

Henry Lawson

*Short Stories
in Prose and
Verse*

Henry Lawson

Short Stories in Prose and Verse



Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4066338081735

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Preface](#)

[Rats](#)

[A Narrow Escape](#)

[We Called Him "Ally" For Short](#)

[Bush Cats](#)

[Johnson, Alias Crow](#)

[The Drover's Wife](#)

[The Fire At Ross's Farm](#)

[The Union Buries Its Dead](#)

[A Typical Bush Yarn](#)

[The Bush Undertaker](#)

[The Legend Of Coo-ee. Gully.](#)

[Macquarie's Mate](#)

[When the Children Come Home](#)

[The Mystery of Dave Regan](#)

[A Derry On A Cove](#)

[Trouble On The Selection](#)

[THE END](#)

Preface

Table of Contents

This is an attempt to publish, in Australia, a collection of sketches and stories at a time when everything Australian, in the shape of a book, must bear the imprint of a London publishing firm before our critics will condescend to notice it, and before the "reading public" will think it worth its while to buy nearly so many copies as will pay for the mere cost of printing a presentable volume.

The Australian writer, until he gets a "London hearing", is only accepted as an imitator of some recognised English or American author; and, so soon as he shows signs of coming to the front, he is labelled "The Australian Southey", "The Australian Burns", or "The Australian Bret Harte", and, lately, "The Australian Kipling". Thus, no matter how original he may be, he is branded, at the very start, as a plagiarist, and by his own country, which thinks, no doubt, that it is paying him a compliment and encouraging him, while it is really doing him a cruel and an almost irreparable injury.

But, mark! So soon as the Southern writer goes "home" and gets some recognition in England, he is "So-and-So, the well-known Australian author whose work has attracted so much attention in London lately"; and we first hear of him by cable, even though he might have been writing at his best for ten years in Australia.

The same paltry spirit tried to dispose of the greatest of modern short story writers as "The Californian Dickens", but America wasn't built that way—neither was Bret Harte!

To illustrate the above growl: a Sydney daily paper, reviewing the *Bulletin's* Golden Shanty when the first edition came out, said of my story, "His Father's Mate", that it stood out distinctly as an excellent specimen of that kind of writing which Bret Harte set the world imitating in vain, and, being "full of local colour, it was no unworthy copy of the great master". That critic evidently hadn't studied the "great master" any more than he did my yarn, of Australian goldfield life.

Then he spoke of another story as also having the "Californian flavour". For the other writers I can say that I feel sure they could point out their scenery, and name, or, in some cases, introduce "the reader" to their characters in the flesh. The first seventeen years of my life were spent on the goldfields, and therefore, I didn't need to go back, in imagination, to a time before I was born, and to a country I had never seen, for literary material.

* * * *

This pamphlet—I can scarcely call it a volume—contains some of my earliest efforts, and they are sufficiently crude and faulty. They have been collected and printed hurriedly, with an eye to Xmas, and without experienced editorial assistance, which last, I begin to think, was sadly necessary.

However, we all hope to do better in future, and I shall have more confidence in my first volume of verse, which will probably be published some time next year. The stories and sketches were originally written for the *Bulletin*, *Worker*, *Truth*, *Antipodean Magazine*, and the *Brisbane Boomerang*, which last was one of the many Australian publications which were starved to death because they tried to be

original, to be honest, to pay for and encourage Australian literature, and, above all, to be Australian, while the “high average intelligence of the Australians” preferred to patronise thievish imported rags of the “Faked-Bits” order.

Rats

Table of Contents

“Why, there’s two of them, and they’re having a fight! Come on.”

It seemed a strange place for a fight—that hot, lonely, cotton-bush plain. And yet not more than half a mile ahead there were apparently two men struggling together on the track.

The three travellers postponed their smoke-ho and hurried on. They were shearers—a little man and a big man, known respectively as “Sunlight” and “Macquarie,” and a tall, thin, young jackeroo whom they called “Milky.”

“I wonder where the other man sprang from? I didn’t see him before,” said Sunlight.

“He muster bin layin’ down in the bushes,” said Macquarie. “They’re goin’ at it proper, too. Come on! Hurry up and see the fun!”

They hurried on.

“It’s a funny-lookin’ feller, the other feller,” panted Milky. “He don’t seem to have no head. Look! he’s down—they’re both down! They must ha’ clinched on the ground. No! they’re up an’ at it again.... Why, good Lord! I think the other’s a woman!”

“My oath! so it is!” yelled Sunlight. “Look! the brute’s got her down again! He’s kickin’ her. Come on, chaps; come on, or he’ll do for her!”

They dropped swags, water-bags and all, and raced forward; but presently Sunlight, who had the best eyes, slackened his pace and dropped behind. His mates glanced

back at his face, saw a peculiar expression there, looked ahead again, and then dropped into a walk.

* * *

They reached the scene of the trouble, and there stood a little withered old man by the track, with his arms folded close up under his chin; he was dressed mostly in calico patches; and half a dozen corks, suspended on bits of string from the brim of his hat, dangled before his bleared optics to scare away the flies. He was scowling malignantly at a stout, dumpy swag which lay in the middle of the track.

“Well, old Rats, what’s the trouble?” asked Sunlight.

“Oh, nothing, nothing,” answered the old man, without looking round. “I fell out with my swag, that’s all. He knocked me down, but I’ve settled him.”

“Oh, But look here,” said Sunlight, winking at his mates, “we saw you jump on him when he was down. That ain’t fair, you know.”

“But you didn’t see it all,” cried Rats, getting excited. “He hit *me* down first! And look here, I’ll fight him again for nothing, and you can see fair play.”

They talked awhile; then Sunlight proposed to second the swag, while his mate supported the old man, and after some persuasion, Milky agreed, for the sake of the lark, to act as time-keeper and referee.

Rats entered into the spirit of the thing; he stripped to the waist, and while he was getting ready the travellers pretended to bet on the result.

Macquarie took his place behind the old man, and Sunlight up-ended the swag. Rats shaped and danced round; then he rushed, fainted, ducked, retreated, darted in