

Classic Poetry Series

Edward George Dyson
- poems -

Publication Date:
2012

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Edward George Dyson(March 1865 - 22 August 1931)

Edward George Dyson was an Australian poet, journalist and short story writer.

He was born at Morrison's near Ballarat in March 1865. His father, George Dyson, arrived in Australia in 1852 and after working on various diggings became a mining engineer, his mother came from a life of refinement in England. The family led a roving life during Dyson's childhood, moving successively to Alfredton, Bendigo, Ballarat and Alfredton again.

Unconsciously the boy was storing for future use the life of the miners, farmers and bushmen, among whom he lived. At 12 he began to work as an assistant to a travelling draper, after that was a whimboy in a mine, and for two or three years an assistant in a factory at Melbourne. This was followed by work in a newspaper office. At 19 he began writing verse, and a few years later embarked on a life of free-lance journalism which lasted until his death.

His first notable work was "The Golden Shanty", which appeared in the Bulletin, and many other short stories followed. In 1896 he published a volume of poems, Rhymes from the Mines, and in 1898 the first collection of his short stories, Below and On Top. In 1901 his first long story The Gold-stealers was published in London, which was followed by In the Roaring Fifties in 1906. In the same year appeared Fact'ry 'Ands, a series of more or less connected sketches dealing with factory life in Melbourne in a vein of humour. Various other stories and collections of stories were published in the Bookstall Series and will be found listed in Miller's Australian Literature. Another volume of verse Hello, Soldier! appeared in 1919.

All through the years Dyson did an enormous amount of work until he broke down under the strain and died after a long illness on 22 August 1931. He married Miss Jackson who survived him with one daughter.

Edward Dyson was the brother of Will Dyson and Ambrose Dyson.

A Friendly Game Of Football

We were challenged by The Dingoes - they're the pride of Squatter's Gap-
To a friendly game of football on the flat by Devil's Trap.
And we went along on horses, sworn to triumph in the game,
For the honour of Gyp's Diggings, and the glory of the same.

And we took the challenge with us. It was beautiful to see,
With its lovely curly letters, at its pretty filigree.
It was very gently worded, and it made us all feel good,
For it breathed the sweetest sentiments of peace and brotherhood.

We had Chang, and Trucker Hogan, and the man who licked The Plug,
Also Heggarty, and Hoolahan, and Peter Scott, the pug;
And we wore our knuckle-dusters, and we took a keg on tap
To our friendly game of football with The Dingoes at The Gap.

All the fellows came to meet us, and we spoke like brothers dear.
They'd a tip-dray full of tucker, and a waggon load of beer,
And some lint done up in bundles; so we reckoned there'd be fun
Ere our friendly game of football with the Dingo Club was done.

Their umpire was a homely man, a stranger to the push,
With a sweet, deceitful calmness, and a flavour of the bush.
He declared he didn't know the game, but promised on his oath
To see fair and square between the teams, or paralyse them both.

Then we bounced the ball and started, and for twenty minutes quite
We observed a proper courtesy and a heavenly sense of right,
But Fitzpatrick tipped McDougal in a handy patch of mud,
And the hero rose up, chewing dirt, and famishing for blood.

Simple Simonsen, the umpire, sorted out the happy pair,
And he found a pitch to suit them, and we left them fighting there;
But The Conqueror and Cop-Out met with cries of rage and pain,
And wild horses couldn't part those ancient enemies again.

So the umpire dragged them from the ruck, and pegged them off a patch,
And then gave his best attention to the slugging and the match.
You could hardly wish to come across a fairer-minded chap
For a friendly game of football than that umpire at The Gap.

In a while young Smith, and Henty, and Blue Ben, and Dick, and Blake,
Chose their partners from The Dingoes, and went pounding for the cake.
Timmy Hogan hit the umpire, and was promptly put to bed
'Neath the ammunition waggon, with a bolus on his head.

Feeling lonely-like, Magee took on a local star named Bent,
And four others started fighting to avoid an argument:
So Simonsen postponed the game, for fear some slight mishap
Might disturb the pleasant feeling then prevailing at The Gap.

Sixty seconds later twenty lively couples held the floor,
And the air was full of whiskers, and the grass was tinged with gore,
And the umpire kept good order in the interests of peace,
Whilst the people, to oblige him, sat severely on the p'lice.

Well, we fought the friendly game out, but I couldn't say who won;
We were all stretched out on shutters when the glorious day was done;
Both the constables had vanished; one was carried off to bunk,
And the umpire was exhausted, and the populace was drunk.

But we've written out a paper, with good Father Feeley's aid,
Breathing brotherly affection; and the challenge is conveyed
To the Dingo Club at Squatter's, and another friendly game
Will eventuate at this end, on the flat below the claim.

We have pressed The Gap to bring their central umpire if they can-
Here we honestly admire him as a fair and decent man-
And we're building on a pleasant time beside the Phoenix slums,
For The Giant feels he's got a call to plug him if he comes.

Edward George Dyson

A New Girl Up At White's

THERE'S a fresh track down the paddock
Through the lightwoods to the creek,
And I notice Billy Craddock
And Maloney do not speak,
And The Snag is slyly bitter
When he's criticising Bill,
And there's quite a foreign glitter
On the fellows at the mill.

Sid M'Mahon's turned out a dandy
With a masher coat and tie,
And the engine-driver, Sandy,
Curls his whiskers on the sly:
All the boys wear paper collars
And their tombstone shirts of nights,
So it's ten to one in dollars
There's a new girl up at White's.

She's a charmer from the river,
But she steeps the lads in gloom,
With her blue eyes all a-quiver
And her hair like wattle-bloom;
Though she's pretty and beguiling,
And so lit up, like, with fun
That the flowers turn to her smiling,
Just as if she was the sun.

But I wish she'd leave the valley,
For the camp is dull to me,
Now the mill hands never rally
For the regulation spree,
And there's not another joker
Gives a tinker's curse for nap.,
Or will take a hand at poker
Or at euchre with a chap!

Tom won't stir us with his fiddle
By the boilers as he did
While Bob stepped it in the middle,

And we passed the billy-lid.
Ah! we had some gay old nights there,
But the boys now don't agree,
And they hang about at White's there,
When they've togged up after tea.

With the gloves we have no battle;
Now they sneak away and moon
Round with White, discussing cattle
All the Sunday afternoon.
There's a want of old uprightness,
Too, has come upon the push,
And a sort of cold politeness
That's not called for in the bush.

They're all off, too, in that quarter;
Kate goes sev'ral times a week
Seeing Andy Kelly's daughter,
Jimmy's sister, up the creek;
And this difference seems a pity,
Since their chances are so slim—
While they are running after Kitty,
She is running after Jim.

Edward George Dyson

A Poor Joke

'NO, you can't count me in, boys; I'm off it—
I'm jack of them practical jokes;
They give neither pleasure nor profit,
And the fellers that plays them are mokes.
I've got sense, though I once was a duffer,
And I fooled up my share, I allow,
But since conscience has made me to suffer—
She's pegging away at me now.

You notice I've aged rather early,
And the wrinkles are deep on my face?
That's sorrer—I'm sixty-nine, barely.
Jes' camp, and I'll tell you my case.
It was here on The Springs, we had hit it,
And we working the lead on this spot—
And we were, to my shame I admit it,
A rather unprincipled lot.

'We were drunk all the day on the Sundays—
No wickeder habit exists;
And our exercise mostly on Mondays
Was feats of endurance with fists.
See, the wash wasn't what we'd call wealthy—
Ten pennyweight stuff, thereabout—
And we took matters easy and healthy;
Now we'd rush for the same, I've no doubt.

'Well, one morning, from over the border
Two Mongols moved inter the camp,
Which we voted a thing out of order—
The climate for Chows was too damp.
But it happened a couple of troopers
Arrived on The Springs that same week,
So the Chinks, in their opium stupors,
Didn't wander down inter the creek,

'Or get drowned in the dam at The Crescent,
As we reckoned might happen somehow;
But they settled down, easy and pleasant,

And there wasn't the smell of a row.
Howsomever, we weren't long twigging
The Chows were an ignerent pair,
And knew nothin' at all about digging
And that was our chance to get square.

'It was 'cording to Bastow's directions,
Though I volunteered for the game,
To ensnare their Mongolian affections,
And lay them right on to a claim
Round the bend where we'd bottomed a duffer—
Myself and Pat Foley—right there,
Where the sinking is deep and is tougher
Than the hobs of Gehenna, I swear.

'That shaft was a regular clinker,
Which it riles me to think of to-day.
Quite a fortnight it took us to sink her,
And then we came through on the clay,
Not the ghost of a handful of gravel.
Well, we dropped it without any fuss,
On the hill pegged the best we could snavel,
And the devil could prospect, for us.

'But the Pagans were not a bit wiser,
And I counted it pretty fair game
To appear as their friend and adviser,
And induce them to take up that claim,
By a-cracking the lay and position
So's to get them to sink on the clay,
Till they struck a hot shop in Perdition
Or tapped water in Europe some day.

'But the heathens were mighty suspicious,
Wouldn't have it I cared for their sakes—
Here, I state that all Chinkies are vicious
And I hate them like fever and snakes.
Then I tried a new system of dealing,
And offered advice at a fee,
And they caught on like winking. Fine feeling
Is wasted on any Chinee.

'So they pegged out our cast-off, the duffer.
Their rights they had made out exact,
And Ah Kit, who was boss, wouldn't suffer
Any little neglect of the Act:
And I put in their pegs to a fraction,
As grave as a brick on a hob,
Rigged up things to their full satisfaction,
And charged them five quid for the job.

Well, the heathens soon set their picks going,
And they seemed rather fond of the graft,
Though the boys had had trouble in stowing
A heap of dead things in the shaft,
And we chuckled and thought we had got 'em:
I knew I could tickle the pair
To keep sinking on inter the bottom
For gravel that never was there.

'Next night a most harrowing rumour
Went round, and the camp was half daft:
It was said that a nugget—a boomer—
Had been found by the Chows in our shaft.
'Point of fact, that the Pagans had struck it,
Had knocked down a sample of wash
That looked good for a pound to the bucket,
And our joke had gone hopelessly squash.

'It was c'rect, boys, by all that is holy!
We'd struck a false bottom, no doubt,
And the fortune of self and of Foley
Was scooped by Ah Kit and Ah Gout.
We resolved that these Chinese were sapping
The wealth of the land, and agreed
On a project for catching them napping
When the troopers rode on to the lead.

Yes, we scrambled for claims all around 'em,
And we made the foam fly for a week,
But the Chows had the gilt edge. Confound 'em,
They'd lobbed right on top of the streak!
No, your joke, boys, I reckon is risky,
And somewhat ridic'lus, I think,

But I'm with you for friendship and whisky
If one of you orders the drink.'

Edward George Dyson

A Thermometrical Ballade

There's a wind up that licks like a flame,
And the sun is a porthole of hell.
Now evanish prim notions of shame,
And the craving to look rather well –
In pyjamas you're never a swell,
And you've chosen some roomily made.
Oh! for ices these pangs to dispel –
It's one hundred and nine in the shade!

We have limped in from tennis. That game ! –
I'd as soon with the damned where they dwell
Stoke a furnace and bathe in the same!
There's no drink human craving to quell,
Not thin chablis nor sweet muscatel.
Never more shall we see, I'm afraid,
The cool shallows, the pale asphodel.
It's one hundred and nine in the shade.

You recline an invertebrate frame
In the moisture your atoms expel,
'Gainst the fates very feebly declaim,
All too limp to rise up and rebel.
Action flies and mosquitoes compel.
We make pitiful fight 'gainst the raid
With a cloying and nauseous smell
In one hundred and nine in the shade.

ENVOY

Here might solids of Hamlet dispel.
Quick the answer to prayer that he prayed.
Human flesh turns to dew 'neath the spell
Of one hundred and nine in the shade.

Edward George Dyson

Ah Ling, The Leper

UP a dark and fetid alley, where the offal and the slime
Of a brave and blustering city met its misery and crime,
In a hovel reeking pestilence, and noisome as the grave,
Dwelt Ah Ling, the Chinese joiner, and the sweater's willing slave.

Squatting down amongst the shavings, with his chisel and his plane,
Through the long, hot days of striving, dead to pleasure and to pain,
Like a creature barely human, very yellow, gaunt, and grim,
Ah Ling laboured on, for pleasure spread no lures that tempted him.

And the curious people, watching through the rotten wall at night,
Saw his death's face weirdly outlined in the candle's feeble light;
Saw him still intent upon his work, ill-omened and unclean,
Planing, sawing, nailing, hewing—just a skin and bone machine.

Neither kith nor kin the joiner had; perchance he nerved his hand
With the treasured hope of seeing once again his native land
As a Chinaman of fortune, and of finishing his life
At his ease in China Proper, with a painted Chinese wife.

But Ah Ling grew yet more grisly, and 'twas easy now to trace
Signs of vice and fierce privations in his scarred and pitted face,
With a dreadful something added. By this thing the truth was known,
And his countrymen forsook him, and he lived and toiled alone.

Still the work came in, and still he slaved and saw his earnings grow.
Who's to trouble where the goods are made when buyers will not know?
Gimcrack chairs and pretty nick-nacks from infected dens like this
Go to furnish happy homes to-day where ignorance is bliss.

Now the time was come when Ling might take his treasure up, and go
To enjoy celestial comforts by the flowing Hoang Ho,
But one day his shop was raided, and upon him fell the hand
Of the Law—and death were better than the ruthless Law's command.

'Room for the leper, room!' A thing of fear, Ah Ling was torn
From his hovel and his labour and his cherished hopes, and borne
To a home of untold terrors, where to life grim death is wed,
And the quick behold and know the loathly horrors of the dead.

Edward George Dyson

An Inequitable Impost

The first one with conviction penned:
"This conflict in seven weeks will end."

Another, later in the war,
Gave Germany just one month more.

Since then I've read predictions free –
They dribble in unceasingly.

All wrong. And still the critics say
When it will finish to the day.

Hughes should get cash in mighty sacks
From his proposed War Prophets Tax.

Edward George Dyson

As The Troops Went Through

I heard this day, as I may no more,
The world's heart throb at my workshop door.
The sun was keen, and the day was still;
The township drowsed in, a haze of heat.
A stir far off on the sleepy hill,
The measured beat of their buoyant feet,
And the lilt and thrum
Of a little drum,
The song they sang in a cadence low,
The piping note of a piccolo.

The township woke, and the doors flew wide;
The women trotted their boys beside.
Across the bridge on a single heel
The soldiers came in a golden glow,
With throb of song and the chink of steel,
The gallant crow of the piccolo.
Good and brown they were,
And their arms swung bare.
Their fine young faces revived in me
A boyhood's vision of chivalry.

The lean, hard regiment tramping down,
Bushies, miners and boys from town.
From 'mid the watchers the road along
One fell in line with the khaki men.
He took the stride, and he caught their song,
And Steve went then, and Meneer, and Ben,
Long Dave McCree,
And the Weavers three,
All whisked away by the "Come! Come! Come!"
The lusty surge of the vaunting drum.

I swore a prayer for each soldier lad.
He was the son that might have had;
The tall, bold boy who was never mine,
All brave with dust that the eyes laughed through,
His shoulders square, and his chin in line,
Was marching too with the gallant few.

Passed the muffled beat
Of their swanking feet,
The swell of drum, the exulting crow,
The wild-bird note of the piccolo.

They dipped away in the listless trees;
A mother wept on her beaded knees
For sons gone out to the long war's end;
But more than mother or man wept I
Who had no son in the world to send.
The hour lagged by, and drifting high
Came the fitful hum
Of the little drum,
And faint, but still with an ardent flow,
The pibroch, call of the piccolo.

Edward George Dyson

Australia

Australia, my native land,
A stirring whisper in your ear—
'Tis time for you to understand
Your rating now is A1, dear.
You've done some rousing things of late.
That lift you from the simple state
In which you chose to vegetate.

The persons so superior,
Whose patronage no more endures,
Now have to fire a salvo for
The glory that is fairly yours.
At length you need no sort of crutch,
You stand alone, you're voted "much"—
Get busy and behave as such.

No man from Oskosh, or from Hull,
Or any other chosen place
Can rise with a distended skull,
And cast aspersions in your face.
You're given all the world to know
Your proper standing as a foe,
And hats are off, and rightly so.

You furnished heroes for the fray,
Your sterling merit's widely blown
To all men's satisfaction say,
Now have you proved it to your own?
Now have you strength to stand and shine
In your own light and say, "Divine
The thing is that I do. It's mine!"

The cannon's stroke throws customs down
The black and bottomless abyss,
And quaking are the gilded crown
And palsied feet of prejudice.
The guns have killed, but it is true
They bring to life things good and new.
God grant they have awakened you!

My ears are greedy for the toast
Of confidence before our guest,
The loyal song, the manly boast
Your splendid faith to manifest.
In works of art and livelihood
Shirk not the creed, "What's ours is good,"
Dread not to have it understood.

Australia, lift your royal brow,
And have the courage of our pride,
Audacity becomes you now,
Be splendidly self-satisfied,
No land from lowliness and dearth
Has won to eminence on earth
That was not conscious of its worth.

Edward George Dyson

Bashful Gleeson

FROM HER HOME beyond the river in the parting of the hills,
Where the wattles fleecy blossom surged and scattered in the breeze,
And the tender creepers twined about the chimneys and the sills,
And the garden flamed with colour like an Eden through the trees,

She would come along the gully, where the ferns grew golden fair,
In the stillness of the morning, like the spirit of the place,
With the sunshafts caught and woven in the meshes of her hair,
And the pink and white of heathbloom sweetly blended in her face.

She was fair, and small, and slender-limbed, and buoyant as a bird,
Fresh as wild, white, dew-dipped violets where the bluegum's shadow goes,
And no music like her laughter in the joyous bush was heard,
And the glory of her smile was as a sunbeam in a rose.

Ben felt mighty at the windlass when she watched him hauling stuff,
And she asked him many questions, 'What was that?' and 'Why was this?'
Though his bashfulness was painful, and he answered like a muff,
With his foolish 'My word Missie!' and his 'Beg your pardon, Miss.'

He stood six foot in his bluchers, stout of heart and strong of limb;
For her sake he would have tackled any man or any brute;
Of her half a score of suitors none could hold a light to him,
And he owned the richest hole along the Bullock Lead to boot.

Yet while Charley Mack and Hogan, and the Teddywaddy Skite
Put in many pleasant evenings at 'The Bower,' Ben declined,
And remained a mere outsider, and would spend one half the night
Waiting, hid among the trees, to watch her shadow on the blind.

He was laughed at on the river, and as far as Kiley's Still
They would tell of Bashful Gleeson, who was 'gone on' Kitty Dwyer,
But, beyond defeating Hogan in a pleasant Sunday mill,
Gleeson's courtship went no further till the morning of the fire.

We were called up in the darkness, heard a few excited words;
In the garden down the flat a Chow was thumping on a gong;
There were shouts and coeys on the hills, and cries of startled birds,
But we saw the gum leaves redden, and that told us what was wrong.

O'er 'The Bower' the red cloud lifted as we sprinted for the punt.
Gleeson took the river for it in the scanty clothes he wore.
Dwyer was madly calling Kitty when we joined the men in front;
Whilst they questioned, hoped, and wondered, Ben was smashing at the door.

He went in amongst the smoke, and found her room; but some have said
That he dared not pass the threshold—that he lingered in distress,
Game to face the fire, but not to pluck sweet Kitty from her bed—
And he knocked and asked her timidly to 'please get up and dress.'

Once again he called, and waited till a keen flame licked his face;
Then a Spartan-like devotion welled within the simple man,
And he shut his eyes and ventured to invade the sacred place,
Found the downy couch of Kitty, clutched an armful up, and ran.

True or not, we watched and waited, and our hearts grew cold and sick
Ere he came; we barely caught him as the flame leapt in his hair.
He had saved the sheets, a bolster, and the blankets, and the tick;
But we looked in vain for Kitty—pretty Kitty wasn't there!

And no wonder: whilst we drenched him as he lay upon the ground,
And her mother wailed entreaties that it wrung our hearts to hear,
Hill came panting with the tidings that Miss Kitty had been found,
Clad in white, and quite unconscious, 'mid the saplings at the rear.

We're not certain how it happened, but I've heard the women say
That 'twas Kitty's work. She saw him when the doctor left, they vow,
Swathed in bandages and helpless, and she kissed him where he lay.
Anyhow, they're three years married, and he isn't bashful now.

Edward George Dyson

Battered Bob

HE WAS working on a station in the Western when I knew him,
And he came from Conongamo, up the old surveyors' track,
And the fellows all admitted that no man in Vic. could 'do him,'
Since he'd smothered Stonewall Menzie, also Anderson, the black.
Bob was modelled for a fighter, but he'd run to beef a trifle;
For his science every rouseabout was satisfied to vouch,
And Red Fogarty advised us he delivered like a rifle,
And his stopping—well, beside him Harry Sallars was a slouch.

Not a man of us had met him till he settled on the station—
This was early in the Sixties, what we call the good old days—
And it's cheerfully admitted Robert owed his reputation
To a crippled jaw, a broken nose, and eyes that looked both ways.
We were certain on the face of it our guess was not an error,
Every feature of his phiz was marked, his chin was pulled askew,
And The Critic passed the office: 'Bet your buttons he's a terror!
That's the man who hammered Kelly on The Creek in Fifty-two!'

Bob was not a shrinking blossom, and he held the first impressions
By his subsequent admissions to the ringers and the mugs,
And he let himself be tickled into casual confessions
Of his battles with the bruisers and the scientific pugs.
How he'd mangled Matty Hardy was his earliest narration;
He'd completely flummoxed Kitchen, and had made the climate hot
For Maloney, Fee, and Curran. It was quite a consolation
When he graciously informed us that he hadn't licked the lot.

The arrival of the Wonder gave a spurt to local science,
And we had an exhibition every evening in the week,
For the lightest joke was answered in the lingo of defiance,
And our blood was cast like water on the grasses by the creek.
Every fellow but the stranger had his scrap or rough-and-tumble;
No one thought of looking ugly at the slugger, Battered Bob;
And whene'er the boys addressed him 'twas in language choice and humble,—
Though they ached to see him beaten, none was anxious for the job.

How we honoured Bob, and yielded to his later information;
Let him lead in all the arguments, and gently run the ranche!
And a very small potato was the owner of the station

By the man who slaughtered Melody and fought a draw with Blanche.
Battered Bob became our champion, our boss, and by degrees he
Sent his fame down to the Wannan, and right up to Spooner's Gap,
And he scooped the honours smiling, and he held them just as easy,
For we'd never seen him shape yet, and he hadn't fought a tap.

We'd a cook whose name was Han Cat—he was short, and fat, and yellow,
Just a common, ugly Chinky, with a never ending smile.
Bob was careful to avoid the corns of any other fellow,
But he filled Han Cat with sorrow, and he whaled him all the while.
Han Cat groaned and bore it meekly, and we didn't care to figure
In the antics of the Champion or his little private rows.
Robert said, 'I like a native, and I'll liquor with a nigger,
But I hate the skin and colour of these sanguinary Chows!'

On a certain Sunday morning Robert slyly cut a section
Off the pig-tail of the pagan—'twas Han's glory and his pride—
But the trouble that came after is his saddest recollection,
And the boys were so disgusted that they very nearly died.
Han Cat wept a while, and then he turned and scowled as black as thunder,
And he cursed the grinning spoiler till he had to stop for breath:
When he shaped up like a Christian, and he waltzed into the Wonder,
We arranged a ring, and waited for the heathen's sudden death.

Oh! the sorrow of that Sunday! Oh! the shame and degradation!
The chaps were simply paralyzed, and everyone was dumb,
For the heathen pushed the battle in the fashion of our nation,
And he countered in a way that made the Wonder fairly hum.
'Bob is fooling Han,' we murmured, 'he'll surprise him in a minute—
Soon he'll rise to this occasion, and display his proper form!'
But, alas! we'd nursed a viper, for our pug was never in it—
And he couldn't battle well enough to keep the Pagan warm.

Han Cat beat our battered champion, beat the conqueror of Menzie,
And he towed him round the paddock like a dummy stuffed with hair,
And we never stirred to interfere and stop the Chinky's frenzy
When he jumped upon the Wonder in a manner most unfair.
You must fancy all our sorrow, and our shame and indignation,
For pen can never, never tell how horrified we felt.
In the morning Little Finney, for the credit of the station,
Hammered Han in stylish fashion with one fist tucked in his belt.

As for Robert, we discussed him in a serious convention,
And resolved that we were victims of a duffer's awful skite,
And we put it up to tar him; but he dropped to our intention,
And he skipped, without a character, for Hamilton that night.
There's a moral, boys: Don't think a mangled boko is a token
That a fellow is a fighter, as a simple thing of course;
Like Battered Bob, he may have had his features bent and broken
Through his carelessness when drunk in being walked on by a horse.

Edward George Dyson

Battle Passes

A quaint old gabled cottage sleeps between the raving hills.
To right and left are livid strife, but on the deep, wide sills
The purple pot-flowers swell and glow, and o'er the walls and eaves
Prinked creeper steals caressing hands, the poplar drips its leaves.
Within the garden hot and sweet
Fair form and woven color meet,
While down the clear, cool stones, 'tween banks with branch and blossom gay,
A little, bridged, blind rivulet goes touching out its way.

Peace lingers hidden from the knife, the tearing blinding shell,
Where falls the spattered sunlight on a lichen-covered well.
No voice is here, no fall of feet, no smoke lifts cool and grey,
But on the granite stoop a cat blinks vaguely at the day.
From hill to hill across the vale
Storms man's terrific iron gale;
The cot roof on a brooding dove recks not the distant gun.
A brown hen scolds her chickens chasing midges in the sun.

Now down the eastward slope they come.
No call of life, no beat of drum,
But stealthily, and in the green,
Low hid, with rifle and machine,
Spit hate and death; and red blood flows
To shame the whiteness of the rose.

Crack follows crash; the bestial roar
Of gastly and insensate war

Breaks on the cot. A rending stoke,
The red roof springs, and in the smoke
And spume of shells the riven walls
Pile where the splintered elm-tree spawls.

From westward, streaming down hill,
Shot-ravaged, thinned, but urgent still,
The brown, fierce, blooded Anzacs sweep,
And Hell leaps a up. The lilies weep
Strange crimson tears. Tight-lipped and mute,
The grim, gaunt soldiers stab and shoot.

It passes. Frantic, fleeing death,
Wild-eyed, foam-flecked and every breath
A labored agony, like deer
That feel the hounds' keen teeth, appear
The Prussian men, and, wild to slay
The hunters press upon their prey.

Cries fade and fitful shots die down. The
Tumbled ruin now
Smoke faintly in the summer light, and lifts
The trodden bough.
A sigh stirs in the trampled green, and held
And tainted red
The rill creeps o'er a dead man's face and
steals along its bed.
One deep among the lilacs thrown
Shock all the stillness with a moan.
Peace like the snowflake lights again where
utter silence lies,
And softly with white finger-tips she seals a
soldier eyes.

Edward George Dyson

Billjim

Down to it is Plugger Bill,
Lyn' crumpled, white 'n' still.
Me 'n' him
Chips in when the scrap begins,
Carin' nothin' for our skins,
Chi-iked as the 'Eavenly Twins-
Bill 'n' Jim.

They 'ave outed Bill at last,
Slugged me cobber hard 'n' fast.
It's a kill.
See the purple of his lip
'N' the red 'n' oozy drip!
Ends our great ole partnership-
Jim 'n' Bill

Mates we was when we was kids;
Camp, 'n' ship, 'n' Pyramids,
Him 'n' me
Hung together, 'n' we tore
Up the heights from Helles shore,
Bill a long 'arf head afore,
Fine to see!

Then it was we took a touch-
Simple puncture, nothin' much;
But we lay
'N' we stays the count, it seems,
In a sorter realm of dreams
Where the sun infernal gleams
Night 'n' day;

Boilin', fryin' achin', dumb,
Waitin' till the stretchers come,
Patiently.
I hangs on to 'arf a cup.
Which I wants ole Bill to sup.
Damn if he ain't savin' up
His for me!

When they come to lift my head
I am softly kiddin' dead,
For a game,
So's they'll first take on his gills.
Over, though, me scheme he spills-
Bli'me, this ole take-down Bill's
Done the same!

But he isn't kiddin' now,
And it knocks me anyhow
Seein' him.
We was both agreed before,
Though it got 'em by the score,
Two was goin' to beat this war-
But 'n' Jim.

Mate o' mine, yiv stayed it through.
Hard luck, Bill-for me 'n' you
Hard 'n' grim.
They have got me Cobber true,
But I'm stickin' tight ez glue....
Bill, there's one who'll plug for two-
It is Jim!

Edward George Dyson

Billy Khaki

Marching somewhat out of order
when the band is cock-a-hoop,
There's a lilting kind of magic in the swagger
of the troop,
Swinging all aboard the steamer with her
nose toward the sea.
What is calling, Billy Khaki, that you're foot-
ing it so free?

Though his lines are none too level,
And he lacks a bit of style.
And he's swanking like the devil
Where the women wave and smile,
He will answer with a rifle
Trim and true from stock to bore,
Where the comrades crouch and stifle
In the reeking pit of war.

What is calling, Billy Khaki? There is
thunder down the sky,
And the merry magpie bugle splits the morn-
ing with its cry,
While your feet are beating rhythms up the
dusty hills and down,
And the drums are all a-talking in the hollow
of the town.

Billy Khaki, is't the splendor of the song the
kiddies sing,
Or the whipping of the flags aloft that sets
your heart a-swing?
Is't the cheering like a paeon of the toss-
ing, teeming crowds,
Or the boom of distant cannon flatly bumping
on the clouds ?

What's calling, calling, Billy? 'Tis the rattle
far away
Of the cavalry at gallop and artillery in play;

'Tis the great gun's fierce concussion, and the
smell of seven hells
When the long ranks go to pieces in the
sneezing of the shells.

But your eyes are laughing, Billy, and a
ribald song you sing,
While the old men sit and tell us war it is a
ghastly thing,
When the swift machines are busy and the
grim, squat fortress nocks
At your bolts as vain as eggs of gulls that spatter on the rocks.

When the horses sweep upon you to complete
a sudden rout,
Or in fire and smoke and fury some brave
regiment goes out,
War is cruel, Bill, and ugly. But full well
you know the rest,
Yet your heart is for the battle, and your face
is to the west.

For if war is beastly, Billy, you can picture
something worse—
There's the wrecking of an empire, and its
broken people's curse;
There are nations reft of freedom, and of hope
and kindly mirth,
And the shadow of an evil black upon the
bitter earth.

So we know what's calling, Billy. 'Tis the
spirit of our race,
And its stir is in your pulses, and its light is
on your face
As you march with clipping boot-heels
through the piping, howling town
To uphold the land we live in, and to pull a
tyrant down.

Thou his lines are none too level,
And he's not a whale for style,

And he's swanking like the devil
When the women wave and smile
He will answer with a rifle,
Trim and true from stuck to bore,
When the comrades sit and stifle
In the smoking pit of war.

Edward George Dyson

Breaking It Gently

ALL WAS UP with Richard Tanner—
'Wait-a-Bit' we called him. Dead?
Yes. The braceman dropped a spanner,
Landed Richard on the head;
Cracked his skull, sir, like a teacup,
Down the pump-shaft in the well.
Braceman hadn't time to speak up,
Tanner never knew what fell.

Tell the widow? Who'd go through it?
No one on the shift would stir;
But Pat Ryan said he'd do it—
'Nately break the news to her.'
Pat's a splitter, and a kinder
Heart I never wish to know.
Stephens told him where to find her,
Begged him gently deal the blow.

In a very solemn manner
Ryan met the dead man's wife—
'Mornin' to yez, Widdy Tanner!
Says he gravely, 'Such is life!'
'I'm no widow!' says she, prying
For the joke in Ryan's eye.
'Scuse me, mum,' says Paddy, sighing,
'Scuse me, mum, but that's a lie.'

'That remark would be repented
If Dick Tanner heard,' says she.
'Meanin', mum, the late lamented
Party av that name?' says he.
Still the widow missed the notion,
Wonder only filled her eye;
So Pat smothered his emotion,
Gulped, and had another try.

'Tis like this, ye see, me honey,
I've been sint t' let ye know
Ye've inherited some money—

Twilve 'r fifteen pounds 'r so.
Through a schame av Providence's,
Which no mortal man could dodge;
Poor Dick's funeral expenses
Have fell due, mum, at the lodge!

Edward George Dyson

Bricks

Dear Ned, I now take up my pen to write
you these few lines,
And hopin' how they find you fit. Gorbli',
it seems an age
Since Jumbo ducked the Port, 'n' drilled 'n'
polished to the nines,
He walked his pork on Collins like a hero off
the stage,
Then hiked a rifle 'cross the sea this bleedin'
war to wage.

The things what's 'appened lately calls to
Jumbo's mind that day
Our push took on the Peewee pack, 'n'
belted out their lard,
With twenty cops to top it off. But now I'm
stowed away,
A bullet in me gizzard where I took it good
and hard,
A-dealin'-stoush 'n' mullock to the Prussian
flamin' Guard.

At Bullcoor mortal charnce had dumped a
mutton-truck of us
From good ole Port ker-flummox where we
didn't orter be,
All in a 'elpless hole-the Pug, Bill Carkeek,
Son, 'n' Gus,
Don, Steve, 'n' Jack, 'n' seven more, 'n', as
it 'appens, me,
With nothin' in since breakfast, 'n' a week
to go for tea.

Worked loose from Caddy's bunch, we went
it gay until we found
We'd took to 'arf the ragin' German Hempire
on our own.
Then down we went so 'umble, with our noses
in the ground,

Takin' cover in the rubble. If a German head
was shown
It was fare-the-well to Herman with a bullet
through the bone.

We slogged the cows remorseless, 'n' they
laid for us a treat.
We held that stinkin' cellar, though, 'n' when
the day was done
Son pussied on his bingie where a Maxie trim
'n' neat
Had spit out loaded lightnin', and he slugged
a tubby Hun,
Then choked a Fritzie with his dukes, 'n'
pinched the sooner's gun!

We rigged her on her knuckle-bones. Cri',
how she lapped 'em up!
We hosed 'em out with livin' lead. That was
the second day.
Me left eye I'd 'ave give for jest a bubble in a
cup,
Three fingers I'd 'ave parted for a bone I've
flung away;
But the butcher wasn't callin', 'n' the fountain
didn't play.

T'was rotten mozzle, Neddo. We had blown
out ever clip,
'N' 'blooded the hammunition for the little box
of tricks.
Each took a batten in his fist. Sez Billy
"Let 'er rip!"
But Son he claws his stubble. Sez—he:
"Hold a brace of ticks."
Then "Yow!" he pipes 'n' "Strewth!" he
sez, "it's bricks, you blighters,
bricks!"

There's more than 'arf a million spilt where
somethin' hit a pub;
We creeps among 'n' sorts 'em, stack afore,

'n' stack behind;
The Hun is comin' at us with his napper like
a tub—
You couldn't 'ope to miss it, pickled, par-
alysed, 'n' blind.
Sez Sonny: "Lay 'em open! Give 'em
blotches on the rind!"

Then bricks was flyin' in the wind. Mine
dinted Otto's chin;
Ole Nosey got his brother, which he never
more will roam.
When Ulrich stopped a Port bookay he rolled
his alley in.
Their fire was somethin' fierce. Poor Son
was blowin' blood 'n' foam,
"Fill up," he coughs, "'n' plug 'em! S'elp
me Gord, we're goin' 'ome!"

With bricks we drove right at 'em 'n' we
wanged 'em best we could.
'Twas either bed 'n' breakfast or a scribble
and a wreath.
Haynes bust a Prussian's almond, took the
bay'net where he stood,
Then heaved his last 'arf-Brunswick, split
the demon's grinnin' teeth,
And Son went down in glory, with a German
underneath!

We'd started out with gibbers in our clobber
and our 'ats.
They gave us floatin' lead enough to stop an
army cor.
We yelled like fiends, 'n' countered with a
lovely flight of bats,
Then rushed in close formation, heavin' cot-
tages, n' tore
Through blinded, bleedin' Bosches, 'n' lor
love yeh, it was war!

We came peltin', headfirst, 'elpless, in a drain

among a lot
Of dirty, damned old Tommies (Gord! The
best that ever blew!)
Eight left of us, all punctured, each man
holdin' what he'd got.
Me wild, a rat hole in me lung, but in me
mauley, too,
A bull-nosed brick with whiskers where no
whiskers ever grew.

There's nothin' doin' now. I wear me blan-
kets like a toff.
The way this fat nurse pets me, strewth, it's
well to be so sick,
A-dreamin' of our contract 'n' the way we
pulled it off.
I reckon Haig is phonin' Hughes: "Hullo,
there, Billy. Quick—
A dozen of the pushes and a thousan' tons
of brick!"

Edward George Dyson

Bullets

As bullets come to us they're thin,
They're angular, or smooth and fat,
Some spiral are, and gimlet in,
And some are sharp, and others flat.
The slim one pink you clean and neat,
The flat ones bat a solid blow
Much as a camel throws his feet,
And leave you beastly incomplete.
If lucky you don't know it through.

The flitting bullets flow and flock;
They twitter as they pass;
They're picking at the solid rock,
They're rooting in the grass.
A tiny ballet swiftly throws
Its gossamer of rust,
Brown fairies on their little toes
A-dancing in the dust.

You cower down when first they come
With snaky whispers at your ear;
And when like swarming bees they hum
You know the tinkling chill of fear.
A whining thing will pluck your heel,
A whirring insect sting your shin;
You shrink to half your size, and feel
The ripples o'er your body seal-
'Tis terror walking in your skin!

The bullets pelt like winter hail,
The whistle and they sigh,
They shrill like cordage in a gale,
Like mewling kittens cry;
They hiss and spit, they purring come;
Or, silent all a span,
They rap, as on a slackened drum,
The dab that kills a man.

Rage takes you next. All hot your face

The bitter void, and curses leap
From pincered teeth. The wide, still space
Whence all these leaden devil's sweep
Is Tophet. Fiends by day and night
Are groping for your heart to sate
In blood their diabolic spite.
You shoot in idiot delight,
Each winging slug a hymn of hate.

The futile bullets scratch and go,
They chortle and the coo.
I laugh my scorn, for now I know
The thing they cannot do.
They flit like midges in the sun,
But howso thick they be
What matter, since there is not one
That God has marked for me!

An Eastern old philosophy
Come home at length and passion stills-
The thing will be that is to be,
And all must come as Heaven wills.
Where in the swelter and the flame
The new, hot, shining bullets drip;
One in the many has an aim,
Inwove a visage and a name-
No man may give his fate the slip!

The bullets thrill along the breeze,
They drum upon the bags,
They tweak your ear, your hair they tease,
And peck your sleeve to rags.
Their voices may no more annoy-
I chortle at the call:
The bullet that is mine, my boy,
I shall not hear at all!

The war's a flutter very like
The tickets that we took from Tatt.
Quite possibly I'll make a strike;
The odds are all opposed to that.
Behind the dawn the Furies sway

The mighty globe from which to get
Those bullets which throughout the day
Will winners be to break or slay.
I have not struck a starter yet

The busy bullets rise and flock;
They whistle as they pass;
They're chipping at the solid rock,
They're skipping in the grass.
Out there the tiny dancers throw
Their sober skirts of rust,
Brown flitting figures tipping toe
Along the golden dust.

Edward George Dyson

Bullocky Bill

FROM a river siding, the railway town,
Or the dull new port there three days down,
Forward and back on the up-hill track,
With a creak of the jinker, a ringing crack,
Slow as a funeral, sure as steam,
Bullocky Bill and his old red team.

Ploughing around by the ti-tree scrub,
Four wheels down to the creeping hub,
Swaying they go, with their heads all low,
Bally, and Splodger, and Spot, and Jo.
Men in the ranges much esteem
Bullocky Bill and his old red team.

Worming about where the tall trees spring,
Surging ahead when the clay bogs cling;
A rattle of lash and of language rash
On the narrow edge of immortal smash.
He'd thread a bead or walk a beam,
Bullocky Bill with his old red team.

Climbing a ridge where the red stars ride;
Straddling down on the other side,
With a whistle and grind, and a scramble blind,
And a thundering gum-tree slung behind.
But they always get there, hill or stream,
Bullocky Bill and his old red team.

Engines or stamps for the mines about,
Tools for the men who are leading out;
Tucker, and boose, and the latest news
Back where the bunyip stirs the ooze.
Pioneers with the best we deem
Bullocky Bill and his old red team.

Edward George Dyson

Cleaning Up

When the horse has been unharnessed and we've flushed the old machine,
And the water o'er the sluice is running evenly and clean;
When there's thirty load before us, and the sun is high and bright,
And we've worked from early morning and shall have to work till night,
Not a man of us is weary, though the graft is pretty rough,
If we see the proper colour showing freely through the stuff.
With a dandy head of water and a youngster at the rear
To hand along the billy, boys, and keep the tail race clear,
We lift the wash and flash the fork and make the gravel fly.
The shovelling is heavy and we're soaked from heel to thigh;
But it makes a fellow tireless and his thews and sinews tough
If the colour's showing freely as he gaily shifts the stuff.
When Geordie Best is pumping to a rollicking refrain,
And Sandy wipes his streaming brow and shakes the fork again,
The pebbles dance and rattle and the water seems to laugh -
Good luck is half the battle and good will's the other half;
And no day's too long and trying and no toil is hard enough,
When we see the colour showing in each shovelful of stuff.
Can the mining speculator with a pile of golden serip,
Or the plunger who has laid his all upon a winning tip,
Or the city man who's hit upon a profitable deal,
Know the wonderful elation that the lucky diggers feel
When fortune's smiled but grimly and the storeman's looking gruff,
And at last they see the colour showing freely in the stuff?
Never, mates! It is a feeling that no other winner knows -
Not the soldier marching homeward from the conquest of his foes,
Nor the scholar who's successful in his searching of the skies,
Nor the squalid miser groveling where his secret treasure lies.
'Tis a keener, wilder rapture in the digger bold and bluff
Who feeds the sluice and sees the colour shining in the stuff.
Then lift the wash, and flash the fork, and make the gravel fly!
We can laugh at all the pleasures on which other men rely,
When the water o'er the sluice is running evenly and clean,
And the loaded ripples glitter with a lively golden sheen.
No day's too long and trying, and no toil is hard enough,
When we wash her down and see the colour freely through the stuff.

Edward George Dyson

Cricket Is A Serious Thing

In politics there's room for jest;
With frequent gibes are speeches met,
And measures which are of the best
Are themes for caustic humor yet.
E'en though the pulpiter we fret
With sundry quiddities we fling,
We pray you never to forget
That cricket is a serious thing.

The crowd assembles at a Test,
And Hobbs at length is fairly set,
Though Gregory rocks 'em in with zest;
The barrackers may fume and fret
When Parkin has contrived to get
Five men of ours – we feel the sting,
And give expression to regret,
For cricket is a serious thing.

They have the lead; we would arrest
A sort of rot. No epithet
Is proper, though they've got our best
For next to nothing, and your bet
Is good as lost. Don't sit and sweat;
Due reverence to the problem bring.
We have a pile of runs to net –
Ah, cricket is a serious thing.

Edward George Dyson

German Joe

SKIRTING the swamp and the tangled scrub,
Tramping and turning amidst the trees,
Carrying nothing but blankets and grub,
Careless of pleasure and health and ease,
Hither and thither with never a goal,
Heavy, and solemn, and stiff, and slow,
Seeking a track and a long-lost line,
'Blazed away to dot lead of mine,'—
Restless and rickety German Joe.

Down in the gully and up the range,
Stung by the gale and the hate-hot sun,
Never a greeting to give in change,
Never a tip from the nearest run,—
Seeking a guide to a golden hole,
Lost in the lone land long ago,
Left in the keep of the hills and trees;
Jealous to have and to hold are these,
Hope you may get it, though, German Joe.

'Likely old yarn for a horse marine!
Struck it, you say, at the river head—
Back where the bellowing bunyip's seen,
Out beyond everywhere—rich and red;
Left it for tucker, and lost the track,
Blazed till your arm couldn't strike a blow;
Gravel that gleams with the golden stuff,
Nuggets 'shust like as der plums in duff,'—
What are you giving us, German Joe?'

'Blaze? Yes; you strike for the Granite Stair,
Make to the left when you cross the creek,
South till you meet with a monkey bear,
Tramp in his tracks for about a week;
Then you can travel the sky-line back.
So long, old chap, if you're bound to go.
Don't you forget when you're rich and great
Who laid you on to the lost lead, mate—
Mad as a hatter is German Joe.'

Laugh as they may, they will stand his friends.
Right as rain when the old man takes
Down to his bunk in the hut, and spends
Seven weeks fighting the fever and shakes,
Muttering still of his lucky lead:
'Whisper—I leds you all in der know,
Den you pe richer nor as der pank.'
Boys, he's a man if he is a crank—
Whisky and physic for German Joe.

Now he's abroad in a wild dream-land,
Baring his breast to the river breeze—
Out where the rock-ribbed ridges stand,
Telling his tale to the secret trees,
Swift as the shadows his visions glide
Over the plains where the mad winds blow.
Cover his face now, and carve a stone,
Henceforth his spirit must seek alone—
Dead as a door-nail is German Joe.

Bushmen have yarned of a ghost that went
Blazing a track from the Granite Stair
Down to a shaft and a tattered tent,
Many days' journey from anywhere.
Others have said that the bushmen lied.
Liars or not, it is true, we know,
Men have discovered a golden mine
Out in the track of an old blazed line,
Led by the spirit of German Joe.

Edward George Dyson

Hello, Soldier!

Back again 'n' nothin' missin' barrin'
arf a hand,
Where an Abdul bit me, chokin' in the Holy
Land.
'Struth, they got some dirty fighters in the
Moslem pack,
Bull-nosed slugs their sneakin' snipers spat
ters in yer back
Blows a gapin' sort iv pit in
What a helephant could sit in.
Bounced their bullets, if yeh please,
Like the 'oppers in a cheese,
Off me rubber pelt in droves,
Moppin' up the other coves.
So here's me once more at large in
Bay-street, Port, a bloomin' Sargin'.
"Cri, it jumbo." "Have a beer."
"Wot-o, Anzac; you're a dear."

Back once more on Moley's corner, loafin' like
a dook;
Back on Bourke, me livin' image, not a
slinkin' spook;
Solid ez the day I started, medals on me
chest,
Switchin' with me pert melacca, swankin'
with the best
Where the little wimmen's flowin',
With their veils 'n' ribbons blowin'-
See their eyes of bloo 'n' brown
Butterflyin' 'bout the town!
Back at 'ome-oh, 'struth, it's good!
Long, cold lagers from the wood,
Ev'ry cobber jumpin' at you,
Strangers duckin' in to bat you-
"Good ole Jumbo, how're you?"
"Ello, soldier, howja do?"

Back at Grillo's where the nigger googs his

whitey eyes,
Plucks his black ole greasy banjo while the
cod-steak fries;
Fish 'n' chips, a pint iv local, and the tidy
girl
Dancin' glad attendance on yeh 'zif yeh was
an earl;
Trailin' round the blazin' city,
Feelin' all content 'n' pretty,
Where the smart procession goes,
Prinked 'n' polished to the shows,
One among the happy drive-
'Sworth the world to be alive!
Dames ez smilin' ez a mother,
Ev'ry man ver fav'rit brother:
"Ello, Jumbo, how is it?"
"Arr there, soldier! Good 'n' fit?"

Takin' hozone at St. Kilder's good enough
for me,
Seein' Summer and the star-blink simmer in
the sea;
Cantin' up me bloomin' cady, toyin' with a
cig.,
Blowin' out me pout a little, chattin' wide 'n'
big
When there's skirt around to skite to.
Say, 'oo has a better right to?
Done me bit 'n' done it well,
Got the tag iv plate to tell;
Square Gallipoli survivor,
With a touch iv Colonel's guyver.
"Sargin' Jumbo, good ole son!"
"Soldier, soldier, you're the one!"

Back again, a wounded hero, moochin' up 'n'
down,
Feelin' 'stthough I'd got a fond arf-Nelson on
the town;
Never was so gay, so 'elp me, never felt so
kind;
Fresh from 'ell a paradise ain't very hard to

find.

After filth, 'n' flies, 'n' slaughter
Fat brown babies in the water,
Singin' people on the sand
Makes a boshter Happy Land!
War what toughened hone 'n' hide
Turned a feller soft inside!
Great it is, the 'earty greetin's,
Friendly digs, 'n' cheerful meetin's
"Ello, Jumbo, howja do?"
"Soldier, soldier, how're you?"

Edward George Dyson

Highly Desireable

The boarder in the bar-room rose,
A pale gaunt man who lodged with Hann,
"I bear," he said, "the worst of woes,
And suffer torments no one knows,
For do my best I never can
Have sleep like any other man.

"I have insomnia," said he.
"At times it drives me mad outright.
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Its just the same – so sleep for me.
You won't believe for three years quite
I haven't slept two hours a night."

Boss-cocky Billson softly swore,
And turning from his chestnut cob.
"What's that?" he questioned from the door.
"You say that you don't sleep no more
Than two hours? I pay thirty bob.
Now, mister, do you want a job?"

Edward George Dyson

How Herman Won The Cross

Once in a blue eternity they gave us
dabs of rum
To close the seams 'n' keep the flume in
liquor-tight condition;
But, soft 'n' sentimental, when the long, cold
evenin's come,
I'd dream me nibs was dronking' to the height
of his ambition,
With rights of suction over all the breweries
there are,
Where barrels squat, like Brahma gods, in
Mother Hardy's bar.

I had me fit of longin' on the night the Ger-
mans came,
All breathin' lioke a gas attack. The air
was halcholic.
We smelt 'em in the darkness, 'n' our rage
went up in flame.
It was envy, squealin' envy, put the ginger
in the frolic.
We shot 'em full of spelter, then went over it
to spite
The swines what drunk the liquor that was
ours by common right.

"If this ain't stopped, 'n' quick," sez we,
"there won't be left a drop
To celebrate the vict'ry when we capture
their position."
I'm prowlin' blind, when sharp there comes a
fond, familiar plop-
Swung round a post, a German in a pitiful
condition
Looms over me. He's sprung a cork, and
shales a flask on high,
'N' sings of beer that touchin' it would make
a butcher cry.

Sez he: "Berloffed kamarid, you haf some drinks mit you."

I meant to spike him where he waved, but altered me intention.

'N' "If you put it thus," sez I, "I don't care if I do."

We had a drink together. There's a tempor'y suspension of hostilities to sample contraband 'n' other stuff In the enemy's possession. Which I think he's had enough.

That Hun had thirty pockets, 'n' he'd stowed a flask in each,

'N' presently I'm thinkin' I could love him like a brother.

He's talkin' fond 'n' friendly in outlandish parts of speech.

"You're prisoner of war," I sez; 'n' then we had another.

Ten flasks he pours into his hat, 'n' fills it to the brim,

'N' weeps 'n' sez his frau she will be waitin' up for him.

We drink each other's health, 'n' know no henmity nor fear.

I see I've got to pinch him, but he's out to do his div. in,

'N' don't care if he don't go home till daylight doth appear.

Sez he: "I pud you home to bed upside dot 'ouse you live in."

He shakes his finger in me eye: "Mein friendt, you're preddy trunk!"

Then arm in arm through No Man's land we does a social bunk.

There's Fear afoot. Comes more than once the glug of sudden death.

We're rockin' fine 'n' careless where the

rifle fire is breakin',
'N' singin' most uproar'ous, in the bomb's
disgustin' breath,
Of girls, 'n' drink, 'n' cheerful sprees, 'n'
'Herman thinks he's takin'
A cobber home to somewhere in an subbub
damp 'n' dim,
Whereas I know fer certain it is me is takin'
him.

Somehow, sometime, I lands him where he's
safely put to bed.

I wake nex' day, 'n' holy smoke! I'm pri-
soner with the German.

Me mouth is like an ashpan, there's hot fish-
bolts in me head,

'N' through the barb-wire peerin' is me
foreigh cobber 'Erman.

"'Ve capdure each lasd nighd," sez he "you
home haf bring me, boss."

For bravery in takin' me, he got the Iron
Cross!

Edward George Dyson

In Hospital

It is thirty moons since I slung me hook
From the job at the hay and corn,
Took me solemn oath, 'n' I straight forsook
All the ways of life, dinkum ways 'n' crook,
'N' the things on which it was good to look
Since the day when a bloke was born.

I was give a gun, 'n' a bay'net bright,
'N' a 'ell of a swag iv work,
N' I dipped my lid to the big pub light,
To the ole push cobbers I give "Good-night!"
Slipped a kiss to 'er, 'n' I wings me flight
For a date with the demon Turk.

Ez we pricked our heel to the skitin' drum.
Square 'n' all, I was gone a mile.
With a perky air, 'n' a 'eart ez glum
Ez a long-dead cod, I was blind 'n' dumb,
Holdin' do the tear that was bound to come
At a word or a friendly smile.

Now I've seen it all, I may come out dead,
But I 'ope never more a fool.
I have scorched, 'n' thirsted, 'n' froze, 'n'
bled,
'N' bin taught the use of the human head,
For when all is done 'n' when all is said,
War's a wonderful sort of school.

I've bin taught to get 'em 'n' never fret,
'N' to sleep without dreamin' when
We have swarmed a slope with the red rain wet;
I 'ave learned a pile, 'n' I'm learnin' yet;
But the thing I've learned that I won't forget
Is a way of not judgin' men.

We was shot down there in a dirty place—
From the mansions 'n' huts we'd come—
'N' of all the welter the 'ardest case

Was a little swine with a dimpled face,
Who a year ago was dispensin' lace
In a Carlton em-por-ee-um.

In the moochin' days of me giddy youth,
When I kidded meself a treat,
I'd have pass him one ez a gooey. 'Strewth
On the track iv Huns, he's a eight-day sleuth,
'N' at tearin' into 'em nail 'n' tooth
He's got Julius Caesar beat!

I ain't proud with him ; 'n' I'm modest, too,
When dividin' a can of swill
With a Algy boy from the wilds iv Kew.
Cos I do not know what the cow will do
When a Fritzzy offers to sock me through;
'N' it's good to be livin' still.

There you are, you see! Oh! it makes you sore,
When a bloke you despised at 'ome
In them pifflin' days of the years before
Takes a odds-on chance with the God of War,
'N' he tows you out with his left lung tore,
'N' a crack in his bleedin' dome!

'Twas a lad called Hugh done ez much for me.
(He has curls 'n' he's fair 'n' slim).
Well, I mind the days in the Port when we
Puts it over Hugh coz we don't agree
With his tone 'n' style, 'n' my foot was free
When the push made a hack of him.

Now he's paid me back. I had struck a snag,
And must creep through the battle spume
All a flamin' age, with a grinnin' jag
In me thigh, for water, or jest a fag.
Like a crippled snake I was forced to drag
Shattered flesh till the crack of doom.

When they saw me he was the one who came.
'N' he give me a raffish grin
'N' a swig. I wasn't so bad that shame

Didn't get me then, for the lad was lame.
They had passed him his, but his 'art was game.
'N' he coughed ez he brought me in.

I have tackled God on me bended knees,
So He'll save him alive 'n' whole,
For the sake of one who he thinks he sees
When the Nurse's hands bring a kind of ease;
And I thank God, too, for the things like these
That have give me a sort of soul.

There are Percies, Algies, 'n' Claudes I've met
Who could take it 'n' come agen,
While the bullets flew in a screamin' jet.
What in pain, 'n' death, and in mire 'n' sweat
I 'ave learned from them that I won't forget
Is a way of not judgin' men.

Edward George Dyson

In The Benevolent

'I'M OFF on the wallaby!' cries Old Ben,
And his pipe is lit, and his swag is rolled;
'There is nothing here for us old-time men,
But up north, I hear, they are on the gold.'
And he shuffles off with a feeble stride,
With his ragged swag and his billy black.
He is making tracks for the other side,
O'er the river deep, or the Great Divide;
But at night, dead beat, he travels back.

Then at morn next day he is off again,
With an eager light in his aged eyes,
Tramping away on his journey vain
For the land of promise beyond the rise.
Over the range there is work to do,
There is roaring life at the shanty bars.
He will tramp the plains whilst the skies are blue,
And will wander the great wide bushland through,
And be soothed to sleep by the blinking stars.

In the garden gay where the old man roams
Pied poppies sway on their supple stalks,
And the fair white rose on the soft breeze foams,
And the pansies peep by the gravelled walks;
But his brow by the breeze of the hills is fanned,
And the clink of bells to his quick ear comes.
When he shades his eyes with a withered hand,
He sees silent rivers and ranges grand,
Or a still lagoon under silver gums.

'Are you bound out back, Dan?' the children cry,
And they peer at him through the fence, and shout
'Well, it's so long, Dan,' as he hobbles by,
With his 'Ay, ay, sonny lad—tramping out!'
On his back he's bearing his house and bed,
As he bore them both in his manhood's pride,
Pressing on each day till his strength has fled
By the force of a dauntless spirit led—
There's a rush somewhere on the Sydney side.

Though his sight may fail and his limbs give way,
Yet no weakness touches his brave old heart,
And he cries each night: 'At the break of day
I must strap up bluey and make a start!'
And they humour him; for the time is near
When he'll tramp no more under changeful skies,
But will leave his travels and troubles here,
Take the track God blazed with His stars, and steer
To the Never Land just across the rise.

Edward George Dyson

In Town

OUT of work and out of money—out of friends that means, you bet—
Out of firewood, togs and tucker, out of everything but debt—
And I loathe the barren pavements, and the crowds a fellow meets,
And the maddening repetition of the suffocating streets.

With their stinks my soul is tainted, and the tang is on my tongue
Of that sour and smoky suburb and the push we're thrown among,
And I sicken at the corners polished free of paint and mirk
By the shoulders of the men who're always hanging round for work.

Home—good Lord! a three-roomed hovel 'twixt a puddle and a drain,
In harmonious connection on the left with Liver Lane,
Where a crippled man is dying, and a horde of children fight,
And a woman in the horrors howls remorsefully at night.

It has stables close behind it, and an ash-heap for a lawn,
And is furnished with the tickets of the things we have in pawn;
And all day the place is haunted by a melancholy crowd
Who beg everything or borrow, and to steal are not too proud.

Through the day come weary women, too, with famine-haunted eyes,
Hawking things that are not wanted—things that no one ever buys.
And I hate the prying neighbours, in their animal content,
And the devilish persistence of the man who wants the rent.

I, who cared for none, and faltered at no work a man might do,
Felt a fierce delight possess me when the trucks went surging through,
When the flood raced in the sluices, or the giant gums swung round
'Fore my axe, and flung their mighty limbs all mangled on the ground—

I who hewed and built and burrowed, and who asked no man to give
When a strong arm was excuse enough for venturing to live—
I am creeping by the gutters, with a simper and a smirk,
To the Fates in spats and toppers for the privilege of work.

Far away the hills are all aflame; the blossom golden fair
Streams up the gladdened ranges, and its scent is everywhere,
And the kiddies of the settlers on the creek are red and sweet,
Whilst my youngsters have the sallowness and savour of the street.

To escape these endless vaults of brick, and pitch a tent out back,
If I get a chance I'll graft until my very sinews crack.
Meanwhile may all the angels up in Paradise look down
On a man of sin who died not, but was damned and sent to town.

Edward George Dyson

Jam (A Hymn Of Hate)

What is meant by active service
'Ere where sin is leakin' loose,
'N' the oldest 'and's as nervis
As a dog-bedevelled goose,
Has bin writ be every poet
What can rhyme it worth a dam,
But the 'orror as we know it
Is jist jam, jam, JAM!
Oh, the 'ymn of 'ate we owe it—
Stodgy, splodgy, seepy, soaky, sanguinary
jam!

There's the "fearful roar iv battle,"
What gets underneath yer 'at,
Mooin' like a million cattle
Each as big as Ararat;
There's the red field green 'n' slippy
(And I'm cleaner where I am),
But the thing that's got me nippy
It is jam, jam, JAM!
Druv us sour it has, 'n' dippy,
Sticky, sicky, slimy, sloppy, stummick-straftin'
jam!

Of the mud that's in the trenches
Writers make a solemn fuss;
For the vermin 'n' the stench
Little ladies pity us;
But the yearn that's honest dinkum,
'N' the prayer what ain't a sham
Is that Fritz may bust 'n' sink 'em
Ships of jam, jam, JAM!
For we bolt 'em, chew 'em, drink 'em,
Million billion bar'ls of beastly, cloyin'
clammy jam!

We are sorry-sick of peaches,
'N' we're full right up of plum,
'N' innards fairly screeches

When the tins of apple come.
Back of Blighty piled in cases,
Jist as close as they can cram,
Fillin' all the open spaces,
Is the 'jam, jam, JAM!
Oh, the woe the soldiers face is,
Monday, Sunday, ruddy, muddy, boundless
bogs of jam.

Edward George Dyson

Joey's Job

In days before the trouble Jo was rated as
a slob.
He chose to sit in hourly expectation of a job.
He'd loop hisself upon a post, for seldom
friends had he,
A gift of patient waitin' his distinctif quality.
He'd linger in a doorway, or he'd loiter on the
grass,
Edgin' modestly aside to let the fleetin'
moments pass.

Jo' begged a bob from mother, but more often
got a clout,
And settled down with cigarettes to smoke the
devil out.
The one consistent member of the Never
Trouble Club,
He put a satin finish on the frontage of the
pub.
His shoulder-blades were pokin' out from
polishin' the pine;
But if a job ran at him Joey's footwork was
divine.

Jo strayed in at the cobbler's door, but, scoffed
at as a fool,
He found the conversation too exhaustin' as
a rule;
Or, canted on the smithy coke, he'd hoist his
feet and yawn,
His boots slid up his shinbones, and his pants
displayin' brawn:
And if the copper chanced along 'twas beauty-
ful to see
Joe wear away and made hisself a fadest
memory.

Then came the universal nark. The Kaiser
let her rip.

They cleared the ring. The scrap was for the whole world's championship.

Jo Brown was takin' notice, lurkin' shy beneath his hat,

And every day he crept to see the drillin' on the flat.

He waited, watchin' from the furze the blokes in butcher's blue,

For the burst of inspiration that would tell him what to do.

He couldn't lean, he couldn't lie. He yelled out in the night.

Jo understood—he'd all these years been spoilin' for a fight!

Right into things he flung himself. He took his kit and gun,

Mooched gladly in the dust, or roasted gaily in the sun.

"Gorstruth," he said, with shining eyes, "it means a frightful war,

'N' now I know this is the thing that Heaven meant me for."

Jo went away a corporal and fought again the Turk,

And like a duck to water Joey cottoned to the work.

If anythin' was doin' it would presently come out

That Joseph Brown from Booragool was there or thereabout.

He got a batch of medals, and a glorious renown

Attached all of a sudden to the name of Sergeant Brown.

Then people talked of Joey as the dearest friend they had;

They were chummy with his uncles, or acquainted with his dad.

Joe goes to France, and presently he figure as

the best
Two-handed all-in fighter in the armies of the
West,
And men of every age at home and high and
low degree,
We gather now, once went to school with
Sergeant Brown, V.C.

Then Hayes and Jo, in Flanders met, and very
proud was Hayes
To shake a townsman by the hand, and sing
the hero's praise,
"Oh, yes," says Jo, "I'm doin' well, 'n' yet
I might do more.
If I was in a hurry, mate, to finish up this war
I'd lay out every Fritz on earth, but, strike me,
what a yob
A man would be to work himself out of a
flamnin' job!"

Now Jo's a swell lieutenant, and he's keepin'
up the pace.
Ha "Record" says Lieutenant Brown's an
honor to the place.
The town gets special mention every time he
scores. We bet
If peace don't mess his chances up, he'll be
Field-Marshal yet.
Dad, mother and the uncles Brown and all our
people know
That Providence began this war to find a grip
for Jo!

Edward George Dyson

Jonah's Luck

OUT OF LUCK, mate? Have a liquor. Hang it, where's the use complaining?
Take your fancy, I'm in funds now—I can stand the racket, Dan.
Dump your bluey in the corner; camp here for the night, it's raining;
Bet your life I'm glad to see you—glad to see a Daylesford man.
Swell? Correct, Dan. Spot the get up; and I own this blooming shanty,
Me the fellows christened 'Jonah' at Jim Crow and Blanket Flat,
'Cause my luck was so infernal—you remember me and Canty?
Rough times, those—the very memory keeps a chap from getting fat.

Where'd I strike it? That's a yarn. The fire's a comfort—sit up nearer.
Hoist your heels, man; take it easy till Kate's ready with the stew.
Yes, I'll tell my little story; 'tain't a long one, but it's queerer
Than those lies that Tullock pitched us on The Flat in '52.
Fancy Phil a parson now! He's smug as grease, the Reverend Tullock.
Yes, he's big—his wife and fam'ly are a high and mighty lot.
Didn't I say his jaw would keep him when he tired of punching mullock?
Well, it has—he's made his pile here. How d'you like your whisky—hot?

Luck! Well, now, I like your cheek, Dan. You had luck, there's no denying.
I in thirty years had averaged just a wage of twenty bob—
Why, at Alma there I saw men making fortunes without trying,
While for days I lived on 'possums, and then had to take a job.
Bah! you talk about misfortune—my ill-luck was always thorough:
Gold once ran away before me if I chased it for a week.
I was starved at Tarrangower—lived on tick at Maryborough—
And I fell and broke my thigh-bone at the start of Fiery Creek.

At Avoca Canty left me. Jim, you know, was not a croaker,
But he jacked the whole arrangement—found we couldn't make a do:
Said he loved me like a brother, but 'twas rough upon a joker
When he'd got to fight the devil, and find luck enough for two.
Jim was off. I didn't blame him, seeing what he'd had to suffer
When Maginnis, just beside us, panned out fifty to the tub.
'We had pegged out hours before him, and had struck another duffer,
And each store upon the lead, my lad, had laid us up for grub.

After that I picked up Barlow, but we parted at Dunolly
When we'd struggled through at Alma, Adelaide Lead, and Ararat.
See, my luck was hard upon him; he contracted melancholy,

And he hung himself one morning in the shaft at Parrot Flat.
Ding it? No. Where gold was getting I was on the job, and early,—
Struck some tucker dirt at Armstrong's, and just lived at Pleasant Creek,
Always grafting like a good 'un, never hopeless-like or surly,
Living partly on my earnings, Dan, but largely on my cheek.

Good old days, they like to call them—they were tough old days to many:
I was through them, and they left me still the choice to graft or beg—
Left me gray, and worn, and wrinkled, aged and stumped—without a penny—
With a chronic rheumatism and this darned old twisted leg.
Other work? That's true—in plenty. But you know the real old stager
Who has followed up the diggings, how he hangs on to the pan,
How he hates to leave the pipeclay. Though you mention it I'll wager
That you never worked on top until you couldn't help it, Dan.

Years went by. On many fields I worked, and often missed a meal, and
Then I found Victoria played out, and the yields were very slack,
So I took a turn up Northward, tried Tasmania and New Zealand,—
Dan, I worked my passage over, and I sneaked the journey back.
Times were worse. I made a cradle, and went fossicking old places;
But the Chows had been before me, and had scraped the country bare;
There was talk of splendid patches 'mongst the creeks and round the races,
But 'twas not my luck to strike them, and I think I lived on air.

Rough? That's not the word. So help me, Dan, I hadn't got a stiver
'When I caved in one fine Sunday—found I couldn't lift my head.
They removed me, and the doctor said I'd got rheumatic fever,
And for seven months I lingered in a ward upon a bed.
Came out crippled, feeling done-up, hopeless-like and very lonely,
And dead-beat right down to bed rock as I'd never felt before.
Bitter? Just! Those hopeful years of honest graft had left me only
This bent leg; and some asylum was the prospect I'd in store.

You'll be knowing how I felt then—cleaned-out, lame, completely gravelled—
All the friends I'd known were scattered widely north, and east, and west:
There seemed nothing there for my sort, and no chances if I travelled;
No, my digging days were over, and I had to give it best.
Though 'twas hard, I tried to meet it like a man in digger fashion:
'Twasn't good enough—I funk'd it; I was fairly on the shelf,
Cursed my bitter fortune daily, and was always in a passion
With the Lord, sir, and with everyone, but mostly with myself.

I was older twenty years then than I am this blessed minute,
But I got a job one morning, knapping rock at Ballarat;
Two-and-three for two-inch metal. You may say there's nothing in it,
To the man who's been through Eaglehawk and mined at Blanket Flat.
Wait—you'd better let me finish. We and ill, I bucked in gladly,
But to get the tools I needed I was forced to pawn my swag.
I'd no hope of golden patches, but I needed tucker badly,
And this job, I think, just saved me being lumbered on the vag.

Fortune is a fickle party, but in spite of all her failings,
Don't revile her, Dan, as I did, while you've still a little rope.
Well, the heap that I was put on was some heavy quartz and tailings,
That was carted from a local mine, I think the Band of Hope.
Take the lesson that is coming to your heart, old man, and hug it:
For I started on the heap with scarce a soul to call my own,
And in less than twenty minutes I'd raked out a bouncing nugget
Scaling close on ninety ounces, and just frosted round with stone.

How is that for high, my hearty? Miracle! It was, by thunder!
After forty years of following the rushes up and down,
Getting old, and past all prospect, and about to knuckle under,
Struck it lucky knapping metal in the middle of a town!
Pass the bottle! Have another! Soon we'll get the word from Kitty—
She's a daisy cook, I tell you. Yes, the public business pays
But my pile was made beforehand—made it 'broking' in the city.
That's the yarn I pitch the neighbours. Here's to good old now-a-days.

Edward George Dyson

Marshal Neigh, V.C.

He came from tumbled country past the
humps of Buffalo
Where the snow sits on the mountain 'n' the
Summer aches below.
He'd a silly name like Archie. Squattin'
sullen on the ship,
He knew nex' to holy nothin' through the gor-
forsaken trip.

No thoughts he had of women, no refreshin'
talk of beer;
If he'd battled, loved, or suffered vital facts
did not appear;
But the parsons and the poets couldn't teach
him to discourse
When it come to pokin' guyver at a pore,
deluded horse.

If nags got sour 'n' kicked agin the rules of
things at sea,
Artie argued matters with 'em, 'n' he'd kid
'em up a tree.
"Here's a pony got hystericks. Pipe the word
for Privit Rowe,"
The Sargint yapped, 'n' all the ship came
cluckin' to the show.

He'd chat him confidential, 'n' he'd pet 'n'
paw the moke;
He'd tickle him, 'n' flatter him, 'n' try him
with a joke;
'N' presently that neddy sobers up, 'n' sez
"Ive course,
Since you puts it that way, cobber, I will be
a better horse."

There was one pertickler whaler, known
aboard ez Marshal Neigh,
Whose monkey tricks with Privit Rowe was

better than a play.
He'd done stunts in someone's circus, 'n' he
loved a merry bout,
Whirlin' in to bust his boiler, or to kick
the bottom out.

Rowe he sez: "Well, there's an idjit! Oh,
yes, let her whiz, you beauty!
Where's yer 'orse sense, little feller? Where's
yer bloomin' sense iv duty?
Well, you orter serve yer country!" Then
there'd come a painful hush,
'N' that nag would drop his head-piece, 'n', so
'elp me cat, he'd blush.

We was heaped ashore be Suez, rifle, horse,
'n' man, 'n' tent,
Where the land is sand, the water, 'n' the
gory firmament.
We had intervals iv longin', we had sweaty
spells of work
In the ash-pit iv Gehenner, dumbly waitin'
fer the Turk.

We goes driftin' on the desert, nothin' doin',
nothin' said,
Till we get to think we're nowhere, 'n' arf
fancy we are dead,
'N' the only 'uman interest on the red hori-
zon's brim
Is Marshal Neigh's queer faney fer the lad
that straddles him.

Plain-livin's nearly, bored us stiff. The Major
calls on Rowe
To devise an entertainment. What his
charger doesn't know
Isn't in the regulations. Him 'n' Rowe is
brothers met,
'N' that horse's sense iv humor is the oddest
fancy yet.

But the Turk arrives one mornin' on the outer
edge iv space.
From back iv things his guns is floppin' kegs
about the place,
'N' Privit Artie Rowe along with others iv
the force
Goes pig-rootin' inter battle, holdin' converse
with his horse.

Little Abdul's quite a fighter, 'n' he mixes it
with skill;
But the Anzacs have him snouted,, 'n', oh,
ma, he's feelin' ill.
They wake the all-fired desert, 'n' the land for
ever dead
Is alive 'n' fairly creepin', and the skies are
droppin' lead.

When they've got the Ot'man goin', little
gaudy hunts begin.
It fer us to chiv His Trousers. 'n' to round
the stragglers in.
Cuttin' closest to the raw, 'n' swearin' lovin'
all the way,
Is Artie from Molinga on his neddy, Marshal
Neigh.

We're pursuin' sundry camels turkey-trottin'
anyhow
With the carriage iv an emu 'n' the action iv
a cow,
When a sand dune busts, 'n' belches arf a
million iv the foe.
They uncork a blanky batt'ry, 'n' it's, Allah,
let her go!

We're not stayin' dinner, thank you. Lie
along yer horse 'n' yell,
While the bullets pip yer britches 'n' you
sniff the flue of Hell.
Here it is that Artie takes it good 'n' solid in
the crust,

He dives from out the saddle, 'n' is swallered
in the dust.

I got through 'n' saw them pointin' where the
Marshal faced the band.

He was goin' where we came from, sniffin'
bodies in the sand.

Till he found Rowe snugglin' under, took him
where his pants was slack,
'N' be all the Asiatic gods, he brought his
soldier back!

With a bullet in his buttock, 'n' a drill hole
in his ear,

He dumped Artie down among us. Square
'n' all, how did we cheer!

There's no medals struck fer neddies, but we
rule there orter be,

'N' the pride iv all the Light Horse is old
Marshal Neigh, V.C.

Edward George Dyson

Men Of Australia

Men of all the lands Australian from the Gulf to Derwent River,
From the Heads of Sydney Harbour to the waters of the West,
There's a spirit loudly calling where the saplings dip and quiver,
Where the city crowds are thronging, and the range uplifts its crest!
Do ye feel the holy fervour of a new-born exultation?
For the task the Lord has set us is a trust of noblest pride—
We are named to march unblooded to the winning of a nation,
And to crown her with a glory that may evermore abide.
Have ye looked to great old nations, have ye wondered at their making,
Seen their fair and gracious cities, gemmed with palaces of light,
Felt the pulse of mighty engines beating ever, never slaking,
Like the sandalled feet of Progress moving onward in the night?
Can ye stand on some high headland when the drowsy day is fading,
And in dreamlike fancy see a merchant fleet upon the seas,
See the pinioned ships majestic 'gainst the purple even sailing
And the busy steamers racing down to half a thousand quays?

Have ye dreamed of this or seen of this, and feel ye no elation
O'er the most heroic duty that a free-born people knows?
To the chain of kindred nations ours to link another nation,
Ours to stay and build and bless her for a future great as those!
Cold and sordid hearts may linger still to bargain over trifles,
But the big-souled men have only hate for huckstering and sloth;
These would batter down division, tear away the bonds that stifle,
And would free our dear Australia for the larger, nobler growth.

Bushmen, roaming on the ridges, tracking "colours" to their sources,
Swinging axes by the rivers where the millsaws rend and shriek
Smoking thoughtful pipes, or dreaming on your slow, untroubled horses,
While the lazy cattle feed along the track or ford the creek,
Ye have known our country's moods in all her wild and desert places,
Ye have felt the sweet, strange promptings that her solitudes inspire;
To have breathed the spirit of her is to love her—turn your faces,
Ride like lovers when the day dawns, ride to serve her, son and sire!

Miners in the dripping workings, farmers, pioneers who settle
On the bush lands, city workers of the benches and the marts,
Swart mechanics at the forges, beating out the glowing metal,
Thinkers, planners, if ye feel the love of country stir your hearts,

Help to write the bravest chapter of a fair young nation's story
Great she'll be as Europe's greatest, more magnificent in truth!
That our children's children standing in the rose light of her glory
May all honour us who loved her, and who crowned her in her youth!

Edward George Dyson

Mickey Mollynoo

A mile-long panto dragon ploddin'
'opeless all the day,
Stuffed out with kits, 'n' spiked with rifles,
steamin' in its sweat,
A-heavin' down the misty road, club-footed
through the clay,
By waggons bogged 'n' buckin' guns,
the wildest welter yet,
Like 'arf creation's tenants shiftin' early
in the wet.

We're marchin' out, we dunno where, to meet
we dunno who;
But here we lights eventual, 'n' sighs 'n'
slips the kit,
'N', 'struth, the first to take us on is Mickie
Mollynoo!
A copper of the Port he was, when 'istory
was writ.
Sez I : "We're sent to face the foe, 'n', selp
me, this is It."

A shine John. Hop is Mollynoo. A mix-up
with the push
Is all his joy. One evenin' when his
baton's flyin' free
I takes a baby brick, 'n' drives it hard agin
the cush,
'N' Privit Mick is scattered out fer all the
world to see,
But not afore indelible he's put his mark on
me.

I got the signs Masonic all inlaid along me
lug
Where Molly, P.C., swiped me in them
'appy, careless days.
He's sargin' now, a vet'ran; I'm a newchum
and a mug,

'N' when he sorter fixes me there's some-
thin' in his gaze
That's pensive like. "Move on!" sez he.
"Keep movin' there!" he says.

If after this I dreams of scraps promiscuous
and crool,
The mills in Butcher's Alley when the
watch is on the wine,
Those nights he raided Wylie's shed to break
the two-up school,
I takes a screw at Molly. With a grin that
ain't divine
He's toyin' with a scar of old I reckernise
as mine.

'N' so I'm layin' for it, 'n' I'm wonderin' how
'n' what.
We're signed on with the Germans, 'n' there
ain't a vacant date;
But sure it's comin' to me, 'n' it's comin' 'ard
'n' 'ot.
Me lurk is patient waitin', but I'm trim-
min' while I wait
A brick to jab or swing with, in a willin'
tatertate.

Oh, judge me wonder! There's a scrim that
follers on a raid.
I'm roughin' it all-in with Hans. He sock
me such a bat
I slides on somethin' narsty, 'n' me little grave
is made;
But Molly butts my Hun, 'n' leaves no face
beneath his hat,
'N', "'Scuse me, Mister Herr," sez he, "I have a lien on that!"

He helps me under cover, 'n' he 'ands me
somethin' wet
(I've got a lick or two that leaves me feelin'
pretty sick).
"Lor love yeh, ole John Hop," sez I, "yiv

buried me in debt."

"Don't minton ut at all," he sez, 'n' eyes
me arf-a-tick.

'N' back there in the trench I sits, 'n' trims
another brick.

'Tis all this how a month or more; then

Mollynoo sez he:

"Come aisy, Jumm, yeh loafer, little hell 'n'
all to view.

A job most illegant is on, cut out fer you 'n'
me.

The damnedest, dirtiest fighter on the

Continent is you,

Bar one, yeh gougin' thafe, 'n' that is

Sargin' Mollynoo!"

I take, with knife 'n' pistol, arf a brick to line
me shirt.

We creeps a thousan' yards or so to jigger
up a gun

Which seven Huns is workin' on the Irish like
a squirt.

We gets across them, me 'n' him. I pots
the extra one;

Mick chokes his third in comfort, 'n',
be'old, the thing is done!

He stands above me, rakin' sweat from off his
gleamin' nut.

"Me dipper's leakin', Mick," sez I; "me
leg is bit in two."

Sez he: "Bleed there in comfort, I'm for
bringin' help, ye scut."

He's back in twenty minutes, with a dillied
German crew.

"Three'll carry in the gun," sez he, "the
rest will carry you."

I dunno how he got 'em, but he made them
barrer me.

They lugged the gun before him, 'n' he

yarded them like geese.
Then Mickie s'lutes the Major. "They're in
custody," sez he,
"Fer conduc' calculated to provoke a breach
iv peace,
A-tearin' iv me uniform, 'n' 'saultin' the
po-lice."

Then down he dumped. His wounds would
make a 'arf a column list.
When hack to front I chucks me bricks 'n'
smiles the best I can.
He grins at me: "Yer right," sez he, "Hold
out yer bla'-guard fist,
I couldn't fight yeh, blarst yeh, if yeh dinted
in me pan.
This messin' round wid Germans makes a
chicken iv a man."

Edward George Dyson

Mud

This war's a waste of slurry, and its at-
mosphere is mud,
All is bog from here to sunset. Wadin'
through
We're the victims of a thicker sort of universal
flood,
With discomforts that old Noah never knew.

We have dubbed our trench The Cecil.
There's a brass-plate and a dome,
And a quagmire where the doormat used
to be,
If you're calling, second Tuesday is our reg'-
lar day at home,
So delighted if you'll toddle in to tea!

There is mud along the corridors enough to
bog a cow;
In the air there hangs a musty kind of
woof;
There's a frog-pond in the parlour, and the
kitchen is a slough.
She has neither doors nor windows, nor a
roof.

When they post our bald somnambulist as
missing from his flat
We take soundings for the digger with a
prop.
By the day the board is gratis, by the week
it's half of that;
For the season there's a corresponding drop.

Opening off the spacious hallway is my natty
little suite,
A commodious and accessible abode.
By judicious disposition, with exclusion of
my feet,
There is sleeping room for Oliver the toad.

Though the ventilation's gusty, and in gobs
the ceiling falls—
Which with oral respiration disagrees—
Though there comes a certain quantity of
seepage from the walls,
There are some I knew in diggings worse
than these.

On my right is Cobber Carkeek. There's a
spring above his head,
And his mattress is a special kind of clay.
He's a most punctilious bloke about the
fashion of his bed,
And he makes it with a shovel every day.

Man is dust. If so, the Cobber has been
puddled up a treat.
On domestic sanitation he's a toff,
For he lights a fire on Sunday, bakes his sur-
face in the heat,
Then he takes a little maul, and cracks it
off.

After hanging out a winter in this Cimmerian
hole
We're forgetting sheets, and baths, and
tidy skins.
In the dark and deadly calm last night they
took us on patrol.
Seven, little fellows, thinking of their sins.

It was ours like blinded snails to prowl the
soggy, slimy night,
With a feeler pricking out at every pore
For the death that stalks in darkness, or the
blinking stab of light,
And the other trifling matters that are war.

That's the stuff to get your liver, that's the
acid on a man,
For it tries his hones, and seeks his marrow

through.

You have got the thought to comfort you that
life is but a span,
If Fritz squirts his loathly limelight over
you.

We got back again at daybreak. Cobber
ducked to doss and said,
From the soft, embracing mud: "No more
I'll roam.
"Oh, thank Heaven, blokes," he murmured,
"for the comforts of a bed!
Gorstruth, but ain't it good to have a
home!"

Edward George Dyson

My Typewriter

I have a trim typewriter now,
They tell me none is better;
It makes a pleasing, rhythmic row,
And neat is every letter.
I tick out stories by machine,
Dig pars, and gags, and verses keen,
And lathe them off in manner slick.
It is so easy, and it's quick.

And yet it falls short, I'm afraid,
Of giving satisfaction,
This making literature by aid
Of scientific traction;
For often, I can't fail to see,
The dashed thing runs away with me.
It bolts, and do whate'er I may
I cannot hold the runaway.

It is not fitted with a brake,
And endless are my verses,
Nor any yarn I start to make
Appropriately terse is.
'Tis plain that this machine-made screed
Is fit but for machines to read;
So "Wanted" (as an iron censor)
"A good, sound, secondhand condenser!"

Edward George Dyson

Night Shift

'HELLO! that's the whistle, be moving.
Wake up! don't lie muttering there.
What language! your style is improving—
It's pleasant to hear you at prayer.
Turn out, man, and spare us the blessing.
Crib's cut, and the tea's on the brew.
You'll have to look slippy in dressing
For that was the half-hour that blew.'

'Half-past! and the night's simply awful,
The hut fairly shakes in the storm.
Hang night-shifts! They shouldn't be lawful;
I've only had time to get warm.
I notice the hut's rarely bright, and
The bunk's always cold as a stone,
Except when I go on at night, and
The half-after whistles have blown.

'Bob built up that fire just to spite me,
The conscienceless son of a swab!
By Jove! it would fairly delight me
To let Hogan be hanged with his job.
Oh! it's easy to preach of contentment;
You're eloquent all on the flute.
Old Nick's everlasting resentment
Plague Dick if he's taken my boot!

'Great Cæsar! you roasted the liquor,
Whoever it was made the tea;
It's hotter than hell-broth and thicker!
Fried bacon again. Not for me!
Good night, and be hanged! Stir up, Stumpy,
You look very happy and warm;
I'll hoist half the bark off the humpy
And give you a taste of the storm.'

We laughed as he went away growling:
But down where the wind whipped the creek
The storm like old fury was howling,

And Fred was on top for the week.
'A devil's own night for the braceman,'
Muttered Con. 'It's a comfort to know
All weathers are one to the faceman,
All shifts are alike down below.'

We slept, and the storm was receding,
The wind moaned a dirge overhead,
When men brought him, broken and bleeding,
And laid him again on the bed.
We saw by the flame burning dimly
The gray hue of death on his face.
The stoker enlightened us grimly:
'No hope. He was blown from the brace.'

Edward George Dyson

Of The True Endeavour

HAPPY he in whom the honest love of fair endeavour lingers,
Who has strength to do his labour, and has pride to do it well,
Carve he gems of purest water with an artist's cunning fingers,
Hew the granite, forge the beam, or make a simple tale to tell

His to feel a glow ecstatic of the mighty exultation
That arose when out of chaos all the wheeling planets stood.
Since when God beheld the wonder, saw the stir of His creation
In the busy scheme of heaven, and He said that it was good,

Never man has made with willing hands some thing of true intention—
Cut in bone a strange, rude picture to inspire the naked hordes,
Or contrived a subtle engine with laborious invention—
But has entered straight and freely to the joy that was the Lord's

Those so blessed have with them solace, balm to still the ache of sorrow,
One companion who will cleave when friends and kindred turn away;
But a jealous mistress is she, and be sure again to-morrow
She will draw you back repentant if ye wander far to-day.

Few there are that know the ardour. Some are weaving songs of beauty,
Some have harped the living music, some have built with noblest skill,
Some are simple men exulting in the moiler's primal duty,
When they swing their axes high or ring the hammer on the drill.

Not to all that love is given art, the clear, unfailing vision,
Not power to carve the perfect form, the bravest lances hurled,
But the humblest hand sincere desire has quickened to decision
Beats a line of grace eternal in the metal of the world.

Men have prayed for many blessings, for the boon of ease have ever
Plagued the God that drove out Adam to the tilling of the soil—
Speak a prayer of honest effort to the God of Vast Endeavour:
Give for each his toil, O Lord—for each the pride and joy of toil!

Edward George Dyson

Out Of Khaki

I slung me khaki suit to-day.
Civilian now front heel to chin
I 'op round on a single shin;
At home in peace I'm bound to stay.
'N' so they've took me duds away.
It 'urt like strippin' off me skin!

I put it on three years ago,
The ole brown rig. There wasn't then
A prouder chicken in the pen.
Jist twenty turned, me nibs you'd know
For how I give me chest a throw,
A man among the best of men.

Me little no the touch I give,
Me chin's ez solid ez a rock,
'N' level with the Town 'All clock,
A five-inch grin across me chiv.
"Lor' love us, this is how to live,"
Sez I, 'n' felt I owned the Block.

Glad eyes was ever on the lurk,
'N' little 'earts was thumpin' warm
For nippers trainin' with the swarm
To swat ole Kaiser Bill, or work
A toe-hold on the heathen Turk.
Fair dink, I loved the uniform!

I soused mine in the brine that day
When Tophet spilt, 'n' in the roar
Of shells that split the sea 'n' tore
Our boats to chips, we broke any
Up through the pelt of leaden spray,
'N' got our first real taste of war.

They shot me tunic all to rags;
Then in the perpendic'lar spree
Me trousers wore off to the knee.
The right-about of many bags

Was ground off in the dust 'n' crags
A-sittin' in Gallipoli.

I wore the khaki on the Somme-
Most time 'twas jist a coat of mud;
I once come through the battle scud
Stripped mother-naked by a bomb;
'N' once it' took its color from
Me own 'n' one good cobber's blood.

They cheered the khaki through the street
When we come home with pipers gay,
But now I'm jist a bloke in grey.
Harf-lost, lob-sided, incomplete,
It's nothin' but me spook you'll meet,
Ghost-walkin' in the light o' day.

Edward George Dyson

Peace, Blessed Peace

Here in the flamin' thick of thick of things,
With Death across the way, 'n' traps
What little Fritz the German flings
Explodin' in yer lunch pe'aps,
It ain't all glory for a bloke',
It ain't all corfee 'ot and stoo,
Nor wavin' banners in the smoke,
Or practisin' the bay'net stroke—
We has our little troubles, too!

Here's Trigger Ribb bin seein' red
'N' raisin' Cain because he had,
Back in the caverns iv his 'ead,
A 'oller tooth run ravin' mad.
Pore Trigger up 'n' down the trench
Was jiggin' like a blithered loan,
'N' every time she give a wrench
You orter seen the beggar blench,
You orter 'eard him play a toon.

The sullen shells was pawin' blind,
A-feelin' for us grim as sin,
While now 'n' then we'd likely find
A dizzy bomb come limpin' in.
But Trigger simply let 'er sizz.
He 'ardly begged to be excused.
This was no damn concern of his.
He twined a muffler round his phiz,
'N' fearful was the words he used.

Lest we be getting' cock-a-whoop
Ole 'Ans tries out his box of tricks.
His bullets all around the coop
Is peckin' like a million chicks.
But Trigger when they barks his snout
Don't sniff at it. He won't confess
They're on the earth—ignores the clout,
'N' makes the same old sung about
His brimmin' mug of bitterness.

They raided us there in the mud
One day afore the dead sun rose.
Me oath, the mess of stuff and blood
Would give a slaughterman the joes!
And when the scrap is past and done,
Where's Trigger Ribb? The noble youth
Has got his bay'net in a Hun,
While down his cheeks the salt tears run.
Sez he to me "Gorbli'—this tooth!"

A shell hoist Trigger in a tree.
We found him motherin' his jor.
"If this ache's goin' on," sez he,
"So 'elp me, it'll spoil the war!"
Five collared Trigger on his perch,
They wired his molar to a bough,
Then give the anguished one a lurch,
'N' down he pitches. From that birch
His riddled tooth is hangin' now.

This afternoon it's merry 'ell;
Grenades is comin' by the peck;
A big gun times us true 'n well,
And, oh! we gets it in the neck.
They lick out flames hat reach a mile,
The drip of lead will never cease.
But Trigger's pottin' all the while;
He sports a fond 'n' foolish smile-
"Thank Gord," he sez, "a bit of peace!"

Edward George Dyson

Peter Simson's Farm

Simson settled in the timber when his arm was strong and true,
And his form was straight and limber; and he wrought the long day through
In a struggle, single-handed, and the trees fell slowly back,
Twenty thousand giants banded 'gainst a solitary jack.

Through the fiercest days of summer you might hear his keen axe ring
And re-echo in the ranges, hear his twanging crosscut sing;
There the great gums swayed and whispered, and the birds were skyward blown,

As the circling hills saluted o'er a bush king overthrown.

Clearing, grubbing, in the gloaming, strong in faith the man descried
Heifers sleek and horses roaming in his paddocks green and wide,
Heard a myriad corn-blades rustle in the breeze's soft caress,
And in every thew and muscle felt a joyous mightiness.

So he felled the stubborn forest, hacked and hewed with tireless might,
And a conqueror's peace went with him to his fern-strewn bunk at night:
Forth he strode next morn, delighting in the duty to be done,
Whistling shrilly to the magpies trilling carols to the sun.

Back the clustered scrub was driven, and the sun fell on the lands,
And the mighty stumps were riven 'tween his bare, brown, corded hands.
One time flooded, sometimes parching, still he did the work of ten,
And his dog-leg fence went marching up the hills and down again.

By the stony creek, whose tiny streams slid o'er the sunken boles
To their secret, silent meetings in the shaded waterholes,
Soon a garden flourished bravely, gemmed with flowers, and cool and green,
While about the hut a busy little wife was always seen.

Came a day at length when, gazing down the paddock from his door,
Simson saw his horses grazing where the bush was long before,
And he heard the joyous prattle of his children on the rocks,
And the lowing of the cattle, and the crowing of the cocks.

There was butter for the market, there was fruit upon the trees,
There were eggs, potatoes, bacon, and a tidy lot of cheese;
Still the struggle was not ended with the timber and the scrub,

For the mortgage is the toughest stump the settler has to grub.

But the boys grew big and bolder—one, a sturdy, brown-faced lad,
With his axe upon his shoulder, loved to go to work 'like dad',
And another in the saddle took a bush-bred native's pride,
And he boasted he could straddle any nag his dad could ride.

Though the work went on and prospered there was still hard work to do;
There were floods, and droughts, and bush-fires, and a touch of pleuro too;
But they laboured, and the future held no prospect to alarm—
All the settlers said: 'They're stickers up at Peter Simson's farm.'

One fine evening Pete was resting in the hush of coming night,
When his boys came in from nesting with a clamorous delight;
Each displayed a tiny rabbit, and the farmer eyed them o'er,—
Then he stamped—it was his habit—and he smote his knee and swore.

Two years later Simson's paddock showed dust-coloured, almost bare,
And too lean for hope of profit were the cows that pastured there;
And the man looked ten years older. Like the tracks about the place,
Made by half a million rabbits, were the lines on Simson's face.

As he fought the bush when younger, Simson stripped and fought again,
Fought the devastating hunger of the plague with might and main,
Neither moping nor despairing, hoping still that times would mend,
Stubborn-browed and sternly facing all the trouble Fate could send.

One poor chicken to the acre Simson's land will carry now.
Starved, the locusts have departed; rust is thick upon the plough;
It is vain to think of cattle, or to try to raise a crop,
For the farmer has gone under, and the rabbits are on top.

So the strong, true man who wrested from the bush a homestead fair
By the rabbits has been bested; yet he does not know despair—
Though begirt with desolation, though in trouble and in debt,
Though his foes pass numeration, Peter Simson's fighting yet!

He is old too soon and failing, but he's game to start anew,
And he tells his hopeless neighbours 'what the Gov'mint's goin' to do'.
Both his girls are in the city, seeking places with the rest,
And his boys are tracking fortune in the melancholy West.

Edward George Dyson

Quits

Ben Unger's wife was dark and small,
With little, round, black eyes;
Ben Unger started at her call,
For Ben had been made wise.
No dirge could crush his spirit but
The one by Annie sung;
No whip-lash ever made could cut
Like Annie Unger's tongue.

But Annie had a round, red cheek,
A figure like a plum,
And Henderson from up the creek
In courtship sly would come.
Then Annie voiced no angry call,
Here dirge remained unsung,
And very gentle was the fall
Of Annie Unger's tongue.

Ned Holman went to Ben upon
The hill in Colter's hay.
He said: "your wife with Henderson
Ran off at ten to-day!"
Ben stood stock still. "All right!" said he;
Then with a little laugh:
"That makes us quits at last. 'Twas me
That stole his brindle calf!"

Edward George Dyson

Repaired

Hauled I was from out the tip
Fritz made with his demonstration,
All broke up, a fractured hip
In me Darby Kell a rip
Settn' up a cool sensation
Like excessive ventilation

One 'and cluttered up a treat-
On me oath you wouldn't know it
From a 'andsome plate of meat.
They had sorter pied me feet,
And a bullet of the foe hit
Where no decent bloke could show it.

'Arf a year they've botched me now;
Ev'ry scientific schemer
In the cor' has faked me prow,
Soled 'n' heeled a bloke somehow-
Gawd, the last one was a screamer.
Wirin' up me flamin' femur!

Comes a guy and pipes you square,
Gogglin' at you through his glasses,
Swings you in the barber's chair,
Tilts you this end up with care,
Lets you have a whiff of gasses
Chattin' off-hand with the lasses.

Then he slices clean 'n' swift,
Like a cobbler cuts his leather,
Gives the splintered knob a lift-
S'elp me tater, it's a gift
How they glues you all together,
Sayin' it's bin nicer weather!

Surgeon wipes his 'ands, a verse
Chortle softly as he pitches
Probes and sponges to the nurse,
Thinks the lunch might have bin worse;

Close your little gap he hitches,
Whistlin' as he jabs the stitches.

I'm caught in with fiddle-strings,
Stuck about with bits 'n' patches,
Fixed with ligatures 'n' springs,
Lath 'n' plastered, swung in slings
Skewered with little wooden matches,
Hung with hinges, knobs 'n' latches.

Till I lay behind me screen,
Serious 'n' sober one day,
Satisfied 'n' all serene,
'Arf a man 'n' 'arf machine
What they winds up ev'ry Monday
'N' it tilts all ways by Sunday.

'Ome again I'll come, a neat,
Semi-autymatic loafer,
Number up, 'n' all complete,
Creakin' round on Collins Street,
With a licence (which I'll owe for)
My own car and my own shofer!

Edward George Dyson

Simple Sister Goes To Sydney

When Flo resolved to go to town from brothers three a yell went up,
Predicting ruin and distress. Bill in his horror dropped a cup.
"Gorstruth!" he said, "in Sydney there what is a simple girl to do?
They took me down. I lost me watch and seven quid. What 'ope for you?"

Ben turned on her in pale dismay. "Look here, me girl, ain't you bin told
How one iv them there spieler blokes done me for twenty pound in gold?
He was as nice a gentleman as any in the blessed shops:
He got away with all I had, and took a luner at the cops."

"Me, too," said Dave, "that time I went to Sydney town to see the Show
One trimmed me for me bran' new suit. You stay where we can watch you, Flo."
Flo packed. "If spieler comes at me his finish will be sharp," she said;
And when the boys next heard of her she'd got a bloke, and then was wed.

She wrote: "He's rather nice, I think, and I am putting him to work.
Next Chrissmiss we are comin' up to see yous people back o' Bourke."
And when he came he brought for Bill a silver watch and seven quid,
For Dave a bran' new suit of check, a ruby tie-pin and a lid.

To Ben he handed twenty pounds, in nice new minted sovereigns, too.
And still the brothers gaped at him, and still their great amazement grew.
He was a natty kind of chap, with gentle manners, small and slim.
And when they spoke 'twas as one man. "So 'elp me cat," they said, "it's 'im!"

Edward George Dyson

Since Nellie Came To Live Along The Creek

MY HUT is built of stringy-bark, the window's calico,
The furniture a gin-case, one bush-table, and a bunk;
Thick as wheat on my selection does the towering timber grow,
And the stately blue-gums' taproots to the bedrock all are sunk;
Then the ferns spring up like nettles,
And the ti-tree comes and settles
On my clearing if I spell-oh for a week;
But I work for love of labour
Since I've got a handy neighbour,
And Miss Nellie's come to live along the creek.

Time was when Death sat by me, and he stalked me through the trees;
Then my arm was weak as water, and my heart a weary thing;
I was sullen as a wombat on such still, wan days as these,
And my wedges all were rusty, and my axe had lost its ring.
Then a fear like sickness bound me,
And I cursed the trees around me,
For quite hopeless seemed the struggle I'd begun
And at night-time, cowed and sinking,
I would sit there thinking, thinking,
Gazing grimly down the barrels of my gun.

Then I felt the bush must crush me with its dreadful, brooding wings,
And its voices seemed to mock me, till I thought that I was mad
Like the mopoke, and the jackass, and the other loony things;
For beside my old dog, Brumbie, not a living mate I had.
Then each sapling was a giant,
And the stumps were all defiant,
And my friends were very few and far to seek;
But the bush is bright and splendid,
And my melancholy's ended,
Since Miss Nellie came to live along the creek

I would swear she was the sweetest if the world was full of girls:
She's as graceful as a sapling, and her waist is neat and slim;
She is dimpled o'er with smiling, and has glossy, golden curls,
And her eyes peep out like violets 'neath her sunhat's jealous rim.
If I think I see her flitting
On the sun-crowned hill, or sitting

'Neath the fern-fronds where the creek sleeps, deep and cool,
Then my stroke is straight and steady,
And the white chips run and eddy,
And I laugh aloud at nothing, like a fool.

Now my axe rings like a sabre, and my heart exults with pride
When the green gums sweep the scrub down, and they thunder and rebound,
And then lie with limbs all shattered, reaching out on either side,
Like giants killed in battle, with their faces to the ground.
Now the bush has many pleasures,
And a wondrous store of treasures,
And a thousand tales its eerie voices speak;
But its strange night hushes, seeming
Sent to lure to mystic dreaming,
Have no terrors, now Miss Nellie's on the creek.

I am happy when the thunder bumps and bellows on the hill,
And the tall trees writhe and wrestle with the fury of the gale,
Or when sunshine floods the clearing, and the bushland is so still
That I hear the creek's low waters tinkle, tinkle on the shale.
In the thought that she is near me
There's a charm to lift and cheer me,
And a power that makes me mighty seems to flow
From Miss Nellie's distant coo-ey,
Or her twin lips red and dewy
When she comes by here, and shyly calls me 'Joe.'

She can work from dawn to nightfall, and look handsome all the day;
At her smile my garden flourished, and the vines grew green and strong,
And the bush falls back before it, and it strikes the scrub away,
For it lingers ever with me, and it stirs me like a song.
Now I labour in all weathers,
And the logs are merest feathers,
Nor my heart nor yet my hand is ever weak,
And a higher thing my prize is
Than all else that life comprises—
Pretty Nell, who's come to live along the creek.

Edward George Dyson

Sister Ann

I'm lyin' in a narrow bed,
'N' starin' at a wall.
Where all is white my plastered head
Is whitest of it all.
My life is jist a whitewashed blank,
With flamin' spurts of pain.
I dunno who I've got to thank,
I've p'raps been trod on by a tank,
Or caught out in the rain
When skies were peltin' fish-plates, bricks
'n' lengths of bullock-chain.

I'm lyin' here, a sulky swine,
'N' hatin' of the bloke
Who's in the doss right next to mine
With 'arf his girders broke.
He never done no 'arm t me,
'N' he's pertickler ill;
But I have got him snouted, see,
'N' all old earth beside but she
Come with the chemist's swill,
'N' puts a kind, soft 'and on mine, 'n' all
my nark is still.

She ain't a beaut, she's thirty two,
She scales eleven stone;
But, 'struth, I didn't think it true
There was such women grown!
She's nurse 'n' sister, mum 'n' dad,
'N' all that straight 'n' fine
In every girl I ever had.
When Gabr'el comes, 'n' all the glad
Young saints are tipped the sign,
You'll see this donah take her place, first
angel in the line!

She's sweet 'n' cool, her touch is dew—
Wet lilies on yer brow.
(Jist 'ark et me what never knew

Of lilies up to now).
She fits your case in 'arf a wink,
'N' knows how, why, 'n' where.
If you are five days gone in drink,
N' hoverin' on perdition's brink,
It is her brother there.
God how pain will take a man, and
He has spoke with her!

I dunno if she ever sleeps
Ten minutes at a stretch.
A dozen times a night she creeps
To soothe a screamin' wretch
Who has a tiger-headed Hun
A-gnawin' at his chest.
'N' when the long, 'ard flight is won,
'N' he is still 'n' nearly done,
She smiles down on his rest,
'N' minds me of a mother with a baby at her
breast.

The curly kid we cuddled when
There was no splendid row
(It seemed a little matter then,
But feels so wondrous now).
It's part of her. She's Joan iv Ark,
Flo Nightingale, all fair
'N' dinkum dames who've made their mark
If she comes tip-toe in the dark,
We blighters feel her there.
The whole pack perks up like a bird, 'n'
sorter takes the air.

She chats you in a 'Ighland botch;
But if our Sis saw fit
To pitch Hindoo instead of Scotch
I'd get the hang of it,
Because her heart it is that talks
What now is plain to me.
At war where bloody murder stalks,
'N' Nick his hottest samples hawks.
I have been given to see

What simple human kindness is, what
brotherhood may be.

Edward George Dyson

Stop-And-See

I'M STEWING in a brick-built town;
My coat is quite a stylish cut,
And, morn and even, up and down,
I travel in a common rut;
But as the city sounds recede,
In dreamy moods I sometimes see
A vision of a busy lead,
And hear its voices calling me.

My flaccid muscles seem to tweak
To feel the windlass pall and strain,
To shake the cradle by the creek,
And puddle at the 'tom' again.
I'd gladly sling this musty shop
To see the sluicing waters flow—
A pile of tucker, dirt on top,
And simply Lord knows what below.

'Twas lightly left, 'tis lately mourned,
The tent life up at Stop-and-See,
When shirts with yellow clay adorned
Were badges of nobility,
When Sunday's best was Monday's wear,
And Bennett gave us verse and book—
Poor Dick! a crude philosopher,
But, bless his heart, a clever cook.

An easy life we lived and free;
The wash was only ten-weight stuff,
The 'bottom' dry and soft at knee—
With Hope to help us 'twas enough.
Then none could say us ay or nay
Did we agree to slave or smoke;
The pan was ready with the pay
E'en though the graft was half in joke.

'Twas good when 'spell-oh!' had been said,
To watch the white smoke curl and cling
Against the gravel roof o'erhead,

The candles dimly flickering
And circled with a yellow glow—
To sprawl upon the broken reef,
And pensively to pull and blow
The fragrant incense from the leaf.

And where the creek ran by our tent,
Or lingered through embowered ponds,
In dusky nooks that held a scent
Of musk amid the drooping fronds,
It was a pleasant task to lay
The dish within the stream, and there
To puddle off the pug and clay,
And pan the gleaming prospect bare.

Oft in the strange deceit of dreams,
I swirl the old tin-dish again,
And Wondee's rippling water seems
To cool my weary limbs as then;
And down the hill-side bare and dry
A digger's chorus faintly comes,
And mingles with the lullaby
Of locusts in the drowsy gums.

The barrels rattle on their stands,
And in the shaft the nail-kegs swing.
The short, sharp strokes of practised hands
Are making pick and anvil ring.
I hear the splitter's measured blow,
The distant knocker rise and drop,
The cheery cry, 'Look up, below!'
The muffled call of 'Heave, on top!'

No piles were made at Stop-and-See,
No nuggets found of giant size,
But, looking back, it seems to me
That all who laboured there were wise.
For there was freedom void of pride,
There hate of forms and shallow arts,
And there were friendships all too wide
For narrow streets and narrow hearts.

The Auction

'Who'll bid? Who'll bid? ' the question rang
Where throned Death was calling.
I seemed to sense his charnel tang,
Mephitic air appalling;
And every tick I heard the clang
Of his steel hammer falling.

Come great men who upon our earth
Had held a lofty mission,
The spacious ones of lordly birth,
The cunning politician,
And gentlemen of holy worth
Or wondrous erudition.

One buyer in a corner trolls
Beyond the ghastly revel.
He buys by lots or single souls,
His voice is low and level.
And paltry is the price he doles.
The buyer is the Devil!

Edward George Dyson

The Church Bells

The Viennese authorities have melted down the great bell in St. Stephen's to supply metal for guns or munitions. Every poor village has made a similar gift.—Lokal Anzeiger.

The great bell booms across the town,
Reverberant and slow,
And drifting from their houses down
The calm-eyed people go.
Their feet fall on the portal stones
Their fathers' fathers trod;
And still the bell, with reverent tones,
From cottage nooks and purple thrones
Is calling souls to God.

The chapel bells with ardor spake
Above the poplars tall,
And perfumed Sabbath seemed to wake.
Responsive to their call
From dappled vale and green hillside
And nestling village hives
The peasants came in simple pride
To hear how their Lord Jesus died
To sweeten all their lives.

They boom beyond the battered town;
The hills are belching smoke;
And valleys charred and ranges brown
Are quaking 'neath the stroke.
The iron roar to Heaven swells,
And domes and steeples nod;
Through cities vast and ferny dells
And village streets the clamant bells
Are calling souls to God!

Edward George Dyson

The Common Men

The great men framed the fierce decrees
Embroidering State with State;
They bit their thumbs across the seas
In diplomatic hate;
They lit the pyre whose glare and heat
Make Hell itself seem cold;
The flames bloomed red above the wheat,
Their wild profusion wreathed the street-
Then in the smoke and fiery sleet
The common men took hold.

Where Babel was with Bedlam freed,
And wide the gates were flung;
To chaos, while the anarch breed
In all the world gave tongue,
The common men in close array,
By mountain, plain and sea,
Went outward girded for the fray,
On one dear quest, whate'er they pay
In blood and pain—the open way
To keep for Liberty.

The common men who never tire,
Unsightly in the mirk
Of caking blood and smoke and mire,
Push forward with their work;
A while in foulest pits entombed,
Resistless, still and slow,
Burnt, broken, stifled, seeming doomed,
Past where the flowers of Satan bloomed,
Up gutted hills with shell-breath plumed,
The stubborn armies go.

Contending in the shattered sky
In empyrean wars,
The sons of simple men out-vie
God's splendid meteors;
Where'er the mills of Vulcan roared
And blinked against the night,

Swart shapes with sweat-washed eyes have
stored
The clean, lean lightnings of the Lord
To be a league-long, leaping sword
In this our holy fight.

The small men know the burden well,
The dreadful paths they know,
With fear and death and torture dwell.
And sup and sleep with, woe.
They're riven in the shrapnel gust,
But; blind and reeling, plan
Another blow, a final thrust
To subjugate the tyrant's lust.
So, bleeding, blundering in the dust,
Men fight and die for MAN.

Edward George Dyson

The Crusaders

What price yer humble, Dicko Smith,
in gaudy putties girt,
With sand-blight in his optics, and much
leaner than he started,
Round the 'Oly Land cavorting in three-
quarters of a shirt,
And imposin' on the natives ez one Dick
the Lion 'Earted?

We are drivin' out the infidel, we're hittin'
up the Turk,
Same ez Richard slung his right across the
Saracen invader
In old days of which I'm readin'. Now
we're gettin' in our work,
'N' what price me nibs, I ask yeh, ez a
qualified Crusader!

'Ere I am, a thirsty Templar in the fields of
Palestine,
Where that hefty little fighter, Bobby
Sable, smit the heathen,
And where Richard Coor de Lion trimmed
the Moslem good 'n' fine,
'N' he took the belt from Saladin, the
slickest Dago breathin'.

There's no plume upon me helmet, 'n' no red
cross on me chest,
'N' so fur they haven't dressed me in a
swanking load of metal;
We've no 'Oly Grail I know of, but we do
our little best
With a jamtin, 'n' a billy, 'n' a battered
ole mess kettle.

Quite a lot of guyver missin' from our brand
of chivalry;
We don't make a pert procession when

we're movin' up the forces;
We've no pretty, pawin' stallion, 'n' no
pennants flowin' free,
'N' no giddy, gaudy bedquilts make a
circus of the 'orses.

We 'most always slip the cattle 'n' we cut out
all the dog
When it fairly comes to buttin' into battle's
hectic fever,
Goin' forward on our wishbones, with our
noses in the bog,
'N' we 'eave a pot iv blazes at the cursed
unbeliever.

Fancy-dress them old Crusaders wore,
and alwiz kep' a band.
What we wear's so near to nothin' that it's
often 'ardly proper,
And we swings a tank iv iron scrap across
the 'Oly Land
From a dinkie gun we nipped ashore the
other side of Jopper.

We ain't ever very natty, for the climate here
is hot;
When it isn't liquid mud the dust is thicker
than the vermin.
Ten to one our bold Nouredin is some wad-
dlin' Turkish pot,
'N' the Saladin we're on to is a snortin'
red-eyed German.

But be'old the eighth Crusade, 'n' Dicko
Smith is in the van,
Dicko Coor de Lion from Carlton what
could teach King Dick a trifle,
For he'd bomb his Royal Jills from out his
baked-pertater can,
Or he'd pink him full of leakage with a
quaint repeatin' rif1e.

We have sunk our claws in Mizpah, and
Siloam is in view.
By my 'alidom from Agra we will send the
Faithful reelin'!
Those old-timers botched the contract, but we
mean to put it through.
Knights Templars from Balmain, the Port,
Monaro, Nhill, andl Ealin'.

We 'are wipin' up Jerus'lem; we were ready
with a hose
Spoutin' lead, a dandy cleaner that you bet
you can rely on;
And Moss Isaacs, Cohn, and Cohen, Moses,
Offelbloom 'n' those
Can all pack their bettin' bags, and come
right home again to Zion.

Edward George Dyson

The Deserted Homestead

PAST a dull, grey plain where a world-old grief seems to brood o'er the silent land,
When the orbéd moon turns her tense, white face on the ominous waste of sand,
And the wind that steals by the dreamer feels like the touch of a phantom hand,

Through the tall, still trees and the tangled scrub that has sprung on the old bush track,
In a clearing wide, where a willow broods and the cowering bush shrinks backs,
Stands a house alone that no dwellers own, yet unharmed by the storm's attack.

'Tis a strange, sad place. On the shingle roof mosses gather and corn-blades spring,
And a stillness reigns in the air unstirred by the beat of a wild bird's wing.
He who sees believes that the old house grieves with the grief of a sentient thing.

From the charmed gums that about the land in a reverent circle throng
Comes no parrot's call, nor the wild cat's cry, nor the magpie's mellow song,
And their shadows chill with an icy thrill and the sense of an awful wrong.

And the creek winds by 'neath the twisted briar and the curling creepers here;
In the dusky depths of its bed it slips on it's slime-green rocks in fear,
And it murmurs low to its stealthy flow in a monotone quaint and drear.

On a furrowed paddock that fronts the house grow the saplings straight and tall,
And noxious weeds in the garden ground on the desolate pathways crawl;
But the briar twists back with the supple-jack 'tween the rocks of the rubble wall.

On the rotting wall of the gloomy rooms bats gather with elfin wings,
And a snake is coiled by the shattered door where a giant lizard clings,
For this house of care is the fitting lair of a myriad voiceless things.

Once I camped alone on the clearing's edge through the lapse of a livelong night,
When the wan moon flooded the house and land in a lake of her ghostly light,
And the silence dread of a world long dead filled my credulous soul with fright.

For no wind breathed by, but a nameless awe was abroad in the open there,
And the camp-fire burned with a pale, thin flame in the chill, translucent air,
And my dog lay prone, like a chiselled stone, with his opaline eyes a-stare.

In the tranced air was an omen felt and the sway of a subtle spell,
And I waited long for I know not what, but the pale night augured well—
At a doleful hour, when the dead have power, lo! A hideous thing befell.

From the shadows flung by the far bush wall came a treacherous, phantom crew,
Like the smoke rack blown o'er the plain at morn when the bracken is wet with
dew.

Not a sound they made, and their forms no shade on the moonlit surface threw.

And the night was changed to the quiet eve of a beautiful summer's day,
And the old house warmed as with life and light, and was set in a garden gay,
And a babe that crawled by the doorway called to a kitten that leapt in play.

But the black fiends circled the peaceful home, and I fathomed their evil quest;
From the ground up-springing they hurled their spears, and danced with a demon
zest,

And a girl lay dead 'neath the roses red with a wound in her fair, white breast.

Through the looped wall spat a rifle's flame, and the devilish pack gave tongue,
For a lean form writhed in a torment dire, on the crimsoned stubble flung.
Many echoes spoke, and the sluggish smoke on the shingles rolled and clung.

Yet again and oft did the flame spring forth, and each shaft from the dwelling
shore

Through a savage heart, but the band unawed at the walls of the homestead
tore,

And a man and wife fought for love and life with the horde by the broken door.

Then ghostly and grey, from the dusky bush came a company riding fast.
Seven horses strode on the buoyant air, and I trembled and gazed aghast,
Such a deadly hate on the forehead sate of each rider racing past.

With a cry they leapt on the dusky crew, and swept them aside like corn
In the lusty stroke of the mower's scythe, and distracted and overborne
Many demons fled, leaving many dead, by the hoofs of the horses torn.

Not in vain—not all—though a father lay with the light on his cold, grey face,
And a mother bled, with a murdered maid held close in a last embrace,
For the babe laughed back at a visage black death drawn to a foul grimace.

Came a soft wind swaying the pendent leaves, like the sigh of awakening day,
And the darkness fell on my tired eyes, for the phantoms had passed away;

And the breezes bore from a distant shore faint echoes of ocean's play.

Past a dull, grey plain, through the tall, still trees, where the lingering days
inspire

An unspoken woe in the heart of man, and the nights hold visions dire,
Stands a house alone that no dwellers own, yet unmarred by the storm or fire.

Edward George Dyson

The Drovers In Reply

We are wondering why those fellows who are writing cheerful ditties
Of the rosy times out droving, and the dust and death of cities,
Do not leave the dreary office, ask a drover for a billet,
And enjoy 'the views,' 'the campfires,' and 'the freedom' while they fill it.

If it's fun to travel cattle or to picnic with merinoes,
Well the drover doesn't see it—few poetic raptures he knows.
As for sleeping on the plains beneath 'the pale moon' always seen there,
That is most appreciated by the man who's never been there.

And the 'balmy air,' the horses, and the 'wondrous constellations,'
The 'possum-rugs, and billies, and the tough and musty rations,
It's strange they only please the swell in urban streets residing,
Where the trams are always handy if he has a taste for riding.

We have travelled far with cattle for the very best of reasons—
For a living—we've gone droving in all latitudes and seasons,
But have never had a mate content with pleasures of this kidney,
And who wouldn't change his blisses for a flutter down in Sydney.

Night watches are delightful when the stars are really splendid
To the sentimental stranger, but his joy is quickly ended
When the rain comes down in sluice-heads, or the cutting hailstones pelter,
And the sheep drift with the blizzard, and the horses bolt for shelter.

Don't imagine we are soured, but it's peculiarly annoying
To be told by city writers of the pleasures we're enjoying,
When perhaps we've nothing better than some fluky water handy,
Whilst the scribes in showy bar-rooms take iced seltzer with their brandy.

The dust in town is nothing to the dust the drover curses,
And the dust a drover swallows, and the awful thirst he nurses
When he's on the hard macadam, where the wethers cannot browse, and
The sirocco drives right at him, and he follows twenty thousand.

This droving on the plain is really charming when the weather
Isn't hot enough to curl the soles right off your upper leather,
Or so cold that when the morning wind comes hissing through the grasses
You can feel it cut your eyelids like a whip-lash as it passes.

There are bull-ants in the blankets, wicked horses, cramps, and 'skeeters,'
And a drinking boss like Halligan, or one like Humpy Peters,
Who is mean about the rations, and a flowing stream of curses
From the break of day to camping, through good fortune and reverses.

Yes, we wonder why the fellows who are building chipper ditties
Of the rosy times out droving and the dust and death of cities,
Do not quit the stuffy office, ask old Peters for a billet,
And enjoy the stars, the camp-fires, and the freedom while they fill it.

Edward George Dyson

The Emu Of Whroo

WE'VE a tale to tell you of a spavined emit,
A bird with a smile like a crack in a hat,
Who was owned by M'Cue, of the township of Whroo,
The county of Rodney—his front name was Pat.
The bird was a dandy, although a bit bandy,
Her knees, too, were queer and her neck out of gauge—
She'd eat what was handy, from crowbars to candy,
Was tall, too, and tough for a chick of her age.
But her taste and her height, and her figure and smile,
Were the smallest potatoes compared with her guile.

M'Cue's bird had a name, Arabella that same—
A name that was given by Pat, we may say,
To the memory and fame of a red-headed flame,
Because, as he said, 'she wuz builded that way.'
The bird Arabella let nothing compel her,
Her temper was bad when disturbed, as a rule.
She'd rupture the smeller of any young 'feller'
Who teased, with a kick that would honor a mule.
And the boys and the girls who were then living near
Were all minus an eye—those with luck had one ear.

The emu with her smile would the new-chum beguile
To step up and study the great, gawky bird,
And then let out in style, and she'd hoist him a mile—
The sound of his wailing would never be heard.
At which she'd look stately, and mild, and sedately,
And seem to be steeped in some deep inward woe,
Or wondering greatly what happened there lately
That people found need to go tearing round so.
P. M'Cue overlooked his long bird's little craze,
He declared it was only her emusing ways.

Is it strange that in time these outrages should prime
The neighbours with ire and profanity dread?
And at every crime, with good reason and rhyme,
They'd bombard the bird with old iron and lead;
Their weapons would whistle by Bella and hiss ill,
The bird only smiled as they yearned for her gore;

They wasted their gristle, she ate up each missile,
And placidly looked on and waited for more,
Her digestion not stones nor old nails could upset,
So it's strange that the men disagreed with the pet.

The late Mr. M'Cue, of the township of Whroo,
Would hear no complaints of his biped absurd,
And with little ado put the biggest man through
Who'd lay 'e'er a finger on Bella, the bird.
If father or teacher came flaunting a feature
Removed from a boy, say, an eyelid or ear,
He sooled on the preacher his feathery creature,
Or offered to fight him for money or beer.
And to shoot at this bird was but labour in vain,
She digested their slugs and she faced them again.

But M'Cue for his care and and anxiety rare
Got meagre rewards from his camel-shanked fowl.
For when on a tear she'd uproot his back hair
And peck at his ear and snatch scraps off his jowl.
A kick from the shoulder, a shock like a boulder
That weighed half-a-ton being twisted in quick,
And Patrick was older and very near cold ere
The time he recovered that feathered mule's kick.
At the worst he but sighed, and regretfully said
It reminded him so of his wife who was dead,

But the time came at last when anxiety cast
Its spell o'er the bird, she grew dull and deprest—
She felt glum, and she passed to hysterics as fast—
All day she sought round in sore mental unrest.
She acted like moody, hysterical Judy,
When Punch is inspired for a villainous lark;
But Paddy was shrewd—he could see she was broody
And yearned in the chick-rearing biz to embark.
The momentous importance and stress of her case.
Were quite plain in her actions and seen in her face.

She tried sitting on stones, and on brickbats and bones,
But moped all the time and supped grief to the dregs—
There was nothing in cones, and in harrowing tones
She spoke her great yearning to cultivate eggs.

One morning, day-dreaming, all glossy and gleaming
She saw the bald head of the neighbour next door;
Its round, egg-like seeming, set Bell wildly scheming
To sit on that skull or be happy no more;
And she laid for the man by the dark and the day,
And he cursed and he kicked in a terrible way.

From that day, it is said, Arabella she led
The bald-headed men who lived near a hard life;
They all held her in dread—for her manners ill-bred
M`Cue spent his time in tempestuous strife.
With eye speculative, she cornered each native
To find if his skull would just suit her complaint;
The man's strength was great if he saved all his pate, if
She failed to secure half his scalp in restraint.
And her owner indulged in Satanic delights,
And he egged on his bird to more furious fights.

But the downfall of spite and the triumph of right
Are bound to come round, fight we ever so hard;
On one March morning bright, Old M`Cue very tight,
Returned to his home and dossed down in the yard.
He'd not long been sleeping when Bella came peeping
And viewed with delight his bare head, like a cast,
And into her keeping she raked it, and heaping
Her ribs on the skull she was happy at last.
And she sat till the day and the night both were gone,
And the next day and next was she still sitting on.

It was thought Pat had fled, and a week or more sped
E'er folks came to search, and they found for their pains
P. M`Cue lying dead with the bird on his head
Still stolidly striving to hatch out some brains.
No priest at Pat's croaking, by blessings invoking,
Had served to make easy the poor sinner's death.
Some folks blamed his soaking, the jury said 'choking'?
The bird was found guilty of stopping his breath,
And for peace, and for quiet, and morality's sake
She was killed with a slab from a Cousin Jack's cake.

Edward George Dyson

The Fact Of The Matter

I'm wonderin' why those fellers who go buildin' chipper ditties,
'Bout the rosy times out drovin', an' the dust an' death of cities,
Don't sling the bloomin' office, strike some drover for a billet,
And soak up all the glory that comes handy while they fill it.

P'r'aps it's fun to travel cattle or to picnic with merinos,
But the drover don't catch on, sir, not much high-class rapture he knows.
As for sleepin' on the plains there in the shadder of the spear-grass,
That's liked best by the Juggins with a spring-bed an' a pier-glass.

An' the camp-fire, an' the freedom, and the blanky constellations,
The 'possum-rug an' billy, an' the togs an' stale ole rations -
It's strange they're only raved about by coves that dress up pretty,
An' sport a wife, an' live on slap-up tucker in the city.

I've tickled beef in my time clear from Clarke to Riverina,
An' shifted sheep all round the shop, but blow me if I've seen a
Single blanky hand who didn't buck at pleasures of this kidney,
And wouldn't trade his blisses for a flutter down in Sydney.

Night-watches are delightful when the stars are really splendid
To the chap who's fresh upon the job, but, you bet, his rapture's ended
When the rain comes down in sluice-heads, or the cuttin' hailstones pelter,
An' the sheep drift off before the wind, an' the horses strike for shelter.

Don't take me for a howler, but I find it come annoyin'
To hear these fellers rave about the pleasures we're enjoyin',
When p'r'aps we've nothin' better than some fluky water handy,
An' they're right on all the lickers - rum, an' plenty beer an' brandy.

The town is dusty, may be, but it isn't worth the curses
'Side the dust a feller swallows an' the blinded thirst he nurses
When he's on the hard macadam, where the jumbucks cannot browse, an'
The wind is in his whiskers, an' he follers twenty thousan'.

This drovin' on the plain, too, it's all O.K. when the weather
Isn't hot enough to curl the soles right off your upper leather,
Or so cold that when the mornin' wind comes hiss'n' through the grasses
You can feel it cut your eyelids like a whip-lash as it passes.

Then there's bull-ants in the blankets, an' a lame horse, an' muskeeters,
An' a D.T. boss like Halligan, or one like Humpy Peters,
Who is mean about the tucker, an' can curse from start to sundown,
An' can fight like fifty devils, an' whose growler's never run down.

Yes, I wonder why the fellers what go building chipper ditties
'Bout the rosy times out drovin' an' the dust an' death of cities,
Don't sling the bloomin' office, strike ole Peters for a billet,
An' soak up all the glory that comes handy while they fill it.

Edward George Dyson

The Fossicker

A STRAIGHT old fossicker was Lanky Mann,
Who clung to that in spite of friends' advising:
A grim and grizzled worshipper of 'pan,'
All other arts and industries despising.

Bare-boned and hard, with thin long hair and beard,
With horny hands that gripped like iron pliers;
A clear, quick eye, a heart that nothing feared,
A soul full simple in its few desires.

No hot, impatient amateur was Jo,
Sweating to turn the slides up every minute—
He knew beforehand how his stuff would go,
Could tell by instinct almost what was in it.

I've known him stand for hours, and rock, and rock,
A-swinging now the shovel, now the ladle,
So sphinx-like that at Time he seemed to mock,
Resolved to run creation through his cradle.

No sun-shafts pricked him through his seasoned hide,
Nor cold nor damp could bend his form heroic;
Bare-breasted Jo the elements defied,
And met all fortunes like a hoary Stoic.

Where there were tailings, tips, and mangled fields,
And sluggish, sloven creeks meandering slowly,
Where puddlers old and sluice-sites promised yields,
There Lanky might be found, contented wholly.

Even though they'd worked the field, as Chinkies do,
Had 'bulled' each shaft, and scraped out every gutter,
Burnt every stick, and put the ashes through—
Yet Jo contrived to knock out bread and butter,

And something for a dead-broke mate—such men
As he have little love for filthy lucre;
His luxury was a whisky now and then,
And now and then a friendly game of euchre.

They tell me he is dead: 'On top? That's so,
Died at the handle, mate, which is accordin'
As he should die and if you're good, you'll know
Jo pannin' prospects in the River Jordan.'

Edward George Dyson

The Germ

I took to khaki at a word,
And fashioned dreams of wonder.
I rode the great sea like a bird,
Chock full of blood and thunder.
I saw myself upon the field
Of battle, framed in glory,
Compelling stubborn foes to yield
As captives to my sword and shield—
This is another story.

We sat about in sun and sand,
We broke old Cairo's images,
Met here and there a swarthy band
In little, friendly scrimmages,
And here it is I start to kid
No Moslem born can hit me.
The Germ then that had long laid hid
Came out of Pharaoh's pyramid,
And covertly he bit me.

For some few days I wore an air
Of pensive introspection,
And then I curled down anywhere.
They whispered of infection,
And hoist me on two sticks as though
I bore the leper's label,
And took me where, all in a row
Of tiny beds, two score or so
Were raising second Babel;

But no man talked to any one.
And no bloke knew another.
This soldier raved about his gun,
And that one of his mother.
They were the victims of the Germ,
The imp that Satan pricks in,
First cousin to the Coffin Worm,
Whose uncomputed legions squirm
Some foul, atomic Styx in.

The Germ rides with the plunging shell,
Or on the belts that fret you,
Or in a speck of dust may well
One thousand years to get you;
Well ambushed in a tunic fold
He waits his special mission,
And never lad so big and bold
But turns to water in his hold
And dribbles to perdition.

Where is war's pomp and circumstance,
The gauds in which we prank it?
Germ ends for us our fine romance,
Wrapped in a dingy blanket.
We set out braggartly in mirth,
World's bravest men and tallest,
To do the mightiest thing on earth,
And here we're lying, nothing worth,
Succumbent to the smallest!

Edward George Dyson

The Girl I Left Behind Me

I said: "I leave my bit of land-
In khaki they've entwined me,
I go abroad to lend a hand."
Said she: "My love, I understand.
I will be true, and though we part
A thousand years you hold my heart'-
The girl I left behind me.

I went away to fight the Huns-
No coward thought could bind me,
I sizzled n the tropic suns,
I faced the bayonets and the guns.
And when in daring deeds I shone
One little woman spurred me on-
The girl I left behind me.

Out there, in grim Gallipoli.
Hard going they assigned me,
I pricked the Turk up from the sea;
I riddled him, he punctured me;
And, bleeding in my rags, I said:
"She'll meet me somewhere if I'm dead-
The girl I left behind me.

In France we broke the German's face-
They tried with gas to blind me.
In mud we bogged from front to base,
And dirt was ours, but not disgrace.
They carved me till I couldn't stand.
Said I "Now for the Lodden, and
The girl I left behind me.

I came ashore, and struck the track;
For dust you scarce could find me.
The dear girl gave no welcome back-
Shed changed her names and state, alack!
"You've been a time, I must say, Ned,
In finishing your old war." Said
The girl I left behind me.

I flung a song up to the skies.
For battles gods designed me.
I think of Fifi's laughing eyes,
And Nami, dusk, but sweet and wise,
And chortle in my heart to find
How very far I've left behind-
The girl I left behind me.

Edward George Dyson

The Hapless Army

"A soldier braving disease and death on the battlefield has a seven times better chance of life than a new-born baby."—Secretary of War, U.S.A.

The Hapless Army from the dark
That lies beyond creation,
All blinded by the solar spark,
And leaderless in lands forlorn,
Come stumbling through the mists of morn;
And foes in close formation,
With taloned fingers dripping red,
Bestrew the sodden world with dead.

The Hapless Army bears no sword;
Fell destiny fulfilling,
It marches where the murder horde,
Amid the fair new urge of life,
With poison stream, and shot, and knife,
Make carnival of killing.
No war above black Hell's abyss
Knows evil grim and foul as this.

In pallid hillocks lie the slain
The callous heaven under;
Like twisted hieroglyphs of pain
They fleck earth to oblivion's brink,
As far as human mind may think,
Accusing God with thunder
Of dreadful silence. Nought it serves—
Fate ever calls the doomed reserves!

Still with Death's own monotony
The innocents are falling,
Like dead leaves in a forest dree;
And still the conscript armies come.
No banners theirs, no beat of drum,
No merry bugles calling!

Mad ally in the Slayers' train,
Man slaps and sorrows for the slain!

Edward George Dyson

The Happy Flatite

We were living in a flat; it was number eighty-three.
At eighty-four the Barleys lived, a fearsome man was he.
He had a wife and numerous kids. We heard then rip and cuss,
Some three feet and a quarter off, across the hall from us.

And when the Barley boys broke out, and ended up in fight,
Or when the Barley baby read the Riot Act at night,
And on their balcony their cat put up an eerie moan,
The fearful Barley family might as well have been our own.

When Barley after parting with some others of the ilk
Came panting up the narrow stairs, and drank our jug of milk,
Then broke out at his missus, and as fiercely answered she –
Where was the great advantage of our marked sobriety?

When Barley bedded early he would shake the common floor
And fill the gulf of night with an intolerable snore,
And people in the other wing at us their bluchers threw –
What good if we slept soft as snow and silent as the dew?

This Barley when unoccupied would fill my study chair,
And utilise much time, and take up space I could not spare,
To tell me of the deeds he'd done, his drinkings deep and vast,
And ladies who had loved him in his sanguinary past.

And Mrs. Barley dropped in – in the morning, as a rule –
And stayed till lunch and chattered like a ladies' boarding-school.
Then she borrowed bread and onions, and wondered if she might
Leave her little Willie with us. She was going out till night.

Our little flat's forsaken; we have left St. Kilda road;
We knew not where to go to, and we haven't an abode;
But no flat in any building that we'd suffered in was worth
The comfort of a camp-out. So we're flat upon the earth!

Edward George Dyson

The Happy Gardeners

We were storemen, clerks and packers on
an ammunition dump
Twice the size of Cootamundra, and the goods
we had to hump
They were bombs as big as water-butts, and
cartridges in tons,
Shells that looked like blessed gasmains, and
a line in traction-guns.

We had struck a warehouse dignity in dealing
with the stocks.
It was, "Sign here, Mr. Eddie!" "Clarkson,
forward to the socks!"
Our floor-walker was a major, with a nozzle
like a peach,
And a stutter in his Trilbies; and a limping
kind of speech.

We were off at eight to business, we were free
for lunch at one,
And we talked of new Spring fashions, and the
brisk trade being done.
After five we sought our dugouts lying snug
beneath the hill,
Each with hollyhocks before it and geraniums
on the sill.

Singing "Home, Sweet home," we swept,
and scrubbed, and dusted up the place,
Then smoked out on the doorstep in the twi-
light's tender grace.
After which with spade and rake we sought
our special garden plot,
And we 'tended to the cabbage and the shrink-
ing young shallot.

So long lived we unmolested that this seemed
indeed "the life."
Set apart from mirk and worry and the inci-

dence of strife;
And we trimmed our Kitchen Eden, swapping
vegetable lore,
While the whole demented world beside was
muddled up with war.

There was little talk of Boches and of bloody
battle scenes,
But a deal about Bill's spuds and Billy
Carkeek's butter-beans;
Porky specialised on onion and he had a sort
of gift
For a cabbage plump and tender that it took
two men to lift.

In the pleasant Sabbath morning, when the
sun lit on our "street,"
And illumed the happy dugout with effulgence
kind and sweet,
It was fine to see us forking, raking, picking
off the bugs,
Treading flat the snails and woodlice and
demolishing the slugs.

Then one day old Fritz got going. He had
a hint of us,
And the shell the blighter posted was as roomy
as a 'bus;
He was groping round the dump, and kind of
pecking after it;
When he plugged the hill the world heeled up,
the dome of heaven split.

Then, O Gott and consternation! Swooped a
shell a and stuck her nose
In Carkeek's beans. Those beans came up!
A cry of grief arose!
As we watched them—plunk! another shell
cut loose, and everywhere
Flew the spuds of Billy Murphy. There were
turnips in the air.

Bill! she tore a quarter-acre from the land-
scape. With it burst
Tommy's carrots, and we watched them, and
in whispers prayed and cursed.
Then a wail of anguish 'scaped us. Boomed
in Porky's cabbage plot
A detestable concussion. Porky's cabbages
were not!

There the Breaking strain was reached, for
Porky fetched an awful cry,
And he rushed away and armed himself.
With loathing in his eye,
Up and over went the hero. He was savage
Through and through,
And he tore across the distance like a mad-
dened kangaroo.

They had left a woeful sight indeed—frail cab-
bages all rent,
Turnips mangled, little carrots all in one red
burial blent,
Parsnips ruined, lettuce shattered, torn and
wilted beet and bean,
And a black and grinning gap where once our
garden flourished green.

Five and fifty hours had passed when came a
German in his shirt.
On his back he carried Porky black with
blood, and smoke and dirt.
"I sniped six of 'em," said Porky, "an' me
pris'ner here," he sez-
"I done in the croel swine what strafed me
helpless cabba-ges."

Edward George Dyson

The Immortal Strain

"Late Midshipman John Travers (Chester),
aged 16 years. He was mortally wounded
early in the action, yet he remained alone in
a most exposed post awaiting orders, with
his gun's crew dead all round him."

We told old stories one by one,
Brave tales of men who toyed with death,
Of wondrous deeds of valor done
In days of bold Elizabeth.
"Alas! our British stock," said we,
"Is not now what it used to be."

We read of Drake's great sailors, or
Of fighting men that Nelson led,
Who steered the walls of oak to war.
"These were our finest souls," we said.
"Their fame is on the ocean writ,
Nor time, nor storm may cancel it.

"The mariners of England then
Were lords of battle and of breeze.
The were, indeed the wondrous men
Who won for us the shoreless seas,
Who took old Neptune's ruling brand
And set it in Britannia's hand.

"But now," we sighed, "the blood is pale,
We're little people of the street,
And dare not front the shrilling gale.
The sons of England are effete,
Of shorter limb and smaller mould,
Mere pigmies by the men of old."

Then came the vibrant bugle note.
None cowered at the high alarm,
The steady fleets were still afloat,
And England saw her soldiers arm,

And readily, with sober grace.
The close-set ranks swung into place.

On sea and shore they fought again,
And storied heroes came to life,
Once more were added to the slain.
Once more found glory in the strife;
Again her yeoman sons arose;
A wall 'tween Britain and her foes.

The eager lads, with laughing lips
And souls elate, where oceans roar,
Or planes the eagle's flight eclipse,
Give all for her, and come no more;
Or where death thunders down the sky
Beside their silent guns they lie;

This boy who, while the iron rains
With seething riot whip the flood,
Fights on, till in his heart remains
No single drop of English blood,
Avers the British strain sublime,
Outliving Death, outlasting Time!

Edward George Dyson

The Letters Of The Dead

A letter came from Dick to-day;
A greeting glad he sends to me.
He tells of one more bloody fray—
Of how with bomb and rifle they
Have put their mark for all to see
Across rock-ribbed Gallipoli.

“How are you doing? Hope all's well,
I in great nick, and like the work.
Though there may be a brimstone smell,
And other pungent hints of Hell,
Not Satan's self can make us shirk
Our task of hitting up the Turk.

“You bet old Slacks is not half bad
He knows his business in a scrim.
He gets cold steel, or we are glad
To stop him with a bullet, lad.
Or sling a bomb his hair to trim;
But, straight, we throw no mud at him.

“He fights and falls, and comes again,
And knocks our charging lines about.
He's game at heart, and tough in grain,
And canters through the leaded rain,
Chock full of mettle—not a doubt
'T will do us proud to put him out.

“But that's our job; to see it through
We've made our minds up, come what may,
This noon we had our work to do.
The shells were dropping two by two;
We fairly felt their bullets play
Among our hair for half a day.

“One clipped my ear, a red-hot kiss,
Another beggar chipped my shin.
They pass you with a vicious hiss
That makes you duck; but, hit or miss,

It isn't in the Sultan's skin
To shift Australia's cheerful grin.

“My oath, old man, though we were prone
We didn't take it lying down.
I got a dozen on my own—
All dread of killing now is flown;
It is the game, and, hard and brown,
We're wading in for freedom's crown.

“Big guns are booming as I write,
A lad is singing 'Dolly Grey,'
The shells are skipping in the night,
And, square and all, I feeling right
For, whisper, Ned, the fellows say
I did a ripping thing to-day.

“Soon homeward tramping with the band,
All notched a bit, and with the prize
Of glory for our native land,
I'll see my little sweetheart stand
And smile, her smile, so sweet and wise—
With proud tears shining in her eyes.

“Geewhiz! What price your humble when
Triumphant from the last attack,
We face a Melbourne crowd again,
Tough, happy, battle-proven men,
And while the cheer-stormed heavens crack
I bring the tattered colors back!”

A mist is o'er the written line
Whence martial ardor seems to flow;
A dull ache holds this heart of mine—
Poor boy, he had a vision fine;
But grave dust clouds the royal glow;
He died in action weeks ago!

He was my friend—I may not weep.
My soul goes out to Him who bled;
I pray for Christ's compassion deep
On mothers, lovers—all who keep

The woeful vigil, having read
The joyous letters of the dead.

Edward George Dyson

The Living Picture

HE RODE along one splendid noon,
When all the hills were lit with Spring,
And through the bushland throbbed a croon
Of every living, hopeful thing.

Between his teeth a rose he bore
As white as milk, and passing there
He tossed it with a laugh. I wore
It as it fell among my hair.

No day a-drip with golden rain,
No heat with drench of wattle scent
Can touch the heart of me again
But with that young, sweet wonder blent.

We wed upon a gusty day,
When baffled fury whipped the sea;
And now I love the swift, wet play
Of wind and rain besetting me.

I took white roses in my hand,
A white rose on my forehead shone,
For we had come to understand
White roses bloomed for us alone.

When scarce a year had gone he sped
To fight the wars. With eyes grown grim
He kissed my lips, and whispering said:
"The world we must keep sweet for him!"

He wrote of war, the soldier's life.
"Tis hard, my dearest, but be brave.
I did not make my love my wife
To be the mother of a slave!"

My babe was born a boy. He had
His father's eyes, his smile, his hair,
And, oh, my soul was brimming glad—
It seemed his father's self was there!

But now came one who bade me still
In holy Heaven put my trust.
They'd laid my love beneath the hill,
And sealed his eyes with timeless dust.

Against my breast the babe I drew,
With strength from him to stay my fears.
I fought my fight the long days through;
He laughed and dabbled in my tears.

From my poor heart, at which it fed
With tiger teeth, I thrust despair,
And faced a world with shadow spread
And only echoes in the air.

The winter waned. One eve I went,
Led by a kindly hand to see
In moving scenes the churches rent,
The tumbled hill, the blasted lee.

Of soldiers resting by the road,
Who smoked and drowsed, a muddy rout,
One sprang alert, and forward strode,
With eager eyes to seek us out.

His fingers held a rose. He threw
The flower, and waved his cap. In me
A frenzy of assurance grew,
For, O dear God, 'twas he! 'twas he!

I called aloud. Aloft my child
I held, and nearer yet he came;
And when he understood and smiled,
My baby lisped his father's name.

They say I fell like something dead,
But when I woke to morning's glow
My boy sat by me on the bed,
And in his hand a rose of snow!

The Moralist

Three other soldier blokes 'n' me packed
'ome from foreign lands;
Bit into each the God of Battles' everlastin'
brands.
They limped in time, 'n' coughed in tune, 'n'
one was short an ear,
'N' one was short a tier of ribs 'n' all was
short of beer.
I speaks up like a temp'rance gent,
But ever since the sky was bent
The thirst of man 'as never yet bin squenched
with argument.

Bill's skull was welded all across, Jim 'ad an
eye in soak,
Sam 'obbled on a patent leg, 'n' every man
was broke;
They sang a song of "Mother" with their faces
titled up.
Says Bill-o: "'Ere's yer 'eroes, sling the
bloomin' votive cup!
We got no beer, the soup was bad-
Now oo will stand the soldier lad
The swag of honest liquor that for years he
hasn't 'ad?"

Sez I: "Respeck yer uniform! Remember
oo you are!"
They'd pinched a wicker barrer, 'arf a pram
'n' 'arf a car.
In this ole Bill-o nestled 'neath a blanket, on
his face
A someone's darlin' sorter look, a touch iv
boy'ood's grace.
The gentle ladies stopped to 'ear,
'N' dropped a symperthetic tear,
A dollar or a deener for the pore haff1ict
dear.

The others trucked the wounded to a hentrance
up a lane.

I sez: "Sich conduct's shameful!" Bill-o
took to ease his pain
One long 'un and another. The conductor
picked his brand;
The gripman lent his countenance to wot he
'ad in 'and.
And when they moved their stand 'twas
Sam
Lay pale 'n' peaceful in the pram,
'N' twenty flappers stroked his paw, 'n' said
he was a lamb.

The gathered in the tokens and they bloood
'em as above,
While Jim-o done the hinvalid 'oom Sammy
had to shove.
Sez I: "No noble 'eroes what's bin fightin'
for their king
Should smirch theirselves by doin' this dis-
'onerable thing."
But fine old gents 'n' donahs prim
They stopped 'n' slid the beans to Jim.
You betcher life I let 'im hear just what I
though of 'im.

Nine, g.m. at St. Kilder, saw the finish of the
prowl.
Each 'ad his full-'n'-plentv, and was blowin'
in the tow'l.
As neither bloke cud stand alone, they leaned
'n' argufied
Which was the patient sufferer oo's turn it was
to ride.
Each 'eld a san'wich and a can.
Sez I: "This shouldn't 'ave began-
'Tain't conduct wot it worthy of a soldier and
a man."

I cud 'a' cried with injured pride. Afore a
push the three

Got scrappin', vague 'n' foolish, which the
cripple boy should be.
Sam slips his scientific leg, 'n' flings it in the
drain-
"I'll auto 'ome," he sez, "or never see me
'ome again."
But I am thinkin' 'ard oo he
Tucked 'elpiess in the pram might be.
Comes sudden reckerlection. Great Gohan-
ners, it is me!

Edward George Dyson

The Old Camp-Oven

WE DON'T keep a grand piano in our hut beside the creek,
And I'm pretty certain Hannah couldn't bang it, anyhow,
But we've got one box of music, and I'd rather hear its squeak
Than the daisiest cantata that's been fashioned up to now.
It's an old camp-oven merely, with a handle made of wire,
But no organ built could nearly compensate to me for it
When I come off graft and find it playing tunes before the fire,
And I'm feeling sort of vacant, but just wonder fully fit.

In its sizzle, sizzle, sizzle,
There's a thousand little airs,
And no man can sit and grizzle
'Bout his troubles and his cares
While the flames are gaily winding,
And the tea is down to brew,
And the old camp-oven's grinding
All the reels he ever knew.

When the wet winds meet and whip me in the early winter nights,
And the hissing hailstones clip me all the way across the flat,
As I battle for'ards, water-logged, toward the beckoning lights,
There is always there a welcome to console a chap for that.
For my little wife is beaming brisk and bright beside the lamp,
And the old camp-oven's going. Gosh! I feel just like a kid
As I peel and sluice so slippy, and I hear the storm winds vamp
To the singing of the oven when the missus lifts the lid.

There's a sizzle and a splutter
And a whirr of many harps;
Where's the instrument can utter
Such a maze of flats and sharps?
Not for me the great creations
When the old camp-oven plays
'Home Sweet Home,' with variations,
At the end of working days.

In the evenings dim and hazy, stretched outside along a butt,
Feeling reasonably lazy, blowing clouds that curl and climb,
I can hear the old camp-oven on the logs before the hut

Ripping out a mellow chorus that just suits the place and time.
If we strike it in the ranges, or The Windmill turns out well,
I suppose there'll be some changes, and I'll want to make things gee;
But the time will never happen when I'll be so steep a swell
That the old camp-oven's measure won't be melody to me.

'Neath its bubble, bubble, bubble,
There's the lilt of jigs and reels;
All the common kind of trouble
That the horney-handed feels
Is wiped out in half a minute
By the restfulness it brings,
And the peaceful rapture in it
When the old camp-oven sings.

Edward George Dyson

The Old Whim Horse

He's an old grey horse, with his head bowed sadly,
 And with dim old eyes and a queer roll aft,
With the off-fore sprung and the hind screwed badly,
 And he bears all over the brands of graft;
And he lifts his head from the grass to wonder
 Why by night and day the whim is still,
Why the silence is, and the stampers' thunder
 Sounds forth no more from the shattered mill.

In that whim he worked when the night winds bellowed
 On the riven summit of Giant's Hand,
And by day when prodigal Spring had yellowed
 All the wide, long sweep of enchanted land;
And he knew his shift, and the whistle's warning,
 And he knew the calls of the boys below;
Through the years, unbidden, at night or morning,
 He had taken his stand by the old whim bow.

But the whim stands still, and the wheeling swallow
 In the silent shaft hangs her home of clay,
And the lizards flirt and the swift snakes follow
 O'er the grass-grown brace in the summer day;
And the corn springs high in the cracks and corners
 Of the forge, and down where the timber lies;
And the crows are perched like a band of mourners
 On the broken hut on the Hermit's Rise.

All the hands have gone, for the rich reef paid out,
 And the company waits till the calls come in;
But the old grey horse, like the claim, is played out,
 And no market's near for his bones and skin.
So they let him live, and they left him grazing
 By the creek, and oft in the evening dim
I have seen him stand on the rises, gazing
 At the ruined brace and the rotting whim.

The floods rush high in the gully under,
 And the lightnings lash at the shrinking trees,
Or the cattle down from the ranges blunder

 As the fires drive by on the summer breeze.
Still the feeble horse at the right hour wanders
 To the lonely ring, though the whistle's dumb,
And with hanging head by the bow he ponders
 Where the whim boy's gone -- why the shifts don't come.

But there comes a night when he sees lights glowing
 In the roofless huts and the ravaged mill,
When he hears again all the stampers going --
 Though the huts are dark and the stampers still:
When he sees the steam to the black roof clinging
 As its shadows roll on the silver sands,
And he knows the voice of his driver singing,
 And the knocker's clang where the braceman stands.

See the old horse take, like a creature dreaming,
 On the ring once more his accustomed place;
But the moonbeams full on the ruins streaming
 Show the scattered timbers and grass-grown brace.
Yet HE hears the sled in the smithy falling,
 And the empty truck as it rattles back,
And the boy who stands by the anvil, calling;
 And he turns and backs, and he "takes up slack".

While the old drum creaks, and the shadows shiver
 As the wind sweeps by, and the hut doors close,
And the bats dip down in the shaft or quiver
 In the ghostly light, round the grey horse goes;
And he feels the strain on his untouched shoulder,
 Hears again the voice that was dear to him,
Sees the form he knew -- and his heart grows bolder
 As he works his shift by the broken whim.

He hears in the sluices the water rushing
 As the buckets drain and the doors fall back;
When the early dawn in the east is blushing,
 He is limping still round the old, old track.
Now he pricks his ears, with a neigh replying
 To a call unspoken, with eyes aglow,
And he sways and sinks in the circle, dying;
 From the ring no more will the grey horse go.

The One At Home

Don told me that he loved me dear
Where down the range Whioola pours;
And when I laughed and would not hear
He flung away to fight the wars.
He flung away—how should he know
My foolish heart was dancin' so?
How should he know that at his word
My soul was trillin' like a bird?

He went out in the cannon smoke.
He did not seek to ask me why.
Again each day my poor heart broke
To see the careless post go by.
I cared not for their Emperors—
For me there was this in the wars;
My brown boy in the shell-clouds dim,
And savage devils killin' him!

They told me on the field he fell,
And far they bore him from the fight,
But he is whole—he will be well
Now in a ward by day and night
A fair, tall nurse with slim, neat hands
By his white bedside smilin' stands;
His brow with trailin' fingertips
She soothes, and damps his fevered lips!

I know her not, but I can see
How blue her great eyes are, and hear
The cooin' of her voice as she
Speaks gentle comfort to my dear;
With love as sweet as mother's care
She heals his wounds, she strokes his hair...
O God, could I but let him see
The hate of her consumin' me!

Edward George Dyson

The Prospectors

WHEN the white sun scorches the fair, green land in the rage of his fierce desires,
Or looms blood red on the Western hills, through the smoke of their waning fires;
When the winds at war strew the mountain side with limbs of the mangled trees,
Or the flood tides wheel in the valleys low, or sweep to the distant seas,
We are leading back, and the faintest track that we leave in the desert wild
Or we blaze for fear through the forest drear will be tramped by the settler's child.

We have turned our backs on the City's joys, on the glare of its myriad lights,
On the measured peace of its bloodless days, and the strife of its shining nights;
We have fled the pubs in the dull bush towns and the furthestmost shanty bars,
And have camped away at the edge of space, or aloft by the brooding stars.
We have stirred the world as our dishes swirled and we drummed on the matted gold,
And from East and West we beguile their best with a wonderful tale oft-told.

We go pushing on when the mirage glints o'er the rim of the voiceless plain,
And we leave our bones to be finger posts for the seekers who come again.
At the jealous heart of the secret bush, we have battered with clamour loud
And have made a way for the squatter bold, or a path for the busy crowd.
We have gone before through the shadowy door of the Never, the Great Unknown,
And have journeyed back with a golden pack, or as dust in the wild winds blown.

In the chilling breath of the ice-bound range, we have laboured and lost and won;
On the blazing hills we have striven long in the face of the angry sun.
We have fallen spitted with niggers' spears in the graves ourselves have dug,
And have bitten grass, with a cloven skull, and the turf in our arms to hug.
From our rifled dead have the natives fled, blood-drunk, to their camping place,
Whilst the crows enthroned on a limb intoned to the devil a measured grace.

We have butchered too when the camp ran wild, with a mad, malignant hate,
For the lust of gold, or the hope we had, or the love of a murdered mate.
We have shocked the night with our ribald songs in the sullen, savage lands,
And have died the death that the lone man dies in the grip of the reeling sands,
Or have lived to die in a city sty, with the help of a charity prayer,
Or to do the swell at a grand hotel on our thousands of pounds a year.

We are moving still, and not love, nor fear, nor a wife's nor mother's grief,
Can distract the longing that drives us forth on the track of the hidden reef.
Some will face the heathen in lands afar by rivers and looming peaks,
Some will stay to ravage their own home bills, or to dig by the sluggish creeks,
Some go pushing West on the old, old quest, and wherever their tents abide
Will the world flow in and its swift tide spin till it scatter them far and wide.

Is it greed alone that impels our ranks? Is it only the lust of gold
Drives them past where the sentinel ranges stand where the plains to the sky
unfold;
Is there nothing more in this dull unrest that remains in the hearts of man,
'Till the swag is rolled, or the pack-horse strapped, or the ship sails out again?
Is it this alone, or in blood and bone does the venturesome spirit glow
That was noble pride when the world was wide and the tracks were all Westward
Ho?

We are common men, with the faults of most, and a few that ourselves have
grown,
With the good traits too of the common herd, and some more that are all our
own;
We have drunk like beasts, and have fought like brutes, and have stolen, and
lied, and slain,
And have paid the score in the way of men—in remorse and fear and pain.
We have done great deeds in our direst needs in the horrors of burning drought,
And at mateship's call have been true through all to the death with the Furthest
Out.

As the soft breeze stirs all the tender green of the bush that is newly born,
And the wattles blaze on the flats and gladden the hills with the glow of morn.
We are trenching high in the stony slopes, or turning the creeks below,
Or the gorge re-echoes the thud of picks and the songs that the miners know.
When the lode strips clean with a yellow sheen our fortunes are fairly won;
When the dish pans bare, up with tents and ware, and hurrah! for the outward
run.

Edward George Dyson

The Rescue

THERE'S a sudden, fierce clang of the knocker, then the sound of a voice in the shaft,
Shrieking words that drum hard on the centres, and the braceman goes suddenly daft:

'Set the whistle a-blowing like blazes! Billy, run, give old Mackie a call—
Run, you fool! Number Two's gone to pieces, and Fred Baker is caught in the fall!
Say, hello! there below—any hope, boys, any chances of saving his life?
'Heave away!' says the knocker. 'They've started. God be praised, he's no youngsters or wife!'

Screams the whistle in fearful entreaty, and the wild echo raves on the spur,
And the night, that was still as a sleeper in soft, charmed sleep, is astir
With the fluttering of wings in the wattles, and the vague frightened murmur of birds,
With far coeys that carry the warning, running feet, inarticulate words.
From the black belt of bush come the miners, and they gather by Mack on the brace,
Out of breath, barely clad, and half-wakened, with a question in every face.

'Who's below?' 'Where's the fall?' Didn't I tell you?—Didn't I say that them sets wasn't sound?'
'Is it Fred? He was reckless was Baker; now he's seen his last shift underground.'
'And his mate? Where is Sandy M'Fadyn?' 'Sandy's snoring at home on his bunk.'
'Not at work! Name o' God! a foreboding?' 'A foreboding be hanged! He is drunk!'
Take it steady there, lads!' the boss orders. He is white to the roots of his hair.
We may get him alive before daybreak if he's close to the face and has air.'

In the dim drive with ardour heroic two facemen are pegging away.
Long and Coots in the rise heard her thunder, and they fled without word or delay
Down the drive, and they rushed for the ladders, and they went up the shaft with a run,
For they knew the weak spot in the workings, and they guessed there was graft to be done.
Number Two was pitch dark, and they scrambled to the plat and they made for the face,
But the roof bad come down fifty yards in, and the reef was all over the place.

Fresher men from the surface replace them, and they're hauled up on top for a

blow;

When a life and death job is in doing there's room only for workers below.
Bare-armed, and bare-chested, and brawny, with a grim, meaning set of the jaw,
The relay hurries in to the rescue, caring not for the danger a straw;
'Tis not toil, but a battle, they're called to, and like Trojans the miners respond,
For a dead man lies crushed 'neath the timbers, or a live man is choking beyond.

By the faint, yellow glow of the candles, where the dank drive is hot with their
breath,
On the verge of the Land of the Shadow, waging war breast to bosom with
Death,
How they struggle, these giants! and slowly, as the trucks rattle into the gloom,
Inch by inch they advance to the conquest of a prison—or is it a tomb?
And the working's re-echo a volley as the timbers are driven in place;
Then a whisper is borne to the toilers 'Boys, his mother is there on the brace!'

Like veterans late into action, fierce with longing to hew and to hack,
Riordan's shift rushes in to relieve them, and the toil-stricken men stagger back.
'Stow the stuff, mates, wherever there's stowage! Run the man on the brace till
he drops!
There's no time to think on this billet! Bark the heels of the trucker who stops!
Keep the props well in front, and be careful. He's in there, and alive, never fret.'
But the grey dawn is softening the ridges, and the word has not come to us yet.

Still the knocker rings out, and the engine shrieks and strains like a creature in
pain
As the cage rushes up to the surface and drops back into darkness again.
By the capstan a woman is crouching. In her eyes neither hope nor despair;
But a yearning that glowers like frenzy bids those who'd speak pity forbear.
Like a figure in stone she is seated till the labour of rescue be done.
For the father was killed in the Phoenix, and the son—Lord of pity! the son?

'Hello! there on top!' they are calling. 'They are through! He is seen in the drive!'
'They have got him—thank Heaven! they've got him, and oh, blessed be God,
he's alive!'
'Man on! heave away!' 'Step aside, lads; let his mother be first when he lands.'
She was silent and strong in her anguish; now she babbles and weeps where she
stands,
And the stern men, grown gentle, support her at the mouth of the shaft, till at
last
With a rush the cage springs to the landing, and her son's arms encircle her fast.

She has cursed the old mine for its murders, for the victims its drives have
ensnared,
Now she cries a great blessing upon it for the one precious life it has spared.

Edward George Dyson

The Shanty

THERE ARE tracks through the scrub, there's a track down the hill,
And a track round the bend from M'Courteney's mill,
Where they slyly emerge from the bush and converge,
You'll discover the humpy—the theme of this dirge—
That is used for the sale of O'Sullivan's 'purge.'
And if curses and cries,
And a blasting of eyes,
And a series of blasphemies fearful arise,
And a lunatic din,
And a racket like sin,
You can bet all you own the O'Sullivan's in.

It's a bark and slab hut, with a bar and a bunk,
And a man propped before it disgustingly drunk,
And a nameless galoot in a hand-me-down suit,
Straddling out on the grass, grim as death, and as mute,
Trapping millions of rabbits that run from his boot.
When eleven lie round
In all shapes on the mound,
And two navvies are fighting like fiends on the ground,
'Tisn't needful to say
It's the sweet Sabbath day,
And that trade at the shanty's uncommonly gay.

Mrs. O'. makes the drinks, and O'Sullivan's dart
Is to drink all he can to keep others in heart.
Though he's old in the hoof, and he reckons he's proof
'Gainst infernalest liquors, in warp and in woof,
He's quite frequently seen howling out on the roof.
For from fungus or fruits,
From old rags or from roots,
Grass, cabbages, pickles, old bedding or boots,
Or the leaves of the gum,
Or whatever may come,
Mrs. O'. can extract the most illigant' rum.

They've no peace in the hut and no peace on the hill,
Mrs. O'. never sleeps and her hand's never still;
And old constable Mack cannot hit on the track

As a man of the law. As a stranger in black
When he finds his way there he can't find his way back.
There's no signboard to see,
But those fools on the spree,
Or a man in his shirt shrieking prayers to a tree.
As for licenses—yar!
They don't know what they are,
For they drink without license at Sullivan's bar.

Edward George Dyson

The Single-Handed Team

We're more than partners, Ned 'n' me,
Two sections permanently righted.
Yiv seen us on the mooch, maybe,
Like remnants lovin'ly united.
Ned's only got one stump, the left;
By 'appy chance I've got its brother,
Of his two dukes he's been bereft;
My left was mauled, 'n' had to go,
It fortunitly 'appens though,
I kept the other.

Ned lost one ear, the left, 'n' struth,
He dropped the correspondin' weeper.
A Hun he crooled me lovely youth
By bombin' out me right 'and peeper.
He done a guy too with me ear,
The right, 'n' now I dunno whether
'Twas Fate's intention, butt it's clear
When trimmed each as the other's mate
'Twas up to us two, soon or late,
To get together.

'Board ship there's me like arf a peach,
'N' Ned's the other arf, but soon it
Strikes' Bill Carkeek that side by each
We makes a satisfact'rv unit.
A 'andy cobber on the ship
Fakes up for us a set of clutches
That damps us firmly hip to hip.
In seven minutes we can peg
The mile out on a timber leg
'N' two steel crutches.

We now go halves, like Si'mese twins,
'N' as a team I hold we're bosker—
The blighter on the street that grins
Has got to deal with Edwin-Oscar.
At balls we two-step, waltz, 'n' swing,
'N' proppin' walls no one has seen us.

When at the bar I never ring
The double on ole Ned. For both
One hand must serve, 'n', on me oath,
It's fair between us.

We jolt one knife 'n' fork, 'n' find
One horse enough for both to ride on,
And neither feller rides behind.
Some sez we put a pile of side on.
Well, where's the single-handed brace
Will take us on? We'll put the peg in,
Train fine, 'n' jump, or box, or race,
Or wrestle them; 'n' more than that
To clinch a match, so 'elp me cat,
We'll throw a leg in!

He's five feet eight, I'm little less;
He's Roman, I'm a sort of Proddy;
But no sectarian bitterness
Will disunite this sec'lar body—
We're hitched for good, we're two in one.
Our taste's the same, from togs to tippie.
But, straight, it makes me sad, ole son,
To think if he should croak or me,
The pore bloke what is left might be
A bloomin' cripple.

Edward George Dyson

The Splitter

IN THE MORN when the keen blade bites the tree,
And the chips on the dead leaves dance,
And the bush echoes back right merrily
Blow for blow as the sunbeams glance
From the axe when it sweeps in circles true,
Then the splitter at heart is gay;
He exults in the work he's set to do,
And he feels like a boy at play.

Swinging free with a stroke that's straight and strong
To the heart of the messmate sent,
He is cheered by the magpie's morning song
With the ring of the metal blent,
But the birds in their terror scatter high
When she falls with a rush and bound,
And the quivering saplings split and fly,
And the ranges all roar around.

Who is lord when the axeman mounts his spar,
And the breeze on his brown breast blows,
When the scent of the new wood floats afar,
And the gum from its red wounds flows?
With the bush at his back he laughs at care,
With a pipe and a right good mate—
There is drink in the billy, grub to spare,
And a bunk in the ten-by-eight.

When the sun's in the west, from nooks aloft
Where the stringy is straight and tall,
Come the strains of a chorus quaint and soft,
Or the clink of the wedge and maul;
From the gully a murmur of broken talk
Or the song that the crosscut sings;
For the bush is a-dream, and high the hawk
Hangs at rest on his cradling wings.

But at night, by the tent, when tea is done
And when euchre's begun to flag—
In the bush he may hear a distant gun

Or the neigh of a lonely nag—
Then the splitter has thoughts no longer gay,
And sorrows he cannot drown,
For he dreams of a girl who's far away,
Or the joys of a spree in town.

Edward George Dyson

The Tale Of Steven

'TIS the tale of Simon Steven, braceman at the Odd-and-Even,
At The Nations, in the gully. They were sinking in the rock.
Sim was small and wiry rather, and a husband and a father,
But he's gone and left his family as a consequence of shock.

Shock was Sim's disease, we reckoned, for it took him in a second,
And no doctor born could dognose what the symptoms were, I think,
But we're missin' Sim completely—he could play the whistle sweetly,
And was always very sociable and brotherly in drink.

That was how poor Steven drifted into trouble—being gifted,
He was hungry for an audience, and it led him up to Coy's;
But his wife made no deductions for the artist, and the ructions
What she raised around that public were just fireworks for the boys.

When she caught him on the liquor, being stronger like and quicker,
She would hammer him in company, which, I take it, wasn't right;
Yet he bore it like a martyr while his wife played up the tartar,
And she gave her straight opinion of each mother's son in sight.

Sim had marks of her corrections scattered round in all directions
On his features and his figure, but he didn't seem to care—
For he thought his missus clearly did her duty by him merely
When she pommelled him for boosing with a poker or a chair.

'Twas a Wednesday, boss, I'm thinking. There'd been much promiscuous drinking
Up the gully, where some city chaps were christening Spooner's mill;
Sim was dayshift at The Nations, and he missed the grand orations,
But, with help from men and brothers, he contrived to get his fill.

They'd been shooting holes, an' Steven, when he left the Odd-and-Even,
Carried with him in his pocket here a plug of dynamite.
Sim had put it there to soften—which is done by miners often,
But it's not the sort of practice that I'd recommend as right.

Well, the braceman didn't worry after tea that day, nor hurry
To the bosom of his family, but took drink for drink with Mack;
When they aimed him homewards kindly, Steven went the distance blindly,
And his feet performed the lockstitch all the way along the track.

Mrs. Sim was primed and ready, and she met him with a neddy,
And she passed no vain remarks, but aimed an awful blow at him;
Came a sound of roaring thunder—Mrs. Sim was blown from under,
And the universe was ruined, and the sun went out for Sim.

After search in all directions, we found very few selections
Of the widow's dear departed, but we did the best we could.
For, you see, by passion goaded, and not knowing Sim was loaded,
She'd concussed that plug of dynamite, and blown him up for good.

There was room for no reproaches 'bout the hearse and mourning coaches;
Though we only buried samples, yet we 'lowed for style and tone—
Man's-size coffin, grave, and preacher for a broken fellow creature,
And we wrote 'In Death Divided' at the bottom of the stone.

Edward George Dyson

The Tin-Pot Mill

QUITE a proud and happy man is Finn the Packer
Since he built his crazy mill upon the rise,
And he stands there in the gully, chewing 'backer,'
With a sleepy sort of comfort in his eyes,
Gazin' up to where the antiquated jigger
Is a-wheezing and a-hopping on the hill,
For up here my lord the Gov'nor isn't bigger
Than the owner of the Federation Mill.

She goes biff, puff, bang, bump, cutter-clatter, smash,
And she rattles on for half a shift, and lets up with a crash;
And then silence reigns a little while, and all the land is still
While they're tinkering awkward patches on the tin-pot mill.

It's a five-head plant, and mostly built of lumber,
'Twas erected by a man that didn't know,
And we've never had a decent spell of slumber
Since that battery of Finn's was got to go;
For she raises just the most infernal clatter,
And we guessed the Day of Judgment had come down
When the tin-pot mill began to bang and batter
Like an earthquake in a boiler-metal town.

All the heads are different sizes, and the horses
Are so crazy that the whole caboodle rocks,
And each time a stamper thunders down it forces
Little spirtings through the crannies in the box.
Then the feed pipe's mostly plugged and aggravating,
And the pump it suffers badly from a cough;
Every hour or so they burst a blooming grating,
And the shoes are nearly always coming off.

Mickey drives her with a portable, a ruin
That they used for donkeying cargo in the Ark.
When she's got a little way on, and is doing,
You should hear that spavined coffee-grinder bark.
She is loose in all her joints, and, through corrosion,
Half her plates are not a sixteenth in the thick.
We're expecting a sensational explosion,

And a subsequent excursion after Mick.

From the feed—which chokes—to quite the smallest ripple,
From the bed-logs to the guides, she's mighty queer,
And she joggles like an agitated cripple
With St. Vitus dance intensified by beer.
She stops short; and starts with most unearthly rumbles,
And, distracted by the silence and the din,
Through the sleepless night the weary miner grumbles,
And heaps curses on the family of Finn.

But the owner's much too cute a man to wrangle.
He is crushing for the public, understand,
And each ton of stuff that's hammered through the mangle
Adds its tribute to the value of his land.
For she leaks the raw amalgam, and he's able
To see daylight 'twixt the ripples an' the plates,
And below the box and 'neath the shaking table
There are nest-eggs 'cumulating while he waits.

She goes biff, puff, bang, bump, clitter-clatter, smash,
And she rattles on for half a shift, and lets with a crash;
Then silence reigns a little while, and the land is still
While they're tinkering awkward patches on the tin-pot mill.

Edward George Dyson

The Trucker

IF YOU want a game to tame you and to take your measure in,
Try a week or two of trucking in a mine
Where the rails are never level for a half-a-minute's spin,
And the curves are short and sharp along the line.

Try the feverish bottom level, down five hundred feet of shaft,
Where the atmosphere is like a second suit,
When the wash is full of water, and you've got to run the graft,
For there's forty ton of gravel in the shoot.

'Want a job o' truckin', dost tha?' says the boss, old Geordie Rist,
Shift's a trucker short, ma lad, but aw don' know—
Can'st tha do th' work, though, think'st tha? Art a pretty decent fist?
Eh, well, damme! thoo can try it; go below.'

So the cage is manned, the knocker clangs and clatters on the brace,
The engine draws a deep, defiant breath
To inflate her lungs of iron; and in silence, face to face,
We drop into the darkness deep as death.

Then a fairy sense of lightness and of floating on the night,
A sudden glare, and Number Three is passed;
Soon a sound of warring waters and another rush of light—
'All clear!' The up-trip never seems so fast.

It is rough upon the tyro, that first tussle with the trucks—
The wretched four, with worn, three-cornered wheels
That are sure to fall to his lot and to floor him if his pluck's
Not true when mates are grinding at his heels.

Then the struggle at the incline, and the deuced ticklish squeeze
At the curves where strength alone not all avails,
And the floundering in the mullock, and the badly-broken knees
Before he learns to run upon the rails.

But it's like all other grafting, and the man that has the grit
Won't tucker out with one back-racking shift;
When he's sweated to condition, with his muscles firm and fit,
He'll disdain to stick at seven trucks of drift.

He can swarm around the pinches with a scramble and a dash,
And negotiate the inclines just as pat;
And the sheets of iron rattle and the waters surge and splash
As he shoots the 'full 'uns' in along the plat.

When the empties wind and clatter down the drive and through the dark—
As 'blowing' spells those backward journeys serve—
On before, deep set in darkness, glints and glows a feeble spark,
The candle burning dimly at the curve.

After cribs are polished off, and when the smoke begins to rise
And cling about the caps and in the cracks,
There's a passing satisfaction in the patriarchal lies
Of the Geordie pioneers and Cousin Jacks—

Lanky Steve's unwritten stories of the fun of Fifty-two,
Or the dashing days at Donkey Woman's Flat,
Of traps, and beaks, and heavy yields, and pugilists put through,
And lifting up the flag at Ballarat.

Yes, the truckers' toil is rather heavy grafting as a rule—
Much heavier than the wages, well I know;
But the life's not full of trouble, and the fellow is a fool
Who cannot find some pleasure down below.

Edward George Dyson

The Unborn

I see grim War, a bestial thing,
with swinish tusks to tear;
Upon his back the vampires cling,
Thin vipers twine among his hair,
The tiger's greed is in his jowl,
His eye is red with bloody tears,
And every obscene beast and fowl
From out his leprous visage leers.
In glowing pride fell fiends arise,
And, trampled, God the Father lies.

Not God alone the Demon slays;
The hills that swell to Heaven drip
With ooze of murdered men; for days
The dead drift with the drifting ship,
And far as eye may see the plain
Is cumbered deep with slaughtered ones,
Contorted to the shape of pain,
Dissolving 'neath the callous suns,
And driven in his foetid breath
Still ply the harvesters of Death.

He sits astride an engine dread,
And at his touch the awful ball
Across the quaking world is sped,
I see a million creatures fall.
Beyond the soldiers on the hill,
The mother by her basinet.
The bolt its mission must fulfil,
And in the years that are not yet
Creation by the blow is shorn
Of dimpled hosts of babes unborn!

Edward George Dyson

The Weeds

Brown passed away, and Mrs Brown,
In weeds all smothered, went through town
By Brown's neat grave to take her stand,
And hold a metaphoric hand.
She diligently drove away
The sorrel springing every day.

When Mrs. Robert Wittle died
Poor Bob would sit her grave beside
On Sunday afternoons, and shed
His briny tribute to the dead;
And dimpled Mrs. brown and he
Had quite a bond of sympathy.

But presently, I understand,
'Twas Bob who held the widow's hand.
She decker herself in orange spray,
And all her weeds she cast away.
Now where the sorrel sheds its seeds
Brown's grave is thick with widow's weeds.

Edward George Dyson

The Young Lieutenant

The young lieutenant's face was grey.
As came the day.
The watchers saw it lifting white
And ghostlike from the pool of night.
His eyes were wide and strangely lit.
Each thought in that unhallowed pit:
"I, too, may seem like one who dies
With wide, set eyes."

He stood so still we thought it death,
For through the breath
Of reeking shell we came, and fire,
To hell, unlit, of blood and mire.
Tianced in a chill delirium
We wondered, though our lips were dumb
What precious thing his fingers pressed
Against his breast.

His left hand clutched so lovingly
What none might see.
All bloodless were his lips beneath
The straight, white, rigid clip of teeth.
His eyes turned to the distance dim;
Our sleepless eyes were all on him.
He stirred; we aped a phantom cheer.
The hour was here!

The young lieutenant blew his call.
"God keep us all!"
He whispered softly. Out he led;
And over the vale of twisted dead,
Close holding that dear thing, he went.
On through the storm we followed, bent
To pelt of iron and the rain
Of flame and pain.

His wan face like a lodestar glowed
Down that black road,
And deep among the torn and slain

We drove, and twenty times again
He squared us to the charging hordes.
His word was like a hundred swords.
And still a hand the treasure pressed
Against his breast.

Our gain we held. Up flamed the sun.
"The ridge is won,"
He calmly said, and, with a sigh,
"Thank God, a man is free to die!"
He smiled at this, and so he passed.
His secret prize we knew at last,
For through his hand the jewel's red,
Fierce lustre bled.

Edward George Dyson

To A Politician

There was a moment when of you
A splendid hope I had to tell,
Believing 'Here is one man who
Will serve our waiting country well.'

I saw you sedulous and keen,
I heard the burning words you spoke.
It seemed that you were hard and clean,
And rapier sharp your every stroke.

Then came success, and in a night
An impish thing you stood apart,
All empty-handed for the fight,
With worse, alas! an empty heart.

Success had spoiled you, said your friends,
It was not so, for naught was there
To spoil but means to petty ends.
At last men saw you bleak and bare.

In those who give you grudging aid
These days, may we the spirits see
Who for the love of men would raid
The strongholds of iniquity?

Are these the heroes high and true,
Who, seeing right with honest eyes,
Will risk their all in putting through
Democracy's stern Enterprise?

You had no wealth of love. You failed
For that. Your heart may never cling
To men upon their crosses nailed,
To brothers sadly travailing.

Edward George Dyson

To The Men Of The Mines

WE SPECKED as boys o'er worked-out ground
By littered fiat and muddy stream,
We watched the whim horse trudging round,
And rode upon the circling beam,
Within the old uproarious mill
Fed mad, insatiable stamps,
Mined peaceful gorge and gusty hill
With pan, and pick, and gad, and drill,
And knew the stir of sudden camps.

By yellow dams in summer days
We puddled at the tom; for weeks
Went seeking up the tortuous ways
Of gullies deep and hidden creeks.
We worked the shallow leads in style,
And hunted fortune down the drives,
And missed her, mostly by a mile—
Once by a yard or so. The while
We lived untrammelled, easy lives.

Through blazing days upon the brace
We laboured, and when night had passed
Beheld the glory and the grace
Of wondrous dawns in bushlands vast.
We heard the burdened timbers groan
In deep mines murmurous as the seas
On long, lone shores by drear winds blown.
We've seen heroic deeds, and known
The digger's joys and tragedies.

I write in rhyme of all these things,
With little skill, perhaps, but you,
To whom each tale a memory brings
Of bygone days, will know them true.
Should mates who've worked in stope and face,
Who've trenched the hill and swirled the dish,
Or toiled upon the plat and brace,
Find pleasure in the lines I trace,
No better welcome could I wish.

Edward George Dyson

To The Theoretical Selector

WOULD YOU be the King, the strong man, first in council and in toil,
To the men who war with nature for possession of the soil?
Take an axe upon your shoulder, take a billy and a rug,
And go forward in the forest where no man has cut and dug,
Where the scrub-ferns grow like magic, and the gum-trees you must fell
Have their topmost boughs in heaven, and their tap-roots deep as hell.

Take the land the Powers would cheerfully devote to Smith or Brown,
Two miles or more from water and a hundred miles from town;
Fell, and scrub, and hew, and hunger, and when seven weeks are gone
You may have a clearing large enough to build a hut upon.
Then you furnish it with saplings and you carpet it with loam,
And you bring the kids and missus to their charming country home!

Rising early with the jackass, like a man of pith and push,
With axe in hand you sally forth to face the stubborn bush.
'Tis a mighty undertaking, and the odds are hard enough,
But the settler must be stubborn, and the settler must be tough,
And he strikes from morn till even with his strong arm bare and brown,
And he counts his gain by inches when the big gum rattles down.

So you slave and strive and suffer, for it's fearful work and slow
Ere the cabbages are solid and the spuds have room to grow.
By and bye to fruit and fowls and swine, as city swells advise,
You resort to make a fortune; but the venture proves unwise,
For the fruit-trees blight and wither, and the pigs die in their pens,
And the drought destroys the ducklings, and the dingoes eat the hens.

Years go on, and still the bush-wall rings your narrow clearing round,
But you've won a few good acres and a crop is on the ground,
And you harvest single-handed, and you rake the stubble clean,
For you lack the cash for wages and the marvellous machine;
Still you're thankful for small mercies—though you're often sorely pushed—
When the missus hasn't sunstroke and the baby isn't bushed.

Then, at last, when worn with work, and warped with years, and very grey,
When your mastering the mortgage and the railroad runs your way,
When your farm is looking home-like, and your sons are grown-up men,
You may talk to brown-faced farmers—you may try to teach them then.

And if any kid-gloved critic starts to give you points on grain,
And a little hot-house farming does to make your errors plain,
You will rise up with a waddy, and you'll sympathise with Cain.

Edward George Dyson

Unredeemed

I saw the Christ down from His cross,
A tragic man lean-limbed and tall,
But weighed with suffering and loss.
His back was to a broken wall,
And out upon the tameless world
Was fixed His gaze His piercing eye
Beheld the towns to ruin hurled,
And saw the storm of death pass by.

Two thousand years it was since first
He offered to the race of men
His sovran boon, As one accurst
They nailed Him to the jibbet then,
And while they mocked Him for their mirth
He smiled, and from the hill of pain
To all the hating tribes of earth
Held forth His wondrous gift again.

To-day the thorns were on His brow,
His grief was deeper than before.
From ravaged field and city now
Arose the screams and reek of war.
The black smoke parted. Through the rift
God's sun fell on the bloody lands.
Christ wept, for still His priceless gift
He held within His wounded hands.
Xxxx

The Living Picture
He rode along one splendid noon,
When all the hills were lit with Spring,
And through the bushland throbbed a croon
Of every living, hopeful thing.

Between his teeth a rose he bore
As white as milk, and passing there
He tossed it with a laugh. I wore
It as it fell among my hair.

No day a-drip with golden rain,
No heat with drench of wattle scent
Can touch the heart of me again
But with that young, sweet wonder blent.

We wed upon a gusty day,
When baffled fury whipped the sea;
And now I love the swift, wet play
Of wind and rain besetting me.

I took white roses in my hand,
A white rose on my forehead shone,
For we had come to understand
White roses bloomed for us alone.

When scarce a year had gone he sped
To fight the wars. With eyes grown grim
He kissed my lips, and whispering said:
"The world we must keep sweet for him!"

He wrote of war, the soldier's life.
"Tis hard, my dearest, but be brave.
I did not make my love my wife
To be the mother of a slave!"

My babe was born a boy. He had
His father's eyes, his smile, his hair,
And, oh, my soul was brimming glad—
It seemed his father's self was there!

But now came one who bade me still
In holy Heaven put my trust.
They'd laid my love beneath the hill,
And sealed his eyes with timeless dust.

Against my breast the babe I drew,
With strength from him to stay my fears.
I fought my fight the long days through;
He laughed and dabbled in my tears.

From my poor heart, at which it fed
With tiger teeth, I thrust despair,

And faced a world with shadow spread
And only echoes in the air.

The winter waned. One eve I went,
Led by a kindly hand to see
In moving scenes the churches rent,
The tumbled hill, the blasted lee.

Of soldiers resting by the road,
Who smoked and drowsed, a muddy rout,
One sprang alert, and forward strode,
With eager eyes to seek us out.

His fingers held a rose. He threw
The flower, and waved his cap. In me
A frenzy of assurance grew,
For, O dear God, 'twas he! 'twas he!

I called aloud. Aloft my child
I held, and nearer yet he came;
And when he understood and smiled,
My baby lisped his father's name.

They say I fell like something dead,
But when I woke to morning's glow
My boy sat by me on the bed,
And in his hand a rose of snow!

Edward George Dyson

Waiting For Water

'Twas old Flynn, the identity, told us
That the creek always ran pretty high,
But that fossicking veteran sold us,
And he lied as his quality lie.
Through a tangle of ranges and ridges,
Down a track that is blazed with our hide,
Over creeks minus crossings and bridges,
High and low, mere impertinent midges
Trying falls with the mighty Divide,

We came, hauling the boxes and stampers,
Or just nipping them in with a winch;
Now and then in unfortunate scampers
Missing smash by the eighth of an inch;
Round the spurs very daintily crawling,
With one team pulling out in a row,
And another lot heavenward hauling,
Lest the whole bag-of-tricks should go sprawling
Into regions unheard of below,

We came through with the shanks and the shafting,
And the frames, and the wonderful wheel;
Then we put in a month of hard grafting
Ere we nailed down the last scrap of deal.
She beat true, and with scarce a vibration,
And we voted her queen of the mills,
And a push from the wide desolation
Drifted in to our jollification
When her drumming was heard in the hills.

Now the discs by the cam-shaft are rusting,
And the stamps in the boxes are still,
And a silence that's deep and disgusting
Seems to hang like a pall on the mill.
Just a fortnight she ran—then she rested,
And we've little to do but complain;
For a bird in the feed-pipe has nested,
And we've spent every stiver invested,
And are praying for tucker and rain.

Billy's Creek—theme of eloquent fables—
Drips like sweat on the breast of the wheel,
And the blankets are dry on the tables,
And the sluice-box is warped like an eel;
Sudden dust-clouds run lunatic races
In the red, rocky bed down below,
And the porcupine scrambles in places
Where Flinn swears by the faith he embraces,
Fourteen inches of water should flow.

For a time we were proof against sorrow,
And we harboured a cheerful belief
In the plenteous rains of to-morrow
As we belted away at the reef.
We piled quartz in the paddocks and hopper,
And the pack-horse came in once a week:
Now our credit is not worth a copper
At the township, and highly improper
Is the language the storekeepers speak.

We no longer talk brightly, or snivel
Of our luck, but we loaf very hard,
Too disgusted to care to be civil,
And too lazy to look at a card.
Only George finds some slight consolation
Crushing prospects—a couple a day—
And then proving by multiplication
How much metal is in the formation,
And the 'divvies' she'll probably pay.

But our leisure is qualified slightly
By the cattle from over the Fly—
Who have taken to pegging out nightly
In our limited water supply.
And the snakes have assisted in keeping
Things alive, for the man, you'll agree,
Will be sly who may find he's been sleeping
With a tiger—or chance on one creeping
In the water he wanted for tea.

Though our sweltering sky never changes,

Squatter Clark, up at Crowfoot, complains
That prospectors out over the ranges
Have been chased out of camp by the rains.
Veal, the Methodist preacher at Spence's,
Who the Cousin Jacks say is 'some tuss'
As a rain-making parson commences
To enlarge on our sins and offences,
And to blame all his failures on us.

We don't go to his church down the mountain:
Seven miles is a wearisome trot,
With the glass playing up like a fountain,
And the prayers correspondingly hot.
So on Sunday each suffering sinner
Has a simple, convivial spree,—
A roast porcupine, maybe, for dinner;
For we daily grow thinner and thinner
On the week's bread and treacle and tea.

We've been scared, too, of late by Golightly,
Him who kept up his chin best of all,
And predicted with confidence nightly
Heavy rains that neglected to fall,
And enlarged on the sure indications
(While we listened, and wearily groaned)
Of tremendous climatic sensations,
Fearful tempests, and great inundations,
That, it happened, were always postponed.

He's gone daft through our many reverses,
Or the sun has got on to his brain,
For he cowers all day, and he curses
To a fretful and wearing refrain;
And at midnight he dolefully screeches
In the gloom of the desolate mill;
Or he goes in his shirt, making speeches
To the man in the moon, whom he reaches
From the summit of Poverty Hill.

So we're waiting, and watching, and longing
With an impotent, bitter desire,
And new troubles and old ones come thronging,

Drought, and fever, and famine, and fire;
And we know—our misfortunes reviewing—
All the pangs that in Hades betide,
Where the damned sit eternally stewing,
And, through days never ending, are suing
For the water that's ever denied.

Edward George Dyson

Weeping Willie

Whey our trooper hit wide water every
heart was yearin' back
To the little 'ouse at Coogee or a hut at Bar-
renjack.
She was 'ookin' up to spike the stars, or rootin'
in the wave,
An' me liver turned a hand spring with each
buck the beggar gave.
Then we pulls a sick 'n' silly smile 'n' tips a
saucy lid,
Crackin' hardy. Willie didn't. Willie
snivelled like a kid.

At Gallip' the steamer dumped us, 'n' we got
right down to work,
Whoopin' up the hill splendacious, playin'
tiggie with the Turk.
When the stinkin' Abdul hit us we curled
down upon a stone,
'N' we yelled for greater glory, crackin' 'ardy
on our own.
Not so Willie. He was cursin', cold ez death
'n' grey ez steel,
'N' the smallest thing that busted made the
little blighter squeal.

In the bitter day's that follered, spillin' life be-
side the sea,
We would fake a spry expression for the things
that had to be,
Always dressin' up the winder, crackin' 'ardy
though we felt
Fearful creepy in the whiskers, very cold be-
neath the belt.
But his jills would sniff 'n' shiver in the mother
of a fright,
'N' go blubberin' 'n' quakin' out to waller in
the fight.

In the West we liked the weather, 'n' we fat-
tened in the mud,
Crackin' 'ardy, stewed together, rats an'
slurry men 'n' blood.
Weepin' Willie wouldn't have it these was
pleasin' things abed,
'N' he shuddered in his shimmy if they passed
him with the dead.
When he cried about his mother, in a gentle
voice he'd tell
Them as dumb-well didn't like it they could go
to sudden 'ell.

There was nothin' sweet for Willie in a rough-
up in the wet;
But if all things scared him purple, not a thing
had stopped him yet.
If some chaps was wanted urgent special dirty
work to do
Willie went in with a shudder, but he alwiz
saw it through.
Oh, a busy little body was our Willie in a
crush!
Then he'd cry out in the night about the faces
in the slush.

Well they pinked him one fine mornin' with
a thumpin' 'unk iv shell;
Put it in 'n' all across him. What he was
you couldn't tell.
I saw him stitched 'n' mended where he
whimpered in his bed,
'N' he'd on'y lived because he was afraid to
die, he said.
Sez he "Struth, they're out there fightin',
trimmin' Boshes good 'n' smart,
While I'm bedded here 'n' 'elpless. It fair
breaks a feller's 'eart."

But he came again last Tuesday '-n' we go it
in a breath—
"London's big 'n' black 'n' noisy. It would

scare a bloke to death."
He's away now in the trenches, white 'n'
nervous, but, you bet,
Playin' lovely 'ands of poker with his busy
bay-o-net,
'Fraid of givin' 'n' of takin', 'fraid of gases,
'fraid of guns—
But a champion lightweight terror to the gor-
forsaken 'Uns!

Edward George Dyson

When Beauty Is Bald

I've sung of Honor's golden hair
And Hero's auburn tresses,
Of Bella's back abundance, where
The sun throws his caresses;
I've sung of curl, and coil, and braid;
On meshes I've dilated,
Until at last I'm sore afraid
There's nothing re the hair of maid
That I have left unstated.

'Twill much relieve the constant strain
Of rhyming to extol her
When on the roof of Sophie's brain
Appears a bright cupola.
The poet's verse will freshly run,
Effects will come much faster,
If he may tell the darling one
Her skull is glowing like the sun
And smooth as alabaster.

New stimulus the singer nerves,
When beauty, scorning switches,
Adds to her many swelling curves
A baldness that bewitches.
We've sung too many wigs, I swear,
And now the poet mocks myths,
For Juliet in her head of air
Outshines the moon, and everywhere,
Love really laughs at locksmiths.

Edward George Dyson

When Brother Peetree Prayed

'Twas a sleepy little chapel by a wattled hill erected,
Where the storms were always muffled, and an atmosphere of peace
Hung about beneath the gum-trees, and the garden was respected
By the goats from Billybunga and the washer-woman's geese.
In the week-days it was sacred to my young imagination
From its walls there oozed a sentiment of reverence profound;
And on Sabbath morns the murmuring of the childish congregation
Seemed to spread a benediction in the bush land far around.
But when Brother Peetree prayed all the parrots flew dismayed,
And the hill shook to its centre, and the trees and fences swayed;
And we youngsters heard the rumble of the Day of Judgment there,
When the pious superintendent wrestled manfully in prayer.

They were horny-handed Methodists, and men of scanty knowledge,
Who controlled that 'little corner of the vine-yard' by the pound;
Their theology was not the kind that's warranted at college,
But their faith was most abundant, and their gospel always sound.
Brother Peetree was a miner at the Band of Hope. His leisure
He employed in 'sticking porkers' for his neighbours, and his skill
Was a theme of admiration; but his soul's sublimest pleasure
Was to speak a prayer on Sunday in the chapel 'neath the hill.
Froze the marrow in our bones at the sound of hollow groans,
And the shrieks of moral anguish, and the awful thunder tones;
And we saw the Hell-fire burning, and we smelt it in the air,
When dear Brother Peetree struggled with the Lord of Hosts in prayer.

Brother Peetree always started with a murmured supplication,
Knelt beside a form, serenely, with a meek, submissive face;
But he rose by certain stages to a rolling exhortation,
And a wild, ecstatic bellowing for sanctity and grace;
And he threw his arms to heaven, and the seats went down before him
As he fought his way along the aisle, and prayed with might and main,
With hysterical beseechings. Then a sudden peace fell o'er him,
And he finished, sobbing softly, at his starting-point again.
And the elders, to their ears pale with reverential fears,
And the sisters and the choir indulged in hot, repentant tears;
And the sinners for salvation did with eagerness declare,
When beloved Brother Peetree wrestled mightily in prayer.

Edward George Dyson

When The Bell Blew Up

'THAT'S the boiler at The Bell, mates! Tumble out, Ned, neck and crop—
Never mind your hat and coat, man, we'll be wanted on the job.
Barney's driving, Harvey's stoking—God help all the hands on top!
Bring along the brandy, some one. Don't stand like an image, Bob;
Grab those shirts—they'll all be needed. Rugs and candles, that's all right.
Bet your lives, boys, we'll have lots of doctor's work to do to-night!

'Didn't she thunder? Scot! I thought the universe had gone to smash.
Take the track through Peetree's paddock, make the smartest time you know.
Barney swore her plates were rotten, but poor Bill was always rash.'
'And his missus, heaven help her!—they were spliced a month ago.'
Down the track we raced together, up the hill—then o'er the claim
Saw the steam-clouds hanging thickly, lustrous with the glow of flame.

Boiler-house in hopeless ruins, engines wrecked and smoke-stack gone;
Bricks and shingles widely scattered, and the shattered boiler bare.
'Five men missed!' 'Buck in, you fellows; get your freest action on;
Keep the fire back from the timbers—God knows who is under there.
Sprag that knocker. How it rattles! Braceman's nowhere—Coleman's Joe.
Tell them what has happened, Ryan. They will have to wait below.'

As we fought the fires, the women, pale and tearful gathered round.
'That you, Peter? Thanks to Heaven!' 'There's my Harry! God is good!'
'Praise the Lord—they've got our lad safe! Joe the braceman has been found!
Down between the tips they found him, pinned there by a log of wood.
'Battery boys are safe. Mack saw them hiding under Peetree's ricks.
They just up and cut from under when it started raining bricks.'

Only two now—Bill and Barney. Still we laboured might and main
'Mid the ruins round the boiler where the shattered walls were stacked.
Then his wife discovered Barney, dazed and black, but right as rain;
Said he didn't know what hit him—'thought the crack of doom had cracked;'
He had landed on the sand-heap, thirty yards or so away.
'God is mighty good to sinners,' murmured Geordie. 'Let us pray.'

Fifty voices called on Harvey, and we worked like horses all,
Delving down amongst the timber, burnt and knocked about, but gay.
'Lend a hand, here, every man; he's pinned beneath the outer wall!
All together. Now you've got him. Gently does it. That's O.K.

Scalded! Yes, and right arm broken. Pass some brandy, one of you.
Cheer, ye devils! Give it lip, lads. He's alive and kicking, too!

'Give him air, now. Make a track there. Let him see his missus first.'
'Where's his wife?' The women wondered. She had not been seen all night.
Someone whispered she was timid, that she dared not face the worst.
Harvey smiled despite his troubles. 'Boys, she's fainted—she's all right.'
So we bore him gaily home, and as he saw the gateway near
Bill tried hard to lead the chorus when we gave a rousing cheer.

'Stop, for God's sake!' In the garden, where her life blood tinged the vine,
Prone poor Harvey's wife was lying, in the moon- light, cold and gray.
There the flying bolt had struck her as she ran towards the mine.
We could guess the truth too well—and near a broken firebar lay.
Carrol, kneeling down beside her, gently raised the wounded head,
And we bent to catch his whisper, and he answered sadly—'Dead!'

Edward George Dyson

When Tommy Came Marching Home

Devine came back the other day.
We'd planned a great home-comin'.
No long trombone we had to play,
No fine, heroic drummin'.
With two sticks and a milk-can Borne
Put up a martial clatter,
While Carter blew a bullock-horn
Says Tom Devine, with healthy scorn;
"Gorstruth! what is the matter?"

We set three colored petticoats
From Baker's chimneys blowin'
('Tis not the bravest flag that floats,
Yet 'twas the finest goin');
We cheered our hero all we knew,
No song of praise neglectin',
To show our pride as he limped through
He merely spat and snorted, "Who
"The deuce are yous expectin'?"

They lured him to my shop somehow,
And sued for news of battle.
Says Tom: "Who rides the mail track now?
Who herdin' Stringer's cattle?"
A dint the Turk put in his head.
He covers with a ringlet.
He'd won a medal, so we read.
"I might 'ave 'ad it pinched," he said-
"I've sewn it in my singlet!"

Says Cole "But, 'struth, you must 'ave seen
A fearful swag of scrappin'."
And Tom agrees "Where men are keen
That's pretty sure to 'appen.
One night a little bloke from Hay
Who plugged a Pentridge warder
Got such a doin' that at day,
Amazed, they ticked him for a stray
Distinguished Service Order.

“Then Sydney Bob was rather vexed
With Green—who'd pinched his braces,
That was 'continued in our next'
In half a score of places.
McCubbin threw his grub at Lea
(You know how sticky stew is);
They fought till neither man could see.
You talk of fight—Gorstrike me, we
Saw stacks of it at Suez!”

Edward George Dyson

Wherefore Art Thou Romeo?

I see thee still in doublet wide,
And hose well kept, a world too slack,
So long and lean thou wert allied,
It struck me, with that curious back,
The Zoo giraffe. Thy brow was black,
Thy speech was awkward, action slow.
I whispered at thy first attack:
"And wherefore art thou Romeo?"

Thou wert then fifty and cross-eyed;
For acting never hadst the knack.
With stilted bow and Irving stride
Thou tookst the stage, and Jill and Jack
Both sniggered, when with damned clack
Thou talkedst of moons, and wrecked the show.
And here by Heaven, thou art back.
Oh, wherefore art thou Romeo?

This fellow was a lad of pride,
No prinked-out fool, with just a snack
Of bounder, and by Fate allied
To pale effeminates who smack
The rouge about. Thou art a quack!
Thy treatment brings the lover low.
Thou'rt living still our hearts to crack;
Oh, wherefore art thou Romeo?

ENVOY

No egotism dost thou lack,
Great scorn hast for the rival pro.,
And talk'st thou of thy art. Alack!
And wherefore art, thou Romeo?

Edward George Dyson

Whose Wife

'HARRY! what, that yourself, back to old Vic., man,
Down from the Never Land? Now, what's your game?
Ugly as ever. Not dropped the old trick, man?
Say, what'll you take with me? Give it a name.

'Here long? Well, rather, lad; five years and over,
Settled for good, and supporting a wife.
Slipped from the saddle, and living in clover,
Swore off a heap, and I've slung the old life.

'What's come of Taffy, and Brum, and the rest of them?
Long since you broke with the Poverty push?'
'Bill, you're on top, you've the best of the best of them.
Poor Brum's a dummy, Taff died in the bush;

'Bob's cook for Chows on an absentee's station,
Sam's tout for spielers, Pete's lumbered for life;
I'm on a tramp through the whole of creation,
Tracking a woman, my runaway wife.

Left me six years ago—sloped! I was shearing
Up on the Thomson. She left not a word;
Last year was seen by a Barcoo man, steering
Round about here, and that's all that I've heard.

Heard of her, know her, Bill?—tallish and clever,
Blue eyes, dark hair, and she's branded here, so;
Not one to liquor, or go on the never,
But skittish and queer in her tantrums, you know.

This is her picture, Bill; just have a look at her.
Like any female you chance to have seen?
Hallo! here, hold up! Say, man, what's the matter?
Your Wife! By the Lord, Morton, what do you mean?'

Edward George Dyson

Why Spring Fell Flat

The Spring is gone. I have not seen
Its fairies tripping on the Block,
Arcadians in grey and green,
The happy flapper in a frock
So dainty that the breezes fret
It like the smoke of cigarette.

I've seen no pixies of the pave
The season deck with flower and plume;
No slim, entrancing elves that wave
Their gossamers like wattle bloom;
But only staid, trim maids arrayed
In Autumn costumes tailor-made.

Not like a garden poppy strewn
And scented as an Eden fair
Has been the Block at afternoon.
So Spring came not to me this year.
Curse on the greedy profiteer
Who made the dear ones all too dear!

Edward George Dyson

William And Bill

Our Mr. Jiggs was certainly an estimable youth,
A pillar of propriety, a champion of truth;
He had a good position in a warehouse in the town;
A staunch church-worker, he became a layman of renown.

Jiggs owned a bijou villa in a little suburb here;
His wife was small but precious, and their baby was a dear;
But a fly in William's ointment (and intrude such creatures will)
Was his father, known about the neighborhood as "Bill."

Now if you're a serious soul, and known as "William" still,
It's unpleasant to have hanging round a father who is "Bill."
So William had discovered, for at sixty-two his dad
Behaved with great exuberance, aspired to be "a lad";

Got shicker on occasion, and came home with the milk
(Which also means the whisky) and with fellows of the ilk
Would sing a ribald ditty, and he'd dance upon his hat,
Then curl hard down, and slumber on the goodly William's mat.

If you're a worker at the church, abhorring wicked fun,
An old man sleeping on your mat in full light of the sun
Is very detrimental; so William had to steal
From bed full oft his roystering pa to drag in by the heel.

And Bill went giddy with the girls, and made excessive love
To the wives of William's neighbors. There was one two doors above
Who said he was a nice old man, so very clean and gay –
She let him buy her suppers, and went with him to the play.

Her husband was a travelling man. One day he spoke to Bill.
Bill pointed out where on the lawn toiled unsuspecting Will.
That ma he struck at Will with his fist, a thing of fear –
He knocked him down, he kicked him, and he trod upon his ear.

He beat him with a rake, and with the hose he washed him round,
Till William, stunned and helpless now, was presently half-downed.
Then said the fellow: "Billy Jiggs, I hope from this time out
You'll kindly let my wife alone when I am not about."

Will sadly looked upon his dad, reproachment in his eye.
Bills raised him up, and to his glance made reverent reply:
"Sins of the fathers fall upon the children. Be resigned.
It's according to the gospel, so I thought you wouldn't mind."

Now William hides at Cooktown, and old Bill resides at hay.
Responsible for all his venal actions, so to say.
Of William Jiggs, whose "gorn all wrong," a touching tale he'll tell –
"A-renouncin' of the Scriptures. And I brought him up so well!"

Edward George Dyson

Worked-Out Mine

On summer nights when moonbeams flow
And glisten o'er the high, white tips,
And winds make lamentation low,
As through the ribs of shattered ships,
And steal about the broken brace
Where pendant timbers swing and moan,
And flitting bats give aimless chase,
Who dares to seek the mine alone?

The shrinking bush with sable rims
A skeleton forlorn and bowed,
With pipe-clay white about its limbs
And at its feet a tattered shroud;
And ghostly figures lurk and groan,
Shrill whispers sound from ghostly lips,
And ghostly footsteps start the stone
That clatters sharply down the tips.

The engine-house is dark and still,
The life that raged within has fled;
Like open graves the boilers chill
That once with glowing fires were red;
Above the shaft in measured space
A rotted rope swings to and fro,
Whilst o'er the plat and on the brace
The silent shadows come and go.

And there below, in chambers dread
Where darkness like a fungus clings,
Are lingering still the old mine's dead—
Bend o'er and hear their whisperings!
Up from the blackness sobs and sighs
Are flung with moans and muttered fears,
A low lament that never dies,
And ceaseless sound of falling tears.

My ears intent have heard their grief—
The fitful tones of Carter's tongue,
The strong man crushed beneath the reef,

The groans of Panton, Praer, and Young,
And 'Trucker Bill' of Number Five,
Along the ruined workings roll;
For deep in every shoot and drive
This mine secretes a shackled soul.

Ah! woful mine, where wives have wept,
And mothers prayed in anxious pain,
And long, distracting vigil kept,
You yawn for victims now in vain!
Still to that god, whose shrine you were,
Is homage done in wild device;
Men hate you as the sepulchre
That stores their bloody sacrifice.

Edward George Dyson