

# Clancy of the Overflow

I had written him a letter which I had, for want of better  
Knowledge, sent to where I met him down the Lachlan, years ago,  
He was shearing when I knew him, so I sent the letter to him,  
Just "on spec", addressed as follows, "Clancy, of The Overflow".

And an answer came directed in a writing unexpected,  
(And I think the same was written with a thumb-nail dipped in tar)  
Twas his shearing mate who wrote it, and verbatim I will quote it:  
"Clancy's gone to Queensland droving, and we don't know where he are."

In my wild erratic fancy visions come to me of Clancy  
Gone a-droving "down the Cooper" where the Western drovers go;  
As the stock are slowly stringing, Clancy rides behind them singing,  
For the drover's life has pleasures that the townsfolk never know.

And the bush hath friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him  
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,  
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,  
And at night the wond'rous glory of the everlasting stars.

I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy  
Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down between the houses tall,  
And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city  
Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all

And in place of lowing cattle, I can hear the fiendish rattle  
Of the tramways and the buses making hurry down the street,  
And the language uninviting of the gutter children fighting,  
Comes fitfully and faintly through the ceaseless tramp of feet.

And the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me  
As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste,  
With their eager eyes and greedy, and their stunted forms and weedy,  
For townsfolk have no time to grow, they have no time to waste.

And I somehow rather fancy that I'd like to change with Clancy,  
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go,  
While he faced the round eternal of the cash-book and the journal —  
But I doubt he'd suit the office, Clancy, of "The Overflow".

## In the Droving Days

"Only a pound," said the auctioneer,  
"Only a pound; and I'm standing here  
Selling this animal, gain or loss —  
Only a pound for the drover's horse?  
One of the sort that was ne'er afraid,  
One of the boys of the Old Brigade;  
Thoroughly honest and game, I'll swear,  
Only a little the worse for wear;  
Plenty as bad to be seen in town,  
Give me a bid and I'll knock him down;  
Sold as he stands, and without recourse,  
Give me a bid for the drover's horse."

Loitering there in an aimless way  
Somehow I noticed the poor old grey,  
Weary and battered and screwed, of course;  
Yet when I noticed the old grey horse,  
The rough bush saddle, and single rein  
Of the bridle laid on his tangled mane,  
Straightway the crowd and the auctioneer  
Seemed on a sudden to disappear,  
Melted away in a kind of haze —  
For my heart went back to the droving days.

Back to the road, and I crossed again  
Over the miles of the saltbush plain —  
The shining plain that is said to be  
The dried-up bed of an inland sea.  
Where the air so dry and so clear and bright  
Refracts the sun with a wondrous light,  
And out in the dim horizon makes  
The deep blue gleam of the phantom lakes.

At dawn of day we could feel the breeze  
That stirred the boughs of the sleeping trees,  
And brought a breath of the fragrance rare  
That comes and goes in that scented air;  
For the trees and grass and the shrubs contain  
A dry sweet scent on the saltbush plain.  
for those that love it and understand  
The saltbush plain is a wonderland,  
A wondrous country, were Nature's ways

Were revealed to me in the droving days.

We saw the fleet wild horses pass,  
And kangaroos through the Mitchell grass;  
The emu ran with her frightened brood  
All unmolested and unpursued.  
But there rose a shout and a wild hubbub  
When the dingo raced for his native scrub,  
And he paid right dear for his stolen meals  
With the drovers' dogs at his wretched heels.  
For we ran him down at a rattling pace,  
While the pack-horse joined in the stirring chase.  
And a wild halloo at the kill we'd raise —  
We were light of heart in the droving days.  
'Twas a drover's horse, and my hand again  
Made a move to close on a fancied rein.  
For I felt a swing and the easy stride  
Of the grand old horse that I used to ride.  
In drought or plenty, in good or ill,  
The same old steed was my comrade still;  
The old grey horse with his honest ways  
Was a mate to me in the droving days.

When we kept our watch in the cold and damp,  
If the cattle broke from the sleeping camp,  
Over the flats and across the plain,  
With my head bent down on his waving mane,  
Through the boughs above and the stumps below,  
On the darkest night I could let him go  
At a racing speed; he would choose his course,  
And my life was safe with the old grey horse.  
But man and horse had a favourite job,  
When an outlaw broke from the station mob;  
With a right good will was the stockwhip plied,  
As the old horse raced at the straggler's side,  
And the greenhide whip such a weal would raise —  
We could use the whip in the droving days.

"Only a pound!" and was this the end —  
Only a pound for the drover's friend.  
The drover's friend that has seen his day,  
And now was worthless and cast away  
With a broken knee and a broken heart  
To be flogged and starved in a hawker's cart.  
Well, I made a bid for a sense of shame  
And the memories of the good old game.

"Thank you? Guinea! and cheap at that!  
Against you there in the curly hat!  
Only a guinea, and one more chance,  
Down he goes if there's no advance,  
Third, and last time, one! two! three!"  
And the old grey horse was knocked down to me.  
And now he's wandering, fat and sleek,  
On the lucerne flats by the Homestead Creek;  
I dare not ride him for fear he'd fall,  
But he does a journey to beat them all,  
For though he scarcely a trot can raise,  
He can take me back to the droving days.

# Mulga Bill's Bicycle

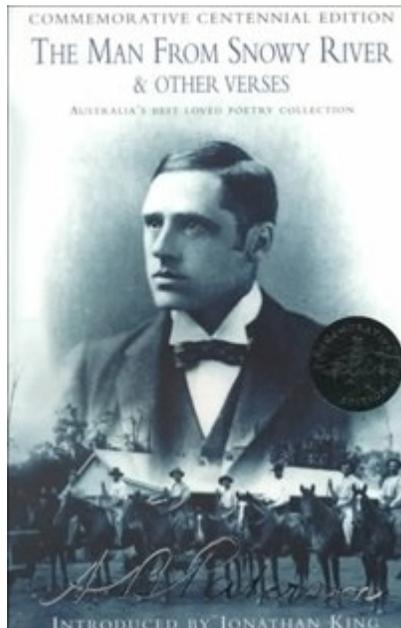
'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that caught the cycling craze;  
He turned away the good old horse that served him many days;  
He dressed himself in cycling clothes, resplendent to be seen;  
He hurried off to town and bought a shining new machine;  
And as he wheeled it through the door, with air of lordly pride,  
The grinning shop assistant said, "Excuse me, can you ride?"  
"See here, young man," said Mulga Bill, "from Walgett to the sea,  
From Conroy's Gap to Castlereagh, there's none can ride like me.  
I'm good all round at everything, as everybody knows,  
Although I'm not the one to talk - I hate a man that blows.  
But riding is my special gift, my chiefest, sole delight;  
Just ask a wild duck can it swim, a wildcat can it fight.  
There's nothing clothed in hair or hide, or built of flesh or steel,  
There's nothing walks or jumps, or runs, on axle, hoof, or wheel,  
But what I'll sit, while hide will hold and girths and straps are tight:  
I'll ride this here two-wheeled concern right straight away at sight."

'Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that sought his own abode,  
That perched above the Dead Man's Creek, beside the mountain road.  
He turned the cycle down the hill and mounted for the fray,  
But ere he'd gone a dozen yards it bolted clean away.  
It left the track, and through the trees, just like a silver streak,  
It whistled down the awful slope towards the Dead Man's Creek.

It shaved a stump by half an inch, it dodged a big white-box:  
The very wallaroos in fright went scrambling up the rocks,  
The wombats hiding in their caves dug deeper underground,  
As Mulga Bill, as white as chalk, sat tight to every bound.  
It struck a stone and gave a spring that cleared a fallen tree,  
It raced beside a precipice as close as close could be;  
And then as Mulga Bill let out one last despairing shriek  
It made a leap of twenty feet into the Dead Man's Creek.

'Twas Mulga Bill from Eaglehawk, that slowly swam ashore:  
He said, "I've had some narrer shaves and lively rides before;  
I've rode a wild bull round a yard to win a five-pound bet,  
But this was the most awful ride that I've encountered yet.  
I'll give that two-wheeled outlaw best; It's shaken all my nerve  
To feel it whistle through the air and plunge and buck and swerve.  
It's safe at rest in Dead Man's Creek, we'll leave it lying still;  
A horse's back is good enough henceforth for Mulga Bill."

# The Man from Ironbark



It was the man from Ironbark who struck the Sydney town,  
He wandered over street and park, he wandered up and down.  
He loitered here he loitered there, till he was like to drop,  
Until at last in sheer despair he sought a barber's shop.  
"Ere! shave my beard and whiskers off, I'll be a man of mark,  
I'll go and do the Sydney toff up home in Ironbark."  
The barber man was small and flash, as barbers mostly are,  
He wore a strike-your-fancy sash he smoked a huge cigar;  
He was a humorist of note and keen at repartee,  
He laid the odds and kept a "tote", whatever that may be,  
And when he saw our friend arrive, he whispered, "Here's a lark!  
Just watch me catch him all alive, this man from Ironbark."

There were some gilded youths that sat along the barber's wall.  
Their eyes were dull, their heads were flat, they had no brains at all;  
To them the barber passed the wink his dexter eyelid shut,  
"I'll make this bloomin' yokel think his bloomin' throat is cut."  
And as he soaped and rubbed it in he made a rude remark:  
"I s'pose the flats is pretty green up there in Ironbark."

A grunt was all reply he got; he shaved the bushman's chin,  
Then made the water boiling hot and dipped the razor in.  
He raised his hand, his brow grew black, he paused awhile to gloat,  
Then slashed the red-hot razor-back across his victim's throat;  
Upon the newly-shaven skin it made a livid mark

No doubt, it fairly took him in — the man from Ironbark.

He fetched a wild up-country yell might wake the dead to hear,  
And though his throat, he knew full well, was cut from ear to ear,  
He struggled gamely to his feet, and faced the murd'rous foe:  
"You've done for me! you dog, I'm beat! One hit before I go!  
I only wish I had a knife, you blessed murdering shark!  
But you'll remember all your life the man from Ironbark."

He lifted up his hairy paw, with one tremendous clout  
He landed on the barber's jaw, and knocked the barber out.  
He set to work with nail and tooth, he made the place a wreck;  
He grabbed the nearest gilded youth, and tried to break his neck.  
And all the while his throat he held to save his vital spark,  
And "Murder! Bloody murder!" yelled the man from Ironbark.

A peeler man who heard the din came in to see the show;  
He tried to run the bushman in, but he refused to go.  
And when at last the barber spoke, and said "'Twas all in fun'  
T'was just a little harmless joke, a trifle overdone."  
"A joke!" he cried, "By George, that's fine; a lively sort of lark;  
I'd like to catch that murdering swine some night in Ironbark."

And now while round the shearing floor the list'ning shearers gape,  
He tells the story o'er and o'er, and brags of his escape.  
"Them barber chaps what keeps a tote, By George, I've had enough,  
One tried to cut my bloomin' throat, but thank the Lord it's tough."  
And whether he's believed or no, there's one thing to remark,  
That flowing beards are all the go way up in Ironbark.

# The Man from Snowy River

There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around  
That the colt from Old Regret had got away,  
And had joined the wild bush horses - he was worth a thousand pound,  
So all the cracks had gathered to the fray.  
All the tried and noted riders from the stations near and far  
Had mustered at the homestead overnight,  
For the bushmen love hard riding where the wild bush horses are,  
And the stock-horse snuffs the battle with delight.

There was Harrison, who made his pile when Pardon won the cup,  
The old man with his hair as white as snow;  
But few could ride beside him when his blood was fairly up —  
He would go wherever horse and man could go.  
And Clancy of the Overflow came down to lend a hand,  
No better horseman ever held the reins;  
For never horse could throw him while the saddle girths would stand,  
He learnt to ride while droving on the plains.

And one was there, a stripling on a small and weedy beast;  
He was something like a racehorse undersized,  
With a touch of Timor pony — three parts thoroughbred at least —  
And such as are by mountain horsemen prized.  
He was hard and tough and wiry — just the sort that won't say die —  
There was courage in his quick impatient tread;  
And he bore the badge of gameness in his bright and fiery eye,  
And the proud and lofty carriage of his head.

But still so slight and weedy, one would doubt his power to stay,  
And the old man said, "That horse will never do  
For a long and tiring gallop - lad, you'd better stop away,  
Those hills are far too rough for such as you."  
So he waited sad and wistful — only Clancy stood his friend —  
"I think we ought to let him come," he said;  
"I warrant he'll be with us when he's wanted at the end,  
For both his horse and he are mountain bred."

"He hails from Snowy River, up by Kosciusko's side,  
Where the hills are twice as steep and twice as rough,  
Where a horse's hoofs strike firelight from the flint stones every stride,  
The man that holds his own is good enough.  
And the Snowy River riders on the mountains make their home,

Where the river runs those giant hills between;  
I have seen full many horsemen since I first commenced to roam,  
But nowhere yet such horsemen have I seen."

So he went; they found the horses by the big mimosa clump,  
They raced away towards the mountain's brow,  
And the old man gave his orders, "Boys, go at them from the jump,  
No use to try for fancy riding now.  
And, Clancy, you must wheel them, try and wheel them to the right.  
Ride boldly, lad, and never fear the spills,  
For never yet was rider that could keep the mob in sight,  
If once they gain the shelter of those hills."

So Clancy rode to wheel them — he was racing on the wing  
Where the best and boldest riders take their place,  
And he raced his stockhorse past them, and he made the ranges ring  
With the stockwhip, as he met them face to face.  
Then they halted for a moment, while he swung the dreaded lash,  
But they saw their well-loved mountain full in view,  
And they charged beneath the stockwhip with a sharp and sudden dash,  
And off into the mountain scrub they flew.

Then fast the horsemen followed, where the gorges deep and black  
Resounded to the thunder of their tread,  
And the stockwhips woke the echoes, and they fiercely answered back  
From cliffs and crags that beetled overhead.  
And upward, ever upward, the wild horses held their way,  
Where Mountain Ash and Kurrajong grew wide;  
And the old man muttered fiercely, "We may bid the mob good day,  
No man can hold them down the other side."

When they reached the mountain's summit, even Clancy took a pull -  
It well might make the boldest hold their breath;  
The wild hop scrub grew thickly, and the hidden ground was full  
Of wombat holes, and any slip was death.  
But the man from Snowy River let the pony have his head,  
And he swung his stockwhip round and gave a cheer,  
And he raced him down the mountain like a torrent down its bed,  
While the others stood and watched in very fear.

He sent the flint-stones flying, but the pony kept his feet,  
He cleared the fallen timbers in his stride,  
And the man from Snowy River never shifted in his seat —  
It was grand to see that mountain horseman ride.  
Through the stringy barks and saplings, on the rough and broken ground,  
Down the hillside at a racing pace he went;

And he never drew the bridle till he landed safe and sound,  
At the bottom of that terrible descent.

He was right among the horses as they climbed the farther hill  
And the watchers on the mountain standing mute,  
Saw him ply the stockwhip fiercely; he was right among them still,  
As he raced across the clearing in pursuit.  
Then they lost him for a moment, where two mountain gullies met  
In the ranges - but a final glimpse reveals  
On a dim and distant hillside the wild horses racing yet,  
With the man from Snowy River at their heels.

And he ran them single-handed till their sides were white with foam.  
He followed like a bloodhound on their track,  
Till they halted cowed and beaten, then he turned their heads for home,  
And alone and unassisted brought them back.  
But his hardy mountain pony he could scarcely raise a trot,  
He was blood from hip to shoulder from the spur;  
But his pluck was still undaunted, and his courage fiery hot,  
For never yet was mountain horse a cur.

And down by Kosciusko, where the pine-clad ridges raise  
Their torn and rugged battlements on high,  
Where the air is clear as crystal, and the white stars fairly blaze  
At midnight in the cold and frosty sky,  
And where around the Overflow the reed -beds sweep and sway  
To the breezes, and the rolling plains are wide,  
The man from Snowy River is a household word today,  
And the stockmen tell the story of his ride.

The poem tells the story of a valuable horse which escapes and the princely sum offered by its owner for its safe return. All the riders in the area gather to pursue the wild bush horses and cut the valuable horse from the mob. But the country defeats them all - except for 'The Man from Snowy River'. His personal courage and skill has turned him into a legend.

It is thought that Paterson based the character of The Man from Snowy River on Jack Riley from Corryong, although this is often disputed with the argument put that Paterson created a composite character from a number of people he met.

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# Waltzing Matilda

Oh there once was a swagman camped in the billabong,  
Under the shade of a Coolabah tree;  
And he sang as he looked at his old billy boiling  
"Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda, my darling.  
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.  
Waltzing Matilda and leading a water-bag —  
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.

Down came a jumbuck to drink at the waterhole,  
Up jumped the swagman and grabbed him in glee;  
And he sang as he stowed him away in his tucker-bag,  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda, my darling.  
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.  
Waltzing Matilda and leading a water-bag —  
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.

Down came the squatter a-riding his thoroughbred;  
Down came policemen — one, two, and three.  
"Whose is the jumbuck you've got in the tucker-bag?  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda, my darling.  
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.  
Waltzing Matilda and leading a water-bag —  
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.

But the swagman, he up and he jumped in the waterhole,  
Drowning himself by the Coolabah tree;  
And his ghost may be heard as it sings in the billabong  
"Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?"

Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda, my darling.  
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.  
Waltzing Matilda and leading a water-bag.  
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.

Written in 1895 and first published in 1903  
[www.uq.edu.au/~mlwham/banjo/matildaq.mid](http://www.uq.edu.au/~mlwham/banjo/matildaq.mid)

There have been minor word changes over the years as this poem has been set to music. The words above are however the original words written by "Banjo" and as they appear in his collected works of 1921 (16th edition)

"Swagman" - an itinerant farmhand, carrying his "swag" (his blankets) rolled into a cylinder

"Billabong" - a creek (normally with a pronounced "oxbow" bend)

"Coolabah tree" - a eucalyptus (gum) tree. (Also known as the coolibah tree)

"Waited till his billy boiled" - a "billy" is a tin can used to heat water over a campfire to make tea

"Jumbuck" - sheep

"Tucker-bag" - bag or box used to store food

"Squatter" - farmer/grazier who simply found good land and took possession; some became extremely rich

"Trooper" - policeman or soldier on horseback © by owner. provided at no charge for educational purposes