

Classic Poetry Series

W T Goodge

- poems -

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A Bad Break

The preacher quoted, and the cranks
Among his congregation smiled,
"How sharper than a serpent's thanks
It is to have a toothless child."

He saw he erred, his eye grew wild,
He frowned upon the mirthful ranks:
"How toothless than a serpent's child
It is to have a sharper's thanks!"

W T Goodge

A Matter of Knack

Jock M'Pherson was a person who was boastful in conversin',
But respectable and ponderous and dignified withal!
Con M'Carty was a party who was something of a smarty,
And beside the big M'Pherson looked particularly small;
But Cornelius M'Carty, he was artful, after all!

When Cornelius M'Carty thought M'Pherson was his dart, he
Made a wager he could carry him a mile along the track;
Which, considering M'Pherson was a very weighty person,
Was a risky undertaking for M'Carty's little back.
But Cornelius protested it depended on the knack!

"Take yer coat off!" called M'Carty, and M'Pherson gave a start, he
Hadn't bargained for proceedings the reverse of dignified!
But he felt he had the best of the arrangement. "Take yer vest off!"
Said M'Carty; and M'Pherson very graciously complied.
It was in the private parlor, and the crowd was all outside.

"Take yer boots off!" said M'Carty in a cheerful tone and hearty,
But M'Pherson he objected that the crowd would see his toes.
Said M'Carty, "See, M'Pherson, there ain't any sense in cursin',
Take yer boots off, I don't reckon to be handicapped with those!
I am not the sort of juggins you apparently suppose!"

This M'Pherson's wrath arouses. "But," said he, "I'll keep me trousers!"
"Not a trouser!" said M'Carty, "or to me the wager goes.
The conditions you're reversin'; I will carry you, M'Pherson,
But the wager doesn't say a blessed word about yer clothes!"
That was how the small M'Carty had M'Pherson by the nose!

W T Goodge

A Snake Yarn

"You talk of snakes," said Jack the Rat,
"But blow me, one hot summer,
I seen a thing that knocked me flat -
Fourteen foot long or more than that,
It was a reg'lar hummer!
Lay right along a sort of bog,
Just like a log!

"The ugly thing was lyin' there
And not a sign o' movin',
Give any man a nasty scare;
Seen nothin' like it anywhere
Since I first started drovin'.
And yet it didn't scare my dog.
Looked like a log!

"I had to cross that bog, yer see,
And bluey I was humpin';
But wonderin' what that thing could be
A-lyin' there in front o' me
I didn't feel like jumpin'.
Yet, though I shivered like a frog,
It seemed a log!

"I takes a leap and lands right on
The back of that there whopper!"
He stopped. We waited. Then Big Mac
Remarked: "Well, then, what happened, Jack?"
"Not much," said Jack, and drained his grog.
"It was a log!"

W T Goodge

Australia's Pride

Now Pat Ahearne, of Ingleburn
Upon the Castlereagh,
Was flush of cash and very "flash"
As shearer-persons say.
At Yankee grab his luck was cool,
At loo he'd lately scooped the pool;
He'd simply smashed the two-up school -
[Assisted by a "grey!"]

And Pat grew then like other men,
His head began to swell;
As he was fly he thought he'd try
The Sydney folks as well.
"Their chances would be mighty slim
Of working any points on him,
When Euchre Bill and Ginger Jim
Had found he was a sell!"

But bushmen's games are not the games
That Sydney spielers play;
A country smarty's "just their dart,"
The city sharpers say.
And Patrick he was taken down
For all he had, but half-a-crown,
Before he'd been in Sydney town
For more than half a day!

'Twas well for Pat, the shearer, that
He'd had the sense to pay
His fare's return to Ingleburn
Before he went away.
It's not what you could call a joke
To find yourself completely "broke";
But Patrick had a splendid stroke
In store for Castlereagh!

He found a shop - an oyster-shop -
Where lobster, crab and cray
Were all alive, and seemed to thrive;
And purchased straight-away
Some crayfish and some lobsters, too
(Such things are cheap in Woolloomooloo),
And caught the Western mail that flew
Towards the Castlereagh.

The train was crowded; which allowed
No sleeping on the trip.
Pat had a flask, and thought to ask
The men to take a nip.
Just then a lobster chanced to find
The bag unclosed, and, feeling kind,
It gave a man a nip; but mind,

It was not on the trip!

And then some crayfish got away,
With lobsters, two or three;
And sundry grips and divers nips
Made things extremely free.
Profane expressions filled the air
(Disgraceful how some people swear!);
A livelier time than Pat had there
You would not wish to see!

A great hooray! the ladies, they
Declared it was a plot,
Beyond a doubt, to drive them out.
But leave? No, they would not;
They swore that they would clear the coast,
Or else the guard should lose his post;
But women always are a most
Unreasonable lot!

On Pat's return to Ingleburn
The shell-fish were in tow,
And things were gay on Castlereagh
Preparing for the Show.
For every township in the scrub
That owns two churches and a pub
Must run a Show and draw a sub.
From Goldsbrough, Mort and Co.!

Now shell-fish are extremely rare
Upon the Castlereagh,
And Ingleburn galoots don't yearn
For lobster or for cray.
Lobsters indeed they'd never seen,
And never might, had it not been
For Pat Ahearne, and he was mean
Enough to make them pay!

On lucre bent he hired a tent
And made a rise with ease.
'Twas at the Show, of course, you know
Where side-shows always please.
The shell-fish they were placed inside,
And Pat stood by the door and cried:
"Walk in and see Australia's Pride -
The monster Sydney fleas!"

W T Goodge

Daley's Dorg 'Wattle'

"You can talk about yer sheep dorgs," said the man from Allan's Creek,
"But I know a dorg that simply knocked 'em bandy! -
Do whatever you would show him, and you'd hardly need to speak;
Owned by Daley, drover cove in Jackandandy.

"We was talkin' in the parlour, me and Daley, quiet like,
When a blow-fly starts a-buzzin' round the ceilin',
Up gets Daley, and he says to me, 'You wait a minute, Mike,
And I'll show you what a dorg he is at heelin'.'

"And an empty pickle-bottle was a-standin' on the shelf,
Daley takes it down and puts it on the table,
And he bets me drinks that blinded dorg would do it by himself -
And I didn't think as how as he was able!

"Well, he shows the dorg the bottle, and he points up to the fly,
And he shuts the door, and says to him - 'Now Wattle!'
And in less than fifteen seconds, spare me days, it ain't a lie,
That there dorg had got that insect in the bottle."

W T Goodge

How we drove the Trotter

Oh, he was a handsome trotter, and he couldn't be completer,
He had such a splendid action and he trotted to this metre,
Such a pace and such a courage, such a record-killing power,
That he did his mile in two-fifteen, his twenty in the hour.
When he trotted on the Bathurst road the pace it was a panter,
But he broke the poet's rhythm when he broke out in a canter -

As we were remarking the pace was a panter,
But just as we liked it he broke in a canter,
And rattled along with a motion terrific,
And scattered the sparks with a freedom prolific;
He tugged at the bit and he jerked at the bridle,
We pulled like a demon, the effort was idle,
The bit in his teeth and the rein in the crupper,
We didn't much care to get home to our supper.

Then we went
Like the wind,
And our hands
They were skinned,
And we thought
With a dread
To go over his head,
And we tugged
And we strove,
Couldn't say
That we drove
Till we found
It had stopped
And the gallop was dropped!

Then he dropped into a trot again as steady as a pacer,
And we thought we had a dandy that was sure to make a racer
That would rival all the Yankees and was bound to beat the British,
Not a bit of vice about him though he was a trifle skittish;
Past the buggies and the sulkies on the road we went a-flying,
For the pace it was a clinker, and they had no chance of trying,
But for fear he'd start a canter we were going to stop his caper
When he bolted like a bullet at a flying piece of paper -

Helter skelter,
What a pelter!
Such a pace to win a welter!
Rush,
Race,
Tear!
Flying through the air!
Wind a-humming,
Fears benumbing,
Here's another trap a-coming!
Shouts!
Bash!

Crash!
Moses, what a smash!

W T Goodge

Ough''A Phonetic Fantasy

The baker-man was kneading dough
And whistling softly, sweet and lough.

Yet ever and anon he'd cough
As though his head were coming ough!

"My word!" said he," but this is rough:
This flour is simply awful stough!"

He punched and thumped it through and through,
As all good bakers dough!

" I'd sooner drive," said he " a plough
Than be a baker anyhough!"

Thus spake the baker kneading dough;
But don't let on I told you sough!

W T Goodge

The Australian Slangage

"Tis the everyday Australian
Has a language of his own,
Has a language, or a slanguage,
Which can simply stand alone.
And a "dickon pitch to kid us"
Is a synonym for "lie",
And to "nark it" means to stop it,
And to "nit it" means to fly.

And a bosom friend's a "cobber,"
And a horse a "prad" or "moke,"
While a casual acquaintance
Is a "joker" or a "bloke."
And his lady-love's his "donah"
or his "clinah" or his "tart"
Or his "little bit o' muslin,"
As it used to be his "bart."

And his naming of the coinage
Is a mystery to some,
With his "quid" and "half-a-caser"
And his "deener" and his "scrum".
And a "tin-back" is a party
Who's remarkable for luck,
And his food is called his "tucker"
Or his "panem" or his "chuck".

A policeman is a "johnny"
Or a "copman" or a "trap",
And a thing obtained on credit
Is invariably "strap".
A conviction's known as "trouble",
And a gaol is called a "jug",
And a sharper is a "spieler"
And a simpleton's a "tug".

If he hits a man in fighting
That is what he calls a "plug",
If he borrows money from you
He will say he "bit your lug."
And to "shake it" is to steal it,
And to "strike it" is to beg;
And a jest is "poking borac",
And a jester "pulls your leg".

Things are "cronk" when they go wrongly
In the language of the "push",
But when things go as he wants 'em
He declares it is "all cush".
When he's bright he's got a "napper",
And he's "ratty" when he's daft,
And when looking for employment

He is "out o' blooming graft".

And his clothes he calls his "clobber"
Or his "togs", but what of that
When a "castor" or a "kady"
Is the name he gives his hat!
And our undiluted English
Is a fad to which we cling,
But the great Australian slanguage
Is a truly awful thing!

W T Goodge

The Great Australian Adjective

The sunburnt ---- stockman stood
And, in a dismal ---- mood,
Apostrophized his ---- cuddy;
"The ---- nag's no ---- good,
He couldn't earn his ---- food -
A regular ---- brumby,
----!"

He jumped across the ---- horse
And cantered off, of ---- course!
The roads were bad and ---- muddy;
Said he, "Well, spare me ---- days
The ---- Government's ---- ways
Are screamin' ---- funny,
----!"

He rode up hill, down ---- dale,
The wind it blew a ---- gale,
The creek was high and ---- floody.
Said he, "The ---- horse must swim,
The same for ---- me and him,
Is something ---- sickenin',
----!"

He plunged into the ---- creek,
The ---- horse was ---- weak,
The stockman's face a ---- study!
And though the ---- horse was drowned
The ---- rider reached the ground
Ejaculating, "----!"
"----!"

This poem was originally published under the title "----!" (The Great Australian Adjective).

C.J. Dennis borrowed the style for his poem 'The Australaise.'

W T Goodge

The Guile of Dad M'Ginnis

When M,Ginnis struck the mining camp at Jamberoora Creek
His behaviour was appreciated highly;
For, although he was a quiet man, in manner mild and meek,
Not like ordinary swagmen with a monumental cheek,
He became the admiration of the camp along the creek
'Cause he showed a point to Kangarooobie Riley!

Both the pubs at Jamberoora had some grog that stood the test
(Not to speak of what was manufactured slyly!)
And the hostel of O'Gorman, which was called The Diggers' Rest,
Was, O'Gorman said, the finest house of any in the west;
But it was a burning question if it really was the best,
Or the "Miners" - kept by Kangarooobie Riley.

Dad M'Ginnis called at Riley's. Said he "felt a trifle queer",
And with something like a wan and weary smile, he
Said he "thought he'd try a whisky". Pushed it back and said, "I fear
I had better take a brandy." Passed that back and said: "Look here,
Take the brandy; after all, I think I'll have a pint of beer!"
And he drank the health of Kangarooobie Riley!

"Where's the money?" asked the publican; "you'll have to pay, begad!"
"Gave the brandy for the beer!" said Dad the wily,
"And I handed you the whisky when I took the brandy, lad!"
"But you paid not for the whisky!" answered Riley. "No," said Dad,
"And you don't expect a man to pay for what he never had!"
- 'Twas the logic flattened Kangarooobie Riley!

"See," said Kangarooobie Riley, "you have had me, that is clear!
But I never mind a joke," he added, dryly.
"Just you work it on O'Gorman, and I'll shout another beer."
"I'd be happy to oblige yer," said McGinnis with a leer,
"But the fact about the matter is - O'Gorman sent me here! -
So, good morning, Mr Kangarooobie Riley!"

W T Goodge

The M'Camley Mixture

Jack M'Camley,
Lank and long,
Ox-persuader,
Billabong.
Bluff and hearty
Sort o' party,
Got the "blanky" habit strong!

Says the parson,
Bright old bird,
"Why'd you use that
Horrid word? -
(Jack looked grinfal) -
Not say sinful,
But most vulgar and absurd!"

"It's the blanky
Church, betwixt
You and me, that
Got me fixed!"
Says M'Camley,
"In our fam'ly
Things is all so blanky mixed!

"There's me father -
Whoa back, Dick! -
Church o' Blanky
England, stric'!
There's me mother
And one brother,
Roman-Blanky-Catholic!

"But me sister -
Way, you Stan!
Don't them bullocks
Rile a man?
Kilts enticed her,
Went and spliced a
Presby-Blanky-terian!"

W T Goodge

The Melodius Bullocky

'Tis of the Wild Colonial Boy [Come out of that saplin', Rat!]
Brought up by honest parents [Now, Strawberry, what are yer at!]
He robbed them lordly squatters and [Whoa Diamond! Dam yer hump!]
And a terror to Horsetralia [Now then, Nugget, you mind that stump!]

'Twas at the age of seventeen [Gee back there, Dimple! Gee!]
He never [Way there Baldy, [sich a cow I never did see!]
He was his father's only son [Gee back there now, Rob Roy!]
And fondly did his parents love the Wild Colonial Boy!

W T Goodge

The Shearer's Cook

Now, shearers' cooks, as shearers know,
Are very seldom wont to blow;
But when I took to dabbing tar
And "picking-up" on Blaringar,
The cook, when "barbers" came at morn
To get a snack, would say, with scorn:
 "Tea on the left,
 Coffee on the right,
Brownie on the bunk, and blast yez!"

The "bunk" or slab was in the hut,
And on it "brownie" ready cut;
Two buckets o'er the fire would be -
One filled with coffee, one with tea;
And when the chaps came filing in
The cook would say, with mirthless grin:
 "Tea on the left,
 Coffee on the right,
Brownie on the bunk, and blast yez!"

Peculiar man, this shearers' cook,
And had a very ugly look.
To me - a new-chum rouseabout,
Said he, one day when all were out:
"There's nothing in this world, my lad,
That's worth your worry, good or bad;
 Grief on the left,
 Sorrow on the right,
Trouble on the bunk, but blast it!"

W T Goodge