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Humorous verses

1. [Humorous verses](#)

Humorous verses

Lawson, Henry, 1867-1922

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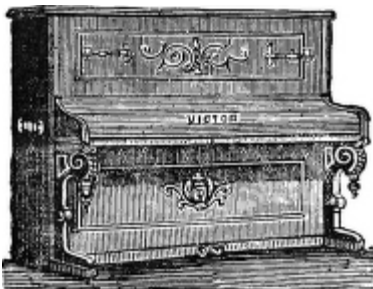


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HUMOROUS VERSES

I desire to thank the editor and proprietors of
the Sydney Bulletin for the privilege of reprinting
the verses in this volume.

H. L. Sydney, March 17th, 1900.

HUMOROUS VERSES

HENRY LAWSON

Author of " When the World was Wide and Other Vkrbhb," "While the
Billt Boils," "On the Track and Over

THE SLIPRAILS," AND " POPDLAR VERSES "



" Once 1 vyfote a little poem which I thought was very Jiiie, Atid I
showed the printer's copy to a critic friend of unine.*

Sydkey

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the"OLD BARK SCHOOL

It was built of bark and poles, and the floor was full of holes

TROUBLE ON THE SELECTION

You lazy boy, you're here at last,

THE PROFESSIONAL WANDERER

When you've knocked about the country —been away from home for
years;

A LITTLE MISTAKE

'Tis a yarn I heard of a new-chum • trap '

A STUDY IN THE "NOOD"

He was bare—we don't want to be rude—

A WORD TO TEXAS JACK

Texas Jack, you are amusin'. By Lord Harry, how I laughed

THE GROG-AN'-GRUMBLE STEEPLECHASE 'Twixt the coastline
and the border lay the town of Grog-an'-Grumble

BUT WHAT'S THE USE

But what's the use of writing 'bush'—

Once I wrote a little poem which I thought was very
fine, And I showed the printer's copy to a critic friend of
mine, First he praised the thing a little, then he found a
little fault; 'The ideas are good,' he muttered, 'but the rhythm
seems to halt.'

So I straighten'd up the rhythm where he marked it
with his pen, And I copied it and showed it to my clever friend
again. 'You've improved the metre greatly, but the rhymes
are bad,' he said. As he read it slowly, scratching surplus wisdom
from
his head.

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r., "r l

126 MY LITERARY FRIEND

So I worked as he suggested (I believe in taking
time), , And, I burnt the 'midnight taper' while I

straightened up the rhyme. ' It is better now,' he muttered, ' you go on and

you'll succeed, ' It has got a ring about it—the ideas are what you need.'

So I worked for hours upon it (I go on when I commence). And I kept in view the rhythm and the jingle and the sense, And I copied it and took it to my solemn friend once more— It reminded him of something he had somewhere read before.

Now the people say I'd never put such horrors into print If I wasn't too conceited to accept a friendly hint, And my dearest friends are certain that I'd profit in the end If I'd always show my copy to a literary friend.

They'd parted but a year before—she never thought he'd come, She stammer'd, blushed, held out her hand, and called him ' Mister Gum.' How could he know that all the while she longed to

murmur ' John.' He called her ' Miss le Brook,' and asked how she was getting on.

They'd parted but a year before; they'd loved each other well, But he'd been to the city, and he came back such a

swell. They longed to meet in fond embrace, they hungered
for a kiss— But Mary called him ' Mister,' and the idiot called
her ' Miss.'

He stood and lean'd against the door—a stupid chap
was he— And, when she asked if he'd come in and have a cup
of tea, He looked to left, he looked to right, and then he
glanced behind, And slowly doffed his cabbage-tree, and said he
' didn't mind.'

She made a shy apology because the meat was
tough. And then she asked if he was sure his tea was sweet
enough; He stirred the tea and sipped it twice, and answer'd
' plenty, quite ;' And cut the smallest piece of beef and said that it
was ' right.'

She glanced at him at times and cough'd an awkward
little cough; He stared at anything but her and said, ' T must
be off.' That evening he went riding north—a sad and lonely
rideShe locked herself inside her room, and there sat
down and cried.

MARY CALLED HIM • MISTER ' 129

They'd parted but a year before, they loved each

other well But she was such a country girl and he was such a
swell ; They longed to meet in fond embrace, they hungered
for a kiss— But Mary called him ' Mister ' and the idiot called
her ' Miss.'

REJECTED

She says she's very sorry, as she sees you to the gate; You calmly
say ' Good-bye' to her while standing off a yard, Then you lift your
hat and leave her, walking mighty stiff and straight— But you're hit,
old man—hit hard.

In your brain the words are burning of the answer that she gave, As
you turn the nearest corner and you stagger just a bit; But you pull
yourself together, for a man's strong heart is brave When it's hit, old
man—hard hit.

130

REJECTED 1.31

You might try to drown the sorrow, but the drink has no effect; You
cannot stand the barmaid with her coarse and vulgar wit; And so you
seek the street again, and start for home direct. When you're hit, old
man—hard hit.

You see the face of her you lost, the pity in her smile— Ah ! she is to
the barmaid as is snow to chimney grit; You're a better man and
nobler in your sorrow, for a while. When you're hit, old man—hard
hit.

And, arriving at your lodgings, with a face of deepest gloom. You
shun the other boarders and your manly brow you knit; You take a
light and go upstairs directly to your room But the whole house knows
you're hit.

132 REJECTED

You clutch the scarf and collar, and you tear them from your throat,
You rip your waistcoat open like a fellow in a fit; And you fling them in
a corner with the made-to-order coat, When you're hit, old man —
hard hit.

You throw yourself, despairing, on your narrow little bed. Or pace the
room till someone starts with ' Skit! cat!—skit!' And then lie blindly
staring at the plaster overhead— You are hit, old man—hard hit.

It's doubtful whether vanity or love has suffered worst. So neatly in
our nature are those feelings interknit. Your heart keeps swelling up
so bad, you wish that it would burst. When you're hit, old man—hard
hit.

You think and think, and think, and think, till you go mad almost;
Across your sight the spectres of the bygone seem to flit;

REJECTED 133

The very girl herself seems dead, and comes back as a ghost, When
you're hit, like this—hard hit.

You know that it's all over—you're an older man by years, In the
future not a twinkle, in your black sky not a split. Ah! you'll think it
well that women have the privilege of tears. When you're hit, old man
—hard hit.

You long and hope for nothing but the rest that sleep can bring. And
you find that in the morning things have brightened up a bit; But
you're dull for many evenings, with a cracked heart in a sling. When
you're hit, old man—hard hit.

James Patrick O'Hara, the Justice of Peace, He bossed the P.M. and
he bossed the police ; A parent, a deacon, a landlord was he— A
townsman of weight was O'Hara, J.P.

ft He gave out the prizes, foundation-stones laid, He shone when the Governor's visit was paid ; And twice re-elected as Mayor was he—
The flies couldn't roost on O'Hara, J.P.,

Now Sandy M'Ply, of the Axe-and-the-Saw, Was charged with a breach of the licensing law
He sold after hours whilst talking too free
On matters concerning O'Hara, J.P.

134

And each contradicted the next witness flat, Concerning back parlours, side-doors, and all that; 'Twas very conflicting, as all must agree— ' Ye'd bett'her take care !' said O'Hara, J.P.

But ' Baby,' the barmaid, her evidence gave— A poor, timid darling who tried to be brave— ' Now, don't be afraid—if it's frightened ye be — ' Speak out, my good girl,' said O'Hara, J.P.

Her hair was so golden, her eyes were so blue. Her face was so fair and her words seemed so true— So green in the ways of sweet women was he That she jolted the heart of O'Hara, J, P.

He turned to the other grave Justice of Peace, And whispered, ' You can't always trust the police ; ' I'll visit the premises during the day, ' And see/or myself,' said O'Hara, Jay Pay.

(Case postponed.)

'Twas early next morning, or late the same night— ' 'Twas early next morning' we think would be right— And sounds that betokened a breach of the law Escaped through the cracks of the Axe-and-the-Saw.

And Constable Dogherty, out in the street, Met Constable Clancy a bit off his beat; He took him with finger and thumb by the ear, And led him around to a lane in the rear.

He pointed a blind where strange shadows were seen— Wild
pantomime hinting of revels within— ' We'll drop on M'Ply, if you'll
listen to me, ' And prove we are right to O'Hara, J. P.'

But Clancy was up to the lay of the land,

He cautiously shaded his mouth with his hand—

' Wisht, man ! Howld yer whisht! or it's ruined

we'll be, ' It's the justice himself—it's O'Hara, J.P '

They hish'd and they whishted, and turned themselves

round, . And got themselves off like two cats on wet ground ;
Agreeing to be, on their honour as men, A deaf-dumb-and-blind
institution just then.

Inside on a sofa, two barmaids between, With one on his knee was a
gentleman seen; And any chance eye at the keyhole could see In
less than a wink 'twas O'Hara, J.P.

O'HARA, J. P. 137

The first in the chorus of songs that were sung,

The loudest that laughed at the jokes that were

sprung, The guest of the evening, the soul of the spree— The daddy
of all was O'Hara, J.P.

And hard-cases chuckled, and hard-cases said That Baby and Alice
conveyed him to bed— In subsequent storms it was painful to see
Those hard-cases side with the sinful J.P.

Next day, in the court, when the case came in sight, O'Hara declared
he was satisfied quite; The case was dismissed—it was destined to
be The final ukase of O'Hara, J.P.

The law and religion came down on him first— The Christian was hard but his wife was the worst! Half ruined and half driven crazy was he— It made an old man of O'Hara, J.P.

Now, young men who come from the bush, do you

hear? Who know not the power of barmaids and beer — Don't see for yourself! from temptation steer free. Remember the fall of O'Hara, J.P.

Bill and Jim are mates no longer—they would scorn the name of mate—

Those two bushmen hate each other with a soul-consuming hate;

Yet erstwhile they were as brothers should be (tho' they never will) :

Ne'er were mates to one another half so true as Jim and Bill.

Bill was one of those who have to argue every day or

die— Though, of course, he swore 'twas Jim who always

itched to argufy. They would, on most abstract subjects, contradict

each other flat And at- times in lurid language—they were mates in

spite of that.

138

Bill believed the Bible story re the origin of him— He was sober, he was steady, he was orthodox ; while

Jim, Who, we grieve to state, was always getting into

drunken scrapes, Held that man degenerated from degenerated apes.

Bill was British to the backbone, he was loyal

through and through; Jim declared that Blucher's Prussians won the fight

at Waterloo, And he hoped the coloured races would in time wipe out the white— And it rather strained their mateship, but it didn't burst it quite.

They battled round in Maoriland—they saw it

through iind through— And argued on the rata, what it was and how it

grew ; Bill believed the vine grew downward, Jim declared that it grew up— Yet they always shared their fortunes to the final bite and sup.

Night after night they argued how the kangaroo was

born, And each one held the other's stupid theories in

scorn, Bill believed it was ' born inside,' Jim declared it was

born out— Each as to his own opinions never had the slightest doubt.

They left the earth to argue and they went among the

stars, Be conditions atmospheric, Bill believed ' the hair of

Mars ' Was too thin for human bein's to exist in mortal

states.' Jim declared it was too thict, if anything—yet they

were mates

Bill for Freetrade—Jim, Protection—argued as to
which was best For the welfare of the workers—and their mateship
stood the test! They argued over what they meant and didn't mean
at all. And what they said and didn't—and were mates in
spite of all.

BILL AND JIM FALL OUT 141

Till one night the two together tried to light a fire in
camp, When they had a leaky billy and the wood was scarce
and damp. And . . . No matter : let the moral be distinctly
understood : One alone should tend the fire, while the other brings
the wood.

It was a week from Christmas-time,
As near as I remember, And half a year since in the rear
We'd left the Darling Timber. The track was hot and more than drear;
The long day seemed for ever ; But now we knew that we were near
Our camp—the Paroo River.

With blighted eyes and blistered feet,
With stomachs out of order, Half mad with flies and dust and heat
We'd crossed the Queensland Border. I longed to hear a stream go
by

And see the circles quiver ; T longed to lay me down and die
That night on Paroo River.

142

THE PAROO 143

'Tis said the land out West is grand—

I do not care who says it— It isn't even decent scrub,
Nor yet an honest desert; It's plagued with flies, and broiling hot,
A curse is on it ever ; I really think that God forgot

The country round that river.

My mate—a native of the land—

In fiery speech and vulgar, Condemned the flies and cursed the
sand,

And doubly damned the mulga. He peered ahead, he peered about
—

A bushman he, and clever— ' Now mind you keep a sharp look-out;

' We must be near the river.'

The ' nose-bags ' heavy on each chest

(God bless one kindly squatter !) With grateful weight our hearts they
pressed—

We only wanted water. The sun was setting (in the west)

In colour like a liver— ■V^e'd fondly hoped to camp and rest

That night on Paroo River.

144 THE PAROO

A cloud was on my mate's broad brow,

And once I heard him mutter : ' I'd like to see the Darling now,

' God bless the Grand Old Gutter !' And now and then he stopped
and said

In tones that made me shiver— ' It cannot well be on ahead,

' I think we've crossed the river'

But soon we saw a strip of ground

That crossed the track we followed— No barer than the surface
round.

But just a Uttle hollowed. His brows assumed a thoughtful frown—

This speech he did deliver : ' I wonder if we'd best go down

' Or up the blessed river "i'

' But where,' said I, ' 's the blooming stream f

And he replied, ' We're at it!' I stood awhile, as in a dream,

' Great Scott!' I cried, ' is that it ? ' Why, that is some old bridle-track !'

He chuckled, ' Well, I never ! ' It's nearly time you came out-back—

' This is the Paroo River !'

THE PAROO 145

No place to camp—no spot of damp—

No moisture to be seen there; If e'er there was it left no sign
That it had ever been there. But ere the morn, with heart and soul
We'd cause to thank the Giver— We found a muddy water-hole
Some ten miles down the river.

Call thjs hot ? I beg your pardon. Hot!—you
don't know what it means. (What's that, waiter? lamb or mutton!
Thank you—

mine is beef and greens. Bread and butter while I'm waiting. Milk?
Oh,

yes—a bucketful.) I'm just in from west the Darling, ' pieking-up ' and
*rolKng wool.'

Mutton stewed or chops for breakfast, dry and tasteless, boiled in fat;
Bread or brownie, tea or coffee—two hours' graft in front of that;
Legs of mutton boiled for dinner—mutton greasywarm for tea—■
Mutton curried (gave my order, beef and plenty greens for me.)

U6

THE GREEN-HAND RODSEABOUX 147

Breakfast, curried rice and mutton till your innards
sacrifice, And you sicken at the colour and the smell of curried
rice. All day long with living mutton—bits and belly-wool
and fleece; Blinded by the yoke of wool, and shirt and trousers

stiff trith grease. Till you long for sigh't of verdure, cabbage-plots and
water clear, And you crave for beef and butter as a boozier craves
for beer.

Dusty patch in baking mulga—glaring iron hut and
shed— Peel and smell of rain forgotten—water scarce and
feed-grass dead. Hot and suffocating sunrise—all-pervading sheep-
yard
smell— Stiff and aching green-hand stretches—' Slushy' rings
the bullock-bell— Pint of tea and hunk of brownie—sinners string
towards the shed— Great, black, greasy crows round carcass—
screen
behind of dust-cloud red.

148 THE GREEN-HAND ROUSEABOUT

Engine whistles. ' Go it, tigers!' and the agony
begins, Picking up for seven devils out of Hades—for my
sins; Picking up for seven devils, seven demons out of
Hell! Sell their souls to get the bell-sheep—half a-dozen
Christs they'd sell! Day grows hot as where they come from—too
danmed
hot for men or brutes; 'Roof of corrugated iron, six-foot-six above the
shoots !
Whiz and rattle and vibration, like an endless chain

of trams; Blasphemy of five-and-forty — prickly heat — and
stink of rams ! ' Barooo' leaves his pen-door open and the sheep
come bucking out; When the rouser goes to pen them, ' Barooo'
blasts

the rouseabout. Injury with insult added—trial of our cursing
powers— Cursed and cursing back enough to damn a dozen
worlds like ours.

' Take my combs down to the grinder, will yer 1'

' Seen my cattle-pup ?' 'There's a sheep fell down in my shoot—just
jump

down and pick it up.' ' Give the oiE.ce when the boss comes.' ' Catch
that

gory sheep, old man.' ' Count the sheep in my pen, will yer ? ' ' Fetch
my

combs back when yer can.' ' When yer get a chance, old feller, will
yer pop down

to the hut ? ' Fetch my pipe—the cook '11 show yer—and I'll let
yer have a cut.'

Shearer yells for tar and needle. Ringer's roaring like
a bull: ' Wool away, you (son of angels). Where the hell's
the (foundling) Wool !!'

Pound a week and station prices—mustn't kick

against the pricks— Seven weeks of lurid mateship—ruined soul and four

pounds six.

ISO THE GREEN-HAND ROUSEABOUT

What's that 1 waiter 1 met stuffed mutton ! Look here, waiter, to be brief,

I said beef ! you blood-stained villain! Beef—moocow—Roast Bullock—BEEF!

THE MAN FROM "WATERLOO (With kind regards to "Banjo.")

It was the Man from Waterloo,

When work in town was slack, Who took the track as bushmen do,

And humped his swag out back. He tramped for months without a bob,

For most the sheds were full, Until at last he got a job

At picking up the wool. He found the work was rather rough,

But swore to see it through, For he was made of sterling stuff—

The Man from Waterloo.

The first remark was like a stab

That fell his ear upon, 'Twas—' There's another something scab

' The boss has taken on !'

152 THE MAN I'ROM WATERLOO

They couldn't let the towny be—

They sneered like anything; They'd mock him when he'd sound the 'g'

In words that end in 'ing.'

There came a man from Ironbark,

And at the shed he shore; He scoffed his victuals like a shark,

And like a fiend he swore. He'd shorn his flowing beard that day—•

He found it hard to reap— Because 'twas hot and in the way

While he was shearing sheep. His loaded fork in grimy holt

Was poised, his jaws moved fast, Impatient till his throat could bolt

The mouthful taken last. He couldn't stand a something toff.

Much less a jackaroo; And swore to take the trimmings off

The Man from Waterloo.

The towny saw he must be up

Or else be underneath. And so one day, before them all,

He dared to clean his teeth.

The men came running from the shed,

And shouted, ' Here's a lark !' ' It's gone to clean its tooties !' said

The man from Ironbark. His feeble joke was much enjoyed ;

He sneered as bullies do. And with a scrubbing-brush he guyed

The Man from Waterloo.

The Jackaroo made no remark

But peeled and waded in, And soon the Man from Ironbark
Had three teeth less to grin ! And when they knew that he could fight
They swore to see him through. Because they saw that he was right
—

The Man from Waterloo.

Now in a shop in Sydney, near

The Bottle on the Shelf, The tale is told—with trimmings—by

The Jackaroo himself. ' They made my life a hell,' he said;

' They wouldn't let me be; ' They set the bully of the shed

' To take it out of me.

154 THE MAN FROM WATERLOO

' The dirt was on him like a sheath,

' He seldom washed his phiz; ' He sneered because I cleaned my
teeth

' I guess I dusted his ! ' I treated them as they deserved—

' I signed on one or two ! ' They won't forget me soon,' observed

The Man from Waterloo.

Now, I think there is a likeness

'Twixt St. Peter's life and mine, For he did a lot of trampin'

Long ago in Palestine. He was ' union ' when the workers

First began to organise. And—I'm glad that old St. Peter

Keeps the gate of Paradise.

When the ancient agitator

And his brothers carried swags, I've no doubt he very often

Tramped with empty tucker-bags ; And I'm glad he's Heaven's
picket,

For I hate explainin' things, And he'll think a uration ticket

Just as good as Whitely King's.

155

156 SAINT PETER

He denied the Saviour's union,

Which was weak of him, no doubt; But perhaps his feet was blistered

And his boots had given out. And the bitter storm was rushin'

On the bark and on the slabs, And a cheerful fire was blazin'.

And the hut was full of 'scabs.'

When I reach the great head-station—

Which is somewhere ' off the track 'I won't want to talk with angels

Who have never been out back ; They might bother me with offers

Of a banjo—meanin' well— And a pair of wings to fly with,

When I only want a spell.

I'll just ask for old St. Peter,

And I think, when he appears, I will only have to tell him

That I carried swag for years. ' I've been on the track,' I'll tell him,
' An' I done the best I could,' And he'll understand me better
Than the other angels would.

SAINT PETER 157

He won't try to get a chorus
Out of lungs that's worn to rags, Or to graft the wings on shoulders
That is stiff with humpin' swags. But I'll rest about the station
Where the work-bell never rings, Till they blow the final trumpet
And the Great Judge sees to things.

THE STRANGER'S FRIEND

The strangest things, and the maddest things, that a
man can do or say, To the chaps and fellers and coves Out Back are
matters of every day ; Maybe on account of the lives they lead, or
the life

that their hearts discard— But never a fool can be too mad or a '
hard case'

be too hard.

I met him in Bourke in the Union days—with which

we have nought to do (Their creed was narrow, their methods crude,
but

they stuck to ' the cause' like glue). He came into town from the Lost
Soul Run for his

grim half-yearly.' bend,' And because of a curious hobby he had, he was

known as ' The Stranger's Friend.'

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THE STRANGER'S FRIEND 159

It is true to the region of adjectives when I say that

the spree was ' grim,' For to go on the spree was a sacred rite, or a heathen

rite, to him. To shout for the travellers passing through to the

land where the lost soul bakes— Till they all seemed devils of different breeds, and his

pockets were filled with snakes.

In the joyful mood, in the solemn mood—in his

cynical stages too— In the maudlin stage, in the fighting stage, in the

stage when all was blue— From the joyful hour when his spree commenced,

right through to the awful end. He never lost grip of his ' fixed idee ' that he was the

Stranger's Friend.

' The feller as knows, he can battle around for his

bloomin' self,' he'd say— ' I don't give a curse for the " blanks " I know-send

the hard-up bloke this way; 'Sead the stranger round, and I'll see him through,'

and, e'en as the bushman spoke, \

The chaps and fellers would tip the wink to a casual,

' hard-up bloke.'

And it wasn't only a bushman's ' bluff' to the fame

of the Friend they scored, For he'd shout the stranger a suit of clothes, and he'd

pay for the stranger's board— The worst of it was that he'd skite all night on the

edge of the stranger's bunk. And never got helplessly drunk himself till he'd got

the stranger drunk.

And the chaps and the fellers would speculate—by

way of a ghastly joke— As to who'd be caught by the 'jim-jams' first—the

Friend or the hard-up bloke ? And the ' Joker' would say that there wasn't a doubt

as to who'd be damned in the end, When the Devil got hold of a hard-up bloke in the

shape of the Stranger's Friend.

It mattered not to the Stranger's Friend what the

rest might say or think, He always held that the hard-up state was due to the

curse of drink, To the evils of cards, and of company : ' But a young
cove's built that way, 'And I was a bloomin' fool meself when I started
out,'

he'd say.

THE STRANGER'S FRIEND 161

At the end of the spree, in clean white 'moles,' cleanshaven, and
cool as ice,

He'd give the stranger a ' bob' or two, and some straight Out Back
advice ;

Then he'd tramp away for the Lost Soul Run, where the hot dust
rose like smoke,

Having done his duty to all mankind, for he'd ' stuck to a hard-up
bloke.'

They'll say 'tis a 'song of a sot,' perhaps, but the

Song of a Sot is true. I have ' battled' myself, and you know, you
chaps,

what a man in the bush goes through ; Let us hope when the last of
his sprees is past, and

his cheques and his strength are done. That, amongst the sober and
thrifty mates, the

Stranger's Friend has one.

Pat M'Durmer brought the tidings to the town of God-Forgotten :
'There are lively days before ye—commin Parlymint's dissolved !'
And the boys were all excited, for the State, of course, was ' rotten,'
And, in subsequent elections, God-Forgotten was involved. There
was little there to live for save in drinking beer and eating; But we

rose on this occasion ere the news appeared in print, For the boys of God-Forgotten, at a wild, uproarious meeting, Nominated Billy Blazes for the commin Parlymint.

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Other towns had other favourites, but the day before the battle Bushmen flocked to God-Forgotten, and the distant sheds were still; Sheep were left to go to glory, and neglected mobs of cattle Went a-straying down the river at their sweet bucolic will. William Spouter stood for Free-trade (and his votes were split by Nottin), He had influence behind him and he also had the tin. But across the lonely flatlands came the cry of God-Forgotten, ' Vote for Blazes and Protection, and the land you're living in !'

Pat M'Durmer said, ' Ye schaymers, please to shut yer ugly faces, ' Lend yer dirty ears a momint while I give ye all a hint: ' Keep ye sober till to-morrow and record yer vote for Blazes ' If ye want to send a ringer to the commin Parlymint.

' As a young and growin' township God-Forgotten's been neglected, ' And, if we'd be ripresented, now's the moment to begin— ' Have the local towns encouraged, local industries purtecfced : 'Vote for Blazes, and Protection, and the land ye're livin' in.

' I don't say that William Blazes is a perfect out-an' outer, ' I don't say he have the larnin', for he never had the luck ; ' I don't say he have the logic, or the gift of gab, like Spouter, ' I don't say he have the practice—but I sat he

HAVE THE PLUCK !

' Now the country's gone to ruin, and the Governments are rotten, ' But he'll save the public credit and purtect the public tin; ' To the iverlastin' glory of the name of God-Forgotten ' Vote for Blazes and Protection, and the land ye're livin' in !'

Pat M'D. went on the war-path, and he worked like salts and senna,
For he organised committees full of energy and push; And those wild
committees riding through the whiskyfed Gehenna Routed out
astonished voters from their humpies in the bush. Everything on
wheels was 'rinted,' and half-sobered drunks were shot in ; Said
M'Durmer to the driver, ' If ye want to save yer skin, ' Never stop to
wet yer whistles—drive like hell to God-Porgotten, ' Make the villains
plump for Blazes, and the land they're livin' in.'

Half the local long-departed (for the purpose resurrected) Plumped
for Blazes and Protection, and the country where they died; So he
topped the poll by sixty, and when Blazes was elected There was
victory and triumph on the God-Forgotten side.

Then the boys got up a banquet, and our chairman, Pat M'Durmer,
Was next day discovered sleeping in the local baker's bin— All the
dough had risen round him, but we heard a smothered murmur, '
Vote for Blazes—and Protection—and the land ye're livin' in.'

Now the great Sir William Blazes lives in London, 'cross the waters.
And they say his city mansion is the swellest in West End, But I very
often wonder if his toney sons and daughters Ever heard of Billy
Blazes who was once the ' people's friend.' Does his biassed
memory linger round that wild electioneering When the men of God-
Forgotten stuck to him through thick and thin ? Does he ever, in his
dreaming, hear the cry above the cheering: 'Vote for Blazes and
Protection, and the land you're livin' in ?'

THE GOD-FORGOTTEN ELECTION 167

Ah, the bush was grand in those days, and the Western boys were
daisies, And their scheming and their dodging would outdo the
wildest print; Still my recollection lingers round the time when Billy
Blazes Was returned by God-Forgotten to the ' Commin Parlymint':
Still I keep a sign of canvas—'twas a mate of mine that made it—
And its paint is cracked and powdered, and its threads are bare and
thin, Yet upon its grimy surface you can read in letters faded : •Vote
for Blazes and Protection, and the Land you're livin' in.'

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 bellsheep out ;
And skim it by the tips at times, or take it ■with the roots—
But 'pink' 'em, nice and pretty wJien you see the Boss's boots.

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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 wsis half as big
again ; And tigers might have Jieard 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 ' Jieadin' '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 Began swore amenfuUy—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;

lie 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 wellbred to stare,

But when the Boss is looking on they like to be aware.

THE BOSS'S BOOTS 173

The rouser has no soul to lose—it[^]s blarst the rouseabout!

And rip 'em through and yell for * tar ' and get the bellsheep outf

And take it with the scum at tim[^]s or take it with the roots,—

But [^]pink* [^]em nice and pretty when you see the Bosses boots.

•Bouseabout* and *picker-up' are interchangeable terms in above rhjones, as also 'boss' and ' super'; the shed-name for the latter is ' Bossover-the-board.' The shearer is paid by the hundred, the rouser by the week. ' Pink 'em pretty': to shear clean to the skin. * Bell-sheep': shearers are not supposed to take another sheep out of pen when ' Smoke-ho,' breakfast or dinner bell goes, but some time themselves to get so many sheep out, and oiie as the bell goes[^] which makes more work for the rouser and entrenches on his * smoke-ho,' as he must leave his ' board' clean. Shearers are seldom or never fined now.

As the night was falliug slowly down on city, town

and bush, From a slum in Jones' Alley sloped the Captain of

the Push; And he scowled towards the North, and he scowled

towards the South, As he hooked his little finger in the corners of his

mouth. Then his whistle, loud and shrill, woke the echoes of
the ' Rocks,' And a dozen ghouls came sloping round the corners
of the blocks.

There was nought to rouse their anger ; yet the oath
that each one swore Seemed less fit for publication than the one that
went
before.

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For they spoke the gutter language with the easy flow
that comes Only to the men whose childhood knew the brothels
and the slums. Then they spat in turns, and halted; and the one
that came behind, Spitting fiercely on the pavement, called on
Heaven
to strike him blind.

Let us first describe the captain, bottle-shouldered,
pale and thin, For he was the beau-ideal of a Sydney larrikin; E'en
his hat was most suggestive of the city where we
live. With a gallows-tilt that no one, save a larrikin, can
give; And the coat, a little shorter than the writer would
desire, Showed a more or less uncertain portion of his strange
attire.

That which tailors know as 'trousers'—known by
him as 'bloomin' bags'—Hanging loosely from his person, swept,
with tattered

eiids, the flags;

And he had a pointed sternpost to the boots that
peeped below (Which he laced up from the centre of the nail of his
great toe), And he wore his shirt uncoUar'd, and the tie
correctly wrong; But I think his vest was shorter than should be in
one so long.

And the captain crooked his finger at a stranger on
the kerb, Whom he qualified politely with an adjective and verb. And
he begged the Gory Bleeders that they wouldn't

interrupt Till he gave an introduction—it was painfuUy

abrupt— 'Here's the bleedin' push, me covey—here's a

(something) from the bush ! 'Strike me dead, he wants to join us !'
said the

captain of the push.

Said the stranger : 'I am nothing but a bushy and

a dunce; 'But I read about the Bleeders in the Weekly

Gasbag once:

'Sitting lonely in the humpy when the wind began to

" whoosh," ' How I longed to share the dangers and the pleasures
of the push! ' Gosh! I hate the swells and good 'uns—I could
burn 'em in their beds; 'I am with you, if you'll have me, and I'll break
their blazing heads.'

' Now, look here,' exclaimed the captain to the
stranger from the bush, ' Now, look here— suppose a feller was to
split upon
the push, ' Would you lay for him and fetch him, even if the
traps were round 1 ' Would you lay him out and kick him to a jelly on
the ground 'i ' Would you jump upon the nameless—kill, or cripple
him, or both 1 ' Speak ? or else I'll—speak !' The stranger answered,
' My kerlonial oath !'

' Now, look here,' exclaimed the captain to the stranger
from the bush, ' Now, look here—suppose the Bleeders let you come
and join the push,

' Would you smash a bleedin' bobby if you got the
blank alone 1 ' Would you break a swell or Ohinkie—split his garret
with a stone 1 ' Would you have a " moll" to keep yer—like to
swear off work for good 1' ' Yes, my oath !' replied the stranger. ' My
kerlonial

oath ! I would !'

' Now, look here,' exclaimed the captain to that
stranger from the bush, 'Now, look here—before the Bleeders let yer
come
and join the push, 'You must prove that you're a blazer—you must
prove that you have grit ' Worthy of a Gory Bleeder—you must show
your
form a bit— ' Take a rook and smash that winder 1' and the
stranger, nothing loth. Took the rock and—smash! They only
muttered
' My kerlonial oath !'

So they swore him in, and found him sure of aim
and light of heel. And his only fault, if any, lay in his excessive zeal;
He was good at throwing metal, but we chronicle with
pain That he jumped upon a victim, damaging the watch
and chain, Ere the Bleeders had secured them ; yet the captain
of the push Swore a dozen oaths in favour of the stranger from
the bush.

Late next morn the captain, rising, hoarse and thirsty
from his lair, Called the newly-feather'd Bleeder, but the stranger
wasn't there ! Quickly going through the pockets of his ' bloomin'
bags,' he learned That the stranger had been through him for the
stuff

his ' moll' had earned ; And the language that he muttered I should
scarcely like to tell (Stars ! and notes of exclamation !! blank and
dash
will do as well).

In the night the captain's signal woke the echoes of
the ' Rocks,' Brought the Gory Bleeders sloping thro' the shadows
of the blocks;

180 THE CAPTAIN OF THE PUSH

And they swore the stranger's action was a bloodescaping shame,
While they waited for the nameless, but the nameless never came.

And the Bleeders soon forgot him ; but the captain .of the push
Still is ' laying' round, in ballast, for the nameless ' from the bush.'

Long Bill, the captain of the push, was tired of his

estate, And wished to change his life and win the love of

something 'straight'; Twas rumour'd that the Gory B.'s had heard
Long

Bill declare That he would turn respectable and wed a ' square
affair.'

He craved the kiss of innocence ; his spirit longed to

rise; The ' Crimson Streak,' his faithful ' piece,' grew

hateful in his eyes ; (And though, in her entirety, the Crimson Streak

' was there,' I grieve to state the Crimson Streak was not a
' square affair.')

He wanted clothes, a masher suit, he wanted boots
and hat; His girl had earned a quid or two—he wouldn't part
with that; And so he went to Brickfield Hill, and from a draper
there He 'shook' the proper kind of togs to fetch a 'square
affair.'

Long Bill went to the barber's shop and had a shave
and singe. And from his narrow forehead combed his darling
Mabel fringe; Long Bill put on a ' square cut' and he brushed his
boots with care. And roved about the Gardens till he mashed a
'square
affair.'

She was a tony servant-girl from somewhere on ' the
Shore;' She dressed in style that suited Bill—he could not
wish for more. While in her guileless presence he had ceased to
chew
or swear, He knew the kind of barrack that can fetch a square
affair.

To thus desert his donah old was risky and a sin, And 'twould have
served him right if she had caved

his garret in. The Gory Bleeders thought it too, and warned him to take care In case the Crimson Stffeik got scent of Billy's square affair.

He took her to the stalls; 'twas dear, but Billy said ' Wot odds !' He couldn't take his square affair amongst the crimson gods. They wandered in the park at night, and hugged each other there— But, ah ! the Crimson Streak got wind of Billy's square affair !

■ The blank and space and stars !' she yelled ; ' the nameless crimson dash ! ' I'll smash the blanky crimson and his square affair, I'll smash '— In short, she drank and raved and shrieked and tore her crimson hair. And swore to murder Billy and to pound his square affair.

184 BILLY'S 'SQUARE AFFAIR'

And so one summer evening, as the day was growing dim, She watched her bloke go out, and foxed his square affair and him. That night the park was startled by the shrieks that rent the air— The 'Streak' had gone for Billy and for Billy's square affair.

The ' gory' push had foxed the Streak, they foxed

her to the park. And they, of course, were close at hand to see the
bleedin' lark; A cop arrived in time to hear a 'gory B.' declare 'Gor
blar-me ! here's the Red Streak foul of Billy's
square affair.'

Now Billy scowls about the Rocks, his manly beauty
marr'd, And BUly's girl, upon her 'ed, is doin' six months
'ard; Bill's swivel eye is in a sling, his heart is in despair, And in the
Sydney 'Orspital lies Billy's square affair.

'TwAS in the felon's dock he stood, his eyes were black
and blue; His voice with grief was broken, and his nose was
broken, too; He muttered, as that broken nose he wiped upon his
cap— ' It's orful when the p'leece has got a derry on a
chap.

' I am a honest workin' cove, as any bloke can see, ' It's just because
the p'leece has got a derry, sir, on
me ; ' Oh, yes, the legal gents can grin, I say it ain't no
joke— ■ It's cruel when the p'leece has got a derry on a
bloke.'

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186 A DERRY ON A COVE

' Why doa'fc you go to work 1' he said (he muttered,

' Why don't you?'). ' Yer honer knows as well as me there ain't no work

to do. ' And when I try to find a job I'm shaddered by a trap— ' It's awful when the p'leece has got a derry on a chap.'

I sigh'd and shed a tearlet for that noble nature marred, But, ah ! the Bench was rough on him, and gave him six months' hard. He only said, ' Beyond the grave you'll cop it hot, by

Jove ! •There ain't no angel p'leece to get a derry on a cove.'

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! claim your rights with fire and steel! Rise ye ! for the cursed tyrants crush ye with the hiron 'eel! They would treat ye worse than sl-a-a-ves! they would treat ye worse than brutes ! Rise and crush the selfish tyrants ! ku-r-rush them with your hob-nailed boots !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! glorious toilers ! Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! Erwake ! er-rise !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! tyrants come across the waves ! Will ye yield the Rights of Labour 1 will ye ? will ye still be sl-a-a-ves ? ! ! !

188 RISE YE ! RISE YE !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! mighty toilers ! and revoke the

rotten laws ! Lo ! your wives go out a-washing while ye battle for the
caws !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! glorious toilers ! Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers !
Erwake ! er-rise !

Our gerlorious dawn is breaking ! Lo ! the tyrant

trembles now ! He will sta-a-rve us here no longer ! toilers will not

bend or bow ! Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! rise ! behold, revenge

is near j See the leaders of the people ! come an' 'ave a pint o' beer !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! Rise ye ! rise ye ! glorious toilers !
Erwake ! er-rise !

Lo ! the poor are starved, my brothers! lo ! our

wives and children weep ! Lo ! our women toil to keep us while the
toilers are

asleep !

RISE YB 1 RISE YE ! 189

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! rise and break the

tyrant's chain ! March ye ! march ye! mighty toilers ! even to the
battle plain !

Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers ! Rise ye ! rise ye ! noble toilers !
Erwake! er-r-rise!

Ye children of the Land of Gold,

I sing a song to you, And if the jokes are somewhat old,
The main idea 's new. So be it sung, by hut and tent,
Where tall the native grows; And understand, the song is meant
For singing through the nose.

There dwelt a hard old cockatoo
On western hills far out. Where everything is green and blue,
Except, of course, in drought; A crimson Anarchist was he—
Held other men in scorn— Yet preached that ev'ry man was free.
And also ' ekal born.'

He lived in his ancestral hufc—
His missus wasn't there— And there was no one with him but
His daughter, Mabel Clare. Her eyes and hair were like the sun;
Her foot was like a mat; Her cheeks a trifle overdone;
She was a democrat.

A manly independence, born
Among the trees, she had. She treated womankind with scorn,
And often cursed her dad. She hated swells and shining lights,
For she had seen a few, And she believed in ' women's rights '
(She mostly got 'em, too).

A stranger at the neighb'ring run

Sojourned, the squatter's guest. He was unknown to anyone,
But like a swell was dress'd ; He had an eyeglass to his eye,
A collar to his ears. His feet were made to tread the sky,
His mouth was formed for sneers.

192 THE BAFXAD OF MABEL CLARE

He wore the latest toggery,
The loudest thing in ties— 'Twas generally reckoned he
Was something in disguise. But who he was, or whence he came,
Was long unknown, except Unto the squatter, who the name
And noble secret kept.
And strolling in the noontide heat.
Beneath the blinding glare. This noble stranger chanced to meet
The radiant Mabel Clare. She saw at once he was a swell—
According to her lights— But, ah ! 'tis very sad to tell,
She met him oft of nights.
And, strolling through a moonlit gorge,
' She chatted all the while Of Ingersoll, and Henry George,
And Bradlaugh and Carlyle : In short, he learned to love the girl,
And things went on like this, Until he said he was an Earl,
And asked her to be his.

' Oh, say no more, Lord Kawlinee,
' Oh, say no more !' she said ; ' Oh, "say no more, Lord Kawlinee,
' I wish that I was dead : ' My head is in a hawful whirl,
' The truth I dare not tell— ' I am a democratic girl,
' And cannot wed a swell!' ♦
' Oh love !' he cried, ' but you forget
' That you are most unjust; ' 'Twas not my fault that I was set
' Within the upper crust. ' Heed not the yarns the poets tell—
' Oh, darling, do not doubt ' A simple lord can love as well
' As any rouseabout!
' For you I'll give my fortune up—
' I'd go to work for you ! ' I'll put the money in the cup
• And drop the title, too. ' Oh, fly with me ! Oh, fly with me
' Across the mountains blue ! ' Hoh, fly with me ! Hoh, fly with me 1 '
That very night she flew.

194 THE BALLAD OF MABEL CLARE

They took the train and journeyed down
Across the range they sped
—
Until they came to Sydney town, Where shortly they were wed.
And still upon the western wild Admiring teamsters tell
How Mabel's father cursed his chUd Fbr clearing with a swell.

' What ails my bird this bridal night,'
Exclaimed Lord Kawlinee; ' What ails my own this bridal night—
' O love, confide in me !' ' Oh now,' she said, ' that I am yaws
' You'll let me weep—I must— ' I did desert the people's cause
'To join the upper crust.'

O proudly smiled his lordship then—
His chimney-pot he floor'd— ' Look up, my love, and smile again,
' For I am not a lord !' His eye-glass from his eye he tore,
The dickey from his breast. And turned and stood liis bride before
A rouseabout—confess'd !

THE BALLAD OB" MABEL CLARE 195

' Unknown I've loved you long,' he said,
' And I have loved you true— ' A-shearing in your guv'ner's shed
' I learned to worship you. ' I do not care for place or pelf,
' For now, my love, I'm sure That you will love me for myself
' And not because I'm poor.
' To prove your love I spent my cheque
' To buy this swell rig-out; ' So fling your arms about my neck
' For I'm a rouseabout!' At first she gave a startled cry,
Then, safe from care's alarms, She sigh'd a soul-subduing sigh

And sank into his arms.

He pawned the togs, and home he took

His bride in all her charms ; The proud old cockatoo received

The pair with open arms. And long they lived, the faithful bride.

The noble rouseabout— And if she wasn't satisfied

She never let it out.

Most unpleasantly adjacent to the haunts of lower orders Stood a ' terrace' in the city when the current year began, And a notice indicated there were vacancies for boarders In the middle house, and lodgings for a single gentleman. Now, a singular observer could have seen but few attractions Whether in the house, or ' missus, or the notice, or the street. But at last there came a lodger whose appearances and actions Puzzled Constable M'Carty, the policeman on the beat.

196

He (the single gent) was wasted almost to emaciation, And his features were the palest that M'Carty ever saw, And these indications, pointing to a past of dissipation, Greatly strengthened the suspicions of the agent of the law. He (the lodger—hang the pronoun!) seemed to like the stormy weather. When the elements in battle kept it up a little late; Yet he'd wander in the moonlight when the stars were close together, Taking ghostly consolation in a visionary state.

He would walk the streets at midnight, when the storm-king raised his banner. Walk without his old umbrella,—wave his arms above his head : Or he'd fold them tight, and mutter, in a wild, disjointed manner. While the town was wrapped in slumber and he should have been in bed.

Said the constable-on-duty: 'Shure, Oi wonther phwat his trade is 1'
And the constable would watch him from the shadow of a wall, But
he never picked a pocket, and he ne'er accosted ladies, And the
constable was puzzled what to make of him at all.

Now, M'Carty had arrested more than one notorious dodger. He had
heard of men afflicted with the strangest kind of fads, But he couldn't
fix the station or the business of the lodger. Who at times would
chum with cadgers, and at other times with cads. And the constable
would often stand and wonder how the gory Sheol the stranger got
his living, for he loafed the time away A.nd he often sought a hillock
when the suu went down in glory, Just as if he was a mourner at the
burial of the day.

Mac. had noticed that the lodger did a mighty lot of smoking, And
could ' stow away a long 'un,' never winking, so he could; And
M'Carty once, at midnight, came upon the lodger poking Round
about suspicious alleys where the common houses stood. Yet the
constable had seen him in a class above suspicion— Seen him
welcomed with effusion by a dozen ' toney gents'— Seen him driving
in the buggy of a rising politician Thro' the gateway of the member's
toney private residence.

And the constable, oflf duty, had observed the lodger slipping Down
a lane to where the river opened on the ocean wide, Where he'd
stand for hours gazing at the distant anchor'd shipping, But he never
took his coat off, so it wasn't suicide.

For the constable had noticed that a man who's filled with loathing
For his selfish fellow-creatures and the evil things that be, Will, for
some mysterious reason, shed a portion of his clothing. Ere he takes
his first and final plunge into eternity.

And M'Carty, once at midnight—be it said to his abasement— Left
his beat and climbed a railing of considerable height, Just to watch
the lodger's shadow on the curtain of his casement While the little
room was lighted in the listening hours of night. Now, at first the
shadow hinted that the substance sat inditing; Now it indicated

toothache, or the headache; and again, 'Twould exaggerate the gestures of a dipsomaniac fighting Those original conceptions of a whisky-sodden biain.

Then the constable, retreating, scratched his head and muttered ' Sorra ' Wan of me can undershtand it. But Oi'U keep me Oi on him, ' Divil take him and his tantrums; he's a lunatic, begorra ! ' Or, if he was up to mischief, he'd be sure to douse the glim.' But M'Carty wasn't easy, for he had a vague suspicion That a ' skame ' was being plotted; and he thought the matter down Till his mind was pretty certain that the business was sedition, And the man, in league with others, sought to overthrow the Crown.

But, in spite of observation, Mac received no information And was forced to stay inactive, being puzzled for a charge. That the lodger was a madman seemed the only explanation, Tho' the house would scarcely harbour such a lunatic at large.

His appearance failed to warrant apprehension as a vagrant, Tho' 'twas getting very shabby, as the constable could see; But M'Carty in the meantime hoped to catch him in a flagrant Breach of peace, or the intention to commit a felony.

(For digression there is leisure, and it is the writer's pleasure Just to pause a while and ponder on a painful legal fact, Being forced to say in sorrow, and a line of doubtful measure, That there's nothing so elastic as the cruel Vagrant Act) Now, M'Carty knew his duty, and was brave as any lion, But he dreaded being ' landed' in an influential bog— As the chances were he would be if the man he had his eye on Was a person of importance who was travelling incog.

CONSTABLE M'CAETyS INVESTIGATIONS 203

Want of sleep and over-worry seemed to tell upon M'Carty : He was thirsty more than ever, but his appetite resigned; He was previously reckoned as a jolly chap and hearty, But the mystery was lying like a mountain on his mind. Tho' he tried his best, he couldn't get a hold upon the lodger. For the latter's antecedents weren't known to the

police— They considered that the ' devil' was a dark and artful dodger Who was scheming under cover for the downfall of the peace.

'Twas a simple explanation, though M'Carty didn't know it. Which with half his penetration he might easily have seen, For the object of his dangerous suspicions was a poet, Who was not so widely famous as he thought lie should have been.

204 CONSTABLE M'CARTY'S INVESTIGATION

And the constable grew thinner, till one morning, ' little dhramin' ' A.V the sword of revelation that was leapin' from its sheath,' He alighted on some verses in the columns of the Fkayman, ' Wid the christian name an surname av the lodger ondemeath!"

Now, M'Carty and the poet are as brother is to brother, Or, at least, as brothers should be ; and they very often meet On the lonely block at midnight, and they wink at one another— Disappearing down the by-way of a shanty in the street. And the poet's name you're asking 1—well, the ground is very tender. You must wait until the public put the gilt upon the name. Till a glorious, sorrow-drowning, and, perhaps, a final ' bender,' Heralds his triumphant entrance to the thunderhalls of Fame.

'TwAS in a tug-of-war where I—the guvnor's hope and pride— Stepped proudly on the platform as the ringer on my side; Old dad was in his glory there—it gave the old man ^ joy To fight a passage through the crowd and barrack for his boy.

A friend came up and said to me, ' Put out your muscles, John, ' And pull them to eternity—your guvnor's looking

on.' I paused before I grasped the rope, and glanced
around the place, And, foremost in the waiting crowd, I saw the old
man's face.

205

206 AT THE TUG-OF-WAR

My mates were strong and plucky chaps, but very
soon I knew That our opponents had the weight and strength to
pull them through; The boys were losing surely and defeat was very
near, When, high above the mighty roar, I heard the old
man cheer !

I felt my muscles swelling when the old man cheer'd
for me, I felt as though I'd burst my heart, or gain the
victory ! I shouted, ' Now ! Together!' and a steady strain
replied, And, with a mighty heave, I helped to beat the other
side!

Oh ! how the old man shouted in his wild, excited joy! I thought he'd
burst his boiler then, a-cheering for

his boy; The chaps, oh ! how they cheered me, while the girls
all smiled so kind. They praised me, little dreaming, how the old man
pulled behind.

AT THE TUG-OF-WAR 207

He barracFs for his boy no more—his grave is old
and green, And sons have grown up round me since he vanished
from the scene; But, when the cause is worthy where I fight for
victory. In fancy still I often hear the old man cheer for me.

Old Time is tramping close to-day—you hear his
bluchers fall, A mighty change is on the way, an' God protect us
all; Some dust'll fly from beery coats—at least it's been
declared. I'm glad that wimin has the votes—but just a trifle
scared.

I'm just a trifle scared—For why ? The wimin mean
to rule; It makes me feel like days, gone by when I was caned
at school. The days of men is nearly dead—of double moons
and stars — They'll soon put out our pipes, 'tis said, an' close the
public bars.

No more we'll take a glass of ale whenipushed with
care an' strife, An' chuckle home with that old tale we used to tell
the wife. We'll laugh an' joke an' sing no more with jolly beery
chums, An' shout 'Here's luck !' while waitin' for the luck
that never comes.

Did we prohibit swillin' tea clean out of commonsense

Or legislate on gossipin' across a backyard fence 1

Did we prohibit bustles—or the hoops when they was here ?

The wimin never think of this—they want to stop our beer.

The track o' life is dry enough, an' crossed with many

a rut, But, oh! we'll find it long an' rough when all the

pubs is shut; When all the pubs is shut, an' gone the doors we

used to seek, An' we go toilin', thirstin' on through Sundays all the week.

210 HERE'S LUCK!

For since the days when pubs was ' inns'—in years

gone past 'n' far— Poor sinful souls have drowned their sins an' sorrers

at the bar; An' though at times it led to crimes, an' debt, and

such complaints— I scarce dare think about the time when all mankind

is saints.

'Twould make the bones of Bacchus leap an' break

his coffin lid; And Burns's ghost would wail an' weep as Bobby

never did. But let the preachers preach in style, an' rave and

rant—'n' buck, I rather guess they'll hear awhile the old war-cry:

'Here's Luck!'

The world might wobble round the sun, an' all the
banks go bung. But pipes'll smoke an' liquor run while Auld Lang
Syne is sung. While men are driven through the miU, an' flinty
times is struck, They'll find a private entrance still!

Here's Luck, old man—Here's Luck !

There's a class of men (and women) who are always
on their guard— Cunning, treacherous, suspicious—feeling softly—
grasping hardBrainy, yet without the courage to forsake the
beaten track— Cautiously they feel their way behind a bolder spirit's
back.

If you save a bit of money, and you start a little
store— Say, an oyster-shop, for instance, where there wasn't
one before— When the shop begins to pay you, and the rent is off
your mind. You will see another started by a chap that comes
behind.

2H

So it is, and so it might have been, my friend, with
me and you— When a friend of both and neither interferes between
the two ; They will fight like fiends, forgetting in their passion
mad and blind, That the row is mostly started by the folk who come

behind.

They will stick to you like sin will, while your
money comes and goes, But they'll leave you when you haven't got
a shilling
in your clothes. You may get some help above you, but you'll nearly
always find That you cannot get assistance from the men who
come behind.

There are many, far too many, in the world of prose
and rhyme, Always looking for another's ' footsteps on the sands
of time.' Journalistic imitators are the meanest of mankind; And the
grandest themes are hackneyed by the pens
that come behind.

THE MEN WHO COME BEHIND 213

If you strike a novel subject, write it up, and do not fail.
They will rhyme and prose about it till your very own is stale,
As they raved about the region that the wattleboughs perfume
Till the reader cursed the bushman and the stink of wattle-bloom.
They will follow in your footsteps while you're
groping for the light; But they'll run to get before you when they see
you're
going right; And they'll trip you up and baulk you in their blind

and greedy heat. Like a stupid pup that hasn't learned to trail behind your feet.

Take your loads of sin and sorrow on more energetic backs! Go and strike across the country where there are not any tracks ! And—we fancy that the subject could be further treated here. But we'll leave it to be hackneyed by the fellows in the rear.

The breezes waved the silver grass,
Waist-high along the siding, And to the creek we ne'er could pass
Three boys on bare-back riding ; Beneath the sheoaks in the bend
The waterhole was brimming— Do you remember yet, old friend,
The times we ' went in swimming ?'
The days we ' played the wag ' from school—
Joys shared—and paid for singly— The air was hot, the water cool—
And naked boys are kingly ! With mud for soap the sun to dry—
A well planned lie to stay us, And dust well rubbed on neck and face
Lest cleanliness betray us.

214

THE DAYS WHEN WE WENT SWIMMING 215

And you'll remember farmer Kutz —

Though scarcely for his bounty— He leased a forty-acre block,
And thought he owned the county ; A farmer of the old world school,
That men grew hard and grim in. He drew his water from the pool
That we preferred to swim in.

And do you mind when down the creek

His angry way he wended, A green-hide cartwhip in his hand

For our young backs intended ? Three naked boys upon the sand—

Half buried and half sunning— Three startled boys without their
clothes

Across the paddocks running.

We've had some scares, but we looked blank

When, resting there and chumming, One glanced by chance along
the bank

And saw the farmer coming ! And home impressions linger yet

Of cups of sorrow brimming ;• I hardly think that we'll forget

The last day we went swimming.

It was built of bark and poles, and the floor was full
of holes

Where each leak in rainy weather made a pool;

And the walls were mostly cracks lined with calico
and sacks—

There was little need for windows in the school.

Then we rode to school and back by the rugged gully track, On the old grey horse that carried three or four; And he looked so very wise that he lit the master's eyes* Every time he put his head in at the door.

216

He had run with Cobb and Co.—' that grey leader, let him go !' There were men 'as knowed the brand upon his hide,' And ■■ as knowed it on the course ' . Funeral service : ' Good old horse ! ' When we burnt him in the gully where he died.

And the master thought the same. 'Twas from Ireland that he came, Where the tanks are full all summer, and the feed is simply grand; And the joker then in vogue said his lessons wid a brogue— 'Twas unconscious imitation, let the reader understand.

And we learnt the world in scraps from some ancient dingy maps Long discarded by the public-schools in town ; And as nearly every book dated back to Captain Cook Our geography was somewhat upside-down.

218 THE OLD BARK SCHOOL

It was 'in the book' and so—well, at that we'd let it

go. For we never would believe that print could lie; And we all learnt pretty soon that when we came out

at noon ' The sun is in the south part of the sky.'

And Ireland ! that was known from the coast line to Athlone: We got little information re the land that gave us birth; Save that Captain Cook was killed (and was very likely grilled) And ' the natives of New Holland are the lowest race on earth.'

And a woodcut, in its place, of the same degraded race Seemed a lot more like a camel than the blackiellows we knew; Jimmy BuUock, with the rest, scratched his head and gave it best; But his faith was sadly shaken by a bobtaUed kangaroo.

THE OLD BAKK SCHOOL 219

But the old bark-school is gone, and the spot it stood upon Is a cattle-camp in winter where the curlew's cry is heard ; There's a brick-school on the flat, but a schoolmate teaches that, For, about the time they built it, our old master was ' transferred.'

But the bark-school comes again with exchanges 'cross the plain — With the Out-Back Advertiser ; and my fancy roams at large When I read of passing stock, of a western mob or flock. With ' James Bullock,' ' Grey,' or ' Henry Dale ' in charge.

And I think how Jimmy went from the old bark school content, With his ' eddication ' finished, with his pack-horse after him ; And perhaps if I were back I would take the self-same track, For I wish my learning ended when the Master ' finished' Jim.

You lazy boy, you're here at last,

You must be wooden-legged; Now, are you sure the gate is fast

And all the sliprails pegged And all the milkers at the yard,

The calves all in the pen 1 We don't want Foley's calf to suck

His mother dry again.

And did you mend the broken rail

And make it firm and neat 1 I s'pose you want that brindle steer

All night among the wheat. And if he finds the lucerne patch.

He'll stuff his belly full; He'll eat till he gets ' blown ' on that

And busts like Ryan's bull.

TROUBLE ON THE SELECTION 221

Old Spot is lost 1 You'll drive me mad,

You will, upon my soul! She might be in the boggy swamps

Or down a digger's hole. You needn't talk, you never looked ;

You'd find her if you'd choose. Instead of poking 'possum logs.

And hunting kangaroos.

How came your boots as wet as muck 1

You tried to drown the ants ! Why don't you take your bluchers off,

Good Lord, he's tore his pants ! Your father's coming home to-night;

You'll catch it hot, you'll see. Now go afitl wash your filthy face

And come and get your tea.

When you've knocked about the country—been away

from home for years ; When the past, by distance softened, nearly
fills

your eyes with tears— You are haunted oft, wherever or however
you may

roam. By a fancy that you ought to go and see the folks at

home. You forget the family quarrels—little things that

used to jar— And you think of how they'll worry—how they

wonder where you are; You will think you served them badly, and
your own

part you'll condemn, And it strikes you that you'll surely be a novelty
to them,

223

For your voice has somewhat altered, and your face

has somewhat changed— And your views of men and matters over
wider fields

have ranged. Then it's time to save your money, or to watch it
(how it goes !) ; Then it's time to get a ' Gladstone' and a decent suit
of clothes; Then it's time to practise daily with a hair-brush and
a comb, Till you drop in unexpected on the folks and friends
at home.

When you've been at home for some time, and the

novelty's worn off, And old chums no longer court you, and your
friends

begin to scoff; When ' the girls ' no longer kiss you, crying ' Jack !

how you have changed !' When you're stale to your relations, and
their manner

seems estranged; When the old domestic quarrels, round the table

thrice a day, Make it too much like the old times—make you wish

you'd stayed away,

224 THE PROFESSIONAL WANDERER

When, in short, you've spent your money in the
fulness of your heart. And your clothes are getting shabby . . . Then
it's high time to depart.

'Tis a yarn I heard of a new-chum'trap'

On the edge of the Never-Never, Where the dead men lie and the
black men lie,

And the bushman lies for ever.

'Twas the custom still with the local blacks

To cadge in the ' altogether '— They had less respect for our feelings
then,

And more respect for the weather.

The trooper said to the sergeant's wife :

' Sure, I wouldn't seem unpleasant; ' But there's women and childer
about the place,

' And—barrin' a lady's present—

' There's ould King Billy wid niver a stitch

' For a month—may the drought cremate him !—

' Bar the wan we put in his dhirty head, ' Where his old Queen Mary
bate him.

226

' God give her strength ! —and a peaceful reign—

' Though she flies in a bit av a passion ' If ony wan hints that her
shtoyle an' luks

' Are a trifle behind the fashion.

' There's two of the boys by the stable now— ' Be the powers ! I'll
teach the varmints

' To come wid nought but a shirt apiece, ' And wid dirt for their
nayther garmints.

' Howld on, ye blaggards ! How dare ye dare ' To come widin sight av
the houses 1—

' I'll give ye a warnin' all for wance 'An' a couple of ould pair of
trousers.'

They took the pants as a child a toy,

The constable's words beguiling A smile of something beside their
joy ;

And they took their departure smiling.

And that very day, when the sun was low. Two blackfellows came to
the station ;

They were filled with the courage of Queensland rum And bursting
with indignation.

A LITTLE MISTAKE 227

The constable noticed, with growing ire, They'd apparently dressed
in a hurry ;

And their language that day, I am sorry to say, Mostly consisted of '
plurry.'

The constable heard, and he wished himself back In the land of
the'bogs and the ditches—

' You plurry big tight-britches p'liceman, what for ' You gibbit our
missuses britches 1'

And this was a case, I am bound to confess,

Where civilisation went under ; Had one of the gins been less
modest in dress

He'd never have made such a blunder.

And here let the moral be duly made known,

And hereafter signed and attested : We should place more reliance
on that which is shown

And less upon what is suggested.

' A SAILOB named Grioe was seen by the guard of a goods train
lying close to the railway-line near Warner Town (S.A.) in a nude
condition. He was unconscious, and had lain there three days,
during one of which the glass registered 110 in the shade. Orice
expressed surprise that the train did not pick him up.'—Daily paper.
In consequence, the muse :—

He was bare—we don't want to be rude— (His condition was owing
to drink)

They say his condition was nood,

Which amounts to the same thing, we think (We mean his condition,
we think,

'Twas a naked condition, or nood,

Which amounts to the same thing, we think)

Uncovered he lay on the grass

That shrivelled and shrunk ; and he stayed Three hot summer days,
while the glass

Was one hundred and ten in the shade.

228

(We nearly remarked that he laid, But that was bad grammar we
thought—

It does sound bucolic, we think

It smacks of the barnyard— Of farming—of pullets in short.)

Unheeded he lay on the dirt;

Beside him a part of his dress, A tattered and threadbare old shirt

Was raised as a flag of distress. (On a stick, like a flag of distress—
Reversed—we mean that the tail-end was up

Half-mast—on a stick—an evident flag of distress.)

Perhaps in his dreams he persood

Bright visions of heav'nly bliss; And artists who study the nood

Never saw such a study as this. The ' luggage' went by and the
guard

Looked out and his eyes fell on Grice— We fancy he looked at him
hard.

We think that he looked at him twice.

230 A STUDY IN THE "NOOD"

They say (if the telegram's true)

When he woke up he wondered (good Lord !) ' Why the engine-man
didn't heave to—

' Why the train didn't take him aboard.' And now, by the case of poor
Grice,

We think that a daily express Should travel with sunshades and ice,
And a lookout for flags of distress.

Texas Jack, you are amusin'. By Lord Harry, how

I laughed When I seen yer rig and saddle -with its bulwarks

fore-and-aft; Holy smoke ! In such a saddle how the dickens can

yer fall t Why, I seen a gal ride bareback with no bridle on at

all! Gosh! so-help-me! strike-me-balmy! if a bit o'

scenery Like ter you in all yer rig-out on the earth I ever see! How I'd
like ter see a bushman use yer fixins, Texas

Jack; On the remnant of a saddle he can ride to hell and
back.

231

Why, I heerd a mother screamin' when her kid went

tossin' by Ridin' bareback on a buckner that had murder in his
eye.

What ? yer come to learn the natives how to squat

on horse's back ! Learn the cornstalk ridin'! Blazes!—w'at yer giv'n' us,

Texas Jack ? Learn the cornstalk—what the flamin', jumptup!

where's my country gone 1 Why, the cornstalk's mother often rides the day afore

he's born !

You may talk about your ridin' in the city, bold an'

free, Talk o' ridin' in the city, Texas Jack, but where'd yer

be When the stock horse snorts an' bunches all 'is

quarters in a hump. And the saddle climbs a sapling, an' the horse-shoes

split a stump 1

No, before yer teach the native you must ride without

a fall Up a gum or down a gully nigh as steep'as any wall—

«

You must swim the roarin' Darlin' when the flood is

at its height Bearin' down the stock an' stations to the great

Australian Bight.

You can't count the bulls an' bisons that yer copped

with your lasso— But a stout old myall bullock p'raps 'ud learn yer

somethin' new; Yer'd better make yer will an' leave yer papers neat

an' trim Before yer make arrangements for the lassoo in' of
Mm ; Ere you'n' yer horse is catsmeat, fittin' fate for sich
galoots, And yer saddle's turned to laces like we put in blucher
boots.

And yer say yer death on Inj ins ! We've got somethin' in yer line—
If yer think your fitin's ekal to the likes of Tommy Ryan.

Take yer karkass up to Queensland where the allygators chew

And the 'carpet-snake is handy with his tail for a lassoo;

Ride across the hazy regins where the lonely emus

wail An' ye'll find the black'U track yer while yer lookin'

for his trail; He can track yer without stoppin' for a thouBand miles

or more— Come again, and he will show yer where yer spit the

year before. But yer'd best be mighty careful, you'U be sorry you

kem here When yer skewered to the fakements of yer saddle

with a spear— When the boomerang is sailin' in the air, may heaven

help yer ! It will cut yer head off goin', an' come back again and

skelp yer.

P.S.—As poet and as Yankee I will greet you, Texas

Jack, For it isn't no ill-feelin' that is gettin' up my back, But I won't see
this land crowded by each Yank and

British cuss Who takes it in his head to come a-civilisin' us.

So if you feel like shootin' now, don't let yer pistol
cough— (Our Government is very free at ohokin' fellers off) ; And
though on your great continent there's misery in
the towns An' not a few untitled lords and kings without their
crowns, I will admit your countrymen is busted big, an' free, An' great
on ekal rites of men and great on liberty ; I will admit yer fathers
punched the gory tyrant's
head, But then we've got our heroes, too, the diggers that
is dead — The plucky men of Ballarat who toed the scratch
right well And broke the nose of Tyranny and made his peepers
swell For yankin' Lib.'s gold tresses in the roarin' days
gone by, An' doublin' up his dirty fist to black her bonny eye; So
when it comes to ridin' mokes, or hoistin' out the
Ohow, Or stickin' up for labour's rights, we don't want
showin' how.

236 A WORD TO TEXAS JACK

They come to learn us cricket in the days of long ago, An' Hanlan
come from Canada to learn us how to
row, An' ' doctors ' come from 'Frisco just to learn us how
to skite. An' ' pugs' from all the lands on earth to learn us
how to fight; An' when they go, as like or not, we find we're taken
in. They've left behind no larnin'—but they've carried

off our tin.

'TwiXT the coastline and the border lay the town of Grog-an'-Grumble In the days before the bushman was a duU 'n' heartless drudge, An' they say the local meeting was a drunken roughand-tumble, Which was ended pretty often by an inquest on the judge. An' 'tis said the city talent very often caught a tartar In the Grog-an'-Grumble sportsman, 'n' retired with broken heads, For the fortune, life, and safety of the Grog-an'Grumble starter Mostly hung upon the finish of the local thoroughbreds.

237

Pat M'Durmer was the owner of a horse they called the Screamer, Which he called the ' quickest shteppeer 'twixt the Darling and the sea;' And I think it's very doubtful if the stomachtroubled dreamer Ever saw a more outrageous piece of equine scenery; For his points were most decided, from his end to his beginning, He had eyes of different colour, and his legs they wasn't mates. Pat M'Durmer said he always came ' widin a flip av winnin',' An' his sire had come from England, 'n' his dam was from the States.

Friends would argue with M'Durmer, and they said he was in error To put up his horse the Screamer, for he'd lose in any case. And they said a city racer by the name of Holy Terror Was regarded as the winner of the coming steeplechase ;

But he said he had the knowledge to come in when it was raining, And irrelevantly mentioned that he knew the time of day, So he rose in their opinion. It was noticed that the training Of the Screamer was conducted in a dark, mysterious way.

Well, the day arrived in glory; 'twas a day of jubilation With careless-hearted bushmen for a hundred miles around. An' the rum 'n' beer 'n' whisky came in waggons from the station, An' the Holy Terror talent were the first upon the ground. Judge M'Ard—with whose opinion it was scarcely safe to wrestle— Took his dangerous position on the bark-and-sapling stand : He was what the local Stiggins used to

speaking of as a * wessel ' Of -v^ath,' and he'd a bludgeon that he carried in his hand.

' Off ye go !' the starter shouted, as down fell a stupid jockey
Off they started in disorder—left the jockey where he lay— And they fell and rolled and galloped down the crooked course and rocky, Till the pumping of the Screamer could be heard a mile away. But he kept his legs and galloped; he was used to rugged courses, And he lumbered down the gully till the ridge began to quake : And he ploughed along the siding, raising earth till other horses An' their riders, too, were blinded by the dustcloud in his wake.

From the ruck he'd struggled slowly—they were much surprised to find him Close abeam of Holy Terror as along the flat they tore— Even higher still and denser rose the cloud of dust behind him, While in more divided splinters flew the shattered rails before.

THE GROG-AN'-GRUMBLE STEEPLECHASE 241

' Terror!' ' Dead heat!' they were shouting— ' Terror !' but the Screamer hung out Nose to nose with Holy Terror as across the creek they swung, An' M'Durmer shouted loudly, ' Put yer tongue out! put yer tongue out!' An' the Screamer put his tongue out, and he won by half-a-tongue.

Bdt what's the use of writing ' hush '—

Though editors demand it— For city folk, and farming folk,

Can never understand it. They're blind to what the bushman sees

The best with eyes shut tightest, Out where the sun is hottest and

The stars are most and brightest.

The crows at sunrise flopping round

Where some poor life has run down ; The pah- of emus trotting from

The lonely tank at sundown, Their snaky heads well up, and eyes
Well out for man's manceuvres, And feathers bobbing round behind
Like fringes round improvers.

The swagman tramping 'cross the plain j

Good Lord, there's nothing sadder, Except the dog that slopes
behind

His master like a shadder ; The turkey-tail to scare the flies,

The water-bag and billy ; The nose-bag getting cruel light.

The traveller getting silly. The plain that seems to Jackaroos

Like gently sloping rises, The shrubs and tufts that's miles away

But magnified in sizes ; The track that seems arisen up

Or else seems gently slopin', And just a hint of kangaroos

Way out across the open. The joy and hope the swagman feels

Returning, after shearing, Or after six months' tramp Out Back,

He strikes the final clearing. His weary spirit breathes again.

His aching legs seem limber When to the East across the plain

He spots the Darling Timber !

244 BUT WHAT'S THE USB

But what's the use of writing ' bush '—

Though editors demand it— For city folk and cockatoos,

They do not understand it. They're blind to what the whaler sees

The best with eyes shut tightest, Out where Australia's widest, and
The stars are most and brightest.

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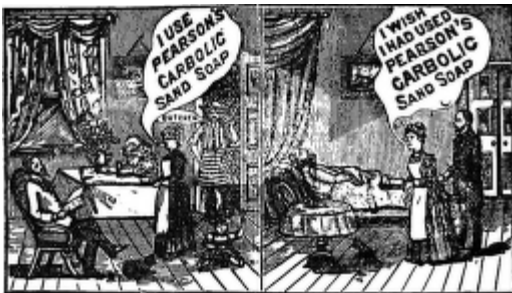
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