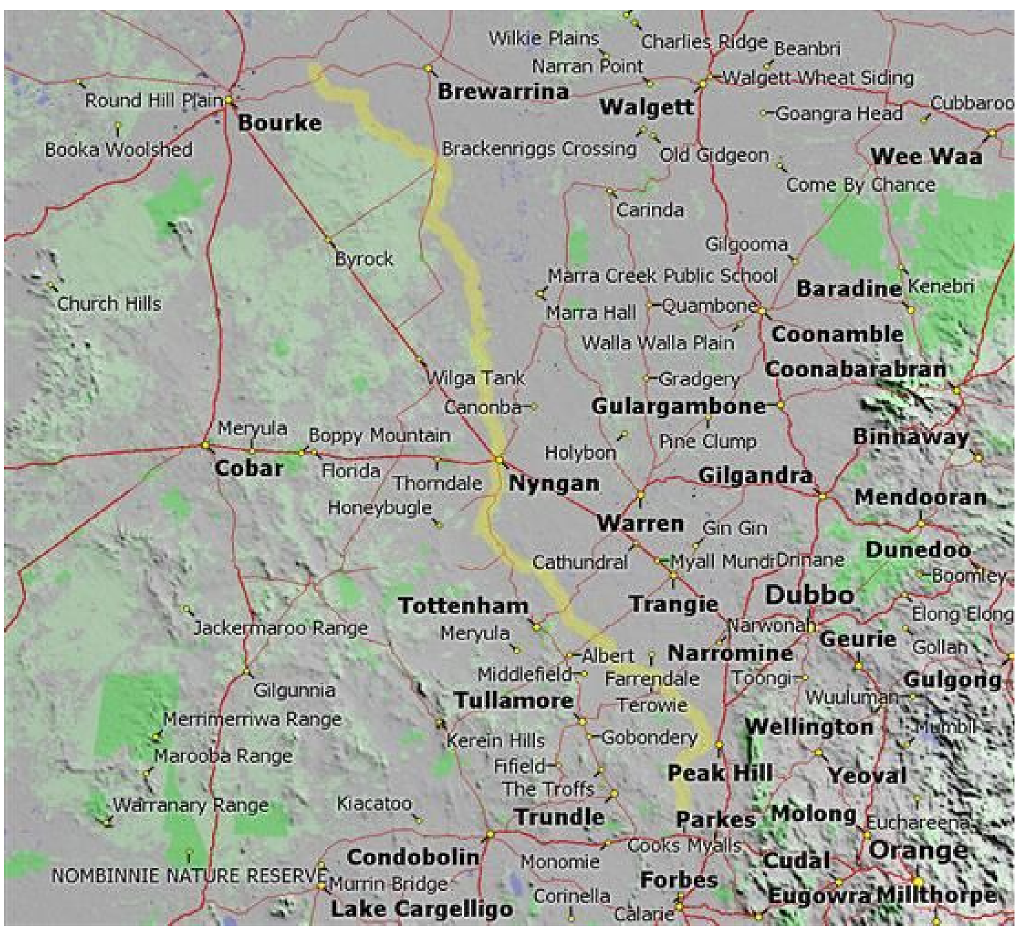
Henry Lawson in the 1890s

II: Bogan as a minor character

4. a. Ladies in the Shed.
   (prose version, *Worker* 4 Nov 1893)
   b. The Shearing Shed.
   (first verse version, *Bulletin* 11 Dec 1897)
   c. When the Ladies Come to the Shearing Shed.
   (second verse version, in *Verses Popular and Humorous,* 1900)
   d. "Besides, Bogan *was* there."
   - excerpts from Lawson's letters to George Robertson in 1917

5. The Man Who Forgot.
   (from *The Country I Come From* London: Blackwood, 1901)

6. He'd Come Back.
   (from *While the Billy Boils* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1896)



The yellow line marks the course of the Bogan River

Ladies In The Shed

Prose version, ***Worker*** 4 Nov 1893; Michell Library MS. A1890, p.231.

The 'Boss over the board' comes along to tell the men not to swear, 'there's a lady coming.' Tiger Tom lets off steam as a precaution. Furtive fixing of shirt fronts and hitching up of pants. Shearer's pants are mostly black with grease, and more or less 'gone' behind. The men do not like to turn their their back parts to the ladies, and they twist and turn all roads so's not, and some of them wish, perhaps, in the secret depths of their rough hearts, that they hadn't been too blanky lazy to wash and mend them blanky pants last Sunday. The ladies and gents come along - a couple of sweet, girly-girly young things, showing off, 'playing to the gallery', and gushing about the poor, dear, sweet little lambs being shorn.

Tiger Tom's lamb is restless, and he 'holds his hand' - and boot - with a mighty effort, and swears fervently and prayerfully under his breath.

A haughty, stylish city beauty walks by like an empress among her slaves. 'Twig the walk of her, Bill,' whispers 'The Dingo' to his mate, as the latest thing in city girls goes past. And Bill twigs the walk of her.

'College Jack,' an educated, well-bred shearer, glances up and then bends his handsome head low over the lamb, breathing hard and shearing somewhat blindly. When the visitors leave he wipes his forehead with a towell and stands a while with his elbows on the beam over the shoots, watching the ladies get into the buggy and drive off.

Illustration from *The Bulletin* 1897

The Shearing Shed.

(first verse version, ***Bulletin*** 11 Dec 1897)

"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 jackeroo
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
With his thumb in the next man's back;
And Bogan says to his pen-mate: "Twig
the style of that last un, Jack."

Jack 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 Jack Moonlight hoped or feared
Were hard for his mates to guess.

Jack 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.

Toorale Station and district from the air

When the Ladies Come to the Shearing Shed.

(second verse version, from ***Verses Popular and Humorous**,* 1900)

'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.

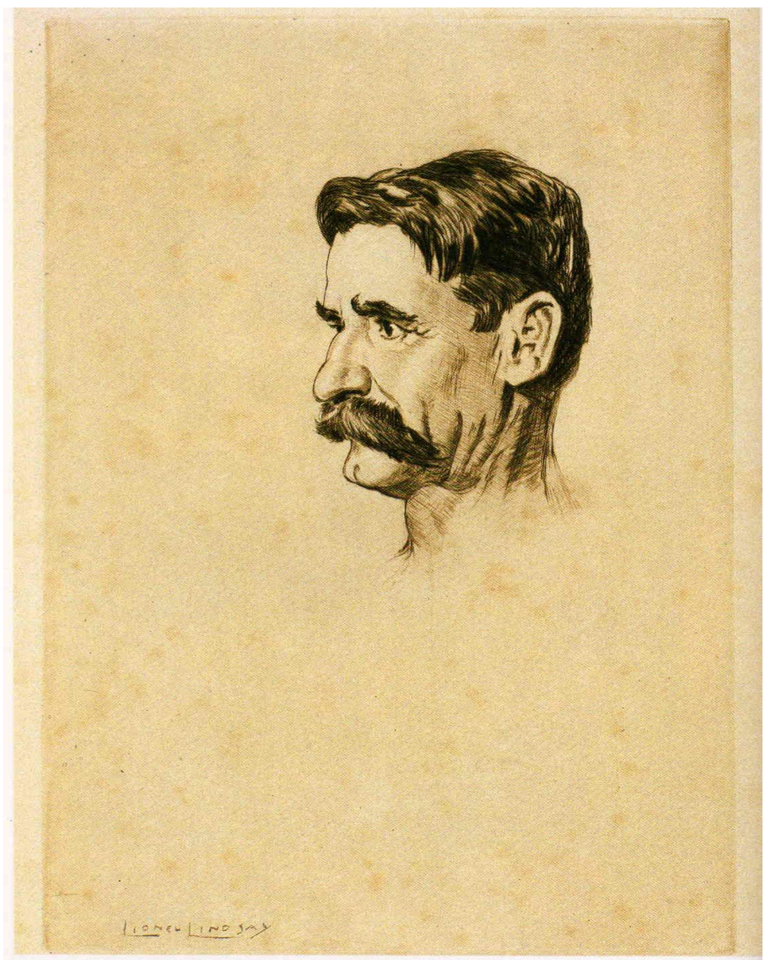
The tall, shy rouser has lost his wits,
And his limbs are all astray;
He leaves a fleece on the shearing-board,
And his broom in the shearer's way.
There's a curse in store for that jackaroo
As down by the wall he slants—
And the ringer bends with his legs askew
And wishes he'd 'patched them pants.'

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.



Henry Lawson drawn by Lionel Lindsay, circa 1900

Robertson to Lawson, 14th February 1917: "If the last four lines of 'When the Ladies Come To the Shearing Shed' could be strengthened, I would like to omit verse 7 altogether. Even as it stands the poem needs no explaining, and would be ever so much better without verse 7. The title, too, is of an unholy length. Get another if you can—one suggested by the old love affair, the sudden recollection of which gave Jim Moonlight the 'stitch in his side'." Lawson made neither comment nor change, except to the title. Robertson repeated the suggestion to omit "verse 7" on 8th March 1917.

Lawson to Robertson, 13th March 1917: "Omission of verse 7 and last agreed to . . ."

Lawson to Robertson, 27th March 1917: "*Shearing Shed*. Jack Moonlight for *Jim*. Your restoration of Jack startled me a little. For why? In one of my earlier 'returns' ('returns' is an official term here for fool replies to goat questions from Headquarters—no inference intended) I explained that Jack Moonlight was the real shearer's name of a better-class shearer and rep (representative) I worked with at Torale (Torally) on the Darling in '91 [1892—C.R.]. So I couldn't use his name. When I put it back this time I fell on the *Jim* at the end of verse 4. *He* was intended for Moonlight. See the connection between lines 7-8, verse 4 [lines 31-2] and line one verse 5 [line 33]? Of course, Jack Moonlight could be another shearer altogether at the next pen, and 'give her a careless glance' altogether disconnected from Barcoo's hoarse whisper to his pen-mate—if he really hears, but that's improbable—the pens are that far apart. But this would not be really so good as the original idea and its construction. But (and, Oh Lord! *the rouser* should be the picker-up—of fleeces—and *the* picker-up should be *a* picker-up): somebody must have messed it up in the *Bulletin*. There'd be between ten and twenty pickers-up on the board (shearing floor). But I see light and a good way out. The picker-up can be Barcoo's and Moonlight's picker-up (each picked up for four or five) and we can call him a rouser (rouseabout), which was a general term for all save the Boss-over-the-board, shearers, and cooks. Both terms are dead, anyhow, and they call them wool-pickers, or fleece-pickers—or Gentlemen-who-oblige-us-by-carrying-away-the-bloody-Jumbuck-jackets, or something.

'But the/a rouser ventures a nervous dig
With his hand in the next man's back;
And Bogan says to his pen-mate: "Twig
The style of the last 'un, Jack." '

Wouldn't dig the ladies! There you are! And Bogan is and sounds better than Barcoo. Besides, Bogan *was* there."

Exchange of letters between Henry Lawson and George Robertson of Angus and Robertson publishers,
as reprinted in Roderick ed. *Henry Lawson: Collected Verse*
Sydney: Angus & Robertson 1967, vol. I p.462-3.

The Man Who Forgot

"Well, I dunno," said Tom Marshall — known as "The Oracle" — "I've heerd o' sich cases before: they ain't commin, but — I've heerd o' sich cases before," and he screwed up the left side of his face whilst he reflectively scraped his capacious right ear with the large blade of a pocket-knife.

They were sitting at the western end of the rouseabouts' hut, enjoying the breeze that came up when the sun went down, and smoking and yarning. The "case" in question was a wretchedly forlorn-looking specimen of the swag-carrying clan whom a boundary-rider had found wandering about the adjacent plain, and had brought into the station. He was a small, scraggy man, painfully fair, with a big, baby-like head, vacant watery eyes, long thin hairy hands, that felt like pieces of damp seaweed, and an apologetic cringe-and-look-up-at-you manner. He professed to have forgotten who he was and all about himself.

The Oracle was deeply interested in this case, as indeed he was in anything else that "looked curious." He was a big, simple-minded shearer, with more heart than brains, more experience than sense, and more curiosity than either. It was a wonder that he had not profited, even indirectly, by the last characteristic. His heart was filled with a kind of reverential pity for anyone who was fortunate or unfortunate enough to possess an "affliction;" and amongst his mates had been counted a deaf man, a blind man, a poet, and a man who "had rats." Tom had dropped across them individually, when they were down in the world, and had befriended them, and studied them with great interest — especially the poet; and they thought kindly of him, and were grateful — except the individual with the rats, who reckoned Tom had an axe to grind — that he, in fact, wanted to cut his (Rat's) liver out as a bait for Darling cod — and so renounced the mateship.

It was natural, then, for The Oracle to take the present case under his wing. He used his influence with the boss to get the Mystery on "picking up," and studied him in spare time, and did his best to assist the poor hushed memory, which nothing the men could say or do seemed able to push further back than the day on which the stranger "kind o' woke up" on the plain, and found a swag beside him. The swag had been prospected and fossicked for a clue, but yielded none. The chaps were sceptical at first, and inclined to make fun of the Mystery; but Tom interfered, and intimated that if they were skunks enough to chyack or try on any of their "funny business" with a "pore afflicted chap," he (Tom) would be obliged to "perform." Most of the men there had witnessed Tom's performance, and no one seemed ambitious to take a leading part in it. They preferred to be in the audience.

"Yes," reflected The Oracle, "it's a curious case, and I dare say some of them big doctors, like Morell Mackenzie, would be glad to give a thousand or two to get holt on a case like this."

"Done," cried Mitchell, the goat of the shed. "I'll go halves! — or stay, let's form a syndicate and work the Mystery."

Some of the rouseabouts laughed, but the joke fell as flat with Tom as any other joke.

"The worst of it is," said the Mystery himself, in the whine that was natural to him, and with a timid side look up at Tom — "the worst of it is I might be a lord or duke, and don't know anything about it. I might be a rich man, with a lot of houses and money. I might be a lord."

The chaps guffawed.

"Wot'yer laughing at?" asked Mitchell. "I don't see anything unreasonable about it; he might be a lord as far as looks go. I've seen two."

"Yes," reflected Tom, ignoring Mitchell, "there's something in that; but then again, you see, you might be Jack the Ripper. Better let it slide, mate; let the dead past bury its dead. Start fresh with a clean sheet."

"But I don't even know my name, or whether I'm married or not," whined the outcast. "I might have a good wife and little ones."

"Better keep on forgetting, mate," Mitchell said, "and as for a name, that's nothing. I don't know mine, and I've had eight. There's plenty good names knocking round. I knew a man named Jim Smith that died. Take his name, it just suits you, and he ain't likely to call round for it; if he does, you can say you was born with it."

So they called him Smith, and soon began to regard him as a harmless lunatic and to take no notice of his eccentricities. Great interest was taken in the case for a time, and even Mitchell put in his oar and tried all sorts of ways to assist the Mystery in his weak, helpless, and almost pitiful endeavours to recollect who he was. A similar case happened to appear in the papers at this time, and the thing caught on to such an extent that The Oracle was moved to impart some advice from his store of wisdom.

"I wouldn't think too much over it if I was you," said he to Mitchell, "hundreds of sensible men went mad over that there Tichborne case who didn't have anything to do with it, but just through thinking on it; and you're ratty enough already, Jack. Let it alone and trust me to find out who's Smith just as soon as ever we cut out."

Meanwhile Smith ate, worked, and slept, and borrowed tobacco and forgot to return it — which was made a note of. He talked freely about his case when asked, but if he addressed anyone, it was with the air of the timid but good young man, who is fully aware of the extent and power of this world's wickedness, and stands somewhat in awe of it, but yet would beg you to favour a humble worker in the vineyard by kindly accepting a tract, and passing it on to friends after perusal.

One Saturday morning, about a fortnight before cut out, The Oracle came late to his stand, and apparently with something on his mind. Smith hadn't turned up, and the next rouseabout was doing his work, to the mutual dissatisfaction of all parties immediately concerned.

"Did you see anything of Smith?" asked Mitchell of The Oracle. "Seems to have forgot to get up this morning."

Tom looked disheartened and disappointed. "*He's forgot again*," said he, slowly and impressively.

"Forgot what? We know he's blessed well forgot to come to graft."

"He's forgot again," repeated Tom. "He woke up this morning and wanted to know who he was and where he was." Comments.

"Better give him best, Oracle," said Mitchell presently. "If he can't find out who he is and where he is, the boss'll soon find it out for him."

"No," said Tom, "when I take a thing in hand I see it through."

This was also characteristic of the boss-over-the-board, though in another direction. He went down to the but and inquired for Smith.

"Why ain't you at work?"

"Who am I, sir? Where am I?" whined Smith. "Can you please tell me who I am and where I am?"

The boss drew a long breath and stared blankly at the Mystery; then he erupted.

"Now, look here!" he howled, "I don't know who the gory sheol you are, except that you're a gory lunatic, and what's more, I don't care a damn. But I'll soon show you where you are! You can call up at the store and get your cheque, and soon as you blessed well like; and then take a walk, and don't forget to take your lovely swag with you."

The matter was discussed at the dinner-table. The Oracle swore that it was a cruel, mean way to treat a "pore afflicted chap," and cursed the boss. Tom's admirers cursed in sympathy, and trouble seemed threatening, when the voice of Mitchell was heard to rise in slow, deliberate tones over the clatter of cutlery and tin plates.

"I wonder," said the voice, "I wonder whether Smith forgot his cheque?"

It was ascertained that Smith hadn't.

There was some eating and thinking done. Soon Mitchell's voice was heard again, directed at The Oracle.

It said "Do you keep any vallabels about your bunk, Oracle?"

Tom looked hard at Mitchell. "Why?"

"Oh, nothin': only I think it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to look at your bunk and see whether Smith forgot."

The chaps grew awfully interested. They fixed their eyes on Tom, and he looked with feeling from one face to another; then he pushed his plate back, and slowly extracted his long legs from between the stool and the table. He climbed to his bunk, and carefully reviewed the ingredients of his swag. Smith hadn't forgot.

When The Oracle's face came round again there was in it a strange expression which a close study would have revealed to be more of anger than of sorrow, but that was not all. It was an expression such as a man might wear who is undergoing a terrible operation, without chloroform, but is determined not to let a whimper escape him. Tom didn't swear, and by that token they guessed how mad he was. 'Twas a rough shed, with a free and lurid vocabulary, but had they all sworn in chorus, with One-eyed Bogan as lead, it would not have done justice to Tom's feelings — and they realized this.

The Oracle took down his bridle from its peg, and started for the door amid a respectful and sympathetic silence, which was only partly broken once by the voice of Mitchell, which asked in an awed whisper: "Going ter ketch yer horse, Tom?" The Oracle nodded, and passed on; he spake no word — he was too full for words.

Five minutes passed, and then the voice of Mitchell was heard again, uninterrupted by the clatter of tinware. It said in impressive tones:

"It would not be a bad idea for some of you chaps that camp in the bunks along there, to have a look at your things. Scotty's bunk is next to Tom's."

Scotty shot out of his place as if a snake had hold of his leg, starting a plank in the table and upsetting three soup plates. He reached for his bunk like a drowning man clutching at a plank, and tore out the bedding. Again, Smith hadn't forgot.

Then followed a general overhaul, and it was found in most cases that Smith had remembered. The pent-up reservoir of blasphemy burst forth.

The Oracle came up with Smith that night at the nearest shanty, and found that he had forgotten again, and in several instances, and was forgetting some more under the influence of rum and of the flattering interest taken in his case by a drunken Bachelor of Arts who happened to be at the pub. Tom came in quietly from the rear, and crooked his finger at the shanty-keeper. They went apart from the rest, and talked together a while very earnestly. Then they secretly examined Smith's swag, the core of which was composed of Tom's and his mate's valuables.

Then The Oracle stirred up Smith's recollections and departed.

Smith was about again in a couple of weeks. He was damaged somewhat physically, but his memory was no longer impaired.

He'd Come Back

The yarn was all lies, I suppose; but it wasn't bad. A city bushman told it, of course, and he told it in the travellers' hut. "As true's God hears me I never meant to desert her in cold blood," he said. "We'd only been married about two years, and we'd got along grand together; but times was hard, and I had to jump at the first chance of a job, and leave her with her people, an' go up-country."

He paused and fumbled with his pipe until all ears were brought to bear on him. "She was a beauty, and no mistake; she was far too good for me — I often wondered how she came to have a chap like me."

He paused again, and the others thought over it — and wondered too, perhaps.

The joker opened his lips to speak, but altered his mind about it.

"Well, I traveled up into Queensland, and worked back into Victoria 'n' South Australia, an' I wrote home pretty reg'lar and sent what money I could. Last I got down on to the south-western coast of South Australia — an' there I got mixed up with another woman — you know what that means, boys?"

Sympathetic silence.

"Well, this went on for two years, and then the other woman drove me to drink. You know what a woman can do when the devil's in her?"

Sound between a sigh and a groan from Lally Thompson. "My oath," he said, sadly.

"You should have made it *three* years, Jack," interposed the joker; "you said two years before." But he was suppressed.

"Well, I got free of them both, at last — drink and the woman, I mean; but it took another — it took a couple of years to pull myself straight — "

Here the joker opened his mouth again, but was warmly requested to shut it.

"Then, chaps, I got thinking. My conscience began to hurt me, and — and hurt worse every day. It nearly drove me to drink again. Ah, boys, a man — if he is a man — can't expect to wrong a woman and escape scot-free in the end." (Sigh from Lally Thompson.) "It's the one thing that always comes home to a man, sooner or later — you know what that means, boys."

Lally Thompson: "My oath!"

The joker: "Dry up yer crimson oath! What do you know about women?"

Cries of "Order!"

"Well," continued the story-teller, "I got thinking. I heard that my wife had broken her heart when I left her, and that made matters worse. I began to feel very bad about it. I felt mean. I felt disgusted with myself. I pictured my poor, ill-treated, little wife and children in misery and poverty, and my conscience wouldn't let me rest night or day" — (Lally Thompson seemed greatly moved) — "so at last I made up my mind to be a man, and make — what's the word?"

"Reparation," suggested the joker.

"Yes, so I slaved like a nigger for a year or so, got a few pounds together and went to find my wife. I found out that she was living in a cottage in Burwood, Sydney, and struggling through the winter on what she'd saved from the money her father left her.

"I got a shave and dressed up quiet and decent. I was older-looking and more subdued like, and I'd got pretty grey in those few years that I'd been making a fool of myself; and, some how, I felt rather glad about it, because I reckoned she'd notice it first thing — she was always quick at noticing things — and forgive me all the quicker. Well, I waylaid the school kids that evening, and found out mine — a little boy and a girl — and fine youngsters they were. The girl took after her mother, and the youngster was the dead spit o' me. I gave 'em half a crows each and told them to tell their mother that someone would come when the sun went down."

Bogan Bill nodded approvingly.

"So at sundown I went and knocked at the door. It opened and there stood my little wife looking prettier than ever — only careworn."

Long, impressive pause.

"Well, Jack, what did she do?" asked Bogan.

"She didn't do nothing."

"Well, Jack, and what did she say?"

Jack sighed and straightened himself up: "She said — she said — 'Well, so you've come back.'"

"Painful silence.

"Well, Jack, and what did you say?"

"I said yes."

"Well, and so you had!" said Tom Moonlight.

"It wasn't that, Tom," said Jack sadly and wearily — "*It was the way she said it!*"

Lally Thompson rubbed his eyes: "And what did you do, Jack?" he asked gently.

"I stayed for a year, and then I deserted her again — but meant it that time."

"Ah, well! It's time to turn in."

III: Bogan as a major character

7. The Boss's Boots
(*Bulletin* 20 Feb 1897; reprinted in *Verses Popular and Humorous* Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1900)

8. Send 'Round the Hat
9. That Pretty Girl in the Army
10. "Lord Douglas"

(8. - 10. above and 13. below published in *Children of the Bush* London: Methuen, 1902;
then republished under the title *Send Round the Hat* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1907)

11. Triangles of Life - I: The Reason
(written 1906, published in *Triangles of Life* Melbourne: Lothian, 1913)

12. Their Mate's Honour
(*Bulletin*, 1908)

13. The Blindness of One-eyed Bogan

The Boss's Boots

(***Bulletin*** 20 Feb 1897; reprinted in ***Verses Popular and Humorous***, 1901)

The Shearers squint along the pens, they squint along the ‘shoots;’
The shearers squint along the board to catch the Boss’s boots;
They have no time to straighten up, they have no time to stare,
But when the Boss is looking on, they like to be aware.

The ‘rouser’ has no soul to save. Condemn the rouseabout!
And sling ’em in, and rip ’em through, and get the bell-sheep out ;
And skim it by the tips at times, or take it with the roots—
But ‘pink’ ’em nice and pretty when you see the Boss’s boots.

The shearing super sprained his foot, as bosses sometimes do—
And wore, until the shed cut out, one ‘side-spring’ and one shoe;
And though he changed his pants at times—some worn-out and some neat—
No ‘tiger’ there could possibly mistake the Boss’s feet.

The Boss affected larger boots than many Western men,
And Jim the Ringer swore the shoe was half as big again;
And tigers might have heard the boss ere any harm was done—
For when he passed it was a sort of dot and carry one.

But now there comes a picker-up who sprained his ankle, too,
And limping round the shed he found the Boss’s cast-off shoe.
He went to work, all legs and arms, as green-hand rousers will,
And never dreamed of Boss’s boots—much less of Bogan Bill.

Ye sons of sin that tramp and shear in hot and dusty scrubs,
Just keep away from ‘headin’ ’em,’ and keep away from pubs,
And keep away from handicaps—for so your sugar scoots—
And you may own a station yet and wear the Boss’s boots.

And Bogan by his mate was heard to mutter through his hair:
‘The Boss has got a rat to-day: he’s buckin’ everywhere—
‘He’s trainin’ for a bike, I think, the way he comes an’ scoots,
‘He’s like a bloomin’ cat on mud the way he shifts his boots.’

Now Bogan Bill was shearing rough and chanced to cut a teat ;
He stuck his leg in front at once, and slewed the ewe a bit;
He hurried up to get her through, when, close beside his shoot,
He saw a large and ancient shoe, in mateship with a boot.

He thought that he’d be fined all right—he couldn’t turn the ‘yoe;’
The more he wished the boss away, the more he wouldn’t go;

And Bogan swore amenfully—beneath his breath he swore—
And he was never known to 'pink' so prettily before.

And Bogan through his bristling scalp in his mind's eye could trace,
The cold, sarcastic smile that lurked about the Boss's face;
He cursed him with a silent curse in language known to few,
He cursed him from his boot right up, and then down to his shoe.

But while he shore so mighty clean, and while he screened the teat,
He fancied there was something wrong about the Boss's feet:
The boot grew unfamiliar, and the odd shoe seemed awry,
And slowly up the trouser went the tail of Bogan's eye,

Then swiftly to the features from a plaited green-hide belt—
You'd have to ring a shed or two to feel as Bogan felt—
For 'twas his green-hand picker-up (who wore a vacant look),
And Bogan saw the Boss outside consulting with his cook.

And Bogan Bill was hurt and mad to see that rouseabout
And Bogan laid his 'Wolseley' down and knocked that rouser out;
He knocked him right across the board, he tumbled through the shoot—
'I'll learn the fool,' said Bogan Bill, 'to flash the Boss's boot!'

The rouser squints along the pens, he squints along the shoots,
And gives his men the office when they miss the Boss's boots.
They have no time to straighten up, they're too well-bred to stare,
But when the Boss is looking on they like to be aware.

The rouser has no soul to lose—it's blarst the rouseabout!
And rip 'em through and yell for 'tar' and get the bell-sheep out,
And take it with the scum at times or take it with the roots,—
But 'pink' 'em nice and pretty when you see the Boss's boots.

A'Wolseley' mechanical shear

Send Round The Hat

Now this is the creed from the Book of the Bush —
Should be simple and plain to a dunce:
"If a man's in a hole you must pass round the hat
Were he jail-bird or gentleman once.

"Is it any harm to wake yer?"

It was about nine o'clock in the morning, and, though it was Sunday morning, it was no harm to wake me; but the shearer had mistaken me for a deaf jackaroo, who was staying at the shanty and was something like me, and had good-naturedly shouted almost at the top of his voice, and he woke the whole shanty. Anyway he woke three or four others who were sleeping on beds and stretchers, and one on a shake-down on the floor, in the same room. It had been a wet night, and the shanty was full of shearers from Big Billabong Shed which had cut out the day before. My room mates had been drinking and gambling overnight, and they swore luridly at the intruder for disturbing them.

He was six-foot-three or thereabout. He was loosely built, bony, sandy-complexioned and grey eyed. He wore a good-humoured grin at most times, as I noticed later on; he was of a type of bushman that I always liked — the sort that seem to get more good-natured the longer they grow, yet are hard-knuckled and would accommodate a man who wanted to fight, or thrash a bully in a good-natured way. The sort that like to carry somebody's baby round, and cut wood, carry water and do little things for overworked married bushwomen. He wore a saddle-tweed sac suit two sizes too small for him, and his face, neck, great hands and bony wrists were covered with sun-blotches and freckles.

"I hope I ain't disturbin' yer," he shouted, as he bent over my bunk, "but there's a cove — "

"You needn't shout!" I interrupted, "I'm not deaf."

"Oh — I beg your pardon!" he shouted. "I didn't know I was yellin'. I thought you was the deaf feller."

"Oh, that's all right," I said. "What's the trouble?"

"Wait till them other chaps is done swearin' and I'll tell yer," he said. He spoke with a quiet, good-natured drawl, with something of the nasal twang, but tone and drawl distinctly Australian — altogether apart from that of the Americans.

"Oh, spit it out for Christ's sake, Long'un!" yelled One-eyed Bogan, who had been the worst swearer in a rough shed, and he fell back on his bunk as if his previous remarks had exhausted him.

"It's that there sick jackaroo that was pickin'-up at Big Billabong," said the Giraffe. "He had to knock off the first week, an' he's been here ever since. They're sendin' him away to the hospital in Sydney by the speeshall train. They're just goin' to take him up in the wagonette to the railway station, an' I thought I might as well go round with the hat an' get him a few bob. He's got a missus and kids in

Sydney."

"Yer always goin' round with yer gory hat!" growled Bogan. "Yer'd blanky well take it round in hell!"

"That's what he's doing, Bogan," muttered Gentleman Once, on the shake-down, with his face to the wall.

The hat was a genuine "cabbage-tree," one of the sort that "last a lifetime." It was well coloured, almost black in fact with weather and age, and it had a new strap round the base of the crown. I looked into it and saw a dirty pound note and some silver. I dropped in half a crown, which was more than I could spare, for I had only been a green-hand at Big Billabong.

"Thank yer!" he said. "Now then, you fellers!"

"I wish you'd keep your hat on your head, and your money in your pockets and your sympathy somewhere else," growled Jack Moonlight as he raised himself painfully on his elbow, and felt under his pillow for two half-crowns. "Here," he said, "here's two half-casers. Chuck 'em in and let me sleep for God's sake!"

Gentleman Once, the gambler, rolled round on his shake-down, bringing his good-looking, dissipated face from the wall. He had turned in in his clothes and, with considerable exertion he shoved his hand down into the pocket of his trousers, which were a tight fit. He brought up a roll of pound notes and could find no silver.

"Here," he said to the Giraffe, "I might as well lay a quid. I'll chance it anyhow. Chuck it in."

"You've got rats this mornin', Gentleman Once," growled the Bogan. "It ain't a blanky horse race."

"P'r'aps I have," said Gentleman Once, and he turned to the wall again with his head on his arm.

"Now, Bogan, yer might as well chuck in somethin," said the Giraffe.

"What's the matter with the —— jackaroo?" asked the Bogan, tugging his trousers from under the mattress.

Moonlight said something in a low tone.

"The —— he has!" said Bogan. "Well, I pity the ——! Here, I'll chuck in half a —— quid!" and he dropped half a sovereign into the hat.

The fourth man, who was known to his face as "Barcoo-Rot," and behind his back as "The Mean Man," had been drinking all night, and not even Bogan's stump-splitting adjectives could rouse him. So Bogan got out of bed, and calling on us (as blanky female cattle) to witness what he was about to do, he rolled the drunkard over, prospected his pockets till he made up five shillings (or a "caser" in bush language), and "chucked" them into the hat.

And Barcoo-Rot is probably unconscious to this day that he was ever connected with an act of charity.

The Giraffe struck the deaf jackaroo in the neat room. I heard the chaps cursing "Long-'un" for waking them, and "Deaf-'un" for being, as they thought at first, the indirect cause of the disturbance. I heard the Giraffe and his hat being condemned in other rooms and cursed along the veranda where more shearers were sleeping; and after a while I turned out.

The Giraffe was carefully fixing a mattress and pillows on the floor of a wagonette, and presently a man, who looked like a corpse, was carried out and lifted into the trap.

As the wagonette started, the shanty-keeper — a fat, soulless-looking man — put his hand in his pocket and dropped a quid into the hat which was still going round, in the hands of the Giraffe's mate, little Teddy Thompson, who was as far below medium height as the Giraffe was above it.

The Giraffe took the horse's head and led him along on the most level parts of the road towards the railway station, and two or three chaps went along to help get the sick man into the train.

The shearing-season was over in that district, but I got a job of house-painting, which was my trade, at the Great Western Hotel (a two-story brick place), and I stayed in Bourke for a couple of months.

The Giraffe was a Victorian native from Bendigo. He was well known in Bourke and to many shearers who came through the great dry scrubs from hundreds of miles round. He was stakeholder, drunkard's banker, peacemaker where possible, referee or second to oblige the chaps when a fight was on, big brother or uncle to most of the children in town, final court of appeal when the youngsters had a dispute over a foot-race at the school picnic, referee at their fights, and he was the stranger's friend.

"The feller as knows can battle around for himself," he'd say. "But I always like to do what I can for a hard-up stranger cove. I was a green-hand jackaroo once meself, and I know what it is."

"You're always bothering about other people, Giraffe," said Tom Hall, the shearers' union secretary, who was only a couple of inches shorter than the Giraffe. "There's nothing in it, you can take it from me — I ought to know."

"Well, what's a feller to do?" said the Giraffe. "I'm only hangin' round here till shearin' starts agen, an' a cove might as well be doin' something. Besides, it ain't as if I was like a cove that had old people or a wife an' kids to look after. I ain't got no responsibilities. A feller can't be doin' nothin'. Besides, I like to lend a helpin' hand when I can."

"Well, all I've got to say," said Tom, most of whose screw went in borrowed quids, etc. "All I've got to say is that you'll get no thanks, and you might blanky well starve in the end."

"There ain't no fear of me starvin' so long as I've got me hands about me; an' I ain't a cove as wants thanks," said the Giraffe.

He was always helping someone or something. Now it was a bit of a "darnce" that we was gettin' up for the girls; again it was Mrs Smith, the woman whose husban' was drowned in the flood in the Began River lars' Crismas, or that there poor woman down by the Billabong — her husband cleared out and left her with a lot o' kids. Or Bill Something, the bullocky, who was run over by his own wagon, while he was drunk, and got his leg broke.

Toward the end of his spree One-eyed Began broke loose and smashed nearly all the windows of the Carriers' Arms, and next morning he was fined heavily at the police court. About dinner-time I encountered the Giraffe and his hat, with two half-crowns in it for a start.

"I'm sorry to trouble yer," he said, "but One-eyed Bogan carn't pay his fine, an' I thought we might fix it up for him. He ain't half a bad sort of feller when he ain't drinkin'. It's only when he gets too much booze in him."

After shearing, the hat usually started round with the Giraffe's own dirty crumpled pound note in the bottom of it as a send-off, later on it was half a sovereign, and so on down to half a crown and a shilling, as he got short of stuff; till in the end he would borrow a "few bob" — which he always repaid after next shearing-"just to start the thing goin'."

There were several yarns about him and his hat. 'Twas said that the hat had belonged to his father, whom he resembled in every respect, and it had been going round for so many years that the crown was worn as thin as paper by the quids, half-quids, casers, half-casers, bobs and tanners or sprats — to say nothing of the scrums — that had been chucked into it in its time and shaken up.

They say that when a new governor visited Bourke the Giraffe happened to be standing on the platform close to the exit, grinning good-humouredly, and the local toady nudged him urgently and said in an awful whisper, "Take off your hat! Why don't you take off your hat?"

"Why?" drawled the Giraffe, "he ain't hard up, is he?"

And they fondly cherish an anecdote to the effect that, when the One-Man-One-Vote Bill was passed (or Payment of Members, or when the first Labour Party went in — I forget on which occasion they said it was) the Giraffe was carried away by the general enthusiasm, got a few beers in him, "chucked" a quid into his hat, and sent it round. The boys contributed by force of habit, and contributed largely, because of the victory and the beer. And when the hat came back to the Giraffe, he stood holding it in front of him with both hands and stared blankly into it for a while. Then it dawned on him.

"Blowed if I haven't bin an' gone an' took up a bloomin' collection for meself!" he said.

He was almost a teetotaller, but he stood his shout in reason. He mostly drank ginger beer.

"I ain't a feller that boozes, but I ain't got nothin' agen chaps enjoyin' themselves, so long as they don't go too far."

It was common for a man on the spree to say to him:

"Here! here's five quid. Look after it for me, Giraffe, will yer, till I git off the booze.

"His real name was Bob Brothers, and his bush names, 'Long-'un,' 'The Giraffe,' 'Send-round-the-hat,' 'Chuck-in-a-bob,' and 'Ginger-ale.'"

Some years before, camels and Afghan drivers had been imported to the Bourke district; the camels did very well in the dry country, they went right across country and carried everything from sardines to flooring-boards. And the teamsters loved the Afghans nearly as much as Sydney furniture makers love the cheap Chinese in the same line. They love 'em even as union shearers on strike love blacklegs brought up-country to take their places.

Now the Giraffe was a good, straight unionist, but in cases of sickness or trouble he was as apt to forget his unionism, as all bushmen are, at all times (and for all time), to forget their creed. So, one evening, the Giraffe blundered into the Carriers' Arms — of all places in the world — when it was full of teamsters; he had his hat in his hand and some small silver and coppers in it.

"I say, you fellers, there's a poor, sick Afghan in the camp down there along the — "

A big, brawny bullock-driver took him firmly by the shoulders, or, rather by the elbows, and ran him out before any damage was done. The Giraffe took it as he took most things, good-humouredly; but, about dusk, he was seen slipping down towards the Afghan camp with a billy of soup.

"I believe," remarked Tom Hall, "that when the Giraffe goes to heaven — and he's the only one of us, as far as I can see, that has a ghost of a show — I believe that when he goes to heaven, the first thing he'll do will be to take his infernal hat round amongst the angels — getting up a collection for this damned world that he left behind."

"Well, I don't think there's so much to his credit, after all," said Jack Mitchell, shearer. "You see, the Giraffe is ambitious; he likes public life, and that accounts for him shoving himself forward with his collections. As for bothering about people in trouble, that's only common curiosity; he's one of those chaps that are always shoving their noses into other people's troubles. And, as for looking after sick men — why! there's nothing the Giraffe likes better than pottering round a sick man, and watching him and studying him. He's awfully interested in sick men, and they're pretty scarce out here. I tell you there's nothing he likes better — except, maybe, it's pottering round a corpse. I believe he'd ride forty miles to help and sympathize and potter round a funeral. The fact of the matter is that the Giraffe is only enjoying himself with other people's troubles — that's all it is. It's only vulgar curiosity and selfishness. I set it down to his ignorance; the way he was brought up."

A few days after the Afghan incident the Giraffe and his hat had a run of luck. A German, one of a party who were building a new wooden bridge over the Big Billabong, was helping unload some girders from a truck at the railway station, when a big log slipped on the skids and his leg was smashed badly. They carried him to the Carriers' Arms, which was the nearest hotel, and into a bedroom behind the bar, and sent for the doctor. The Giraffe was in evidence as usual.

"It vas not that at all," said German Charlie, when they asked him if he was in much pain. "It vas not that at all. I don't cares a damn for der bain; but dis is der tird year — und I vas going home dis year — after der gontract — und der gontract yoost commence!"`

That was the burden of his song all through, between his groans. There were a good few chaps sitting quietly about the bar and veranda when the doctor arrived. The Giraffe was sitting at the end of the counter, on which he had laid his hat while he wiped his face, neck, and forehead with a big speckled "sweatrag." It was a very hot day.

The doctor, a good-hearted young Australian, was heard saying something. Then German Charlie, in a voice that rung with pain:

"Make that leg right, doctor — quick! Dis is der tird pluddy year — und I must go home!"

The doctor asked him if he was in great pain. "Neffer mind der pluddy bain, doctor! Neffer mind der pluddy bain! Dot vas nossing. Make dat leg well quick, doctor. Dis vas der last gontract, and I vas going home dis year." Then the words jerked out of him by physical agony: "Der girl vas vaiting dree year, und — by Got! I must go home."

The publican — Watty Braithwaite, known as "Watty Broadweight," or, more familiarly, "Watty Bothways" — turned over the Giraffe's hat in a tired, bored sort of way, dropped a quid into it, and nodded resignedly at the Giraffe.

The Giraffe caught up the hint and the hat with alacrity. The hat went all round town, so to speak; and, as soon as his leg was firm enough not to come loose on the road German Charlie went home.

It was well known that I contributed to the Sydney *Bulletin* and several other papers. The Giraffe's bump of reverence was very large, and swelled especially for sick men and poets. He treated me with much more respect than is due from a bushman to a man, and with an odd sort of extra gentleness I sometimes fancied. But one day he rather surprised me.

"I'm sorry to trouble yer," he said in a shamefaced way. "I don't know as you go in for sportin', but One-eyed Bogan an' Barcoo-Rot is goin' to have a bit of a scrap down the Billybong this evenin', an' —— "

"A bit of a what?" I asked.

"A bit of fight to a finish," he said apologetically. "An' the chaps is tryin' to fix up a fiver to put some life into the thing. There's bad blood between One-eyed Bogan and Barcoo-Rot, an' it won't do them any harm to have it out."

It was a great fight, I remember. There must have been a couple of score blood-soaked handkerchiefs (or "sweat-rags") buried in a hole on the field of battle, and the Giraffe was busy the rest of the evening helping to patch up the principals. Later on he took up a small collection for the loser, who happened to be Barcoo-Rot in spite of the advantage of an eye.

The Salvation Army lassie, who went round with the *War Cry*, nearly always sold the Giraffe three copies.

A new-chum parson, who wanted a subscription to build or enlarge a chapel, or something, sought the assistance of the Giraffe's influence with his mates.

"Well," said the Giraffe, "I ain't a churchgoer meself. I ain't what you might call a religious cove, but I'll be glad to do what I can to help yer. I don't suppose I can do much. I ain't been to church since I was a kiddy."

The parson was shocked, but later on he learned to appreciate the Giraffe and his mates, and to love Australia for the bushman's sake, and it was he who told me the above anecdote.

The Giraffe helped fix some stalls for a Catholic Church bazaar, and some of the chaps chaffed him about it in the union office.

"You'll be taking up a collection for a joss-house down in the Chinamen's camp next," said Tom Hall in conclusion.

"Well, I ain't got nothin' agen the Roming Carflics," said the Giraffe. "An' Father O'Donovan's a very decent sort of cove. He stuck up for the unions all right in the strike anyway." ("He wouldn't be Irish if he wasn't," someone commented.) "I carried swags once for six months with a feller that was a Carflick, an' he was a very straight feller. And a girl I knowed turned Carflick to marry a chap that had got her into trouble, an' she was always jes' the same to me after as she was before. Besides, I like to help everything that's goin' on."

Tom Hall and one or two others went out hurriedly to have a drink. But we all loved the Giraffe.

He was very innocent and very humorous, especially when he meant to be most serious and philosophical.

"Some of them bush girls is regular tomboys," he said to me solemnly one day. "Some of them is too cheeky altogether. I remember once I was stoppin' at a place — they was sort of relations o' mine — an' they put me to sleep in a room off the verander, where there was a glass door an' no blinds. An' the first mornin' the girls — they was sort o' cousins o' mine — they come gigglin' and foolin' round outside the door on the verander, an' kep' me in bed till nearly ten o'clock. I had to put me trowsis on under the bed-clothes in the end. But I got back on 'em the next night," he reflected.

"How did you do that, Bob?" I asked.

"Why, I went to bed in me trowsis!"

One day I was on a plank, painting the ceiling of the bar of the Great Western Hotel. I was anxious to get the job finished. The work had been kept back most of the day by chaps handing up long beers to me, and drawing my attention to the alleged fact that I was putting on the paint wrong side out. I was slapping it on over the last few boards when:

"I'm very sorry to trouble yer; I always seem to be troublin' yer; but there's that there woman and them girls —— "

I looked down — about the first time I had looked down on him — and there was the Giraffe, with his hat brim up on the plank and two half-crowns in it.

"Oh, that's all right, Bob," I said, and I dropped in half a crown.

There were shearers in the bar, and presently there was some barracking. It appeared that that there woman and them girls were strange women, in the local as well as the Biblical sense of the word, who had come from Sydney at the end of the shearing-season, and had taken a cottage on the edge of the scrub on the outskirts of the town. There had been trouble this week in connection with a row at their establishment, and they had been fined, warned off by the police, and turned out by their landlord.

"This is a bit too red-hot, Giraffe," said one of the shearers. "Them —— s has made enough out of us coves. They've got plenty of stuff, don't you fret. Let 'em go to —— ! I'm blanked if I give a sprat."

"They ain't got their fares to Sydney," said the Giraffe. "An', what's more, the little 'un is sick, an' two of them has kids in Sydney."

"How the —— do you know?"

"Why, one of 'em come to me an' told me all about it."

There was an involuntary guffaw.

"Look here, Bob," said Billy Woods, the rouseabouts' secretary, kindly. "Don't you make a fool of yourself. You'll have all the chaps laughing at you. Those girls are only working you for all you're worth. I suppose one of 'em came crying and whining to you. Don't you bother about 'em. *You* don't know 'em; they can pump water at a moment's notice. You haven't had any experience with women yet, Bob."

"She didn't come whinin' and cryin' to me," said the Giraffe, dropping his twanging drawl a little. "She looked me straight in the face an' told me all about it."

"I say, Giraffe," said Box-o'-Tricks, "what have you been doin'? You've bin down there on the nod. I'm surprised at yer, Giraffe."

"An' he pretends to be so gory soft an' innocent, too," growled the Bogan. "We know all about you, Giraffe."

"Look here, Giraffe," said Mitchell the shearer. "I'd never have thought it of you. We all thought you were the only virgin youth west the river; I always thought you were a moral young man. You mustn't think that because your conscience is pricking you everyone else's is."

"I ain't had anythin' to do with them," said the Giraffe, drawling again. "I ain't a cove that goes in for that sort of thing. But other chaps has, and I think they might as well help 'em out of their fix."

"They're a rotten crowd," said Billy Woods. "You don't know them, Bob. Don't bother about them-they're not worth it. Put your money in your pocket. You'll find a better use for it before next shearing."

"Better shout, Giraffe," said Box-o'-Tricks.

Now in spite of the Giraffe's softness he was the hardest man in Bourke to move when he'd decided on what he thought was "the fair thing to do." Another peculiarity of his was that on occasion, such for instance as "sayin' a few words" at a strike meeting, he would straighten himself, drop the twang, and rope in his drawl, so to speak.

"Well, look here, you chaps," he said now. "I don't know anything about them women. I s'pose they're bad, but I don't suppose they're worse than men has made them. All I know is that there's four women turned out, without any stuff, and every woman in Bourke, an' the police, an' the law agen 'em. An' the fact that they is women is agenst 'em most of all. You don't expect 'em to hump their swags to Sydney! Why, only I ain't got the stuff I wouldn't trouble yer. I'd pay their fares meself. Look," he said, lowering his voice, "there they are now, an' one of the girls is cryin'. Don't let 'em see yer lookin'."

I dropped softly from the plank and peeped out with the rest.

They stood by the fence on the opposite side of the street, a bit up towards the railway station, with their portmanteaux and bundles at their feet. One girl leant with her arms on the fence rail and her face buried in them, another was trying to comfort her. The third girl and the woman stood facing our way. The woman was good-looking; she had a hard face, but it might have been made hard. The third girl seemed half defiant, half inclined to cry. Presently she went to the other side of the girl who was crying on the fence and put her arm round her shoulder. The woman suddenly turned her back on us and stood looking away over the paddocks.

The hat went round. Billy Woods was first, then Box-o'-Tricks, and then Mitchell.

Billy contributed with eloquent silence. "I was only jokin', Giraffe," said Box-o'-Tricks, dredging his pockets for a couple of shillings. It was some time after the shearing, and most of the chaps were hard up.

"Ah, well," sighed Mitchell. "There's no help for it. If the Giraffe would take up a collection to import some decent girls to this God-forgotten hole there might be some sense in it.... It's bad enough for the Giraffe to undermine our religious prejudices, and tempt us to take a morbid interest in sick Chows and Afghans, and blacklegs and widows; but when he starts mixing us up with strange women it's time to buck." And he prospected his pockets and contributed two shillings, some odd pennies, and a pinch of tobacco dust.

"I don't mind helping the girls, but I'm damned if I'll give a penny to help the old ——," said Tom Hall.

"Well, she was a girl once herself," drawled the Giraffe.

The Giraffe went round to the other pubs and to the union offices, and when he returned he seemed satisfied with the plate, but troubled about something else.

"I don't know what to do for them for to-night," he said. "None of the pubs or boardin'-houses will hear of them, an' there ain't no empty houses, an' the women is all agen 'em."

"Not all," said Alice, the big, handsome barmaid from Sydney. "Come here, Bob." She gave the Giraffe half a sovereign and a look for which some of us would have paid him ten pounds — had we had the money, and had the look been transferable.

"Wait a minute, Bob," she said, and she went in to speak to the landlord.

"There's an empty bedroom at the end of the store in the yard," she said when she came back. "They can camp there for to-night if they behave themselves. You'd better tell 'em, Bob."

"Thank yer, Alice," said the Giraffe.

Next day, after work, the Giraffe and I drifted together and down by the river in the cool of the evening, and sat on the edge of the steep, drought-parched bank.

"I heard you saw your lady friends off this morning, Bob," I said, and was sorry I said it, even before he answered.

"Oh, they ain't no friends of mine," he said. "Only four' poor devils of women. I thought they mightn't like to stand waitin' with the crowd on the platform, so I jest offered to get their tickets an' told 'em to wait round at the back of the station till the bell rung.... An' what do yer think they did, Harry?" he went on, with an exasperatingly unintelligent grin. "Why, they wanted to kiss me."

"Did they?"

"Yes. An' they would have done it, too, if I hadn't been so long.... Why, I'm blessed if they didn't kiss me hands."

"You don't say so."

"God's truth. Somehow I didn't like to go on the platform with them after that; besides, they was cryin', and I can't stand women cryin'. But some of the chaps put them into an empty carriage." He thought a moment. Then: "There's some terrible good-hearted fellers in the world," he reflected.

I thought so too. "Bob," I said, "you're a single man. Why don't you get married and settle down?"

"Well," he said, "I ain't got no wife an' kids, that's a fact. But it ain't my fault."

He may have been right about the wife. But I thought of the look that Alice had given him, and —

"Girls seem to like me right enough," he said, "but it don't go no further than that. The trouble is that I'm so long, and I always seem to get shook after little girls. At least there was one little girl in Bendigo that I was properly gone on."

"And wouldn't she have you?"

"Well, it seems not."

"Did you ask her?"

"Oh, yes, I asked her right enough."

"Well, and what did she say?"

"She said it would be redicilus for her to be seen trottin' alongside of a chimbley like me."

"Perhaps she didn't mean that. There are any amount of little women who like tall men."

"I thought of that too — afterwards. P'r'aps she didn't mean it that way. I s'pose the fact of the matter was that she didn't cotton on to me, and wanted to let me down easy. She didn't want to hurt me feelin's, if yer understand — she was a very good-hearted little girl. There's some terrible tall fellers where I come from, and I know two as married little girls."

He seemed a hopeless case.

"Sometimes," he said, "sometimes I wish that I wasn't so blessed long."

"There's that there deaf jackaroo," he reflected presently. "He's something in the same fig about girls as I am. He's too deaf and I'm too long."

"How do you make that out?" I asked. "He's got three girls, to my knowledge, and, as for being deaf, why, he gasses more than any man in the town, and knows more of what's going on than old Mother Brindle the washerwoman."

"Well, look at that now!" said the Giraffe, slowly. "Who'd have thought it? He never told me he had three girls, an' as for hearin' news, I always tell him anything that's goin' on that I think he doesn't catch. He told me his trouble was that whenever he went out with a girl people could hear what they was sayin' — at least they could hear what she was sayin' to him, an' draw their own conclusions, he said. He said he went out one night with a girl, and some of the chaps foxed 'em an' heard her sayin' `don't' to him, an' put it all round town."

"What did she say `don't' for?" I asked.

"He didn't tell me that, but I s'pose he was kissin' her or huggin' her or something."

"Bob," I said presently, "didn't you try the little girl in Bendigo a second time?"

"No," he said. "What was the use. She was a good little girl, and I wasn't goin' to go botherin' her. I ain't the sort of cove that goes hangin' round where he isn't wanted. But somehow I couldn't stay about Bendigo after she gave me the hint, so I thought I'd come over an' have a knock round on this side for a year or two."

"And you never wrote to her?"

"No. What was the use of goin' pesterin' her with letters? I know what trouble letters give me when I have to answer one. She'd have only had to tell me the straight truth in a letter an' it wouldn't have done me any good. But I've pretty well got over it by this time."

A few days later I went to Sydney. The Giraffe was the last I shook hands with from the carriage window, and he slipped something in a piece of newspaper into my hand.

"I hope yer won't be offended," he drawled, "but some of the chaps thought you mightn't be too flush of stuff — you've been shoutin' a good deal; so they put a quid or two together. They thought it might help yer to have a bit of a fly round in Sydney."

I was back in Bourke before next shearing. On the evening of my arrival I ran against the Giraffe; he seemed strangely shaken over something, but he kept his hat on his head.

"Would yer mind takin' a stroll as fur as the Billerbong?" he said. "I got something I'd like to tell yer."

His big, brown, sunburnt hands trembled and shook as he took a letter from his pocket and opened it.

"I've just got a letter," he said. "A letter from that little girl at Bendigo. It seems it was all a mistake. I'd like you to read it. Somehow I feel as if I want to talk to a feller, and I'd rather talk to you than any of them other chaps."

It was a good letter, from a big-hearted little girl. She had been breaking her heart for the great ass all these months. It seemed that he had left Bendigo without saying good-bye to her. "Somehow I couldn't bring meself to it," he said, when I taxed him with it. She had never been able to get his address until last week; then she got it from a Bourke man who had gone south. She called him "an awful long fool," which he was, without the slightest doubt, and she implored him to write, and come back to her.

"And will you go back, Bob?" I asked.

"My oath! I'd take the train to-morrer only I ain't got the stuff. But I've got a stand in Big Billerbong Shed an' I'll soon knock a few quid together. I'll go back as soon as ever shearin's over. I'm goin' to write away to her to-night."

The Giraffe was the "ringer" of Big Billabong Shed that season. His tallies averaged a hundred and twenty a day. He only sent his hat round once during shearing, and it was noticed that he hesitated at first and only contributed half a crown. But then it was a case of a man being taken from the shed by the police for wife desertion.

"It's always that way," commented Mitchell. "Those soft, good-hearted fellows always end by getting hard and selfish. The world makes 'em so. It's the thought of the soft fools they've been that finds out sooner or later and makes 'em repent. Like as not the Giraffe will be the meanest man out back before he's done."

When Big Billabong cut out, and we got back to Bourke with our dusty swags and dirty cheques, I spoke to Tom Hall:

"Look here, Tom," I said. "That long fool, the Giraffe, has been breaking his heart for a little girl in Bendigo ever since he's been out back, and she's been breaking her heart for him, and the ass didn't know it till he got a letter from her just before Big Billabong started. He's going to-morrow morning."

That evening Tom stole the Giraffe's hat. "I s'pose it'll turn up in the mornin'," said the Giraffe. "I don't mind a lark," he added, "but it does seem a bit red hot for the chaps to collar a cove's hat and a feller goin' away for good, p'r'aps, in the mornin'."

Mitchell started the thing going with a quid.

"It's worth it," he said, "to get rid of him. We'll have some peace now. There won't be so many accidents or women in trouble when the Giraffe and his blessed hat are gone. Any way, he's an eyesore in the town, and he's getting on my nerves for one.... Come on, you sinners! Chuck 'em in; we're only taking quids and half-quids."

About daylight next morning Tom Hall slipped into the Giraffe's room at the Carriers' Arms. The Giraffe was sleeping peacefully. Tom put the hat on a chair by his side. The collection had been a record one, and, besides the packet of money in the crown of the hat, there was a silver-mounted pipe with case — the best that could be bought in Bourke, a gold brooch, and several trifles — besides an ugly valentine of a long man in his shirt walking the room with a twin on each arm.

Tom was about to shake the Giraffe by the shoulder, when he noticed a great foot, with about half a yard of big-boned ankle and shank, sticking out at the bottom of the bed. The temptation was too great. Tom took up the hair-brush, and, with the back of it, he gave a smart rap on the point of an in-growing toe-nail, and slithered.

We heard the Giraffe swearing good-naturedly for a while, and then there was a pregnant silence. He was staring at the hat we supposed.

We were all up at the station to see him off. It was rather a long wait. The Giraffe edged me up to the other end of the platform.

He seemed overcome.

"There's — there's some terrible good-hearted fellers in this world," he said. "You mustn't forgit 'em, Harry, when you make a big name writin'. I'm — well, I'm blessed if I don't feel as if I was jist goin' to blubber!"

I was glad he didn't. The Giraffe blubberin' would have been a spectacle. I steered him back to his friends.

"Ain't you going to kiss me, Bob?" said the Great Western's big, handsome barmaid, as the bell rang.

"Well, I don't mind kissin' you, Alice," he said, wiping his mouth. "But I'm goin' to be married, yer know." And he kissed her fair on the mouth.

"There's nothin' like gettin' into practice," he said, grinning round.

We thought he was improving wonderfully; but at the last moment something troubled him.

"Look here, you chaps," he said, hesitatingly, with his hand in his pocket, "I don't know what I'm going to do with all this stuff. There's that there poor washerwoman that scalded her legs liftin' the boiler of clothes off the fire — "

We shoved him into the carriage. He hung — about half of him — out the window, wildly waving his hat, till the train disappeared in the scrub.

And, as I sit here writing by lamplight at midday, in the midst of a great city of shallow social sham, of hopeless, squalid poverty, of ignorant selfishness, cultured or brutish, and of noble and heroic endeavour frowned down or callously neglected, I am almost aware of a burst of sunshine in the room, and a long form leaning over my chair, and:

"Excuse me for troublin' yer; I'm always troublin' yer; but there's that there poor woman...."

And I wish I could immortalize him!

That Pretty Girl In The Army

Now I often sit at Watty's, when the night is very near,
With a head that's full of jingles — and the fumes of bottled beer;
For I always have a fancy that, if I am over there
When the Army prays for Watty, I'm included in the prayer.
It would take a lot of praying, lots of thumping on the drum,
To prepare our sinful, straying, erring souls for Kingdom Come.
But I love my fellow-sinners! and I hope, upon the whole,
That the Army gets a hearing when it prays for Watty's soul.
When the World was Wide.

The Salvation Army does good business in some of the outback towns of the great pastoral wastes of Australia. There's the thoughtless, careless generosity of the bushman, whose pockets don't go far enough down his trousers (that's what's the matter with him), and who contributes to anything that comes along, without troubling to ask questions, like long Bob Brothers of Bourke, who, chancing to be "a Protestant by rights," unwittingly subscribed towards the erection of a new Catholic church, and, being chaffed for his mistake, said:

"Ah, well, I don't suppose it'll matter a hang in the end, anyway it goes. I ain't got nothink agenst the Roming Carflicks."

There's the shearer, fresh with his cheque from a cut-out shed, gloriously drunk and happy, in love with all the world, and ready to subscribe towards any creed and shout for all hands — including Old Nick if he happened to come along. There's the shearer, half-drunk and inclined to be nasty, who has got the wrong end of all things with a tight grip, and who flings a shilling in the face of out-back conventionality (as he thinks) by chucking a bob into the Salvation Army ring. Then he glares round to see if he can catch anybody winking behind his back. There's the cynical joker, a queer mixture, who contributes generously and tempts the reformed boozer afterwards. There's the severe-faced old station-hand — in clean shirt and neckerchief and white moleskins — in for his annual or semi-annual spree, who contributes on principle, and then drinks religiously until his cheque is gone and the horrors are come. There's the shearer, feeling mighty bad after a spree, and in danger of seeing things when he tries to go to sleep. He has dropped ten or twenty pounds over bar counters and at cards, and he now "chucks" a repentant shilling into the ring, with a very private and rather vague sort of feeling that something might come of it. There's the stout, contented, good-natured publican, who tips the Army as if it were a barrel-organ. And there are others and other reasons — black sheep and ne'er-do-wells — and faint echoes of other times in Salvation Army tunes.

Bourke, the metropolis of the Great Scrubs, on the banks of the Darling River, about five hundred miles from Sydney, was suffering from a long drought when I was there in ninety-two; and the heat may or may not have been another cause contributing to the success, from a business point of view, of the Bourke garrison. There was much beer boozing — and, besides, it was vaguely understood (as most things are vaguely understood out there in the drought-haze) that the place the Army came to save us from was hotter than Bourke. We didn't hanker to go to a hotter place than Bourke. But that year there was an extraordinary reason for the Army's great financial success there.

She was a little girl, nineteen or twenty, I should judge, the prettiest girl I ever saw in the Army, and one of the prettiest I've ever seen out of it. She had the features of an angel, but her expression was wonderfully human, sweet and sympathetic. Her big grey eyes were sad with sympathy for sufferers and sinners, and her poke bonnet was full of bunchy, red-gold hair. Her first appearance was somewhat dramatic — perhaps the Army arranged it so.

The Army used to pray, and thump the drum, and sing, and take up collections every evening outside Watty Bothways' Hotel, the Carriers' Arms. They performed longer and more often outside Watty's than any other pub in town — perhaps because Watty was considered the most hopeless publican and his customers the hardest crowd of boozers in Bourke. The band generally began to play about dusk. Watty would lean back comfortably in a basket easy-chair on his wide veranda, and clasp his hands, in a calm, contented way, while the Army banged the drum and got steam up, and whilst, perhaps, there was a barney going on in the bar, or a bloodthirsty fight in the backyard. On such occasions there was something like an indulgent or fatherly expression on his fat and usually emotionless face. And by and by he'd move his head gently and doze. The banging and the singing seemed to soothe him, and the praying, which was often very personal, never seemed to disturb him in the least.

Well, it was about dusk one day; it had been a terrible day, a hundred and something startling in the shade, but there came a breeze after sunset. There had been several dozen of buckets of water thrown on the veranda floor and the ground outside. Watty was seated in his accustomed place when the Army arrived. There was no barney in the bar because there was a fight in the backyard, and that claimed the attention of all the customers.

The Army prayed for Watty and his clients; then a reformed drunkard started to testify against publicans and all their works. Watty settled himself comfortably, folded his hands, and leaned back and dozed.

The fight was over, and the chaps began to drop round to the bar. The man who was saved waved his arms, and danced round and howled.

"Ye-es!" he shouted hoarsely. "The publicans, and boozers, and gamblers, and sinners may think that Bourke is hot, but hell is a thousand times hotter! I tell you"

"Oh, Lord!" said Mitchell, the shearer, and he threw a penny into the ring.

"Ye-es! I tell you that hell is a million times hotter than Bourke! I tell you —— "

"Oh, look here," said a voice from the background, "that won't wash. Why, don't you know that when the Bourke people die they send back for their blankets?"

The saved brother glared round.

"I hear a freethinker speaking, my friends," he said. Then, with sudden inspiration and renewed energy, "I hear the voice of a freethinker. Show me the face of a freethinker," he yelled, glaring round like a hunted, hungry man. "Show me the face of a freethinker, and I'll tell you what he is."

Watty hitched himself into a more comfortable position and clasped his hands on his knee and closed his eyes again.

"Ya-a-a-s!" shrieked the brand. "I tell you, my friends, I can tell a freethinker by his face. Show me the face of a —— "

At this point there was an interruption. One-eyed, or Wall-eyed, Bogan, who had a broken nose, and the best side of whose face was reckoned the ugliest and most sinister — One-eyed Bogan thrust his face forward from the ring of darkness into the torchlight of salvation. He had got the worst of a drawn battle; his nose and mouth were bleeding, and his good eye was damaged.

"Look at my face!" he snarled, with dangerous earnestness. "Look at my face! That's the face of a freethinker, and I don't care who knows it. Now! what have you got to say against my face, `Man-without-a-Shirt?'"

The brother drew back. He had been known in the northwest in his sinful days as "Man-without-a-Shirt," alias "Shirty," or "The Dirty Man," and was flabbergasted at being recognized in speech. Also, he had been in a shearing-shed and in a shanty orgy with One-eyed Bogan, and knew the man.

Now most of the chaps respected the Army, and, indeed, anything that looked like religion, but the Bogan's face, as representing free-thought, was a bit too sudden for them. There were sounds on the opposite side of the ring as from men being smitten repeatedly and rapidly below the belt, and long Tom Hall and one or two others got away into the darkness in the background, where Tom rolled helplessly on the grass and sobbed.

It struck me that Bogan's face was more the result of free speech than anything else.

The Army was about to pray when the Pretty Girl stepped forward, her eyes shining with indignation and enthusiasm. She had arrived by the evening train, and had been standing shrinkingly behind an Army lass of fifty Australian summers, who was about six feet high, flat and broad, and had a square face, and a mouth like a joint in boiler plates.

The Pretty Girl stamped her pretty foot on the gravel, and her eyes flashed in the torchlight.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," she said. "Great big men like you to be going on the way you are. If you were ignorant or poor, as I've seen people, there might be some excuse for you. Haven't you got any mothers, or sisters, or wives to think of? What sort of a life is this you lead? Drinking, and gambling, and fighting, and swearing your lives away! Do you ever think of God and the time when you were children? Why don't you make homes? Look at that man's face!" (she pointed suddenly at Bogan, who collapsed and sidled behind his mates out of the light). "Look at that man's face! Is it a face for a Christian? And you help and encourage him to fight. You're worse than he is. Oh, it's brutal. It's — it's wicked. Great big men like you, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

Long Bob Brothers — about six-foot-four — the longest and most innocent there, shrunk down by the wall and got his inquiring face out of the light. The Pretty Girl fluttered on for a few moments longer, greatly excited, and then stepped back, seemingly much upset, and was taken under the wing of the woman with the boiler-plate mouth.

It was a surprise, and very sudden. Bogan slipped round to the backyard, and was seen bathing his battered features at the pump. The rest wore the expression of men who knew that something unusual has happened, but don't know what, and are waiting vacantly for developments. — Except Tom Hall, who had recovered and returned. He stood looking over the head of the ring of bushmen, and apparently taking the same critical interest in the girl as he would in a fight — his expression was such as a journalist might wear who is getting exciting copy.

The Army had it all their own way for the rest of the evening, and made a good collection. The Pretty Girl stood smiling round with shining eyes as the bobs and tanners dropped in, and then, being shoved forward by the flat woman, she thanked us sweetly, and said we were good fellows, and that she was sorry for some things she'd said to us. Then she retired, fluttering and very much flushed, and hid herself behind the hard woman — who, by the way, had an excrescence on her upper lip which might have stood for a rivet.

Presently the Pretty Girl came from behind the big woman and stood watching things with glistening eyes. Some of the chaps on the opposite side of the ring moved a little to one side and all were careful not to meet her eye — not to be caught looking at her — lest she should be embarrassed. Watty had roused himself a little at the sound of a strange voice in the Army (and such a clear, sweet voice too!) and had a look; then he settled back peacefully again, but it was noticed that he didn't snore that evening.

And when the Army prayed, the Pretty Girl knelt down with the rest on the gravel. One or two tall bushmen bowed their heads as if they had to, and One-eyed Bogan, with the blood washed from his face, stood with his hat off, glaring round to see if he could catch anyone sniggering.

Mitchell, the shearer, said afterwards that the whole business made him feel for the moment like he felt sometimes in the days when he used to feel things.

The town discussed the Pretty Girl in the Army that night and for many days thereafter, but no one could find out who she was or where she belonged to — except that she came from Sydney last. She kept her secret, if she had one, very close — or else the other S.-A. women were not to be pumped. She lived in skillion-rooms at the back of the big weather-board Salvation Army barracks with two other "lassies," who did washing and sewing and nursing, and went shabby, and half starved themselves, and were baked in the heat, like scores of women in the bush, and even as hundreds of women, suffering from religious mania, slave and stint in city slums, and neglect their homes, husbands and children — for the glory of Booth.

The Pretty Girl was referred to as Sister Hannah by the Army people, and came somehow to be known by sinners as "Miss Captain." I don't know whether that was her real name or what rank she held in the Army, if indeed she held any.

She sold *War Cry*s, and the circulation doubled in a day. One-eyed Bogan, being bailed up unexpectedly, gave her "half a caser" for a *Cry*, and ran away without the paper or the change. Jack Mitchell bought a *Cry* for the first time in his life, and read it. He said he found some of the articles intensely realistic, and many of the statements were very interesting. He said he read one or two things in the *Cry* that he didn't know before. Tom Hall, taken unawares, bought three *Crys* from the Pretty Girl, and blushed to find it fame.

Little Billy Woods, the Labourers' Union secretary — who had a poetic temperament and more than the average bushman's reverence for higher things — Little Billy Woods told me in a burst of confidence that he generally had two feelings, one after the other, after encountering that girl. One was that unfathomable far-away feeling of loneliness and longing, that comes at odd times to the best of married men, with the best of wives and children — as Billy had. The other feeling, which came later on, and was a reaction in fact, was the feeling of a man who thinks he's been twisted round a woman's little finger for the benefit of somebody else. Billy said that he couldn't help being reminded by the shy, sweet smile and the shy, sweet "thank you" of the Pretty Girl in the Army, of the shy, sweet smile and the shy, sweet gratitude of a Sydney private barmaid, who had once roped him in, in the days before he was married. Then he'd reckon that the Army lassie had been sent out back to Bourke as a business speculation.

Tom Hall was inclined to reckon so too — but that was after he'd been chaffed for a month about the three *War Cry*s.

The Pretty Girl was discussed from psychological points of view; not forgetting the sex problem. Donald Macdonald — shearer, union leader and labour delegate to other colonies on occasion — Donald Macdonald said that whenever he saw a circle of plain or ugly, dried-up women or girls round a shepherd, evangelist or a Salvation Army drum, he'd say "sexually starved!" They were hungry for love. Religious mania was sexual passion dammed out of its course. Therefore he held that morbidly religious girls were the most easily seduced.

But this couldn't apply to Pretty Girl in the Army. Mitchell reckoned that she'd either had a great sorrow — a lot of trouble, or a disappointment in love (the "or" is Mitchell's); but they couldn't see how a girl like her could possibly be disappointed in love — unless the chap died or got into jail for life. Donald decided that her soul had been starved somehow.

Mitchell suggested that it might be only a craving for notoriety, the same thing that makes women and girls go amongst lepers, and out to the battlefield, and nurse ugly pieces of men back to life again; the same thing that makes some women and girls swear ropes round men's necks. The Pretty Girl might be the daughter of well-to-do people — even aristocrats, said Mitchell — she was pretty enough and spoke well enough.

"Every woman's a barmaid at heart," as the *Bulletin* puts it, said Mitchell.

But not even one of the haggard women of Bourke ever breathed a suspicion of scandal against her. They said she was too good and too pretty to be where she was. You see it was not as in an old settled town where hags blacken God's world with their tongues. Bourke was just a little camping town in a big land, where free, good-hearted democratic Australians, and the best of black sheep from the old world were constantly passing through; where husband's were often obliged to be away from home for twelve months, and the storekeepers had to trust the people, and mates trusted each other, and the folks were broad-minded. The mind's eye had a wide range.

After her maiden speech the Pretty Girl seldom spoke, except to return thanks for collections — and she never testified. She had a sweet voice and used to sing.

Now, if I were writing pure fiction, and were not cursed with an obstinate inclination to write the truth, I might say that, after the advent of the Pretty Girl, the morals of Bourke improved suddenly and wonderfully. That One-eyed Bogan left off gambling and drinking and fighting and swearing, and put on a red coat and testified and fought the devil only; that Mitchell dropped his mask of cynicism; that Donald Macdonald ate no longer of the tree of knowledge and ceased to worry himself with psychological problems, and was happy; and that Tom Hall was no longer a scoffer. That no one sneaked round through the scrub after dusk to certain necessary establishments in weather-board cottages on the outskirts of the town; and that the broad-minded and obliging ladies thereof became Salvation Army lassies.

But none of these things happened. Drunks quieted down or got out of the way if they could when the Pretty Girl appeared on the scene, fights and games of "headin' 'em" were adjourned, and weak, ordinary language was used for the time being, and that was about all.

Nevertheless, most of the chaps were in love with that Pretty Girl in the Army — all those who didn't *worship* her privately. Long Bob Brothers hovered round in hopes, they said, that she'd meet with an accident — get run over by a horse or something — and he'd have to carry her in; he scared the women at the barracks by dropping firewood over the fence after dark. Barcoo-Rot, the meanest man in the back country, was seen to drop a threepenny bit into the ring, and a rumour was industriously circulated (by Tom Hall) to the effect that One-eyed Bogan intended to shave and join the Army disguised as a lassie.

Handsome Jake Boreham (*alias* Bore-'em), a sentimental shearer from New Zealand, who had read Bret Harte, made an elaborate attempt for the Pretty Girl, by pretending to be going to the dogs headlong, with an idea of first winning her sorrowful interest and sympathy, and then making an apparently hard struggle to straighten up for her sake. He related his experience with the cheerful and refreshing absence of reserve which was characteristic of him, and is of most bushmen.

"I'd had a few drinks," he said, "and was having a spell under a gum by the river, when I saw the Pretty Girl and another Army woman coming down along the bank. It was a blazing hot day. I thought of Sandy and the Schoolmistress in Bret Harte, and I thought it would be a good idea to stretch out in the sun and pretend to be helpless; so I threw my hat on the ground and lay down, with my head in the blazing heat, in the most graceful position I could get at, and I tried to put a look of pained regret on my face, as if I was dreaming of my lost boyhood and me mother. I thought, perhaps, the Girl would pity me, and I felt sure she'd stoop and pick up my hat and put it gently over my poor troubled head. Then I was going to become conscious for a moment, and look hopelessly round, and into her eyes, and then start and look sorrowful and ashamed, and stagger to my feet, taking off my hat like the Silver King does to the audience when he makes his first appearance drunk on the stage; and then I was going to reel off, trying to walk as straight as I could. And next day I was going to clean up my teeth and nails and put on a white shirt, and start to be a new man henceforth.

"Well, as I lay there with my eyes shut, I heard the footsteps come up and stop, and heard 'em whisper, and I thought I heard the Pretty Girl say `Poor fellow!' or something that sounded like that; and just then I got a God-almighty poke in the ribs with an umbrella — at least I suppose it was aimed for my ribs; but women are bad shots, and the point of the umbrella caught me in the side, just between the bottom rib and the hip-bone, and I sat up with a click, like the blade of a pocketknife.

"The other lassie was the big square-faced woman. The Pretty Girl looked rather more frightened and disgusted than sentimental, but she had plenty of pluck, and soon pulled herself together. She said I ought to be ashamed of myself, a great big man like me, lying there in the dust like a drunken tramp — an eyesore and a disgrace to all the world. She told me to go to my camp, wherever that was, and sleep myself sober. The square-jawed woman said I looked like a fool sitting there. I did feel ashamed, and I reckon I did look like a fool — a man generally does in a fix like that. I felt like one, anyway. I got up and walked away, and it hurt me so much that I went over to West Bourke and went to the dogs properly for a fortnight, and lost twenty quid on a game of draughts against a blindfold player. Now both those women had umbrellas, but I'm not sure to this day which of 'em it was that gave me the poke. It wouldn't have mattered much anyway. I haven't borrowed one of Bret Harte's books since."

Jake reflected a while. "The worst of it was," he said ruefully, "that I wasn't sure that the girl or the woman didn't see through me, and that worried me a bit. You never can tell how much a woman suspects, and that's the worst of 'em. I found that out after I got married."

The Pretty Girl in the Army grew pale and thin and bigger-eyed. The women said it was a shame, and that she ought to be sent home to her friends, wherever they were. She was laid up for two or three days, and some of the women cooked delicacies and handed 'em over the barracks fence, and offered to come in and nurse her; but the square woman took washing home and nursed the girl herself.

The Pretty Girl still sold *War Cry*s and took up collections, but in a tired, listless, half shamed-faced way. It was plain that she was tired of the Army, and growing ashamed of the Salvationists. Perhaps she had come to see things too plainly.

You see, the Army does no good out back in Australia — except from a business point of view. It is simply there to collect funds for hungry headquarters. The bushmen are much too intelligent for the Army. There was no poverty in Bourke — as it is understood in the city; there was plenty of food; and camping out and roughing it come natural to the bushmen. In cases of sickness, accident, widows or orphans, the chaps sent round the hat, without banging a drum or testifying, and that was all right. If a chap was hard up he borrowed a couple of quid from his mate. If a strange family arrived without a penny, someone had to fix 'em up, and the storekeepers helped them till the man got work. For the rest, we work out our own salvation, or damnation — as the case is — in the bush, with no one to help us, except a mate, perhaps. The Army can't help us, but a fellow-sinner can, sometimes, who has been through it all himself. The Army is only a drag on the progress of Democracy, because it attracts many who would otherwise be aggressive Democrats — and for other reasons.

Besides, if we all reformed the Army would get deuced little from us for its city mission.

The Pretty Girl went to service for a while with the stock inspector's wife, who could get nothing out of her concerning herself or her friends. She still slept at the barracks, stuck to the Army, and attended its meetings.

It was Christmas morning, and there was peace in Bourke and goodwill towards all men. There hadn't been a fight since yesterday evening, and that had only been a friendly one, to settle an argument concerning the past ownership, and, at the same time, to decide as to the future possession of a dog.

It had been a hot, close night, and it ended in a suffocating sunrise. The free portion of the male population were in the habit of taking their blankets and sleeping out in "the Park," or town square, in hot weather; the wives and daughters of the town slept, or tried to sleep, with bedroom windows and doors open, while husbands lay outside on the verandas. I camped in a corner of the park that night, and the sun woke me.

As I sat up I caught sight of a swagman coming along the white, dusty road from the direction of the bridge, where the cleared road ran across west and on, a hundred and thirty miles, through the barren, broiling mulga scrubs, to Hungerford, on the border of Sheol. I knew that swagman's walk. It was John Merrick (Jack Moonlight), one-time Shearers' Union secretary at Coonamble, and generally "Rep" (shearers' representative) in any shed where he sheared. He was a "better-class shearer," one of those quiet, thoughtful men of whom there are generally two or three in the roughest of rough sheds, who have great influence, and give the shed a good name from a Union point of view. Not quiet with the resentful or snobbish reserve of the educated Englishman, but with a sad or subdued sort of quietness that has force in it — as if they fully realized that their intelligence is much higher than the average, that they have suffered more real trouble and heartbreak than the majority of their mates, and that their mates couldn't possibly understand them if they spoke as they felt and couldn't see things as they do — yet men who understand and are intensely sympathetic in their loneliness and sensitive reserve.

I had worked in a shed with Jack Moonlight, and had met him in Sydney, and to be mates with a bushman for a few weeks is to know him well — anyway, I found it so. He had taken a trip to Sydney the Christmas before last, and when he came back there was something wanting. He became more silent, he drank more, and sometimes alone, and took to smoking heavily. He dropped his mates, took little or no interest in Union matters, and travelled alone, and at night.

The Australian bushman is born with a mate who sticks to him through life — like a mole. They may be hundreds of miles apart sometimes, and separated for years, yet they are mates for life. A bushman may have many mates in his roving, but there is always one his mate, "my mate;" and it is common to hear a bushman, who is, in every way, a true mate to the man he happens to be travelling with, speak of *his mate's mate* — "Jack's mate" — who might be in Klondyke or South Africa. A bushman has always a mate to comfort him and argue with him, and work and tramp and drink with him, and lend him quids when he's hard up, and call him a b—— fool, and fight him sometimes; to abuse him to his face and defend his name behind his back; to bear false witness and perjure his soul for his sake; to lie to the girl for him if he's single, and to his wife if he's married; to secure a "pen" for him at a shed where he isn't on the spot, or, if the mate is away in New Zealand or South Africa, to write and tell him if it's any good coming over this way. And each would take the word of the other against all the world, and each believes that the other is the straightest chap that ever lived-"a white man!" And next best to your old mate is the man you're tramping, riding, working, or drinking with.

About the first thing the cook asks you when you come along to a shearers' hut is, "Where's your mate?" I travelled alone for a while one time, and it seemed to me sometimes, by the tone of the inquiry concerning the whereabouts of my mate, that the bush had an idea that I might have done away with him and that the thing ought to be looked into.

When a man drops mateship altogether and takes to "hatting" in the bush, it's a step towards a convenient tree and a couple of saddle-straps buckled together.

I had an idea that I, in a measure, took the place of Jack Moonlight's mate about this time.

"'Ullo, Jack!" I hailed as he reached the corner of the park.

"Good morning, Harry!" said Jack, as if he'd seen me last yesterday evening instead of three months ago. "How are you getting on?"

We walked together towards the Union Office, where I had a camp in the skillion-room at the back. Jack was silent. But there's no place in the world where a man's silence is respected so much (within reasonable bounds) as in the Australian bush, where every man has a past more or less sad, and every man a ghost — perhaps from other lands that we know nothing of, and speaking in a foreign tongue. They say in the bush, "Oh, Jack's only thinking!" And they let him think. Generally you want to think as much as your mate; and when you've been together some time it's quite natural to travel all day without exchanging a word. In the morning Jim says, "Well, I think I made a bargain with that horse, Bill," and some time late in the afternoon, say twenty miles farther on, it occurs to Bill to "rejoin," "Well, I reckon the blank as sold it to you had yer proper!"

I like a good thinking mate, and I believe that thinking in company is a lot more healthy and more comfortable, as well as less risky, than thinking alone.

On the way to the Union Office Jack and I passed the Royal Hotel, and caught a glimpse, through the open door, of a bedroom off the veranda, of the landlord's fresh, fair, young Sydney girl-wife, sleeping prettily behind the mosquito-net, like a sleeping beauty, while the boss lay on a mattress outside on the veranda, across the open door. (He wasn't necessary for publication, but an evidence of good faith.)

I glanced at Jack for a grin, but didn't get one. He wore the pained expression of a man who is suddenly hit hard with the thought of something that might have been.

I boiled the billy and fried a pound of steak.

"Been travelling all night, Tack?" I asked.

"Yes," said Jack. "I camped at Emus yesterday."

He didn't eat. I began to reckon that he was brooding too much for his health. He was much thinner than when I saw him last, and pretty haggard, and he had something of the hopeless, haggard look that I'd seen in Tom Hall's eyes after the last big shearing strike, when Tom had worked day and night to hold his mates up all through the hard, bitter struggle, and the battle was lost.

"Look here, Jack!" I said at last. "What's up?"

"Nothing's up, Harry," said Jack. "What made you think so?"

"Have you got yourself into any fix?" I asked. "What's the Hungerford track been doing to you?"

"No, Harry," he said, "I'm all right. How are you?" And he pulled some string and papers and a roll of dusty pound notes from his pocket and threw them on the bunk.

I was hard up just then, so I took a note and the billy to go to the Royal and get some beer. I thought the beer might loosen his mind a bit.

"Better take a couple of quid," said Jack. "You look as if you want some new shirts and things." But a pound was enough for me, and I think he had reason to be glad of that later on, as it turned out.

"Anything new in Bourke?" asked Jack as we drank the beer.

"No," I said, "not a thing — except there's a pretty girl in the Salvation Army."

"And it's about time," growled Jack.

"Now, look here, Jack," I said presently, "what's come over you lately at all? I might be able to help you. It's not a bit of use telling me that there's nothing the matter. When a man takes to brooding and travelling alone it's a bad sign, and it will end in a leaning tree and a bit of clothes-line as likely as not. Tell me what the trouble is. Tell us all about it. There's a ghost, isn't there?"

"Well, I suppose so," said Jack. "We've all got our ghosts for that matter. But never you mind, Harry; I'm all right. I don't go interfering with your ghosts, and I don't see what call you've got to come haunting mine. Why, it's as bad as kicking a man's dog." And he gave the ghost of a grin.

"Tell me, Jack," I said, "is it a woman?"

"Yes," said Jack, "it's a woman. Now, are you satisfied?"

"Is it a girl?" I asked.

"Yes," he said.

So there was no more to be said. I'd thought it might have been a lot worse than a girl. I'd thought he might have got married somewhere, sometime, and made a mess of it.

We had dinner at Billy Woods's place, and a sensible Christmas dinner it was — everything cold, except the vegetables, with the hose going on the veranda in spite of the by-laws, and Billy's wife and her sister, fresh and cool-looking and jolly, instead of being hot and brown and cross like most Australian women who roast themselves over a blazing fire in a hot kitchen on a broiling day, all the morning, to cook scalding plum pudding and redhot roasts, for no other reason than that their grandmothers used to cook hot Christmas dinners in England.

And in the afternoon we went for a row on the river, pulling easily up the anabranch and floating down with the stream under the shade of the river timber — instead of going to sleep and waking up helpless and soaked in perspiration, to find the women with headaches, as many do on Christmas Day in Australia.

Mrs Woods tried to draw Jack out, but it was no use, and in the evening he commenced drinking, and that made Billy uneasy. "I'm afraid Jack's on the wrong track," he said.

After tea most of us collected about Watty's veranda. Most things that happened in Bourke happened at Watty's pub, or near it.

If a horse bolted with a buggy or cart, he was generally stopped outside Watty's, which seemed to suggest, as Mitchell said, that most of the heroes drank at Watty's — also that the pluckiest men were found amongst the hardest drinkers. (But sometimes the horse fetched up against Watty's sign and lamppost — which was a stout one of "iron-bark" — and smashed the trap.) Then Watty's was the Carriers' Arms, a union pub; and Australian teamsters are mostly hard cases: while there was something in Watty's beer which made men argue fluently, and the best fights came off in his backyard. Watty's dogs were the most quarrelsome in town, and there was a dog-fight there every other evening, followed as often as not by a man-fight. If a bushman's horse ran away with him the chances were that he'd be thrown on to Watty's veranda, if he wasn't pitched into the bar; and victims of accidents, and sick, hard-up shearers, were generally carried to Watty's pub, as being the most convenient and comfortable for them. Mitchell denied that it was generosity or good nature on Watty's part, he said it was all business — advertisement. Watty knew what he was doing. He was very deep, was Watty. Mitchell further hinted that if he was sick *he* wouldn't be carried to Watty's, for Watty knew what a thirsty business a funeral was. Tom Hall reckoned that Watty bribed the Army on the quiet.

I was sitting on a stool along the veranda wall with Donald Macdonald, Bob Brothers (the Giraffe) and Mitchell, and one or two others, and Jack Moonlight sat on the floor with his back to the wall and his hat well down over his eyes. The Army came along at the usual time, but we didn't see the Pretty Girl at first — she was a bit late. Mitchell said he liked to be at Watty's when the Army prayed and the Pretty Girl was there; he had no objection to being prayed for by a girl like that, though he reckoned that nothing short of a real angel could save him now. He said his old grandmother used to pray for him every night of her life and three times on Sunday, with Christmas Day extra when Christmas Day didn't fall on a Sunday; but Mitchell reckoned that the old lady couldn't have had much influence because he became more sinful every year, and went deeper in ways of darkness, until finally he embarked on a career of crime.

The Army prayed, and then a thin "ratty" little woman bobbed up in the ring; she'd gone mad on religion as women do on woman's rights and hundreds of other things. She was so skinny in the face, her jaws so prominent, and her mouth so wide, that when she opened it to speak it was like a ventriloquist's dummy and you could almost see the cracks open down under her ears.

"They say I'm cracked!" she screamed in a shrill, cracked voice. "But I'm not cracked — I'm only cracked on the Lord Jesus Christ! That's all I'm cracked on —— ." And just then the Amen man of the Army — the Army groaner we called him, who was always putting both feet in it — just then he blundered forward, rolled up his eyes, threw his hands up and down as if he were bouncing two balls, and said, with deep feeling:

"Thank the Lord she's got a crack in the right place!"

Tom Hall doubled up, and most of the other sinners seemed to think there was something very funny about it. And the Army, too, seemed struck with an idea that there was something wrong somewhere, for they started a hymn.

A big American negro, who'd been a night watchman in Sydney, stepped into the ring and waved his arms and kept time, and as he got excited he moved his hands up and down rapidly, as if he was hauling down a rope in a great hurry through a pulley block above, and he kept saying, "Come down, Lord!" all through the hymn, like a bass accompaniment, "Come down, Lord; come down, Lord; come down, Lord; come down, Lord!" and the quicker be said it the faster he hauled. He was as good as a drum. And, when the hymn was over, he started to testify.

"My frens!" he said, "I was once black as der coals in der mined! I was once black as der ink in der ocean of sin! But now — thank an' bless the Lord! — I am whiter dan der dribben snow!"

Tom Hall sat down on the edge of the veranda and leaned his head against a post and cried. He had contributed a bob this evening, and he was getting his money's worth.

Then the Pretty Girl arrived and was pushed forward into the ring. She looked thinner and whiter than I'd ever seen her, and there was a feverish brightness in her eyes that I didn't like.

"Men!" she said, "this is Christmas Day-." I didn't hear any more for, at the sound of her voice, Jack Moonlight jumped up as if he'd sat on a baby. He started forward, stared at her for a moment as if he couldn't believe his eyes, and then said, "Hannah!" short and sharp. She started as if she was shot, gave him a wild look, and stumbled forward; the next moment he had her in his arms and was steering for the private parlour.

I heard Mrs Bothways calling for water and smelling-salts; she was as fat as Watty, and very much like him in the face, but she was emotional and sympathetic. Then presently I heard, through the open window, the Pretty Girl say to Jack, "Oh, Jack, Jack! Why did you go away and leave me like that? It was cruel!"

"But you told me to go, Hannah," said Jack.

"That-that didn't make any difference. Why didn't you write?" she sobbed.

"Because you never wrote to me, Hannah," he said.

"That — that was no excuse!" she said. "It was so k-k-k-cruel of you, Jack."

Mrs Bothways pulled down the window. A new-comer asked Watty what the trouble was, and he said that the Army girl had only found her chap, or husband, or long-lost brother or something, but the missus was looking after the business; then he dozed again.

And then we adjourned to the Royal and took the Army with us.

"That's the way of it," said Donald Macdonald. "With a woman it's love or religion; with a man it's love or the devil."

"Or with a man," said Mitchell, presently, "it's love and the devil both, sometimes, Donald."

I looked at Mitchell hard, but for all his face expressed he might only have said, "I think it's going to rain."

"Lord Douglas"

They hold him true, who's true to one,
However false he be
The Rouseabout of Rouseabouts

The Imperial Hotel was rather an unfortunate name for an out-back town pub, for out back is the stronghold of Australian democracy; it was the out-back vote and influence that brought about "One Man One Vote," "Payment of Members," and most of the democratic legislation of late years, and from out back came the overwhelming vote in favour of Australian as Imperial Federation.

The name Royal Hotel is as familiar as that of the Railway Hotel, and passes unnoticed and ungrowled at, even by bush republicans. The Royal Hotel at Bourke was kept by an Irishman, one O'Donohoo, who was Union to the backbone, loudly in favour of "Australia for the Australians," and, of course, against even the democratic New South Wales Government of the time. He went all round town one St Patrick's morning with a bunch of green ribbon fastened to his coat-tail with a large fish-hook, and wasn't aware of the fact till he sat down on the point of it. But that's got nothing to do with it.

The Imperial Hotel at Bourke was unpopular from the first. It was said that the very existence of the house was the result of a swindle. It had been built with money borrowed on certain allotments in the centre of the town and on the understanding that it should be built on the mortgaged land, whereas it was erected on a free allotment. Which fact was discovered, greatly to its surprise, by the building society when it came to foreclose on the allotments some years later. While the building was being erected the Bourke people understood, in a vague way, that it was to be a convent (perhaps the building society thought so, too), and when certain ornaments in brick and cement in the shape of a bishop's mitre were placed over the corners of the walls the question seemed decided. But when the place was finished a bar was fitted up, and up went the sign, to the disgust of the other publicans, who didn't know a licence had been taken out — for licensing didn't go by local option in those days. It was rumoured that the place belonged to, and the whole business was engineered by, a priest. And priests are men of the world.

The Imperial Hotel was patronized by the pastoralists, the civil servants, the bank manager and clerks — all the scrub aristocracy; it was the headquarters of the Pastoralists' Union in Bourke; a barracks for blacklegs brought up from Sydney to take the place of Union shearers on strike; and the new Governor, on his inevitable visit to Bourke, was banqueted at the Imperial Hotel. The editor of the local "capitalistic rag" stayed there; the pastoralists' member was elected mostly by dark ways and means devised at the Imperial Hotel, and one of its managers had stood as a dummy candidate to split the Labour vote; the management of the hotel was his reward. In short, it was there that most of the plots were hatched to circumvent Freedom, and put away or deliver into the clutches of law and order certain sons of Light and Liberty who believed in converting blacklegs into jellies by force of fists when bribes, gentle persuasion and pure Australian language failed to convert them to clean Unionism. The Imperial Hotel was called the "Squatters' Pub," the "Scabbery," and other and more expressive names.
The hotel became still more unpopular after Percy Douglas had managed it for a while. He was an avowed enemy of Labour Unionists. He employed Chinese cooks, and that in the height of the anti-Chinese agitation in Australia, and he was known to have kindly feelings towards the Afghans who, with their camels, were running white carriers off the roads. If an excited Unionist called a man a "blackleg" or "scab" in the Imperial bar he was run out — sometimes with great difficulty, and occasionally as far as the lock-up.

Percy Douglas was a fine-looking man, "wid a chest on him an' well hung — a fine fee-*gure* of a man," as O'Donohoo pronounced it. He was tall and erect, he dressed well, wore small side-whiskers, had an eagle nose, and looked like an aristocrat. Like many of his type, who start sometimes as billiard-markers and suddenly become hotel managers in Australia, nothing was known of his past. Jack Mitchell reckoned, by the way he treated his employees and spoke to workmen, that he was the educated son of an English farmer — gone wrong and sent out to Australia. Someone called him "Lord Douglas," and the nickname caught on.

He made himself well hated. He got One-eyed Bogan "three months' hard" for taking a bottle of whisky off the Imperial bar counter because he (Bogan) was drunk and thirsty and had knocked down his cheque, and because there was no one minding the bar at the moment.

Lord Douglas dismissed the barmaid, and, as she was leaving, he had her boxes searched and gave her in charge for stealing certain articles belonging to the hotel. The chaps subscribed to defend the case, and subsequently put a few pounds together for the girl. She proved her gratitude by bringing a charge of a baby against one of the chaps — but that was only one of the little ways of the world, as Mitchell said. She joined a Chinese camp later on.

Lord Douglas employed a carpenter to do some work about the hotel, and because the carpenter left before the job was finished, Lord Douglas locked his tools in an outhouse and refused to give them up; and when the carpenter, with the spirit of an Australian workman, broke the padlock and removed his tool-chest, the landlord gave him in charge for breaking and entering. The chaps defended the case and won it, and hated Lord Douglas as much as if he were their elder brother. Mitchell was the only one to put in a word for him.

"I've been puzzling it out," said Mitchell, as he sat nursing his best leg in the Union Office, "and, as far as I can see, it all amounts to this — we're all mistaken in Lord Douglas. We don't know the man. He's all right. We don't understand him. He's really a sensitive, good-hearted man who's been shoved a bit off the track by the world. It's the world's fault — he's not to blame. You see, when he was a youngster he was the most good-natured kid in the school; he was always soft, and, consequently, he was always being imposed upon, and bullied, and knocked about. Whenever he got a penny to buy lollies he'd count 'em out carefully and divide 'em round amongst his schoolmates and brothers and sisters. He was the only one that worked at home, and consequently they all hated him. His father respected him, but didn't love him, because he wasn't a younger son, and wasn't bringing his father's grey hairs down in sorrow to the grave. If it was in Australia, probably Lord Douglas was an elder son and had to do all the hard graft, and teach himself at night, and sleep in a bark skillion while his younger brothers benefited — they were born in the new brick house and went to boarding-schools. His mother had a contempt for him because he wasn't a black sheep and a prodigal, and, when the old man died, the rest of the family got all the stuff and Lord Douglas was kicked out because they could do without him now. And the family hated him like poison ever afterwards (especially his mother), and spread lies about him — because they had treated him shamefully and because his mouth was shut — they knew he wouldn't speak. Then probably he went in for Democracy and worked for Freedom, till Freedom trod on him once too often with her hob-nailed boots. Then the chances are, in the end, he was ruined by a girl or woman, and driven, against his will, to take refuge in pure individualism. He's all right, only we don't appreciate him. He's only fighting against his old ideals — his old self that comes up sometimes — and that's what makes him sweat his barmaids and servants, and hate us, and run us in; and perhaps when he cuts up extra rough it's because his conscience kicks him when he thinks of the damned soft fool he used to be. He's all right — take my word for it. It's all a mask. Why, he might be one of the kindest-hearted men in Bourke underneath."

Tom Hall rubbed his head and blinked, as if he was worried by an idea that there might be some facts in Mitchell's theories.

"You're allers findin' excuses for blacklegs an' scabs, Mitchell," said Barcoo-Rot, who took Mitchell seriously (and who would have taken a laughing jackass seriously). "Why, you'd find a white spot on a squatter. I wouldn't be surprised if you blacklegged yourself in the end."

This was an unpardonable insult, from a Union point of view, and the chaps half-unconsciously made room on the floor for Barcoo-Rot to fall after Jack Mitchell hit him. But Mitchell took the insult philosophically.

"Well, Barcoo-Rot," he said, nursing the other leg, "for the matter of that, I did find a white spot on a squatter once. He lent me a quid when I was hard up. There's white spots on the blackest characters if you only drop prejudice and look close enough. I suppose even Jack-the-Ripper's character was speckled. Why, I can even see spots on your character, sometimes, Barcoo-Rot. I've known white spots to spread on chaps' characters until they were little short of saints. Sometimes I even fancy I can feel my own wings sprouting. And as for turning blackleg — well, I suppose I've got a bit of the crawler in my composition (most of us have), and a man never knows what might happen to his principles."

"Well," said Barcoo-Rot, "I beg yer pardon — ain't that enough?"

"No," said Mitchell, "you ought to wear a three-bushel bag and ashes for three months, and drink water; but since the police would send you to an asylum if you did that, I think the best thing we can do is to go out and have a drink."

Lord Douglas married an Australian girl somewhere, somehow, and brought her to Bourke, and there were two little girls — regular little fairies. She was a gentle, kind-hearted little woman, but she didn't seem to improve him much, save that he was very good to her.

"It's mostly that way," commented Mitchell. "When a boss gets married and has children he thinks he's got a greater right to grind his fellowmen and rob their wives and children. I'd never work for a boss with a big family — it's hard enough to keep a single boss nowadays in this country."

After one stormy election, at the end of a long and bitter shearing strike, One-eyed Bogan, his trusty enemy, Barcoo-Rot, and one or two other enthusiastic reformers were charged with rioting, and got from one to three months' hard. And they had only smashed three windows of the Imperial Hotel and chased the Chinese cook into the river.

"I used to have some hopes for Democracy," commented Mitchell, "but I've got none now. How can you expect Liberty, Equality or Fraternity — how can you expect Freedom and Universal Brotherhood and Equal Rights in a country where Sons of Light get three months' hard for breaking windows and bashing a Chinaman? It almost makes me long to sail away in a gallant barque."

There were other cases in connection with the rotten-egging of Capitalistic candidates on the Imperial Hotel balcony, and it was partly on the evidence of Douglas and his friends that certain respectable Labour leaders got heavy terms of imprisonment for rioting and "sedition" and "inciting," in connection with organized attacks on blacklegs and their escorts.

Retribution, if it was retribution, came suddenly and in a most unexpected manner to Lord Douglas.

It seems he employed a second carpenter for six months to repair and make certain additions to the hotel, and put him off under various pretences until he owed him a hundred pounds or thereabout. At last, immediately after an exciting interview with Lord Douglas, the carpenter died suddenly of heart disease. The widow, a strong-minded bushwoman, put a bailiff in the hotel on a very short notice — and against the advice of her lawyer, who thought the case hopeless — and the Lord Douglas bubble promptly burst. He had somehow come to be regarded as the proprietor of the hotel, but now the real proprietors or proprietor — he was still said to be a priest — turned Douglas out and put in a new manager. The old servants were paid after some trouble. The local storekeepers and one or two firms in Sydney, who had large accounts against the Imperial Hotel (and had trusted it, mainly because it was patronized by Capitalism and Fat), were never paid.

Lord Douglas cleared out to Sydney, leaving his wife and children, for the present, with her brother, a hay-and-corn storekeeper, who also had a large and hopeless account against the hotel; and when the brother went broke and left the district she rented a two-roomed cottage and took in dressmaking.

Dressmaking didn't pay so well in the bush then as it did in the old diggings days when sewing-machines were scarce and the possession of one meant an independent living to any girl — when diggers paid ten shillings for a strip of "flannen" doubled over and sewn together, with holes for arms and head, and called it a shirt. Mrs Douglas had a hard time, with her two little girls, who were still better and more prettily dressed than any other children in Bourke. One grocer still called on her for orders and pretended to be satisfied to wait "till Mr Douglas came back," and when she would no longer order what he considered sufficient provisions for her and the children, and commenced buying sugar, etc., by the pound, for cash, he one day sent a box of groceries round to her. He pretended it was a mistake.

"However," he said, "I'd be very much obliged if you could use 'em, Mrs Douglas. I'm overstocked now; haven't got room for another tin of sardines in the shop. Don't you worry about bills, Mrs Douglas; I can wait till Douglas comes home. I did well enough out of the Imperial Hotel when your husband had it, and a pound's worth of groceries won't hurt me now. I'm only too glad to get rid of some of the stock."

She cried a little, thought of the children, and kept the groceries.

"I suppose I'll be sold up soon meself if things don't git brighter," said that grocer to a friend, "so it doesn't matter much."

The same with Foley the butcher, who had a brogue with a sort of drawling groan in it, and was a cynic of the Mitchell school.

"You see," he said, "she's as proud as the devil, but when I send round a bit o' rawst, or porrk, or the undercut o' the blade-bawn, she thinks o' the little gur-r-rls before she thinks o' sendin' it back to me. That's where I've got the pull on her."

The Giraffe borrowed a horse and tip-dray one day at the beginning of winter and cut a load of firewood in the bush, and next morning, at daylight, Mrs Douglas was nearly startled out of her life by a crash at the end of the cottage, which made her think that the chimney had fallen in, or a tree fallen on the house; and when she slipped on a wrapper and looked out, she saw a load of short-cut wood by the chimney, and caught a glimpse of the back view of the Giraffe, who stood in the dray with his legs wide apart and was disappearing into the edge of the scrub; and soon the rapid clock-clock-clock of the wheels died away in the west, as if he were making for West Australia.

The next we heard of Lord Douglas he had got two years' hard for embezzlement in connection with some canvassing he had taken up. Mrs Douglas fell ill — a touch of brain-fever — and one of the labourers' wives took care of the children while two others took turns in nursing. While she was recovering, Bob Brothers sent round the hat, and, after a conclave in the Union Office — as mysterious as any meeting ever called with the object of downing bloated Capitalism — it was discovered that one of the chaps — who didn't wish his name to be mentioned — had borrowed just twenty-five pounds from Lord Douglas in the old days and now wished to return it to Mrs Douglas. So the thing was managed, and if she had any suspicions she kept them to herself. She started a little fancy goods shop and got along fairly comfortable.

Douglas, by the way, was, publicly, supposed, for her sake and because of the little girls, to be away in West Australia on the goldfields.

Time passes without much notice out back, and one hot day, when the sun hung behind the fierce sandstorms from the northwest as dully lurid as he ever showed in a London fog, Lord Douglas got out of the train that had just finished its five-hundred-miles' run, and not seeing a new-chum porter, who started forward by force of habit to take his bag, he walked stiffly off the platform and down the main street towards his wife's cottage.

He was very gaunt, and his eyes, to those who passed him closely, seemed to have a furtive, hunted expression. He had let his beard grow, and it had grown grey.

It was within a few days of Christmas — the same Christmas that we lost the Pretty Girl in the Salvation Army. As a rule the big shearing-sheds within a fortnight of Bourke cut out in time for the shearers to reach the town and have their Christmas dinners and sprees — and for some of them to be locked up over Christmas Day — within sound of a church-going bell. Most of the chaps gathered in the Shearers' Union Office on New Year's Eve and discussed Douglas amongst other things.

"I vote we kick the cow out of the town!" snarled One-eyed Bogan, viciously.

"We can't do that," said Bob Brothers (the Giraffe), speaking more promptly than usual. "There's his wife and youngsters to consider, yer know."

"He something well deserted his wife," snarled Bogan, "an' now he comes crawlin' back to her to keep him."

"Well," said Mitchell, mildly, "but we ain't all got as much against him as you have, Bogan."

"He made a crimson jail-bird of me!" snapped Bogan. "Well," said Mitchell, "that didn't hurt you much, anyway; it rather improved your character if anything. Besides, he made a jail-bird of himself afterwards, so you ought to have a fellow-feeling — a feathered feeling, so to speak. Now you needn't be offended, Bogan, we're all jail-birds at heart, only we haven't all got the pluck."

"I'm in favour of blanky well tarrin' an' featherin' him an' kickin' him out of the town!" shouted Bogan. "It would be a good turn to his wife, too; she'd be well rid of the —— ."

"Perhaps she's fond of him," suggested Mitchell; "I've known such cases before. I saw them sitting together on the veranda last night when they thought no one was looking."

"He deserted her," said One-eyed Bogan, in a climbing-down tone, "and left her to starve."

"Perhaps the police were to blame for that," said Mitchell. "You know you deserted all your old mates once for three months, Bogan, and it wasn't your fault."

"He seems to be a crimson pet of yours, Jack Mitchell," said Bogan, firing up.

"Ah, well, all I know," said Mitchell, standing up and stretching himself wearily, "all I know is that he looked like a gentleman once, and treated us like a gentleman, and cheated us like a gentleman, and ran some of us in like a gentleman, and, as far as I can see, he's served his time like a gentleman and come back to face us and live himself down like a man. I always had a sneaking regard for a gentleman."

"Why, Mitchell, I'm beginning to think you are a gentleman yourself," said Jake Boreham.

"Well," said Mitchell, "I used to have a suspicion once that I had a drop of blue blood in me somewhere, and it worried me a lot; but I asked my old mother about it one day, and she scalded me — God bless her! — and father chased me with a stockwhip, so I gave up making inquiries."
"You'll join the bloomin' Capitalists next," sneered One-eyed Bogan.

"I wish I could, Bogan," said Mitchell. "I'd take a trip to Paris and see for myself whether the Frenchwomen are as bad as they're made out to be, or go to Japan. But what are we going to do about Douglas?"

"Kick the skunk out of town, or boycott him!" said one or two. "He ought to be tarred and feathered and hanged."

"Couldn't do worse than hang him," commented Jake Boreham, cheerfully.

"Oh, yes, we could," said Mitchell, sitting down, resting his elbows on his knees, and marking his points with one forefinger on the other. "For instance, we might boil him slow in tar. We might skin him alive. We might put him in a cage and poke him with sticks, with his wife and children in another cage to look on and enjoy the fun."

The chaps, who had been sitting quietly listening to Mitchell, and grinning, suddenly became serious and shifted their positions uneasily.

"But I can tell you what would hurt his feelings more than anything else we could do," said Mitchell.

"Well, what is it, Jack?" said Tom Hall, rather impatiently.

"Send round the hat and take up a collection for him," said Mitchell, "enough to let him get away with his wife and children and start life again in some less respectable town than Bourke. You needn't grin, I'm serious about it."

There was a thoughtful pause, and one or two scratched their heads. "His wife seems pretty sick," Mitchell went on in a reflective tone. "I passed the place this morning and saw him scrubbing out the floor. He's been doing a bit of house-painting for old Heegard to-day. I suppose he learnt it in jail. I saw him at work and touched my hat to him."

"What!" cried Tom Hall, affecting to shrink from Mitchell in horror.

"Yes," said Mitchell, "I'm not sure that I didn't take my hat off. Now I know it's not bush religion for a man to touch his hat, except to a funeral, or a strange roof or woman sometimes; but when I meet a braver man than myself I salute him. I've only met two in my life."

"And who were they, Jack?" asked Jake Boreham.

"One," said Mitchell — "one is Douglas, and the other — well, the other was the man I used to be. But that's got nothing to do with it."

"But perhaps Douglas thought you were crowing over him when you took off your hat to him —

sneerin' at him, like, Mitchell," reflected Jake Boreham.

"No, Jake," said Mitchell, growing serious suddenly. "There are ways of doing things that another man understands."

They all thought for a while.

"Well," said Tom Hall, "supposing we do take up a collection for him, he'd be too damned proud to take it."

"But that's where we've got the pull on him," said Mitchell, brightening up. "I heard Dr Morgan say that Mrs Douglas wouldn't live if she wasn't sent away to a cooler place, and Douglas knows it; and, besides, one of the little girls is sick. We've got him in a corner and he'll have to take the stuff. Besides, two years in jail takes a lot of the pride out of a man."

"Well, I'm damned if I'll give a sprat to help the man who tried his best to crush the Unions!" said One-eyed Bogan.

"Damned if I will either!" said Barcoo-Rot.

"Now, look here, One-eyed Bogan," said Mitchell, "I don't like to harp on old things, for I know they bore you, but when you returned to public life that time no one talked of kicking you out of the town. In fact, I heard that the chaps put a few pounds together to help you get away for a while till you got over your modesty."

No one spoke.

"I passed Douglas's place on my way here from my camp to-night," Mitchell went on musingly, "and I saw him walking up and down in the yard with his sick child in his arms. You remember that little girl, Bogan? I saw her run and pick up your hat and give it to you one day when you were trying to put it on with your feet. You remember, Bogan? The shock nearly sobered you."

There was a very awkward pause. The position had become too psychological altogether and had to be ended somehow. The awkward silence had to be broken, and Bogan broke it. He turned up Bob Brothers's hat, which was lying on the table, and "chucked" in a "quid," qualifying the hat and the quid, and disguising his feelings with the national oath of the land.

"We've had enough of this gory, maudlin, sentimental tommy-rot," he said. "Here, Barcoo, stump up or I'll belt it out of your hide! I'll — I'll take yer to pieces!"

But Douglas didn't leave the town. He sent his wife and children to Sydney until the heat wave was past, built a new room on to the cottage, and started a book and newspaper shop, and a poultry farm in the back paddock, and flourished.

They called him Mr Douglas for a while, then Douglas, then Percy Douglas, and now he is well-known as Old Daddy Douglas, and the Sydney *Worker*, *Truth*, and *Bulletin*, and other democratic rags are on sale at his shop. He is big with schemes for locking the Darling River, and he gets his drink at

O'Donohoo's. He is scarcely yet regarded as a straight-out democrat. He was a gentleman once, Mitchell said, and the old blood was not to be trusted. But, last elections, Douglas worked quietly for Unionism, and gave the leaders certain hints, and put them up to various electioneering dodges which enabled them to return, in the face of Monopoly, a Labour member who is as likely to go straight as long as any other Labour member.

Triangles Of Life: The Reason

ALL Australia. All of the best you have seen or read, or remember of it; of what has been written about it by its own sons and in Australia. And a timber-cutter's camp just within the blazing, blinding, humming, waving, shimmering and pulsating great dusty and gritty heart of it. Tents about, seeming only not to blaze off like so much paper, and bough cook's-shed at the junction of two lanes of piled cut scrub. A sky darkened and dusky and lowering with drought haze and a boiled sun steaming in the center of it. A heat that blinds to darkness with perspiration and chills momentarily and frightens men.

"God Forgive Billy" was in a bad way. He had a touch of the "dry 'orrers," as One-eyed-Bogan said, who had had great experience with the "Horrors," both with his own and his mates', and dry and otherwise. When the men came they found no dinner ready, and they found Billy sitting in the dust and ashes of his "floor," his back propped against an upright of the shed, a bucket half full of potatoes between his legs, and a butcher's knife held loosely in his helpless nerveless hand, lying knuckles down in the dust, and rocking a little like a broken live thing — and his greasy kerosene tins round him. Great, shiny black crows were flopping round indignantly, interrupted in a premature grace; a great repulsive-looking goanna skurried and sidled off, turning his head evilly, and went up the baked, ashen bark of a tree; and a close inspection might have revealed the fact that the black ants had already suspended hostilities in their slow, sure and bloodthirsty and merciless war of extermination against a colony of red ants on the bank of the creek (with its one yellow dam or waterhole), and their lines were drawing back towards their base — the shed. He said the Devil had taken the boiling corned beef out of the pot, and so it was no use going on with the potatoes. He described the devil, and supposed it must have been a French one, because it "certingly wearn't a English one." One-eyed-Bogan took a stick and looked and poked in the kerosene tin hanging over the fire, and the meat was gone all right, or rather all wrong. He was a man who liked to see for himself, and he always looked twice at least — on account of his one eye, perhaps.

The meat had really been taken by the mangy, hairless, hide-covered skeleton of a starved Kangaroo dog, "belonging to King Billy," that was known to be hanging about. There was "any God's quantity of rabbits," but dogs starve on rabbits. Billy himself, the royal one, afterwards admitted the fact, and Billy was a truthful potentate. He had seen his dog do it — take the meat out of the boiling water by a corner that stuck up, and from over the lee of the blazing fire, just as described as a lie once by one of the Bulletin's contributors, and just as I saw it done when a boy, and describe it here as a fact.

Billy said that the other Billy sat down along a prop when he saw the dog do that. Billy (the royal one) said he believed his dog belong-it the devil, and he bin borrow poison along-a rabbit poisoner's camp, and bin kill-it. He showed the scalp, for like all truthful men, black or white, he believed truth to be no good at all without undoubted material or written evidence behind it.

They carried Billy under the patchy "shade" of some gidgea, and laid him down and watered him till the grateful ground ceased to steam, and was much darker than the shade.

Billy sat up and told them that this was what they call the Four Lanes, and yonder straight ahead was Shepperton-on-Tems, and over there was Halliford and Sunbury-on-Tems, and that was a backwater of the Tems, with the willers an' watercress an' ole mill and rustic bridge, an', twisting himself round, "there was Shawlton (Charlton) jest round the corner, with Bob Howe's farm first, and the Farmers' Arms, and then the village, with Shawlton House opposite, where yer see them poplers over the hedge, and then Harry Leonard's farm, with Upper Sunbury further on, an' the London Road leadin' to Stains an' Windser Castle an' Hampton Court — an' — an' London and everywheere else for all he know'd." Blue smoke crawled along the ground from the burning off, and he said "that was the ground mist comin' up, an' it was gettin' chilly," and he proposed that they'd all go to the Farmers' Arms, where he'd fill up the pewter.

Little "God Forgive Billy," the greenest of New Chum Jackeroos, had been sent up by the Government, or Labour Bureau — that is he was given a pass and some rations, and sent away almost from the ship into the disc of Australia, of which he knew absolutely nothing except the awful blaze and dust of it — the blasting reason-shaking contrast from the green lanes of England — which was driving him mad. He had learned potato-peeling and rough cooking aboard the ship, and was liked here because of his fresh innocence, mild and obliging disposition, his gentle nursing and attention to Bogan when he had a touch o' the sun, and his smile, which was dimples deepened and lengthened a bit, hardened and fixed. Besides, he could play both mouth-organ and tin whistle. And he had one surprising gift altogether out of keeping with his appearance and character or nature. A gift that astonished all who saw an exhibition of it for the first time — and startled some. He could act the drunken man. That is a certain type of him. And the type was Australian, and not English. He was a perfect face-maker in this respect — for it was a silent part. He'd half turn away and damp his hair and moustache swiftly, by a quick pass or sleight of hand, and his hair would be dank, his moustache slobbered, and his hand would pass drunkenly over it to fling the surplus beers away, and his limbs would go, and his left eyelid keep dropping, like a lid, and — and he'd be Billy very drunk, who had never been drunk in his life.

Was it the Billy of previous incarnation come out again for the moment?

They never grew tired of seeing Billy do it, and "Come and see Bill the cook drunk" was a common invitation to strangers and new-comers. They intended to use him for practical jokes on the boss, etc., but it wasn't in Billy's nature to agree to anything like that.

One-eyed Bogan was left in camp that afternoon to mutual satisfaction, to look after poor Little Billy and his dry horrors, because Bogan was the most casual, easy-going, and pipe-lighting, and water-bag-seeking worker in that hell's vineyard — as well as the strongest and least nervous man in camp. Besides, he said he had experience with lunatics, and (besides) he owed a debt of gratitude to Billy, and they reckoned he would be kinder to the little fellow on that account.

"And you never know how snake-quick an' cunning an' strong them little fellers is when they're drunk or ratty. But I'm cunnin' enough, I reckon, 'n' strong enough too for pore little Billy."

One-eyed Bogan had a naturally sinister expression, and had been otherwise damaged about the face in many gambling and drinking rows, and his green patch and glaring eye must have been very soothing indeed to a mild little new chum going mad through heat, trouble and loneliness in a strange and fearful land.

Bogan said at tea that he'd fixed Billy with his eye all right, which was very apparent, for Billy was much worse, and had to be kept sitting on the rough stool between two of them — who humoured and watched him as a little child — because he only wanted to go down that lane and have a dip in the Thames backwater now it was dusk, and no one was about.

Bogan reckoned he was safe enough for the night, with any one to watch him, turn about, and quite harmless. But he saw the thing in another light, later on, when Billy confessed tearfully to Jack Moonlight that he thought he was going mad, because he kept craving to peel Bogan's head with the chopper, like a big pumpkin, and quarter it. He said the Voices were urging him all the time to do it — he could hear them all the time he was speaking. And he wanted to be tied up.

Just before dark a solitary swagman, or "traveller," came along — on his way from a shearing shed to the coach-road, he said — and seeing and hearing how things stood, he volunteered to look after Billy first part of the night, as he'd only made a short stage, and rest over next day, if they liked, with an eye to Billy and the cooking. He said he'd had to do with such cases before, and understood. He was a likely looking chap for the job — tall, with saddish brown eyes — so they washed a tin plate, knife and fork, and pint pot for him, with an audible breath of relief. But afterwards One-eyed Bogan carefully collected the chopper, knives and forks, and all edged tools about camp and lashed them together in a bundle with bagging, a spare tent fly, and bits of clothes-line and wire — for general safety, he said. He said, "Yer couldn't be too careful in these here cases." He made his bed in the open, on some boughs, under the saplings, and laid the bundle beside it, and tied a cord to it and to his arm when he laid him down to rest. But he was seen, when they all were down, save Billy and his new warder, sitting up against the rising moon, and not like a "Queen of Night palm" either, and passing his hand nervously over his "pumpkin" and glancing, apprehensively, it seemed, from Billy and his new mate to the wood-heap — perhaps he was thinking of mashed raw pumpkin.

Bogan gets a fright here through Jack Moonlight stumbling over him.

Then he was seen no more, and in the morning, just as they were reckoning that he'd "gone off too," and worse calamity of all! had taken the tools, he came out of the scrub from another direction with his bundle and blankets on his shoulder, and looking as if he'd passed a bad night. He said, "Yer could never be too careful in these here cases. They was so — cunnin', and allers turned agin them as was nearest an' dearest to 'em. That was a sure sign." Which reminds me that I could never see why it should be considered a sure, or even extra, or even one sign of insanity that patients turn against friends and relatives first, and cleave to strangers. Look more like a sign of returning, or temporary, sanity, the more I think of it.

Next evening Billy was better, though he feared it coming on with the night. He had taken a great liking to the new man, whom he persisted in recognizing as a long-lost village school-mate. The swagman said he had been taken to England as a child, but remembered very little of it, and nothing of Billy. Billy showed no inclination to peel his potatoes, however, and during the evening, the It and the Voices not coming on, he told him all about it. How he had left home and run to London first, because it was gloomy at home, and there was always trouble. There was big trouble, not his, but he should 'a'stayed an' shared it. He had a right in it. He hoped, with a momentary loss of himself and a fluttering raising of uncertain fingers to his temples, that "Bob," the new man, wouldn't mention a word of it in Shepparton or anywheres. He was sick an' weak, or he wouldn't have talked on it..."And his poor old mother! — Poor mother!" He shed tears and his voice broke into the whine that no man likes to hear. "He'd left trouble that he had as much right in as any o' them. Left poor mother dyin' broken-hearted on it, and Tom t' fight it out. Poor old Tom! Good old Tom as he was allers havin' 'dry' words with — an' all his own fault..."

The stranger, who treated him as a perfectly rational being, listened with seeming interest, sympathized, soothed, and assured Billy over and over again, with astonishing patience, that it was all going to be mended and fixed up, and that Billy was going home almost directly the job was done.

About here there came what some writers call a "diversion." It certainly diverted Bogan's dreams, if he dreamed. It diverted Jack Moonlight in his quiet way, and was probably a relief to the new — comer. He heard some one, or something, coming through the scrub, then a silence (he heard that too), as if the man or animal had stopped, or was moving quietly. Then he fancied a shadow was bending over Bogan, but before he was sure there was a yell, and sounds like the sudden getting up of a dray horse that has been stumbled over in his sleep by a blundering old working bullock, and badly frightened. The shadows blended and went down; then one rose, and then the other, and there was bad language, then presently one shadow settled down again, and the language grumbled out on the night breeze. Bob was just going across with Billy to see, when he met Jack Moonlight, who seemed to have a "hiccup," or a catch, in his stomach.

"What's up?" asked Bob, with the adjectives necessary in new acquaintanceships.

"Oh, it's only Bogan," said Moonlight; "I dunno what the hell he wanted to play up like that for. I was coming from the fires, and I only bent over him and rubbed his head with my pipe bowl, to see if he was awake, and I told him to keep an eye out for God Forgive Billy."

Billy had a strong objection, connected with the earth's 'lectricity, to sleeping on his usual bed of boughs and blanket on the ground, and he had a horror of the tent. He said he'd got too much 'lectricity coming round the world, and that was what was the matter with him. He said he should never have come halfway round the world, which was correct, and having come so far he should have gone the other half and finished it — which was sane enough. So Bob made Bill's bed on the rough sapling bench or table, under the dead-bough shed, and persuaded him to lie down. The posts had been "puddled," or clay rammed, down hard round them, and the cavities kept filled with water, to keep the ants off the table, so Billy was isolated from them, if not from the earth's electricity. His friend told him he was, that the water and clay acted as perfect world insulator, and he seemed satisfied.

Almost before Bob was aware, he had commenced that long, quiet, calm, deceptive sleep, which so often cruelly raises hopes in the hearts of relatives and friends of such "cases" in the earliest stages, but which never deceives mental doctors or nurses. Bob sat on the sapling seat bench with his back against a corner upright, and commenced his watch of Billy — and of other things —

I. Childhood: Rows and scenes and scenes and rows, violent rows that frightened; father and mother separated; home a hell. Boy slavery and freedom.

II. Cheap boarding house, pretty, but hysterical, daughter; mother, step-father, and sisters; rows and scenes more violent than at home. Tale of ill-treatment. Last big row. Cab, box, and hurried, mad marriage at a "matrimonial bureau." Seven years of it.

III. Police court. Desertion. "Judicial separation." Maintenance order. Reconciliation — court — reconciliation — court. Summons for desertion, and maintenance. Summons, summons, summons, Darlinghurst. And the full knowledge of what sort of woman she was.

He shook it off, or lifted his mind from under it. He had gone through so much that he had this power: that he could do this at will almost. The moon rose over the scrub, and all things softened. It was cool, and even growing chilly, as drought nights do grow, and he drew the blanket up over Billy, who never stirred. Then he leaned back against the corner sapling, when he heard his voice called; the close, yet far away call, very distinct. "Robert!" His elbows jumped to his sides as he straightened, but he'd heard that voice before. Then, clear and distinct: "Read, Robert — read!"

At the first start he thrust out his hand towards Billy, and his hand touched Billy's hand, which lay, palm up, on the saplings; he was drawing back with a momentary sense of shame at his fear when Billy's fingers closed over his, as a sleeping child's might. Then he looked up, and across, and set his mind to read. Then gradually the "Four Lanes" took shape, and he saw the cool green, peaceful English scene, as Billy had. The ground mist was "coming up," and dusk coming on — dusking the moonlight at first — and he saw two figures coming, or seeming more to float toward him from the direction of Shepperton-on- Thames — as in a picture from the dawn of memory. Then suddenly the figures were close to him and plain — save the faces. The girl wore a dark jacket, such as worn in England five or six years ago, and a dark hat with much forward brim, held down to hide the face, which always gives a girl a more hang-dog and guilty look than any slouch hat worn any way can give a man. And to Bob it seemed his wife, as he last saw her — under cross-examination. And who was the man? He seemed to have had both arms round the woman — or girl — in the first part of the vision, now he had only one, the left, and the right was risen as though to hide his face, shut out of sight, or ward off a blow. The attitude chilled Bob with a strange fear. Who was the man? What was Bob to do? What would Bob do? He seemed to be lying against the outside of a ditch with eyes just above the grass. Should he attack the man as "all the world" would expect him to do, or slip down and along the bottom of the ditch quietly? There was no "world" to see, so he was just sinking down, with that strange, calm, easy "will power," or whatever it is, which makes all the difference between hypnotic influence and "nightmare" when, with a sudden upheaval, as of a wave, he was beside the girl. He was the man with one arm round her and the other up to ward off. He was struggling and grappling with Billy, the little scrub cutter's lunatic cook, while watching whom he had fallen asleep, and — with the sudden, violent, half dislocating jerk of all the limbs and body that often accompanies an awakening from hypnotic trance, he was awake, and standing up, in his proper senses, cool and collected. It was as though nightmare, with its violent awakening, had come to the rescue from hypnotism. And Billy lay as he had fallen asleep, still sleeping peacefully. The awful hot, ghostly daylight was over the scrub, looking the same as drought nightfall.

Billy woke at his usual time, and in his usual manner, save for saying cheerily, "Oh! I'm all right now, mates!" Then with a fearful pause, he flung his wavering fingers up hopelessly to his head and said, "Oh — oh, them Voices, Bob!"

Next day, the last of the job, Billy was worse, and they had to run him down or round him up several times, but the drays came out and the men cleared up without loss of time, and went into the station for their cheques, taking Billy with them. And leaving the King Billy monarch of all he surveyed — just think of it, for hundreds of miles — and sixteen dogs and two gins. They took Billy with them — and a trusted, sober, station hand, sent by the super — to the coach road, where Poisonous Jimmy kept a pub-store and post office, and there was a "police camp" (a brick and iron one) handy. Billy had a pleasant ride — through English lanes — to Poisonous Jimmy's — though he rode and walked with devils most of the time. He pointed out all the features of the imaginary panorama — to propitiate them perhaps. Poisonous Jimmy's was like a deserted and dried-up slaughter yard, with the offal shed only left and cleaned up a bit, and set in big dust and sand patch in the blazing scrub desert. Here the stranger got a packet of dusty letters and a lot of copies of a Sydney paper. Then he began to act peculiar. He got the loan of the private parlour from the landlady, and, after much hunting, borrowed some scraps of brown paper. Then he got on the right side of the girl to make him some paste. Then he went through his bundle of papers and marked many paragraphs, some verse, and other matter with the stump of a blue pencil. Then he cut out all the marked pieces carefully with his penknife, and pasted them on strips of brown paper; then he borrowed a carpenter's rule, measured the strips carefully, and entered the result in a pocket-book!

The girl noticed first, of course. Then she whispered to the landlady, who went and had an indifferent look, as also had Poisonous Jimmy. They'd seen too many drink and drought "looneys" to take much notice. Then One-eyed Bogan went to see for himself, and glared in quite awhile with his one eye.

" — ! Blowed if he ain't took it from Billy!" he said. "I told yer yer couldn't be too careful in them cases! Lunatic-doctors an' lunatic- nurses all get it more or less themselves if they stick to the game long enough. Who the blazes next, I wonder?"

Then the new lunatic wanted a piece of white paper, and the landlady humoured him — as she had done the others — to "save trouble and for the sake of peace and quietness." She found it at the bottom of a "band- box" (where did that term come from to Australia?). Then he wrapped the brown paper with the slips pasted on, folded it, tied it neatly with twine, addressed, stamped — and posted it to a newspaper!

"And I'll have to send it, because it's stamped," said Poisonous Jimmy. "Couldn't keep it back without a doctor's certificate. You chaps had better give the policeman a hint — what goes in the coach with your mate. T'other looney's goin' too."

But just a little rite had to be performed that belongs to the Bushman's Creed in another man's trouble — be he Bushman or — or Chinaman — and which is usually performed on the quiet, mysteriously, furtively, and looks more like a low class conspiracy, or better class robbery being planned than anything else. But in Billy's case it didn't matter. Bogan collected the men in the bar, and took off his old black slouch calico crowned straw hat. But Jack Moonlight objected jocularly that there were edges of straw inside under which coins might slip in a hat held by experienced hands (he was a noted gambler — and so was One-eyed Bogan).

So One-eyed Bogan borrowed Moonlight's hat, "chucked" "half-a-caser" in it for a send-off, and passed it round. In a shearing shed in full swing in a good season it would have been quids, half-quids, casers, and at the lowest half-casers permitted. But scrub-cutting is low down and "red hot" in a bad season. "Anyways," Bogan said, "there was enough to get a clean shirt and socks and a handkerchief and boot laces for Billy." When Bogan got his last shearing cheque he went to Sydney and ended up, or rather began a new life in the Darlinghurst Receiving House, with a pair of torn trousers, a shirt, the best part of a waistcoat, a new elastic side-boot, and one sock. He sang "Home, Sweet Home!" all the first night in the padded cell — "an' that'll show how bad I was!" he said.

And at the last moment, Bogan told the policeman in charge of Billy, for his comfort on a thirty-mile dry stretch, that "he'd better keep his eye on the other fellow too!" And the driver was a noted eccentric, and there were no other passengers — but — well, all men are mad more or less — and more Out Back in drought time. So perhaps the inspector thought himself lucky to have no more than three looneys on hand — and one of them he knew. Better the lunatic you know than the one you don't.

Then they went their various ways through their common hells to their private ones, sober, drunken and domestic.

"But," said Bob to the policeman, casually, as they plunged into a fifty-mile bank of dust, "that's a hard case, that One-eyed chap they call the Bogan. What lark was he up to when he took your lug?"

Which satisfied the constable at once that it was only another little practical joke attempted on the police, whereas Bob might have talked to him till Sydney, and never convinced him that his new and previous mates had been in earnest, but mistaken.

Bob now became Billy's brother Tom, and was told all about it again — about Billy's troubles in Australia — and so on through all the freaks of a disordered brain to Redfern Terminus.

Billy was taken to the Receiving House, where Bob went to see him, and they saved him from Callan Park.

Some weeks later a boat of the Bright Star Line wanted a fourth or fifth cook (and as many shillings a month firemen as they could get), and Billy went as cook, and the other lunatic saw him off with a supply of tobacco and a parcel of clean things.

And there was one little man with a smile in England who never talked of Australia.

In 1901 Robert Cleaves went to London with great hopes — and deep fears — as a writer, and struck a period of "mental dismay," as I heard it called by another who went to London with great hopes as a young poet, and came back grey. But it was more than "mental dismay" with Bob, it was mental horror — or horrors — most of the time, for he had heavy private trouble on him, and no funds, relatives or friends. In the lowest depth of the dismay, and on the verge of rags and starvation, he thought of "Shawlton" and "God Forgive Billy."

Their Mate's Honour.

Bulletin 1908, as reprinted in Cronin ed. *A Fantasy of Man: Henry Lawson Complete Works* vol. II, p. 383

"What does it matter so long as *he* doesn't know?"

They stood in a sort of circle, faces inward, all regarding the grey ground vacantly. It was on the bank of the river at Bourke, a little below the new, tared "white-elephant" wharf - or, rather, landing stage for wool - high above the muddy grey streak of water, and just out of the town - and screened from it by a fringe of mulga scrub. Down the river, guarding it like sentinels, and showing the wool-boats the way on dark nights, ran the honest, shady river timber - "the Darling timber".

"What does it matter so long as he doesn't know?" asked One-eyed Bogan again.

"That's what the rest of the world always says, Bogan," said Mitchell.

Jack Moonlight turned and glanced absently along the dark line of the mulga beyond the river timber. He checked in his glance, and gazed half vacantly for a moment as if he had just caught sight of something in the glimmering haze which he was vaguely conscious of not having seen there before. Then he swung back and spoke:

"I come across a similar case once - years ago. It was in North Sydney. I was lookin' round there once for a day or two, when I was down with a cheque. (I was born there, and went to school there.) There was an old mate of mine living there, married and settled down; but he went up country sometimes - pretty reg'lar - month or two at a time; connected with a wool firm or something. They all knew her round the place - except Tom. She was never satisfied when he was away, even when he left her plenty of money. (And she had plenty of credit as Tom's wife.) He was always writing to his firm to give her a few pounds in advance if she wanted it, and writing to her to call for it. They all knew round the place. There was two or three of them sort of wives in with her. Generally when one gets caught or found out, two or three homes gets busted up. Well, one time - it was the time I was down there - Tom come home unexpected, and found out. I didn't hear about it and get hold of him in time."

Moonlight was reminded to glance once again at the haze, to see if that vague thing was there yet, but it seemed to have vanished into sunset.
"Well, wot did this here Tom do?" asked Bogan.
"He went to an ironmonger's first, and then he went down to Manly, and stuck a piece of looking-glass up on a ledge of rock to see by, and shot himself through the temple."
"But this here mate of yours found out?" persisted Bogan.
"Let Joe Large find out for himself- that's the way it has to be amongst men. He'll find out sooner or later, and then it will be time enough for any of us that happens to be on the spot to do something. He's happy, and he'd smash the first man that hinted a word against his wife. Let is go at that. He'll find out soon enough, and what does it matter to us so long's he don't know?"
"Most everybody else in Bourke knows," said Jack Moonlight, "and it makes me feel a crawler, for one, every time I shake hands with Joe, or have a drink with him. I can't refuse *that* without telling the reason why. But" - and here a dangerous flash, as if from smouldering insanity, lit his eyes - "I tell you all now, there's one thing I won't stand, and if Joe's dear old mate, Ted Cosgrove, makes to shake hands with Joe Large this time, or drink with him, I'll smash the first glass in that brute's grinning face."
There was a pipe-lighting and match-borrowing pause.
"After all, " said Bob, "she's only a woman - an' a little'un at that! Five or six of us long fellers can't tackle a little woman. Yer can't say nothin' about a woman."
"That's it," said Mitchell. " You've hit the nail right on the head while it was hot, Bob. It's a long worm that has no turning. It takes a brave man to tackle a woman, and it takes a hero to tackle some; more'n half-a-dozen heroes, in fact. An' none of us ain't a hero. Ah, well! I don't see that we can do anything except wait and hope. There's sure to be one or two of us on hand to get hold of Joe and keep him from the gallows when the burst-up does come. We've only got to keep our ears open, and look out for it."

They moved on towards the town - past the camel drivers' camp in a clearing to the right, where, generally, Abdul Khan and his retainers would squat down round a red charcoal fire in the dusk, and pass the great, long, serpent-stemmed pipe - like a fiend's feeding bottle - and make weird sounds on something like a hideously bloated bull snake with sores broken out on it. Then they came in sight of a pretty little vine-fronted cottage, with a hose tied to the verandah post and playing all day (at Joe's expense) and with it's back garden almost buried in the blue-grey gum bush (as distinct from the native dark green mulga). They instinctively took a track that led well round to the rear. They had reached the edge when long Tom Hall, who was in the lead, suddenly stopped and held up his hand.

A turbaned head showed over the back garden gate, which was lower than the fence. Then, in the passing of a life moment, the gate opened and shut, and a turban-tipped figure, almost as mystic as Asia's past, in the blue-grey, and the gathering dusk, with a lower skyline behind, passed down the track, floated, as it were, round to the right, and was gone.

"Abdul Khan!" hoarsed One-eyed Bogan, with a very bad oath.
"Ye-s-s," mused Michell, when the dead silence had lasted long enough. "Here! hold on, Bogan! We don't want a dead Afghan or two in the business just yet; and your record wouldn't help save you much from the gallows." He had seen Bogan engaged in a personal matter before - or at least in a case for which Bogan had made himself personally responsible; and he knew that Bogan's methods were somewhat crude.

It was a committee of ways and means now. The original question had been decided by the vision of Asia.
"She'll have to clear out of this at once," said Tom Hall. "Forale shed cut out day before yesterday, and Joe Large might be here any time to-night. He won't camp much till he gets home. Lucky there was no steamer up river. Now - the first thing is to get her out of the place; and the first thing we've got to consider is how it's to be done."

"I'm ———— if I'll go within a mile of the woman," said One-eyed Bogan, without waiting to be asked.

"I'll tell you what," said Michell, dropping for a moment his mask and manner of a friendly Mephistopheles in the earnestness of a man and mate. "We'll have to have a woman in the business - and a good woman too. There's no help for it."

One after another, unconsciously it may have been, took to looking at Tom Hall for advice and help out of their hole. He happened to be the only known and permanently married man amongst them just then.

"A good, straightforward little woman," added Michell, as an afterthought, cocking an eye at the fading sky and scratching the bristles under his chin.

Tom Hall got to his feet.

"Well, you chaps," he said, "I'd do anything for Joe Large, and so would the missus. But- but she can't go there - to the cottage I mean."

"That's easily arranged," said Mitchell. "Send a note to Mrs Large's sister - Miss Fergus she calls herself - sayin' Mrs Hall would like to see her for a few minutes but can't come on account of the baby. That'll bring her- she does a bit of fancy work and might think it's that. There she is now! Drivin' home from somewhere with old Mother Brooks."

About an hour later, the hardened remains of a dashing woman, with ex-first-class barmaid written all over her, rose from a very hard chair in little Mrs Hall's little dining-room, and stood plainly shaken.
"I hope you don't think I knew or even suspected anything about this, Mrs Hall," she began.
"I don't think anything about you, Miss Fergus- nor your sister for that matter, "said the plain little woman. "It's about Joe Large."

Miss Fergus opened the door, rather blindly, and so found her way out and then walked home fast, like a woman who had made up her mind.

There was a "pregnant pause" when Miss Fergus passed into the cottage sitting-room. Mrs Large then spoke: "Well,?"
"Well, they are going to tell Joe," said her sister, with brutal directness.
"Tell Joe? Who? About what?"
"You know as well as I do. Cosgrove and - and the others. It's no use, Baby," she said, as her sister jumped up with denials and bad words on her lips. "It's no use between ourselves- we're both in it. Don't pretend now that we deceived each other, though we always pretended we did, you know. They're going to tell Joe to-night, or as soon as he gets in. His mates- Tom Hall, that fellow they call

Moonlight, and the rest- are. And the sooner we're both out of this the better."

"But there's no train till the morning! How am I going to go? Walk?" demanded Mrs Joe sharply.

"They'll arrange all about that. They'll send a buggy in about an hour with a man to drive us down to Nyngan. We can take a train from there."
"Can't you get them to keep it from Joe until after I've seen him and - and gone? I'll promise -"
"No use. You only want to get his last cheque, but you've got no chance, they've sent that long fool Bob, round with the hat to get a few pounds for us and - "
"And what?" screamed Mrs Large. "Bellin' my name all over the town?"
"Now, don't be a fool!" said her sister. "There'll be no bellin', and as for that, it was all over the town months ago. He'll simply say it's for someone in a hole and those fools will drop their notes in. That's all right enough, as Tom Hall says. It's Joe that's in the hole- only he doesn't know it yet."

In a little more than an hour a double buggy drove up from the Carriers' Arms, in charge of the old yard man, who had seen a small parcel and a note for them. He put their luggage in front of him; they got in behind and were driven down the road that ran by the line, under the gathering starlight.

"Now," said Tom Hall in his organising manner - as if a train-load of free labourers were expected- "Joe, and his mates, if he has any, will have to come round by the bridge. We'll want a picket out. You'd better go, Mitchell- you're the biggest liar from Sydney to Perth, and the most cheerful one. Wait at the Bridge Hotel. Some of us will watch in case Joe gets a boat across the river. Just let him know casually that his wife and her sister went down to Nevertire by the train this morning to see a sick cousin or something - she's got plenty of relatives. They got a wire last night. You decorate the story. Joe never drinks till he's been home with his wife, but he won't mind now - under the circ's. Have a drink with him too, if you can- at the Bridge Hotel and then bring him on to the Royal.

They were gathered in the old bar of the Royal- in the old original weatherboard building. They had got a "mulga wire" that Joe Large was at the Bridge Hotel with Jack Mitchell and might be expected at any moment. Moonlight stood near the end of the bar, with an elbow hooked onto it, gloomily watching Cosgrove, who sat with a mate or two on the seat along the wall. One-eyed Bogan, edging from behind Tom Hall at the other end of the bar, had never looked so suspicious - showing the whole course of his bygone criminal career.

Joe Large swung in and swung down his swag. "'Ullo, boys."he said."Here we are again. How are yer all?" He shook hands with a crushing grip. Moonlight watched Cosgrove. "'Ullo, Tom Hall, you blanky old long slab of democracy, how the ——— are yer?" Cosgrove got up and went out. "Why, what's up with Cosgrove? Never mind - he's comin' back, I s'pose. Fill 'em up for everybody!"

Mitchell slipped out and went across to the chemist, whom he knew; he told him he couldn't sleep, and other things.
"I've lost about a stone," said Joe Large. "Six weeks and averaged a hundred, and I had luck in Tattersall's too. All for the little woman. We're both going to take a trip to Sydney this time. Look out for the society papers' arrivals from the West: 'Joseph Large Esq., professional shearer, wringer at Forale for three seasons, and blindfold draught player; and his charming young wife. They intend to do it grand and so on.' Fill 'em up again."

Mitchell edged along the bar towards Joe's glass as he set it down.

There was light, after hours, showing through the cracks between the slabs of the big room off the kitchen behind the old place, also voices, and sounds as of a scuffle and oaths. Senior-Sargeant Cassidy, drifting round casually, with no apparent object in view - after the manner of Mr Inspector Bucket - and just as he used to drift round felonious corners on the Rocks in the days of its Push glory - came on Dalton standing at the corner of the kitchen with his hands behind his back, and studying the weather.

"What is it Dalton?"
"They're telling Joe Large"
"About - ?"
"About - "
"Then I don't see as I'm wanted here."
"The doctor will be more wanted in the morning, Cassidy."
"Why?"
"Jack Moonlight is going to fix up things with Cosgrove, at daylight, in the scrub, up above the waterworks."
"Is he though?"
"And One-eyed Bogan's taking on Redmond afterwards, and the Lord knows where it will end."
"I'll be there" said Cassidy, "if I'm kicked out of the force and lose me pension."
Inside the Large Committee stood round a stretcher on which a big man was strapped down exhausted now by his last struggle. The candlelight threw giant and grotesque shadows on the walls, where harness was hung. By an irony of black reflection, the shadow of Tom Hall's head wore a mighty pair of polished, velvet-bound bullock horns.
"Joe - Joe," said old grey-bearded Andrews, ex-digger, and tank-sinking contractor. "Do you think I'd tell ye a lie? I knowed yer father, Joe, long afore ye was heard on. I nursed *ye* on me knee, Joe."
"Let me up," said Joe Large, "I'll be quiet - I won't hurt anyone."
They unbuckled the straps and he sat on the edge of the stretcher with his head on his hand.
"And she's gone?" he asked again.
"Near Sydney by now, Joe, " said Mitchell.
Tom Hall laid a hand on Joe's shoulder, that began to heave. Joe's right hand came up, like a broken child's, and Hall clasped it with a grip of iron.
"I - I tried to be a good husband to her, Tom, " Joe said. "I tried to be a good husband to her. All you chaps know. I tried to be a good husband to her."
"Better get out, you chaps," whispered Tom Hall. "He'll be alright now."
"We'll have to let him see the cottage," they told Mitchell, outside. "To see for himself that she's gone - taken her traps - or else to-morrow night he might get an idea it was all D.T.'s. Then we'll take him to Mrs Hall's for a cup of coffee - she'll be up waiting. You're going with him, Mitchell, you know, and little Teddy Thompson. He's going down after stragglers. We'll put you across the river before daylight, and make for Louth in the first place."
"There's a steamer early in ther-" began One-eyed Bogan.
"We don't want no steamer," said Moonlight. "He'll have to walk. Let him walk all night if he will - or as long as you can keep up with him."
"Why Louth?" asked Bogan.
"His brother, Ernest is there."
"Oh!"
"And Maggie Macauley."

"What about her?"
"Don't you know, you bats?" said Mitchell. "She's the girl he should have married. We'll send Maggie a mulga wire."

Grey daylight. They made a circle in the little-known clearing above the waterworks. Moonlight stripped as in a daydream and laid his coat rather carefully on the old white log on the edge of the clearing. Bogan kicked some loose twigs out of the way. Cassidy, in plain clothes, and "off duty", settled himself comfortably in a hollow of the log.

That evening, Redmond, with but one serviceable eye, steered his shattered and bandaged mate, Cosgrove, into a second-class carriage at the station.
Bogan, with no serviceable eye at all, spent some days fighting the battle over again between gropings for his glass, and got so excited that he was constantly letting his beer go flat. And the Inspector, coming next day, was mildly surprised to find Senior-Sergeant Cassidy with a fresh black eye and no one in his lock-up.

Down in Louth, some days later, in the big brick floored kitchen at the rear of the Royal there, a little freckle-faced girl took a big shearer by the arm and steered him gently to a sofa, where she'd arranged a pillow.
"Lie down, Joe," she said, "and rest."
Then she turned to see to a saucepan of beef-tea that had stood on the stove all night.
Mitchell, professional shearer, non-drinker and single man, could afford to waste a month or two - even twelve. He thought a lot on the steamer coming up. He sent many mulga wires along the tracks which that camel train would pass on its way to Wilcannia. He was putting something in Asia's pipe for Asia to smoke.
And it came to pass that so many surprising and startling things happened to Abdul Khan that year that it seemed to Abdul Khan that the curses of all his hereditary enemies in Asia, together with the sins of all his fathers, had found him and swooped down on him in a body. So he sold out, went to Westralia, and afterwards to Afghanistan, where he might have a chance to fight the fates on known ground, and where they wouldn't have the advantage of the active co-operation of the devils, Binghi and Billjim.

The Blindness Of One-eyed Bogan

> They judge not and they are not judged — 'tis their philosophy —
> (There's something wrong with every ship that sails upon the sea).
> ***The Ballad of the Rouseabout*.**

"And what became of One-eyed Bogan?" I asked Tom Hall when I met him and Jack Mitchell down in Sydney with their shearing cheques the Christmas before last.

"You'd better ask Mitchell, Harry," said Tom. "He can tell you about Bogan better than I can. But first, what about the drink we're going to have?"

We turned out of Pitt Street into Hunter Street, and across George Street, where a double line of fast electric tramway was running, into Margaret Street and had a drink at Pfahlert's Hotel, where a counter lunch — as good as many dinners you get for a shilling — was included with a sixpenny drink. "Get a quiet corner," said Mitchell, "I like to hear myself cackle." So we took our beer out in the fernery and got a cool place at a little table in a quiet corner amongst the fern boxes.

"Well, One-eyed Bogan was a hard case, Mitchell," I said. "Wasn't he?"

"Yes," said Mitchell, putting down his "long-beer" glass, "he was."

"Rather a bad egg?"

"Yes, a regular bad egg," said Mitchell, decidedly.

"I heard he got caught cheating at cards," I said.

"Did you?" said Mitchell. "Well, I believe he did. Ah, well," he added reflectively, after another long pull, "One-eyed Bogan won't cheat at cards any more."

"Why?" I said. "Is he dead then?"

"No," said Mitchell, "he's blind."

"Good God!" I said, "how did that happen?"

"He lost the other eye," said Mitchell, and he took another drink. "Ah, well, he won't cheat at cards any more — unless there's cards invented for the blind."

"How did it happen?" I asked.

"Well," said Mitchell, "you see, Harry, it was this way. Bogan went pretty free in Bourke after the shearing before last, and in the end he got mixed up in a very ugly-looking business: he was accused of doing two new-chum jackaroos out of their stuff by some sort of confidence trick."

"Confidence trick," I said. "I'd never have thought that One-eyed Bogan had the brains to go in for that sort of thing."

"Well, it seems he had, or else he used somebody else's brains; there's plenty of broken-down English gentlemen sharpers knocking about out back, you know, and Bogan might have been taking lessons from one. I don't know the rights of the case, it was hushed up, as you'll see presently; but, anyway, the jackaroos swore that Bogan had done 'em out of ten quid. They were both Cockneys and I suppose they reckoned themselves smart, but bushmen have more time to think. Besides, Bogan's one eye was in his favour. You see he always kept his one eye fixed strictly on whatever business he had in hand; if he'd had another eye to rove round and distract his attention and look at things on the outside, the chances are he would never have got into trouble."

"Never mind that, Jack," said Tom Hall. "Harry wants to hear the yarn."

"Well, to make it short, one of the jackaroos went to the police and Bogan cleared out. His character was pretty bad just then, so there was a piece of blue paper out for him. Bogan didn't seem to think the thing was so serious as it was, for he only went a few miles down the river and camped with his horses on a sort of island inside an anabranch, till the thing should blow over or the new chums leave Bourke.

"Bogan's old enemy, Constable Campbell, got wind of Bogan's camp, and started out after him. He rode round the outside track and came in on to the river just below where the anabranch joins it, at the lower end of the island and right opposite Bogan's camp. You know what those billabongs are: dry gullies till the river rises from the Queensland rains and backs them up till the water runs round into the river again and makes anabranches of 'em — places that you thought were hollows you'll find above water, and you can row over places you thought were hills. There's no water so treacherous and deceitful as you'll find in some of those billabongs. A man starts to ride across a place where he thinks the water is just over the grass, and blunders into a deep channel — that wasn't there before — with a steady undercurrent with the whole weight of the Darling River funnelled into it; and if he can't swim and his horse isn't used to it — or sometimes if he can swim — it's a case with him, and the Darling River cod hold an inquest on him, if they have time, before he's buried deep in Darling River mud for ever. And somebody advertises in the missing column for Jack Somebody who was last heard of in Australia."

"Never mind that, Mitchell, go on," I said.

"Well, Campbell knew the river and saw that there was a stiff current there, so he hailed Bogan.

"'Good day, Campbell,' shouted Bogan.

"`I want you, Bogan,' said Campbell. `Come across and bring your horses.'

"`I'm damned if I will,' says Bogan. `I'm not going to catch me death o' cold to save your skin. If you want me you'll have to bloody well come and git me.' Bogan was a good strong swimmer, and he had good horses, but he didn't try to get away — I suppose he reckoned he'd have to face the music one time or another — and one time is as good as another out back.

"Campbell was no swimmer; he had no temptation to risk his life — you see it wasn't as in war with a lot of comrades watching ready to advertise a man as a coward for staying alive — so he argued with Bogan and tried to get him to listen to reason, and swore at him. `I'll make it damned hot for you, Bogan,' he said, `if I have to come over for you.'

"`Two can play at that game,' says Bogan.

"`Look here, Bogan," said Campbell, `I'll tell you what I'll do. If you give me your word that you'll come up to the police station to-morrow I'll go back and say nothing about it. You can say you didn't know a warrant was out after you. It will be all the better for you in the end. Better give me your word, man.'

"Perhaps Campbell knew Bogan better than any of us.

"`Now then, Bogan,' he said, `don't be a fool. Give your word like a sensible man, and I'll go back. I'll give you five minutes to make up your mind.' And he took out his watch.

"But Bogan was nasty and wouldn't give his word, so there was nothing for it but for Campbell to make a try for him.

"Campbell had plenty of pluck, or obstinacy, which amounts to the same thing. He put his carbine and revolver under a log, out of the rain that was coming on, saw to his handcuffs, and then spurred his horse into the water. Bogan lit his pipe with a stick from his camp-fire — so Campbell said afterwards — and sat down on his heels and puffed away, and waited for him.

"Just as Campbell's horse floundered into the current Bogan shouted to go back, but Campbell thought it was a threat and kept on. But Bogan had caught sight of a log coming down the stream, end on, with a sharp, splintered end, and before Campbell knew where he was, the sharp end of the log caught the horse in the flank. The horse started to plunge and struggle sideways, with all his legs, and Campbell got free of him as quick as he could. Now, you know, in some of those Darling River reaches the current will seem to run steadily far a while, and then come with a rush. (I was caught in one of those rushes once, when I was in swimming, and would have been drowned if I hadn't been born to be hanged.) Well, a rush came along just as Campbell got free from his horse, and he went down-stream one side of a snag and his horse the other. Campbell's pretty stout, you know, and his uniform was tight, and it handicapped him.

"Just as he was being washed past the lower end of the snag he caught hold of a branch that stuck out of the water and held on. He swung round and saw Bogan running down to the point opposite him. Now, you know there was always a lot of low cunning about Bogan, and I suppose he reckoned that if he pulled Campbell out he'd stand a good show of getting clear of his trouble; anyway, if he didn't save Campbell it might be said that he killed him — besides, Bogan was a good swimmer, so there wasn't any heroism about it anyhow. Campbell was only a few feetfrom the bank, but Bogan started to strip — to make the job look as big as possible, I suppose. He shouted to Campbell to say he was coming, and to hold on. Campbell said afterwards that Bogan seemed an hour undressing. The weight of the current was forcing down the bough that Campbell was hanging on to, and suddenly, he said, he felt a great feeling of helplessness take him by the shoulders. He yelled to Bogan and let go.

"Now, it happened that Jake Boreham and I were passing away the time between shearings, and we were having a sort of fishing and shooting loaf down the river in a boat arrangement that Jake had made out of boards and tarred canvas. We called her the *Jolly Coffin*. We were just poking up the bank in the slack water, a few hundred yards below the billabong, when Jake said, `Why, there's a horse or something in the river.' Then he shouted, `No, by God, it's a man,' and we poked the *Coffin* out into the stream for all she was worth. `Looks like two men fighting in the water,' Jake shouts presently. `Hurry up, or they'll drown each other.'

"We hailed 'em, and Bogan shouted for help. He was treading water and holding Campbell up in front of him now in real professional style. As soon as he heard us he threw up his arms and splashed a bit — I reckoned he was trying to put as much style as he could into that rescue. But I caught a crab, and, before we could get to them, they were washed past into the top of a tree that stood well below flood-mark. I pulled the boat's head round and let her stern down between the branches. Bogan had one arm over a limb and was holding Campbell with the other, and trying to lift him higher out of the water. I noticed Bogan's face was bleeding — there was a dead limb stuck in the tree with nasty sharp points on it, and I reckoned he'd run his face against one of them. Campbell was gasping like a codfish out of water, and he was the whitest man I ever saw (except one, and *he'd* been drowned for a week).

Campbell had the sense to keep still. We asked Bogan if he could hold on, and he said he could, but he couldn't hold Campbell any longer. So Jake took the oars and I leaned over the stern and caught hold of Campbell, and Jake ran the boat into the bank, and we got him ashore; then we went back for Bogan and landed him.

"We had some whisky and soon brought Campbell round; but Bogan was bleeding like a pig from a nasty cut over his good eye, so we bound wet handkerchiefs round his eyes and led him to a log and he sat down for a while, holding his hand to his eye and groaning. He kept saying, `I'm blind, mates, I'm blind! I've lost me other eye!' but we didn't dream it was so bad as that: we kept giving him whisky. We got some dry boughs and made a big fire. Then Bogan stood up and held his arms stiff down to his sides, opening and shutting his hands as if he was in great pain. And I've often thought since what a different man Bogan seemed without his clothes and with the broken bridge of his nose and his eyes covered by the handkerchiefs. He was clean shaven, and his mouth and chin are his best features, and he's clean limbed and well hung. I often thought afterwards that there was something of a blind god about him as he stood there naked by the fire on the day he saved Campbell's life — something that reminded me of a statue I saw once in the Art Gallery. (Pity the world isn't blinder to a man's worst points.)

"Presently Jake listened and said, `By God, that's lucky!' and we heard a steamer coming up-river and presently we saw her coming round the point with a couple of wool-barges in tow. We got Bogan aboard and got some clothes on him, and took him ashore at Bourke to the new hospital. The doctors did all they knew, but Bogan was blind for life. He never saw anything again — except `a sort of dull white blur,' as he called it — or his past life sometimes, I suppose. Perhaps he saw that for the first time. Ah, well!

"Bogan's old enemy, Barcoo-Rot, went to see him in the hospital, and Bogan said, `Well, Barcoo, I reckon we've had our last fight. I owe you a hiding, but I don't see how I'm going to pay you.' `Never mind that, Bogan, old man,' says Barcoo. `I'll take it from anyone yer likes to appoint, if that worries yer; and, look here, Bogan, if I can't fight you I can fight for you — and don't you forget it!' And Barcoo used to lead Bogan round about town in his spare time and tell him all that was going on; and I believe he always had an ear cocked in case someone said a word against Bogan — as if any of the chaps would say a word against a blind man.

"Bogan's case was hushed up. The police told us to fix it up the best way we could. One of the jackaroos, who reckoned that Bogan had swindled him, was a gentleman, and he was the first to throw a quid in the Giraffe's hat when it went round for Bogan, but the other jackaroo was a cur: he said he wanted the money that Bogan had robbed him of. There were two witnesses, but we sent 'em away, and Tom Hall, there, scared the jackaroo. You know Tom was always the best hand we had at persuading witnesses in Union cases to go home to see their mothers."

"How did you scare that jackaroo, Tom?" I asked.

"Tell you about it some other time," said Tom.

"Well," said Mitchell, "Bogan was always a good woolsorter, so, next shearing, old Baldy Thompson — (you know Baldy Thompson, Harry, of West-o'-Sunday Station) — Baldy had a talk with some of the chaps, and took Bogan out in his buggy with him to West-o'-Sunday. Bogan would sit at the end of the rolling tables, in the shearing-shed, with a boy to hand him the fleeces, and he'd feel a fleece and tell the boy what bin to throw it into; and by and by he began to learn to throw the fleeces into the bins himself. And sometimes Baldy would have a sheep brought to him and get him to feel the fleece and tell him the quality of it. And then again Baldy would talk, just loud enough for Bogan to overhear, and swear that he'd sooner have Bogan, blind as he was, than half a dozen scientific jackaroo experts with all their eyes about them.

"Of course Bogan wasn't worth anything much to Baldy, but Baldy gave him two pounds a week out of his own pocket, and another quid that we made up between us; so he made enough to pull him through the rest of the year.

"It was curious to see how soon he learned to find his way about the hut and manage his tea and tucker. It was a rough shed, but everybody was eager to steer Bogan about — and, in fact, two of them had a fight about it one day. Baldy and all of us —— and especially visitors when they came — were mighty interested in Bogan; and I reckon we were rather proud of having a blind wool-sorter. I reckon Bogan had thirty or forty pairs of eyes watching out for him in case he'd run against something or fall. It irritated him to be messed round too much — he said a baby would never learn to walk if it was held all the time. He reckoned he'd learn more in a year than a man who'd served a lifetime to blindness; but we didn't let him wander much — for fear he'd fall into the big rocky waterhole there, by accident.

"And after the shearing-season Bogan's wife turned up in Bourke —— "

"Bogan's wife!" I exclaimed. "Why, I never knew Bogan was married."

"Neither did anyone else," said Mitchell. "But he was. Perhaps that was what accounted for Bogan. Sometimes, in his sober moods, I used to have an idea that there must have been something behind the Bogan to account for him. Perhaps he got trapped — or got married and found out that he'd made a mistake — which is about the worst thing a man can find out —— "

"Except that his wife made the mistake, Mitchell," said Tom Hall.

"Or that both did," reflected Mitchell. "Ah, well! — never mind — Bogan had been married two or three years. Maybe he got married when he was on the spree — I knew that he used to send money to someone in Sydney and I suppose it was her. Anyway, she turned up after he was blind. She was a hard-looking woman — just the sort that might have kept a third-rate pub or a sly-grog shop. But you can't judge between husband and wife, unless you've lived in the same house with them — and under the same roofs with their parents right back to Adam for that matter. Anyway, she stuck to Bogan all right; she took a little two-roomed cottage and made him comfortable — she's got a sewing-machine and a mangle and takes in washing and sewing. She brought a carrotty-headed youngster with her, and the first time I saw Bogan sitting on the veranda with that youngster on his knee I thought it was a good thing that he was blind."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because the youngster isn't his," said Mitchell.

"How do you know that?"

"By the look of it — and by the look on her face, once, when she caught me squinting from the kid's face to Bogan's."

"And whose was it?" I asked, without thinking.

"How am I to know?" said Mitchell. "It might be yours for all I know — it's ugly enough, and you never had any taste in women. But you mustn't speak of that in Bourke. But there's another youngster coming, and I'll swear that'll be Bogan's all right.

"A curious thing about Bogan is that he's begun to be fidgety about his personal appearance — and you know he wasn't a dood. He wears a collar now, and polishes his boots; he wears elastic-sides, and polishes 'em himself — the only thing is that he blackens over the elastic. He can do many things for himself, and he's proud of it. He says he can see many things that he couldn't see when he had his eyes. You seldom hear him swear, save in a friendly way; he seems much gentler, but he reckons he would stand a show with Barcoo-Rot even now, if Barcoo would stand up in front of him and keep yelling —— "

"By the way," I asked, "how did Bogan lose the sight of his other eye?"

"Sleeping out in the rain when he was drunk," said Mitchell. "He got a cold in his eye." Then he asked, suddenly:

"Did you ever see a blind man cry?"

"No," I said.

"Well, I have," said Mitchell.

"You know Bogan wears goggles to hide his eyes — his wife made him do that. The chaps often used to drop round and have a yarn with Bogan and cheer him up, and one evening I was sitting smoking with him, and yarning about old times, when he got very quiet all of a sudden, and I saw a tear drop from under one of his shutters and roll down his cheek. It wasn't the eye he lost saving Campbell — it was the old wall-eye he used to use in the days before he was called 'One-eyed Bogan.' I suppose he thought it was dark and that I couldn't see his face. (There's a good many people in this world who think you can't see because they can't.) It made me feel like I used to feel sometimes in the days when I felt things —— "

"Come on, Mitchell," said Tom Hall, "you've had enough beer."

"I think I have," said Mitchell. "Besides, I promised to send a wire to Jake Boreham to tell him that his mother's dead. Jake's shearing at West-o'-Sunday; shearing won't be over for three or four weeks, and Jake wants an excuse to get away without offending old Baldy and come down and have a fly round with us before the holidays are over."

Down at the telegraph-office Mitchell took a form and filled it in very carefully: "Jacob Boreham. West-o'-Sunday Station. Bourke. Come home at once. Mother is dead. In terrible trouble. Father dying.

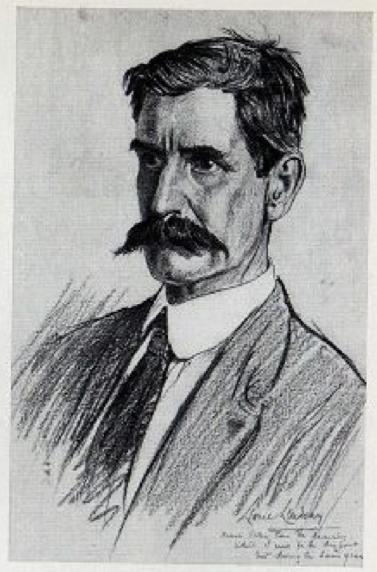
— MARY BOREHAM."

"I think that will do," said Mitchell. "It ought to satisfy Baldy, and it won't give Jake too much of a shock, because he hasn't got a sister or sister-in-law, and his father and mother's been dead over ten years."

"Now, if I was running a theatre," said Mitchell, as we left the office, "I'd give five pounds a night for the face Jake'll have on him when he takes that telegram to Baldy Thompson."

-o-0-o-

Christopher Brennan



Henry Lawson

Norman Lindsay

PENCIL STUDIES BY
LIONEL LINDSAY

Did Henry Lawson read Nietzsche?

By David Rathbone.

During a recent course of lectures at the National Gallery of Victoria, I explored some of the complicated connections between Norman Lindsay's art and Nietzsche's philosophy, and explored the fascinating and at times frightening histories of Jack Lindsay and Percy “Inky” Stephensen. My thesis throughout the lectures was that the various understandings of Nietzsche displayed by Lionel, Norman and Inky all fall short in one way or another of appreciating what Nietzsche calls his anti-anti-semitism, which he used to deconstruct "the pathological manner in which nationalist nonsense has alienated and continues to alienate the peoples of Europe from each other" (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §256 cf. §251). This however was not the case with Jack Lindsay, whose strong background in classical studies enabled him to appreciate Nietzsche's philosophy far better than had his father, his uncle or his undergraduate friend Inky Stephensen, but also caused him consequently to shrink away from their racist misunderstandings. This recoil unfortunately went too far; so far in fact that Jack lost faith in his own important book *Dionysus: Nietzsche Contra Nietzsche*, and disowned it.

This put the Lindsay school in a strange position, for it had imported into Australia a philosophy which it itself did not fully understand. What Lionel and Norman had understood immediately was Nietzsche's attempt to liberate the body from the prison of the soul-superstition. Norman's frolicking nudes dance beyond good and evil in perfect innocence, blissfully unaware of the outrage they cause amongst the prudes and puritans of the pulpit and the lectern, animated by a spirit able to forget the bad dreams that were once called "soul" and "God." But the Lindsay brothers also understood that Nietzsche was no materialist, for like Spinoza he denied the old "soul susperstition" and the myth of "life after death" only to liberate a spirit which is also the body, and a body which is "deeper than we can dream." Just as our simian ancestors could hardly imagine what possibilities would unfold out of their rudimentary vocal chords, we too stammer and speculate in ignorance and incomprehension when we try to speak of higher capacities which we humans have in a rudimentary form. This stammering rudimentary attempt is called by us "art," and its higher symbolic function at the core of culture cleared by Nietzsche was embraced enthusiastically by both Lionel and Norman.

But what the Lindsay brothers didn't understand was that a parallel liberation is also effected by Nietzsche's philosophy, not only of the body from the constraints of Victorian prudery and religious superstition, but also one of the mind from such constraints as racism and nationalism, overcoming these masks of nihilism in a "new nobility" characterized by its relation to the future, rather than the past. This inadequate understanding of Nietzsche due to their limited reading of his works led the elder Lindsays inadvertently to mar not only their own work, but also to misleadingly taint the name of Nietzsche in Australia with racism. Even the Magic Pudding of today excises an antisemitic line from the first edition. This issue suddenly broke between 1936 and 1938 - Norman and Jack quarreled and fell out, and Jack turned away from Nietzsche (and at a deeper level, from his father) to Marx, and became a communist. Inky, who had returned to Australia, turned abruptly from the left-wing Republicanism of the *Foundations of Culture in Australia* of 1936 (in which he calls Hitler "intrinsically lacking in culture, mentally equipped like a school bully" p.25), to the open support for Hitler printed by *The Publicist* on the 1st June 1938 - a position which not surprisingly landed Inky Stephensen in the Tatura Detention Camp for the duration of WWII. Craig Munro's *Wild Man of Letters* is a brilliant piece of intellectual biography which gets as close to the bottom of the murky affair of Inky Stephensen and the Australia First Party as anyone is ever likely to.[12]

The various racist taints surrounding Norman Lindsay and especially P.R. Stephensen unfortunately meant not only that Jack Lindsay's *Dionysus: Nietzsche Contra Nietzsche* went largely ignored, but that the work was needlessly repudiated by its own author. An already obscure work (published in a limited edition of 500 copies by the Fanfrolico Press in 1928, never since re-published), Jack showed his disapproval of Norman by throwing out the baby of his own book with the bathwater of his quarrel with Norman. Together with the poetry in *The London Aphrodite* (published in six installments by the Fanfrolico Press in London 1928-29), Jack Lindsay articulates a fascinating interpretation of Nietzsche, free from the lamentable racism and sexist homophobia marring the otherwise brilliant works of his father Norman and his Uncle Lionel, sidestepping altogether their quarrel over Norman's spiritualism and fondness for *séances,* and subsuming the achievements of Christoper Brennan in symbolism, of Hugh McCrae in vitalism, and of Henry Lawson in existential justice and cosmic irony.

Another reason *Dionysus: Nietzsche Contra Nietzsche* is so little known is that after his Marxist turn, Jack Lindsay not only turned away from any further study of Nietzsche, but also chose (disastrously) to re-write all his poetry, so that the contents of his *Collected Poems* of 1981 is a mangled revision of his originally brilliant but eventully ordinary poetry. Although this act of auto-antagonism is wholly consonant with his appreciation of Brennan's point (that "Nietzsche" is the name of a kind of battle-field), it is also difficult not to lament Jack's own attack upon himself, no less than it seems irresistible to lament Brennan's slide into alcoholic self-destruction, or for that matter, Henry Lawson's graceful glide under the foamy waves of an ocean of beer. Interestingly, it is in the writings of Joan Lindsay (wife of Daryl, younger brother of Lionel and Norman) that the challenged posed by these nihilistic implosions is re-interpreted in terms of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return. This theme is both obvious and yet also entirely implicit in Joan Lindsay's work, for Joan Lindsay was no theorist. Yet her enigmatic *Picnic at Hanging Rock,* and her autobiographical works *Time Without Clocks* and *Facts Hard and Soft* exemplify an implicit exploration of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return and his perspectival philosophy of masks as lucid and as deep as Simone de Beaviour's.

Axel Clark's *Christopher Brennan: A Critical Biography* details Brennan's unhappy story meticulously, but Clark's lack of any real understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy places severe restrictions upon his appreciation of Brennan's achievements, which has now been somewhat remedied by Noel Macainsh in his articles on Brennan in *The Pathos of Distance*. Other major Australian poets also reporting that they were influenced by Nietzsche between 1895 and 1910 include Bernard O'Dowd,[13] Hugh McCrae,[14] Kenneth Slessor.[15] But Lawson was a generation older again

---

12 Stop Press: have just discovered Barbara Winter *The Australia-First Movement and the **Publicist** 1936-1942* (Brisbane: Glass House Books, 2005).

13 Who writes in "Poetry Militant: An Australian Plea for the Poetry of Purpose" (1909) "I hold two men ... to be the two greatest poets of this age of the Evolution Dawn. Those two poets, Destroyers and Creators, are Walt Whitman and Frederick Nietzsche" (O'Dowd, Collected Poems p.28)

14 Who was closely connected with the Lindsay circle from Lionel's illustration of his *Satyrs and Sunlight* onwards, as evident in Fitzgerald (ed) *The Letters of Hugh McCrae* - see eg McCrae to Norman Lindsay ca. 1918 "I need most to tell you that in 'The Hidden Symbol' I find a torch which illuminates the most secret corner of *Creative Effort* ... not that I need any ... but it helps." (*Letters* p.20 - "The Hidden Symbol" being a long essay mostly in dialogue form added as part two to the second (London) edition of *Creative Effort* - Hugh having copies of both manuscripts prior to their publication.

15 Judith Wright said that two conflicting forces meet in Slessor's poetry: "the Nietzschean cry that man must learn to suffice himself, must increase his capacities, must become physically and spiritually superior to himself; and the

Hugh McCrae is I think right to challenge Judith Wright's anachronism when she makes of both Barcroft Boake and Adam Lindsay Gordon Nietzscheans *avant la lettre* (see Wright *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry* pages 63 and 67; Macainsh *Pathos of Distance* p.9). A similar case might be made for Marcus Clarke, whose love of Balzac for instance leads to a certain pre-established harmony with Nietzsche all too easily mistaken for influence, for Nietzsche was also very fond of Balzac (see "Balzac and Modern French Literature" *Australasian* 3 Aug 1867 - reprinted in Wilding (ed) *Portable Marcus Clarke*). However, a much stronger circumstantial case can be made for an influence on an even more significant figure in Australian literature - Henry Lawson.

Lawson's father, Peter Larsen, was a Norwegian sailor who jumped ship in Melbourne to join the gold-rush in December 1855. Larsen's own father had grown up in the same district in Norway as Ibsen, and as Manning Clark puts it "caught the two strong currents - the Dionysian and the Christian" welling up at that time in Scandanavia (Manning Clark *In Search of Henry Lawson* p.2-3). Lawson's father was a free-thinker, believing not in God but in Man: "the only morality he was interested in was the morality of kindliness, of men and women and children being nice to each other" - an attitude consonant with Nietzsche's project of re-valuing Christian values and bringing them “down to earth" - faith, hope, love and charity being thus conceived not as "belief" in other supernatural worlds or creatures or creators, but rather as faith in the creativity of people, as hope that life in *this* world would improve, as love of the actual people actually all around you, not some nebulous "everybody," and as practicing charity not as calculated "point-scoring'"with an imaginary deity, but merely as the "overflowing virtue" of the generosity of the over-full spirit. All these virtues are woven throughout the text of both Nietzsche's aphorisms and Lawson's short stories and poems, both of which overflow with an existential authenticity which has arrested readers for generations.

But it is on the side of Lawson's mother that an even stronger possibility of direct Nietzschean influence exists. Lawson's parent's marriage was not a happy one, and in the early 1880s Henry moved with his mother from the bush to Sydney. Louisa Lawson was herself a poet, and her darkly gothic work today remains haunting, if also hacknied. However it is as a proto-feminist that she is mostly remembered, for she founded and edited Australia's first feminist journal called *Dawn*, and the teenage Henry even worked the hand-press for his mother. "The Bulletin Interviews Louisa Lawson" on the Bulletin's Red page of October 24th 1896 is a fascinating interview in which Lawson's mother advances something very much like what Nietzsche says in *Gay Science* §68.

Lawson's later married the daughter of William MacNamara and his German wife. MacNamara was the proprietor of MacNamara's Bookshop at 221 Castlereigh St in Sydney, and gathering-place of the free-thinking intellectuals of the 1890s, the environment in which the 18-21 year-old Henry developed in the early 1890s. Louisa Lawson was part of a literary circle which included Thomas Walker and Alfred Deakin, along with less reputable figures such as “Ragnar Redbeard” (aka Arthur Desmond). Colin Roderick in *The Real Henry Lawson* reports that Henry Lawson "fell into company of a motley band" of poets, philosophers and political activists in the 1890s, including J.A. Andrews and Arthur Desmond, the latter "imbued with what he fancied was the philosophy of Nietzsche. When he met Lawson in 1893, Desmond was engaged upon “improving” on Nietzsche with his megalomaniacial *Might is Right.*" (Roderick p. 49). But Lawson knew Desmond was no monster, and later defended him in print directly with his poem "Arthur Desmond," and indirectly with his prose

---

Nietzschean perception which underlay that demand, that when God is 'dead' nothing can protect man from the malice of the universe." (*Preoccupations in Australian Poetry* p.140) piece "A Leader of the Future."

These circumstantial facts establish the strong likelihood that Nietzsche's name was known to Lawson. There is at least a "Zeitgeist" case to be made. Only further archival research can decide if any direct evidence of Lawson having read Nietzsche can be found. However as the penniless Lawson usually read extensively standing in MacNamara's (and Angus & Robertson's) bookshops to avoid paying for the books, and was not a systematic note-taker, such direct evidence may be difficult to find. In this regard Lawson's partial deafness was an asset, for he could easily concentrate on reading in noisy places. But it also makes it difficult to document Lawson's reading, who could not afford to buy the books he read.

By the time Lionel and Norman Lindsay arrived at the Bulletin in 1900, there can be little doubt that Nietzsche's name must have arisen in Lawson's presence. Lionel states rhetorically in his autobiography, "How much we owe to Nietzsche, as artist, as stimulus, as the supreme critic of decadence! No one has suffered more from misinterpretation, yet the world owes to him the destruction of Pessimism as philosophy, and a spiritual return to man as the measure of all things" (*Comedy of Life* p.122). And in 1905 Norman recounts "I got *Zarathustra* in shilling parts translated by Thomas Common, and the exultation I was given by that inspired work transfigured for me all profundities in life and art" (*My Mask* p.124). And there can be even less doubt that Lawson would have read the Red Pages of the Bulletin devoted to Nietzsche during 1900 – the Nietzsche obituary on 13th October 1900; "The Ethic of Nietzsche" by Bulletin editor A.G. Stephens in the issue of 10th November; and the excerpts of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* entitled "The Wisdom of Nietzsche" in two installments appearing in consequitive issues of the 10th and 17th of Novemeber.

John Tregenza reports that Havelock Ellis's essay on Nietzsche's philosophy in *The Savoy* published in London in 1896 is reported by the Lindsays to have made its way to Creswick later that year (Tragenza *Australian Little Magazines 1923-1954: Their Role in Forming and Reflecting Literary Trends* p. 15), and so no doubt that issue was on bookshelves in Sydney shops in the closing years of the 19th century. All of the early secondary literature on Nietzsche discussed in the two works documenting the Nietzsche reception in England between 1890 and 1915 (*Nietzsche in England* by David Thatcher, and *Nietzsche in Anglosaxony* by Patrick Bridgwater) would also have appeared on the shelves of shops in Austalia 3 – 6 months later, such as Gorge Brandes' "Essay on Aristocratic Radicalism" of 1889; M.A. Mügge's *Friedrich Nietzsche, his life and work*; H.L. Mencken's *Nietzsche* of 1908; Daniel Halévy's *Life of Friedrich Nietzsche* translated in 1911, - all of which stood on shelves alongside T. Fisher Unwin's 4-volume selected works (which included the Haussmann and Gray translation of the *Genealogy of Morals*, the Tille translation of *Zarathustra*, the Common translations of *Twilight of the Idols, Antichrist,* and the two Wagner-works of 1888, and Johanna Volz's translation of *The Dawn of Day.*

And so to the question "Did Lawson read Nietzsche?" we can answer a definite maybe. And as for the question of influence, nothing more than a strong possibility can yet be considered proven. The rest is a matter of interpretation.

Note: many of the primary materials discussed in this appendix are on-line here:
http://www.australasiannietzschesociety.net.au/History.html

Henry Lawson, 1895

To the "Advanced Idealist"

Days that "are to be" for ever! What are they to you or me?
I am tired of the drivel of the days that "are to be".
Better than the barren present of the land we're living in,
Better days than have been even, or the world that might have been.
Not of Tennysonian heroes most impossibly insane,
But the Launcelot, the King Arthur, and Miles Hendon of Mark Twain.

Who are they who come to lead us, on the same hard-trodden track,
Which we fancied led to Freedom — while the world is rolling back?
Who are you, who come to teach us in the barren thirteenth hour?
Boys with College educations — younger sons of wealth and power,
Dazzled by the light of ages, penetrating through the mists
You have raised about you — posing as "Advanced Idealists".

You should know who raked your learning from the ashes and the mould
Of your "dead and vanished" ages that your "new ideas" are old.
"New Ideas"? We trace them plainly, as an ancient lava flow,
Burning out the hearts of god-like heroes centuries ago!
Men who lived beyond your wisdom, men who thought and fought alone!
Fought for future generations, while the world went rolling on.

Thought, and fought alone, and suffered every ignorant attack.
What of future generations, while the world is rolling back?
"Sing for us a Song of Freedom; sing a hymn of love and hate,"
So you cry as for the People, but the people come too late.
Round the graves of vanished poets, who were starved along the track,
Clings a cold sarcastic silence — while the world is rolling back.

And your "Leader of the People", "Saviour", "King of Nature's Kings",
Stands among his broken idols, brooding over bitter things.
Faith betrayed and trust mistrusted — Saviour branded as a thief.
Eyes of Truth for ever meeting steady eyes of unbelief.
"Trust me!" "Trust each other!" cried he. "Throw all selfish ends behind."
And democracy made answer, turning sideways, "Axe to grind."

Elector

"THE BULLETIN" Interviews Louisa Lawson

From the RED PAGE, October 24, 1896

(Many gifted men had remarkable mothers, and Henry Lawson's mother, Mrs. Peter Larsen, better known as Louisa Lawson, is in many ways a remarkable woman. Born at Guntawang, near Mudgee, N.S.W., she has suffered all her life from that craving for knowledge and culture which one sees in so many bush girls - often suppressed in deference to their not-understanding men-folk, sometimes fighting hopelessly against the round of trivialities in which Custom circumscribes a woman, rarely succeeding to reach an enlightened plane of thought or performance - Louisa Lawson's mother burnt her books, her husband, a clever, capable man, frowned down her impulse to imaginative work; friends and relatives looked askance at her "queer ways". The energy of a magnificent physical constitution enabled her to struggle on. She read, and wrote, and occasionally talked. When she came to Sydney a dozen years ago, a poor little wooden cross marked the grave of poet Kendall in Waverley cemetery, maybe the sentiment was a foolish one, for Kendall's monument is in his work, but Mrs. Lawson initiated a movement which replaced the shabby little cross with a handsome monument. Then she started "The Dawn - a journal for the household, edited, printed and published by women". The paper is living yet and in its heyday spoke many brave and true words. Then she organised the first Woman's Suffrage League established in Sydney. Then she was chosen a member of the Sydney School of Arts committee and for several years her strong sense was a force for its deliberations. Recently she has become a Government contractor - and inventor. For 21 years N.S.W. mail bags have been fastened with a strap, sealed by a device invented by Superintendent Davies. Mrs. Lawson took a contract for supplying these straps, and it struck her at once that the contrivance for fastening was slow and combrous. So it was, undoubtedly; the astonishing thing is that in 21 years the consensus of male wisdom among postal officials should not have bettered it. In odd moments Mrs. Lawson thought out an improved buckle, had a model made from her description, and took it to the Post Office authorities, who instantly recognised its ingenuity and adopted it. It saves two-thirds of the time formerly needed to fasten the bags, and many hundreds of pounds annually in value of string and wax - Mrs. Lawson's portrait in another part of this issue barely does her justice. The expression is too hard. Despite all, Louisa Lawson is essentially a womanly woman, of a characteristically feminine type. Her nature is the groundwork of her son Henry's; but there is in him the additional element of restless male intensity. - And, now Mrs. Lawson may speak a little space for herself.)

"Something about myself? Oh, dear! Won't it look very conceited? Well, if it does don't blame me. Are you sure THE BULLETIN wants it? Do you know, I'd much rather not.

"I'm 48. But you don't want to tell the people my age, do you? I was married when I was 18 - and what I've gone through since then!. It would fill a book. You know my husband's name was Peter Larsen, but Henry's name is really Lawson - he was registered Lawson - that was the way people always spoke of my husband.

"He is dead years now. Of the children, I think Bert takes after him more; Henry is like me; Gertie is more like my mother. You have heard how clever Bert is at music? and everybody knows Henry. Gertie is with me now, working on THE DAWN. Henry and Bert are in Westralia.

"My father is alive still - such a fine old man! - he must be about 75 now; mother died only the other day. Father's father and mother were such good old people - that's my grandfather and mother - Henry's great-grandparents. The old lady - she had worked hard all her life, poor soul! - she could reap her three quarters of an acre of wheat in a day - and when she felt herself going to die she got out of bed and washed herself, dressed in clean clothes, lay down again, folded hands on her breast - 'so as not to give trouble', she said.

"Father is a born poet; they tell me I take after him. You can see the likeness in this portrait: Henry is the same. He is a good old Kentish yeoman, my father; a big, strong, handsome man. You think I'm handsome? Do you really? I suppose I am taller and stronger than most women; I'd need to be, for what I've gone through.

"And why shouldn't a woman be tall and strong. I feel sorry for some of the women that come to see me sometimes; they look so weak and helpless - as if they expected me to pick 'em up and pull 'em to pieces and put 'em together again. I try to speak softly to them, but sometimes I can't help letting out, and then they go away and say, 'Mrs. Lawson was so unkind to us!'

"And whose fault is it but men's? Woman are what men make them. Why, a woman can't bear a child without it being received into the hands of a male doctor; it is baptised by a fat old male parson; a girl goes through life obeying laws made by men; and if she breaks them, a male magistrate sends her to gaol where a male warder handles her and looks in her cell at night to see she's all right. If she gets so far as to be hanged, a male hangman puts the rope around her neck; she is buried by a male grave digger; and she goes to Heaven ruled over by a male God or a hell managed by a male devil. Isn't it a wonder men didn't make the devil a woman?

"Run down the men? Don't you go away with that idea. Men are gods - and women are angels, and do you know what you make them suffer? I declare it's the most pitiful thing in the world. When I come sometimes to a meeting of these poor working women - little, dowdy, shabby things all worn down with care and babies - doing their best to bring up a family on the pittance they get from their husband - and keep those husbands at home and away from the public-house - when I see their poor lined faces I feel inclined to cry. They suffer so much.

"And listen to their talk! so quiet and sensible. If you want real practical wisdom, go to an old washerwoman patching clothes on the Rocks with a black eye, and you'll hear more true philosophy than a Parliament of men will talk in a twelve-month.

"No, I don't run down men, but I run down their vanity - especially when they're talking and writing about women. A man editing a ladies' paper! or talking about women's questions in Parliament! I don't know whether to laugh or cry; they know so little about us. We see it. Oh, why don't the women laugh right out - not quietly to themselves; laugh all together; get up on the housetops and laugh, and startle you out of your self-satisfaction.

"Men are so self-satisfied. Why, would you believe it! I was talking a while ago to a member of Parliament and sympathising with him about his wife - he's separated from her, poor thing! - and saying how hard people were on women that's alone, and he looked up at me so innocently and said, 'I'm not in the market, Mrs. Lawson'. The fool thought I wanted to marry him! and to this day I believe he thinks he had a narrow escape! Poor men!

"Did you ever think what it was to be a woman and have to try to make a living by yourself, with so many men's hands against her. It's all right if she puts herself under the thumb of a man - she's respectable then; but woe betide her if she strikes out for herself and tries to compete with men on what they call "their own ground". Who made it their own ground.

"Why, when I started out ten years ago to make a woman's paper - THE DAWN - this is the last number of it - the compositors boycotted me, and they even tried to boycott us at the Post Office - wouldn't let it go through the post as a newspaper. I knew nothing about printing, but I felt I could write - or, anyhow, I felt I could *feel* - so I scraped a few pounds together and got a machine and some type, and I and the girls began to print without knowing any more about it than Adam.

"How did we learn to set type and lock up formes? Goodness knows! Just worked at it till we puzzled it out! And how the men used to come and patronise us, and try to get something out of us! I remember one day a man from the CHRISTIAN WORLD came round to borrow a block - a picture. I wouldn't lend it to him; I said we had paid a pound for it, and I couldn't afford to go and buy blocks for other papers. Then he stood by the stone and sneered at the girls locking up the formes. We were just going to press, and you know how locking-up isn't always an easy matter - particularly for new chums like we were.

"Well, he stood there and said nasty things, and poor Miss Greig - she's my forewoman - and the girls, they got as white as chalk; the tears were in their eyes. I asked him three times to go, and he wouldn't, so I took up a watering pot full of water that we had for sweeping the floor, and I let him have it.

"It went up with a s-swish, and you should have just seen him! He was so nicely dressed - all white flannel and straw hat, and spring flowers in his button-hole; and it wet him through - knocked his hat off and filled his coat-pocket full of water. He was brave, I'll say that; he wouldn't go; he just wiped himself and stood there getting nastier and nastier, and I lost patience. 'Look here', I said, 'do you know what we do in the bush to tramps that come bothering us? We give 'em clean water first, and then, if they won't go we give 'em something like this'. And I took up the lye-bucket, that we use for cleaning type; it was thick, with an inch of black scum on it like jelly, that wobbled when you shook it. I held it under his nose, and said: 'Do you see this!' And he went in a hurry.

"Did Henry help me? He did that. His father thought a lot of Henry; he used to call him a tiger for work. Poor boy! When we were starting DAWN he used to turn the machine for us; he would just get some verse in his head or go on turning mechanically, forgetting all about us. He didn't like to be interrupted when he was thinking, so often when the issue was all printed off we would go upstairs to supper and leave him there turning away at the empty machine, with his eyes shining.

"Are you married? I'm glad: a bachelor is only half a man. But so many of you think that a wife is bought by a wedding-dress and a ring. No! A woman is bound to a man only by her love for him, her respect for him, to the extent of her trust and faith in him. O, if men would permit us to trust and honour them! We do so wish to."