



**“Banjo and Lawson”  
Poems**



## *Past Carin'*

By Henry Lawson

Now up and down the siding brown  
The great black crows are flyin',  
And down below the spur, I know,  
Another `milker's' dyin';  
The crops have withered from the ground,  
The tank's clay bed is glarin',  
But from my heart no tear nor sound,  
For I have gone past carin' —  
    Past worryin' or carin',  
    Past feelin' aught or carin';  
    But from my heart no tear nor sound,  
    For I have gone past carin'.

Through Death and Trouble, turn about,  
Through hopeless desolation,  
Through flood and fever, fire and drought,  
And slavery and starvation;  
Through childbirth, sickness, hurt, and blight,  
And nervousness an' scarin',  
Through bein' left alone at night,  
I've got to be past carin'.  
    Past botherin' or carin',  
    Past feelin' and past carin';  
    Through city cheats and neighbours' spite,  
    I've come to be past carin'.

Our first child took, in days like these,  
A cruel week in dyin',  
All day upon her father's knees,  
Or on my poor breast lyin';  
The tears we shed — the prayers we said  
Were awful, wild — despairin'!  
I've pulled three through, and buried two  
Since then — and I'm past carin'.  
    I've grown to be past carin',  
    Past worryin' and wearin';  
    I've pulled three through and buried two  
    Since then, and I'm past carin'.

'Twas ten years first, then came the worst,  
All for a dusty clearin',  
I thought, I thought my heart would burst  
When first my man went shearin';  
He's drovin' in the great North-west,  
I don't know how he's farin';  
For I, the one that loved him best,  
Have grown to be past carin'.  
    I've grown to be past carin'  
    Past lookin' for or carin';  
    The girl that waited long ago,  
    Has lived to be past carin'.

My eyes are dry, I cannot cry,  
I've got no heart for breakin',  
But where it was in days gone by,  
A dull and empty achin'.  
My last boy ran away from me,  
I know my temper's wearin',  
But now I only wish to be  
Beyond all signs of carin'.  
    Past wearyin' or carin',  
    Past feelin' and despairin';  
    And now I only wish to be  
    Beyond all signs of carin'.



*Louisa Lawson and her son Charles William in front of their bark hut, Gulgong area 1870-1875*  
**State Library NSW**

## *The Man From Snowy River*

By A.B. "Banjo" Paterson

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 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 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 sway,  
Were 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 stringybarks 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 further 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 in 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.



Brumbies in Kosciusko National Park (ABC Open contributor Shoot 2720)

## *When Your Pants Begin To Go*

By Henry Lawson

When you wear a cloudy collar and a shirt that isn't white,  
And you cannot sleep for thinking how you'll reach to-morrow night,  
You may be a man of sorrows, and on speaking terms with Care,  
And as yet be unacquainted with the Demon of Despair;  
For I rather think that nothing heaps the trouble on your mind  
Like the knowledge that your trousers badly need a patch behind.

I have noticed when misfortune strikes the hero of the play,  
That his clothes are worn and tattered in a most unlikely way;  
And the gods applaud and cheer him while he whines and loaf's around,  
And they never seem to notice that his pants are mostly sound;  
But, of course, he cannot help it, for our mirth would mock his care,  
If the ceiling of his trousers showed the patches of repair.

You are none the less a hero if you elevate your chin  
When you feel the pavement wearing through the leather, sock, and skin;  
You are rather more heroic than are ordinary folk  
If you scorn to fish for pity under cover of a joke;  
You will face the doubtful glances of the people that you know;  
But -- of course, you're bound to face them when your pants begin to go.

If, when flush, you took your pleasures -- failed to make a god of Pelf,  
Some will say that for your troubles you can only thank yourself --  
Some will swear you'll die a beggar, but you only laugh at that,  
While your garments hang together and you wear a decent hat;  
You may laugh at their predictions while your soles are wearing low,  
But -- a man's an awful coward when his pants begin to go.

Though the present and the future may be anything but bright,  
It is best to tell the fellows that you're getting on all right,  
And a man prefers to say it -- 'tis a manly lie to tell,  
For the folks may be persuaded that you're doing very well;  
But it's hard to be a hero, and it's hard to wear a grin,  
When your most important garment is in places very thin.

Get some sympathy and comfort from the chum who knows you best,  
That your sorrows won't run over in the presence of the rest;  
There's a chum that you can go to when you feel inclined to whine,  
He'll declare your coat is tidy, and he'll say: `Just look at mine!'  
Though you may be patched all over he will say it doesn't show,  
And he'll swear it can't be noticed when your pants begin to go.

Brother mine, and of misfortune! times are hard, but do not fret,  
Keep your courage up and struggle, and we'll laugh at these things yet,  
Though there is no corn in Egypt, surely Africa has some --  
Keep your smile in working order for the better days to come!  
We shall often laugh together at the hard times that we know,  
And get measured by the tailor when our pants begin to go.

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Now the lady of refinement, in the lap of comfort rocked,  
Chancing on these rugged verses, will pretend that she is shocked.  
Leave her to her smelling-bottle; 'tis the wealthy who decide  
That the world should hide its patches 'neath the cruel look of pride;  
And I think there's something noble, and I swear there's nothing low,  
In the pride of Human Nature when its pants begin to go.



**Men looking for work, 1930. National Library of Australia obj-141685124**

## ***Mulga Bill's Bicycle***

By A.B. "Banjo" Paterson

'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."

## *Clancy of the Overflow*

By A.B. "Banjo" Paterson

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".