

DAD

IN POLITICS

Steele Rudd



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DAD IN POLITICS *and other stories*

Dad in Politics

and other stories

by Steele Rudd (A. H. DAVIS)

illustrations by H. J. Weston



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Introduction to The University of Queensland Press Edition

In 1903 Arthur Hoey Davis was an Under Sheriff of the Queensland Supreme Court. He had already published *On Our Selection*, *Our New Selection*, and *Sandy's Selection*, and these books were enjoying increasing popularity.

To improve his position during his early years as a junior officer in the public service, he had taught himself Pitman's shorthand, ultimately becoming foundation Secretary of the Queensland Shorthand Writers' Association. For practice he used to take shorthand notes of legal proceedings in the Supreme Court, and he also frequently attended sessions of Parliament. In this way he came to understand Parliamentary procedure, a knowledge which he put to good use in *Dad in Politics*.

In 1903 the Government was looking for ways and means to save money and, late in that year, Davis was retrenched. There is little doubt in my mind that jealousy for his spreading fame as "Steele Rudd" was the cardinal reason for his removal.

Cabinet, through the Under Secretary of the Public Service, offered him a position in the Taxation Department at a smaller salary; he declined, adding to his letter in response to the offer the following lines:

He either fears his fate too much
Or his deserts are small
Who fears to put it to the test
To win or lose it all.

When he left the Justice Department he took up journalism full time, and without previous experience started *Steele*

Rudd's Magazine, a monthly publication to which the leading authors, artists, and poets of the day contributed. It was during the early stages of the magazine, in 1904, that *Dad in Politics* was written, but it was not published in book form until 1908, after *The Poor Parson*.

It is quite true that many of his characters were drawn from life and existed in the flesh. It is also true that these characters were quickly recognized by the subjects themselves and by the general public. After his retrenchment when he was writing about politicians, resentment in certain quarters was so great that there was a definite move to have him brought before the Bar of the House to be castigated for his satires.

My father was forty when I was born and, at the time I knew him, he held a mixture of Labor and Liberal political views (this of course in the time before the Country Party had come into prominence). He was always in sympathy with those not overly blessed with the material things of life, and was always an ardent champion of men on the land. He was an early and vigorous campaigner for the Queensland Farmers' Union, although it later failed, I think, for the lack of general co-operation among the farmers themselves.

This edition of *Dad in Politics* is a reprinting from the first edition, which was taken with very little textual alteration from *Steele Rudd's Magazine*. Some of the illustrations, however, differed and the University of Queensland Press edition has used the illustrations from the book edition. As in the original, *Dad in Politics* includes two chapters which are also in *Sandy's Selection*; and I am grateful to Angus and Robertson for their permission to use these chapters in this edition.

I have written this Introduction largely from memories of my father and mother, and family discussions as I grew up, together with information obtained from the rest of the family and from the various available documents and records. *Dad in Politics* was written some years before I was born, and has long been out of print. I am glad that the intervening generation, which has not had the opportunity to read this book, will now be able to appreciate a truly Australian story teller.

ERIC DAVIS
JULY 1968

Acknowledgment

Many of the stories in this volume have appeared in the columns of *Steele Rudd's Magazine*, *The Australian*, *The Worker (Q.)*, and *Life*.

I have to thank the editors of these papers for the right to republish in book form.

Two chapters of *Dad in Politics* have, with the permission of the publisher, been reprinted from *Sandy's Selection*, in order to complete the series.

A.H.D.

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DAD IN POLITICS

1. On the Stump

Smith, the member for our district, died one day, and we forgot all about him the next. Not that a politician is ever remembered much after he dies, but Smith had been a blind, bigoted, old Tory, and was better dead. Politicians are mostly better dead, so far as other people and their country are concerned.

One night Gray and Willins, and Mulrooney, and Fahey, and Charley Thompson, and Johnson, and a lot of others came to our place and asked Dad to oppose Mulligan, the "endorsed" candidate for Eton. Dad was taken by surprise. He opened his eyes and stared. He chuckled some, too; but the deputation was in earnest, and it waited for his reply.

"You're the man we want, Rudd," Gray said. "You know the country and the wants of the district, and what is best for the farmers, and you'd be able to make yourself heard."

Joe and Dave, seated near the fire, turned their heads away and grinned.

"You've only to stand," Mulrooney said, "and you'll get the seat."

Joe and Dave chuckled deprecatingly, then rose, and went on to the verandah.

Dad glared after them with ferocity in his eye.

"I don't think he would do for it, Mr. Mulrooney," Mother said by way of apology for Dad. Dad didn't agree with Mother.

"Why not?" he snorted. "Why th' devil wouldn't I? I'd tell some of them fellows," he went on, "what I think of them, an' what they've been doing for the country—th' robbers! Believe me!" and his eyes flashed fire.

"Well, you'll stand, then, Mr. Rudd?" Gray said again.

Dad stared first at one, then at another, and seemed in doubt.

"It's yer dooty, Rudd," Thompson drawled, and Thompson didn't care two straws whether Dad consented to stand, or whether he went away somewhere and drowned himself.

"We want a man," Fahey added, "who'll go to Brisbane an' put the sufferances of the farmers plainly an'—an'—well before Parliament—a man who'll talk t' thim, an' talk straight-forredly t' thim, an'—an'—tell this what's right an'—an' what ought t' be done. An' there's no one can do it better'n yeou."

Dad stared at the floor in silence. He seemed impressed with Fahey's argument.

"It's yer dooty," Thompson drawled again, filling his pipe.

Dave and Joe laughed loud, and left the verandah and went to the barn to husk corn.

At last Dad pulled himself together.

"Then I will!" he said boldly, and, rising to his feet, struck the table hard with his fist, and put the light out. "That's my word!" he shouted in the dark. Mulrooney struck a match, and Sarah re-lit the lamp.

"And when I *give* my word," Dad went on, "I alwez *keep* it." And he struck the table harder than before, and put the lamp out again.

"Goodness me!" Mother moaned; "what is the man doing?"

But Mulrooney struck another match and handed it to Sarah.

Dad then went into details, and the deputation expressed its delight with him and went away.

Next morning at breakfast, Joe asked Dave whom he was going to vote for, and Dave spluttered into his cup and splashed tea about the table. Sarah, at the bottom of the board, struggled to suppress her mirth. Dad, at the head, cleared his throat and scowled. Joe looked calmly at Dad and said:

"When are y' going to address the 'lectors?"

Dave bent his head and leaned heavily on his knife and fork and spluttered some more.

"Well," Dad answered severely, "my committee will arrange all that, I dare say."

Dave lifted his head and felt for something to wipe the tears from his eyes with.

Barty, seated opposite, pointed with his fork to Dave and cried:

"L-I-look at 'im!"

All of us broke into loud hilarity—all of us except Dad.



Dad Seemed Impressed With Fahey's Argument

He dropped his knife and fork and shouted:

"Look here——!"

But Dave and Joe rose together and hastened to the yard.

"Th' devil take them!" Dad growled, taking up his knife and fork again and proceeding with his breakfast, "and their confounded impudence!"

To our astonishment, Dad kept faith with the deputation, and prepared to contest Eton. He went with Gray and Thompson and travelled round the country and addressed the electors at the Middle Arm and Cherry Gully, and Bible Creek, and Tannymorel, and Hell-hole, and any place where there was a school or barn or shed or anything he could stand up in. And at nearly every place that Dad appeared he was received with joy and enthusiasm and made much of. Saddletop was the only place where he met with opposition, and then only from old Carey. Carey was jealous of Dad's prosperity and popularity, and jumped up at the meeting and accused him of all kinds of villainy and called him "Judas." But when Dad came off the platform and reached for Carey, Carey hurried out, and nothing more was heard from him until heavy lumps of blue metal began to thump and rattle on the iron roof, and punctuate Dad's oration with long intervals of disorder.

"Now, isn't he a low-down scoundrel!" Dad said to the audience, and they stood up and responded with a wild yell. They enjoyed Dad. His style and method suited them. He used plain language, and didn't quote statistics or poetry or scripture. And they liked Dad because he wasn't a humbug nor a sham; because he didn't go to their houses and ask after the health of absent members of the family whom he had never seen, and wish to be remembered to them; because he didn't compliment the wives upon having honest, hard-working, industrious husbands when he didn't know whether they had or not; and because he didn't hug and cuddle every baby in the electorate, and say they resembled their fathers or their mothers or someone. They respected Dad, too, because he was plain and honest, and when polling day came round they voted for him to a man, and with a big cheer put him in at the head of the poll.



He Travelled Round the Country and Addressed the Electors

We could scarcely believe it when the news came that Dad was in.

Dave said, "Well, I'm blowed!" Sarah danced about and clapped her hands and spoke of going to Brisbane; and Mother sat down and shed tears. And when Gray drove Dad home in the buggy we all gathered round and received him like a monarch. We had never honoured our parent so much before. Mother threw her arms round Dad and hugged him; Sarah took possession of his arm; Barty hung on fondly to the slack of his pants; Joe carried his top-coat; and Dave walked in the rear grinning. Dad stood it all well, too, and showed wonderful composure. You'd think he had been a member of Parliament all his days. When he had mounted the verandah he turned, and looking at us all said:

"To-morrow I'll have to go to Brisbane, an' be away all the session, an' you'll have the place to look after y'selves."

'Twas a welcome piece of news to us. It sent a thrill of delight through us. To everyone of us it was the happiest feature of Dad's political triumph. We hoped the session might last for the term of Dad's natural life.

Next day Joe drove Dad to the railway station, and he caught the train for Brisbane.

At Toogoom Dad was joined by another member of Parliament, a politician who conducted a newspaper and used its influence to belittle and vilify Dad because he was honest. He grabbed Dad by the hand and said he was delighted to see him, and congratulated him on his victory, and treated him just like a brother. Dad was astonished. Dad didn't know much about politicians then. He knows more about them now.



2. The Member for Eton

Arrived at Brisbane, Dad set out with his portmanteau for his old boarding-house on Wickham Terrace. He had scarcely entered the establishment when the boarders were rushing wildly into each other's rooms, calling out, "Esau is back." They all remembered Dad, and seemed pleased to see him again.

Next morning, at breakfast, Dad sat over a plate of sausage, and, in a loud voice, inquired the way to Parliament House. Several of the boarders directed him.

"Are you going to hear them speak, Mr. Rudd?" the boarding-house-keeper asked.

"Well—yes," Dad answered, "and to speak myself, p'raps."

They all stared at Dad then, and one who read the papers regularly, and had a memory for names, asked him if he was related to the Rudd who was returned for Eton.

Dad leaned back as if he was in a barber's chair, and laughed heartily.

"I'm 'im," he said . . . "It's me that beat Mulligan."

They all stared again and laughed.

"Really, though, Mr. Rudd?" the boarding-house-keeper asked meekly, and as if she secretly doubted Dad.

"Yairs," Dad went on, ignoring the lady, "I beat Mulligan easy enough . . . be three 'und'ed an' ten, I think it were."

"If I'd known you had a member of Parliament here, Mrs. Brown," a beery-looking boarder, the wag of the house, said, rising and leaning on the back of his chair, "I'd have taken off my boots."

There was a loud roar round the table then, and every eye was fixed cheerfully on Dad. Dad glared at the wag. The wag smiled placidly back at him.

"Well," Dad said, "that would be more than y' do when y' go to bed, perhaps."

They all roared louder then, and the wag changed colour and went away.

And one reached over and said, "Good man!" to Dad, and hit him hard on the back and made him spill all the tea out of his saucer, which he had just blown cool and was lifting to his head. Dad frowned. Then another boarder repeated Dad's retort to the wag, and the room rang with renewed hilarity. And the same boarder punched Dad on the back a second time, and caused a sausage to escape from his fork.

"Damm you!" Dad shouted, turning fiercely on him. But the boarder had folded his serviette, and hurried from the table, chuckling. So did the others.

Dad found his way to Parliament House, and entered the building as if he was proprietor of it. He seemed to be emulating in dignity and lordliness the member for Glengallon.

Several messengers and a calm, well-groomed, well-fed policeman approached Dad. They appeared to suspect he was a new, hairy sort of Guy Fawkes, with evil designs on the costly and sacred edifice.

"Where's th' place where they're speakin'?" Dad asked.

The Law pointed up a wide staircase, and said:

"But y' can't go there. . . Have you a ticket?"

Dad hadn't.

"Go along there, then," the policeman said, pointing through a doorway; "you'll get a ticket for the gallery, and go up the stairs."

Dad poked his way through, and a boy in brass buttons handed him a ticket in silence, and pointed up the stairs in more silence.

Dad blundered up like an elephant, his footsteps and false steps echoing all over the building. He reached the top breathless, and when his eyes rested upon a group of ordinary-looking people crouching in listening attitudes, he looked bewildered. A policeman, with white gloves on, and his hair oiled and parted in the centre, grimaced and motioned to Dad to sit down.

"I repeat, Sir, that the Government have made no efforts whatever to encourage the right people to come and settle here," came from the depths of the Chamber.

Dad looked down and saw all the eminent legislators of his country lolloping idly on the benches.

"Damn it!" he exclaimed in a loud voice, "that's where I've to be!"

Those in the gallery turned their heads and looked angrily at Dad. The policeman tiptoed up a few short steps and whispered a short warning into Dad's ear.

"Do you know who I am?" Dad said in a voice that travelled round the building and reached the ear of Mr. Speaker, down below, who turned his eyes on the gallery.

The policeman squeezed Dad's arm viciously to silence him, but he might just as well have squeezed one of the wooden forms.

"Do you know who I am?" Dad said again, in a louder key.

The policeman grimaced some more, and removed Dad's hat from his head and tried to force him into a seat. Dad recovered his hat with a violent wrench, and hit the policeman on the head with it, and knocked the parting out of his hair and planted a lot of dust in it. The gallery stood up to enjoy Dad. The policeman clenched his teeth, and pounced fiercely on Dad. But Dad put both hands to him, and shoved him right off his feet, and he fell down the short steps with a thud against a little man with a bald head, and crushed him under a form. The gallery forgot about the debate going on below, and, in one voice, cheered the new show. Dad expanded his chest and extended his nostrils, and stood game and defiant-looking, waiting for the Law to renew the attack.

"Clear the gallery!" came from Mr. Speaker.

Then there was commotion! In an instant three policemen appeared in the gallery and seized Dad, and rolled down the stairs with him. Dad yelled and fought with them like a Ned Kelly; and the Law had just sent for a cab to take Dad to gaol when the member for Toogoom appeared and recognised him. He explained matters, then took Dad into the refreshment room and calmed him.

3. A Scene in the House

The member for Toogoom became a sort of "best man" to Dad. He conducted him to the "Chair" and introduced him to Mr. Speaker as the member for Eton. The Speaker bowed profoundly to Dad, and Dad asked him how he was getting on, then signed his name, and took a seat on the cross benches, and sank deep into the costly leather cushions, and cleared his throat several times and groaned and glared composedly round the gorgeous chamber and up at the galleries. And those in the gallery stared down at Dad and grinned. And the members conversed with each other about him, and the reporters made notes of his arrival and his personal appearance, and the artists made sketches of him which no one but themselves would ever recognise.

There they lolled—seventy-two picked men; seventy-two paid representatives of different opinions, of different shape and shades and size; seventy-two imposing-looking politicians! Some of them were lean and long and weary-looking; some big, bulky, and bloated; some dejected; some jolly; some poetic; some pious; some had long hair; some had no hair; many of them wore spectacles; one an eye-glass; and one—the undersized prig of the galaxy—wore rich black curls.

The Minister for Lands rose to introduce "A Land Settlement Bill," and made a long speech. He said no country in the wide world was so liberal in matters of land as this country, and with eloquence and enthusiasm proceeded to reveal a new scheme for settling people on the land. There was never a Minister for Lands yet born who hadn't a scheme for settling people somewhere or other.

Dad screwed himself round, crossed his legs, and fixed his eyes intently on that Minister. You'd think he was preparing to enjoy a sermon.

"In the first clause of the Bill," the Minister went on, "provision is made for monetary assistance, and the principal aim of

the measure is to help those who have a desire to live a country life, to settle on the land in communities——”

Just here an oldish member named O'Reilly, sitting near Dad, with a wild-looking head of flowing white hair, and a strong Irish accent, said "Hear, hear!"

Dad glared aggressively at the Hibernian.

"There's nothing new in the village-community system," the Minister resumed. "It's older than the Norman Conquest."

Then he talked glibly about "grazing farms," and "homesteads," and "continuous occupation by the groups," and "undue restrictions," and "articles of export," and "open markets," and many other ancient and miserable platitudes.

Dad edged along the seat an inch or two, so as not to miss any of him, and unconsciously leaned on the hoary-headed one's tall black hat.

O'Reilly poked Dad in the ribs with a silver-headed walking stick which he was leaning on, and nodded to the beaver.

Dad scowled disdainfully, but didn't remove himself. O'Reilly poked him in the ribs again.

"Damn you!" Dad said, "what do you want?"

"Have y' not iny manners? Do not you see you're crushing me hat?"

The Speaker reproved O'Reilly. "Order!" he said stentoriously. "Order!"

Dad glared angrily at O'Reilly, then shoved the hat away, and again gave all his attention to the Minister.

O'Reilly continued to snarl audibly, and turned the whites of his eyes aggressively at Dad, and attracted the attention of members sitting behind. They laughed, and were in turn called to order by the Speaker.

"These co-operators, therefore," the Minister said, "will have to settle their disputes among themselves, except in matters of a criminal nature; and if they resort to any contentious proceedings—that is to say, if they go to law with one another—they will cease to be members of the society. This is a bold experiment——"

"An' a fool of a one!" Dad shouted in a voice that drowned the Minister's; and rising to his feet held up his hand.

"Order! Order!" the Speaker cried, eyeing Dad like an adder.



"An' a Fool of a One!" Dad Shouted

"Look here," Dad shouted, pointing his finger at the Minister.

"The hon. member for Eton must desist from interrupting the——"

The rest of the Speaker's rebuke was lost. The Chamber suddenly became boisterous. "Sit down! Sit down!" came from every corner.

Then a member, seated behind Dad, reached forward and pulled him down on the seat by the coat-tail.

Dad thought it was O'Reilly, and turned angrily on him, and shook his fist at him, and in a loud voice warned him to be careful. O'Reilly gesticulated, and showed his teeth to Dad and hissed that "he had been a member of the House for twenty-five years an' more."

Dad grunted contemptuously, and said he didn't care if he had been a member for fifty years!

O'Reilly turned the whites of his eyes at Dad again, then ignored him.

"It provides that in cases of destitution," continued the Minister, "certain allowances may be made to the wives and families of the men for a limited period at places away from the settlement. It would be impossible to take women and children to a settlement in its rough condition——"

"*Wha-a-t?*" Dad yelled, jumping up again. "What th' devil sort o' people do you——"

"Order! Order!" came sharp and angrily from the Speaker. "The hon. member must retract those words at once."

"Hear, hear! Hear, hear!" from those on the Ministerial side, mingled with loud cries of "Withdraw!"

"I've come here" Dad shouted, waving his hands about, "to see that the honest an' right an'——"

Cries of "Chair! Chair!" and "Sit down!" accompanied by loud laughter from the Labour party, overflowed the Chamber.

"I must ask the hon. member for Eton, once and for all," the Speaker said angrily, "to resume his seat." And he seemed to mean what he said.

Dad lifted his voice again, but "Chair! Chair!" and more Labour laughter, smothered him. It looked as if something serious must happen, but the member for Toogoom hurried

across the floor and talked persuasively into Dad's ear, and Dad gave way reluctantly and sat heavily down on O'Reilly's long hat and made it flat.

Then there was disorder.

"Why th' devil didn't y' look after it, then?" Dad snorted to O'Reilly, rising and releasing the battered beaver. "I haven't eyes behin' me."

"You're a clumsy elephant, that's what ye are!" O'Reilly whined, lifting his voice and straightening the beaver.

Dad turned and fell on O'Reilly, and took him by the collar and squeezed him hard into the cushion.

There was real commotion and excitement then.

All the members stood up. Some called "Shame!" others "Disgraceful!" People in the galleries leaned over and grinned and burst buttons restraining their joy. Messengers and miscellaneous members rushed eagerly through the lobbies and into the "refreshment room," urging absent ones to hurry and witness the fun.

"Lesh them fi' it out," the honorable member for Fillem-upagen murmured, hanging on fondly to the rim of the bar by the dimple on his chin.

The Speaker grew pale, and exhausted himself appealing for "Order." He might just as well have called "Butcher," or "Baker," or anything, for Dad was deaf to it all.

O'Reilly twisted his legs round Dad's neck and yelled in a shrill, hideous key, and hit blindly at Dad's whiskers with his fists. Dad straightened up and swung round, but couldn't shake him off. A small dog with no tail, which had been lying asleep in a corner of the Under-Secretary's gallery, woke up suddenly, and, seeing O'Reilly being swung round, rushed in and yelped vigorously at Dad. The Labour party broke into fresh bursts of hilarity. A messenger in a uniform hastened to eject the dog. The animal dodged through his legs, and barked at him. The occupants of the strangers' gallery lost control of their emotions, and hung over the railings, and shrieked cheerfully.

"Clear the galleries!" the Speaker gasped and created more commotion and disorder. At last several members seized Dad, and separated him from O'Reilly, and asked him to have some sense and not to be a fool. O'Reilly, bereft of collar and tie,

his white hair dishevelled, stood panting and gasping for breath; then suddenly, and with agility of a circus man, he divested himself of his coat, which he tossed fiercely to the rear. It spread itself out on the table, and upset a water bottle on the Statutes, and the fluid flowed into the lap of the aged Clerk of the Assembly, who jumped up in horror. Then his vest was ripped off with one pull and flung to the winds. It fluttered through the Chamber, and settled calmly on the Speaker. O'Reilly next tugged at his shirt, and whilst "Order!" and "Shame!" echoed all round, yelled a profane sort of prelude, then struck a pugilistic attitude and sparred round Dad and those who were restraining him, and bumped the table.

The member for Fillemupagen rolled into the Chamber, and hiccupped loudly above the din:

"Lesh 'im havesh it, Reilly—he's 'gainsh Fe'ration."

More loud laughter from the Labour party, and pathetic cries of "Disgraceful!" from the Conservatives.

The Chesterfield of the Assembly submerged in a high collar, rose and appealed for peace.

"I nevah in mai laife," he said, "witnessed anything so beastly bleggardly." Then he went outside the bar in disgust, murmuring, "Vulgah bleggards!"

Finally two or three members secured O'Reilly and conducted him to an anteroom, where they calmed and rehabilitated him. Dad sat down and glared round like an injured lion. Then the Premier, pale and trembling with indignation, rose.

"Mr. Speaker" he said, "it is with feelings of pain—with feelings of shame, Sir" (Hear, hear) "that I rise to refer to the disgraceful scene—the degrading exhibition of ruffianism—which this honourable House has just witnessed." (The member for Bordertown, with the clean shave, shifted his "chew" from the hollow of one cheek to the other, and said "Hear, hear!" then leisurely went on chewing some more.) "During the whole of the twenty years I have had the honour to hold a seat in this Chamber, Sir, I have never known an occasion when the honour and reputation of this House have been so insulted, so—er—dragged to the level, I might say, of the common public-house back-yard brawl, Sir." (Loud applause and shouts of approval from the Conservatives, intermingled with

"Rot!" and shouts of "What about the Derkin's incident?" from the Labour supporters and hiccoughs and "Queshun!" from the member for Fillemupagen, and "Order!" from the Speaker.) "The hon member for Churchland" (meaning O'Reilly) "is an old member of this House, Sir, and I'm amazed, Mr. Speaker—amazed, I say—and grieved that he should so far forget himself as to be guilty of such conduct—conduct only becoming—er—er ("Gentlemen," from the member for Burke, and laughter from the Labour party) "a lunatic, Sir!" (O'Reilly, who had re-entered the Chamber, here jumped to his feet and vociferated wildly, but was promptly pulled on to the cushion again by two other members, where he kicked and scratched, and yelled "I'm not a lunatic!"). "The honourable member for Eton" (turning and glancing in the direction of Dad) "is the youngest member of this House, and it may be well he should understand that if he comes here with no respect for himself, he might at least show some reverence and regard for the honourable position he happens to hold, and for the dignity and reputation of this Assembly." (Wild applause from the Ministerialists, during which Dad groaned contentedly and stared about the Chamber and up at the crowded galleries.) "And," the Premier continued severely, "I say the honourable member for Churchland and the honourable member for Eton should apologise to this House, Sir."

Then the Chamber rang with cheers, and triumphant cries of "Apologise!" from the Government benches.

The "Chesterfield" of the Assembly, in his lofty, lordly fashion, rose to gratuitously endorse the remarks of the Premier, and more confusion followed. The Independents and Labour members rose *en masse*, and bombarded him with cries of "Sit down!" "Chair!" "The member for Churchland," and "Let them apologise." Then the "Chesterfield" turned ferociously upon them, and, lifting his voice above theirs, shouted back:

"If you will have the mannahs to permit mai to be heard, I only wish to say that you are the maost vulgah borde of hoodlums that ever disgraced a Legislative Assemblay." And he sat down suddenly, mopped his flushed brow with a large silk handkerchief, adjusted his gorgeous tie, and muttered "Vulgah cads!"

"I rise to a point of order, Mr. Speaker!" yelled a broad-shouldered member, with a tremendous voice, across the Chamber. "Is the member for Bunya in order, Sir, in describing members on this side of the House as a horde of hoodlums disgracing——"

"Mr. Speaker," the Premier hotly interrupted, landing on his feet in a bound, "the member for Churchland and the member for Eton have been asked to——"

"I have asked for your decision, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order!" the broad-backed member yelled. (Cheers and "Hear, hear!" from the Labour party.)

"Chair! Chair!" from different parts of the Assembly. Then the Speaker, red in the face and angry-looking, pointed his sharp-edged features at the broad-backed Labour man, who was standing erect, and wagging his head, and said:

"If the honourable member for Bunya made use of the words complained of by the honourable member for St. George, such expressions are certainly unparliamentary, and must be met with——"

The Premier jumped to his feet again, and interrupted excitedly: "I regret to have to move, Sir, that your ruling be disagreed with." (Great disorder.) "According to May"—(more disorder and loud cries of "Chair!" "Respect the Chair!" and "Shame!" during which Dad rose and strolled out of the Chamber—so did the member for Toogoom and O'Reilly.)

"It is clearly laid down in May, Mr. Speaker, Clause 999, that——"

"Chair! Chair! Chair!"

"I must draw the attention of the honourable the Leader of the Government," the Speaker said, "to the fact that the question before——"

He was suddenly interrupted from an unexpected quarter. On his left at the bar of the Chamber fresh disorder broke out. The prig of the House rushed into the Chamber in fear and trembling, and his rich black curls standing straight up.

"Let go ov me! Let go ov me! Let go ov me!" rang out in a wild, shrill key, and Dad and O'Reilly, locked in each other's embrace, rocked and swayed about in the lobby, then with a heavy thud fell upon the carpets, their heads just inside the Chamber.



Then It Shook Him, and Kicked Him Down the Stairs

Wild confusion! Those who were not in a position to see what was going on stood up on the seats to get a view.

"Disgraceful!" the "Chesterfield" of the Assembly moaned; "a positive outrage!"

"Who'sh on top thish 'ime?" murmured the member for Filemupagen, with his chin resting calmly on his chest.

A spectator in the gallery—one of the unwashed who spent much valueless time following the debates—craning his neck to get a view of the struggle, overbalanced himself, and fell over, clinging with both hands to the balustrading, and kicking his legs about like a frog in water just above the heads of a bunch of Government supporters.

"Help! Help!" he shouted.

The bunch of Government supporters suddenly looked up, then took alarm, and divided and rushed across the floor.

The Speaker closed his eyes and moaned and perspired. The Chamber rang with a fresh burst of Labour laughter.

"O, my G—, help!" groaned the dangling form. All eyes were turned on it. But the long arm of the Law reached down from the gallery, and hauled the intruder back. Then it shook him, and kicked him down the stairs.

At the same moment Dad and O'Reilly suddenly disappeared from the floor. The member for Toogoom and some more dragged them away by the heels and saved the situation.

"Shocking! Shocking!" came from the Ministers, while bursts of smothered merriment continued to escape from the ranks of Labour, and for some moments the House didn't know where it was. Then the Speaker, perspiring and looking Bonaparte' after Waterloo, turned his face to the clock, and said he would "resume the Chair at seven o'clock."



4. "Order!" said the Speaker

The Speaker was a man of his word, and resumed the Chair at seven o'clock. There was a full House. The Chamber was ablaze with electric light; the costly leather cushions lined with honourable members—the representatives of public opinion—sitting erect, alert, expectant-looking, and for once they respected the property for which their country went in debt, and rested their huge feet on the expensive carpet. The Strangers' Gallery, creaking under the burden it had to bear, was packed from the balustrading to the back wall; and the eager, anxious crowd elbowed each other, and leaned over and gaped and grinned down upon the heads of the intellectual gathering below. The Ladies' Gallery, charged to the last inch of its carrying capacity with the wives, daughters, and female friends of members and influential citizens, was alive with absurd-looking hats and fans, and the air was filled with perfume. Press representatives—their ranks reinforced for the occasion—sat turning over the leaves of notebooks, preparing for action. The lobbies were filled with distinguished visitors, huddled together like sheep in a shed. Outside a multitude of disappointed ones repined their inability to gain admittance, and went home resolved to book seats and make sure of the next evening's entertainment.

Those who witnessed the scene before tea knew Dad, and pointed him out to the rest of the audience. In every part of the House, fingers were indicating him, and murmurs of "That's him—the big, hairy, old chap on the cross benches"—were audible in every gallery. Dad was the object of everyone's admiration, the idol of the evening. But there was no vanity, no pride, no priggishness, no self-consciousness, about Dad's political demeanour. There he sat, grave, stolid, stern.

Mr. Speaker, his black gown hanging loosely on him, and an extravagant plaster of embroidery protecting his chest, completed making some notes in a book, and, raising his head,

adjusted his pince-nez and glared significantly at the members. It was the signal to commence fire. O'Reilly, the member for Churchland, rose slowly and ran his fingers through his shaggy white hair till it stood fairly on end.

"Mr. Speaker," he commenced, "I wud just like to saay a few words in explanation uv what tuk place here in this——"
 ("Hear, hear.")

"Is it the will of the House that the honourable member for Churchland be heard?" the Speaker put in promptly, lowering his spectacles to the tip of his Napoleonic nose, and staring all round with an air of tremendous authority. (Enthusiastic cries in the affirmative and yells of "Hear, hear!" and "The member for Churchland!")

"I move that the member for Churchland be heard," came in sonorous tones from the broad-backed Labour member for St. George.

"The motion is that the member for Churchland be heard. Those in fa-vour say 'Aye'" (an unanimous burst of "aye," which made the spectators grin and giggle), "to the contrary, 'no.' The 'ayes' have it." (More giggling in the galleries.)

The member for Churchland proceeded:

"Well, Mister Speaker," he said cheerfully, "I wish to saay that I regrit as much and may be more than even the Primeer himself, or any mumber of——"

He was interrupted by the member for Fillemupagen.

"Mis'er Speaker," the latter hiccoughed, "I ri'sh poin' order." (Loud laughter.)

The Speaker frowned heavily on the member for Fillemupagen, and O'Reilly turned and hissed, "Will yez hould your tongue?" (Renewed laughter.)

"Order!"

"I ri'sh poin' order," the representative for Fillemupagen hiccoughed some more. (Cries of "Sit down!" and "The member for Churchland has the Chair!")

The Premier sprang to his feet.

"Mr. Speaker!" he shouted, "I most emphatically protest against the business of the country being continuously obstructed in this manner. (Hear, hear.) If we are to have a repetition of the disgraceful exhibition this Chamber was treated to this



He Was Interrupted by the Member for Fillemupagen

afternoon——" (Uproar, mingled with cries of approval from the Ministerial side of the House and vehement shouts of "You're obstructing yourself!" from Labourites.)

"I submish, Mis'er Spikker," the member for Fillempagen continued to ejaculate, clutching the back of the bench in front of him for support, "thash I'msh (hic) jushly ent'led to ri'sh to (hic) poin' order." (Great laughter from the Labour party, and "Positively disgraceful! Nothing but an ill-mannered lot of hooligans!" from the Chesterfield of the Assembly.)

"Will the honourable member be good enough to state his point of order?" the Speaker snapped, leaning forward and showing his false teeth. ("Hear, hear.")

"Certainly!" And the member for Fillempagen lowered his head a little and clung tighter to the back of the bench while he tried to remember things, and caused more merriment and an exodus of disgusted females from the Ladies' Gallery. "I callsh you 'tention to a breash stan'in orshers thish Housh, Mis'er Spikker." (Tremendous burst of hilarity and cries of "Sit down!") "Ev-shbody musher seen, an' you musher seen, Mis'er Spikker, pershon not mem'er thish 'Oush come in thish Cham'er throughsh roof." (Yells of laughter from the Labour party, dissent from the Government benches, and "Order, gentlemen, order!" from the Speaker.)

"There is no point of order in the question raised by the honourable member," the latter decided angrily. "If such a breach were committed, the honourable gentleman should have moved the suspension of the standing orders and called attention to it at the time. (Hear, hear.) Having allowed it to pass, the matter cannot be dealt with now." (Government cheers.)

"But I shay *dishincty*, Mis'er Spikker" (more Labour laughter, which was shared heartily by occupants of the gallery, and "Order!"), "I shay thish 'Oush *cansh!*"

"Order, order!" the Speaker shouted. "I ask the honourable member for Fillempagen to resume his seat." (Cheers from the Government and cries of disapproval from the Labour party.)

"I shay thish 'Ouse *cansh.*" (Uproar.)

"The honourable member must not further address the House," snorted the Speaker, with shot and shell in his eye.

"Tha'sh parshality——"

"Order!"

"It'sh not Bri'sh jus'ice!" ("Order, order!" and uproar.)

"Will the honourable member resume his seat?" (Cheers from the Government, laughter from the Labour party, and "If this bleggardly conduct continues, I will deem it mai duty as a protest to walk out of the Chambah," from the Chesterfield. Then renewed merriment.)

In the midst of all the commotion an excited old man in the Strangers' Gallery dropped a heavy walking-stick on the heads of the occupants of the cross benches, and consternation and confusion set in amongst the "Independents." They seemed to think the owner of the blackthorn was following in pursuit of his property, and fled in disorder, and took shelter on the Labour benches. Labour members welcomed them with loud guffaws, jeers, and hilarity. The Independents gazed up in scorn at the gallery, and the occupants of it, writhing in emotion, grinned back at them. The member for Mopoke Meadow, who had received most of the force of the falling missile, rubbed the back of his ear and shouted boisterously:

"Mr. Speaker, I appeal to you, Sir, for protection——"

"Order!" the Speaker retorted. (Laughter.)

"But, Mr. Speak——"

"Order! Order!" (Vehement merriment, in which the gallery heartily joined.)

The member for Mopoke Meadow sat down and in savage, indignant undertones murmured his opinion of Mr. Speaker. "A one-sided pig!" he said, and raised more merriment in his corner of the Chamber.

Again the Premier appealed for peace, but in vain.

"D——d undignified of you," the Chesterfield called out.

"Less decorum could not be expected from a Parliament of blackfellahs or South Sea Ailanders." ("Hear, hear," and laughter.)

But the Speaker had not settled with the member for Fillemupagen, who was still upon his feet.

"The honourable member for Churchland," he said with great dignity, "is in possession of the chair, and again I ask the honourable member for Fillemupagen to resume his seat."

("Hear, hear.")

"*Wons*h reshume *any* sheat," the member for Fillemupagen jerked out stubbornly. (Commotion.)

"The honourable gentleman is distinctly out of order in refusing to resume his seat."

"Mis'er Spikker——"

"Order!"

"Mis'er (hic) Spikker!" (Loud laughter.)

"Order, order!"

"I wish make pershonal exp'nation——"

"Order!" (and tremendous laughter from the Labour party).

"I have the chair, Mr. Speaker!" O'Reilly yelled in defence of his Parliamentary rights.

"The honourable member for Churchland is in possession of the chair, and the member for Fillemupagen must resume his seat."

"Wellsh, 'en (hic) I movesh——"

"Order!"

"Your rulinsb——" (Laughter.)

"Order, order!"

"Be dish'greed." (Roars of laughter.)

"Order, order, order!"

"Itsh not——" (Yells and howls of laughter.)

"Order!"

"Bri'sh justice!" (Shrieks of laughter.)

"Order, order!" (Howls of merriment and confusion.)

"It's *Kanaka* shustice!" (Dissent, cries of "Shame! Shame!" and "Order, order!" from the Speaker.)

"Yoush a *Kanaka* youshelf!" (Uproar, more cries of "Shame!" and "Name him!" and laughter from the Labour members.)

The Premier again rose amidst all the disorder and commotion, and excitedly called the Speaker's attention to the words of the member for Fillemupagen.

"I have never heard," he said, "of such disrespectful language ever being used in any British House of Parliament." (Cheers from the Government.)

"My attention having been drawn by the Leader of the Government to the most offensive and unparliamentary language addressed to this House by the honourable member for



He Offered to Fight the Speaker and the Premier on the Spot

Fillempagen," the Speaker said, "I ask that honourable member to withdraw the words 'You are a kanaka yourself,' and apologise to this House." (Cheers and uproar.)

"I shay so a- (hic) -gen!" (More disorder and prolonged laughter.)

"Upon my soul," the Chesterfield interjected, addressing himself to the Labour party, "but you fellahs are the greatest lot of jackasses it has evah——"

"Order!" And continued bursts of hilarity.

The Chesterfield obeyed the Chair, and the Premier rose again.

"I move, Sir," he said, "that the member for Fillempagen be suspended from this Chamber for twenty-four hours." (Renewed cheers from the Government, and shouts of disapproval from the Labour members.)

The motion was put and carried, and the Speaker passed sentence, and ordered the offending one to leave the Chamber.

Several members approached the member for Fillempagen to persuade him leave the precincts quietly, but the honourable gentleman was only beginning to feel his feet. He shoved his friends aside, waved his hands about, danced into the middle of the Chamber, and offered to fight the Speaker and the Premier on the spot, and started to feel and fumble for the buttons of his coat.

Excitement was tremendous. But before the member for Fillempagen could divest himself of any of his garments the sergeant-at-arms appeared and escorted him out amidst cheers and counter-cheers, howls, and hoots, and laughter.



5. A Steak in the Country

When the disorder subsided, O'Reilly finished his apology; then the Minister for Lands rose again to continue his second reading speech. "I do not flatter myself that this measure," he said, "which has cost me so much personal labour and trouble, will put an end to all the pauperism—all the distress and discontent that's in the country. But I do think, Sir, that it will go a long way—a very long way, indeed—towards removing from our cities and populous centres, those who are really worth helping." ("Hear, hear.")

"Then, y' can't mean it for y'selves," Dad interjected bluntly.

"Order!" the Speaker said, and members of the Opposition laughed and looked hopefully upon Dad.

"The village life of a Swiss peasant," the Minister went on, ignoring the interruption, "as long as he pays his taxes and gives his quota of conscription to the army of his country, is probably as enviable as that of any race in the world; and in village communities, there, they manage their own affairs, and manage them in a most amiable and agreeable manner. They cultivate their land without as much as even running up a dividing fence, and no differences or disputes ever arise between them——"

"Well, then——!" Dad shouted.

"Order!" the Speaker cried promptly.

"They're different from——"

"Order!" the Speaker cried again.

"From the people of this——"

"Order! Order!" angrily from the Speaker.

"This country."

"Order! Order! OR-DER!" (Great laughter.)

"For I knew a minister," Dad rumbled on. (More laughter.)

Just here the Speaker came down on Dad like an elephant throwing a handspring.

"The honourable member," he snorted, "must desist from



"What I Came Here to Say," He Roared, "I'll Say!"

making interruptions, and must not defy the authority of this House." (Applause from the Government.) Then Dad jumped up and threw his arms about.

"What I came here to say," he roared, "I'll SAY!" (Ministerial cries of "Chair!" and cheers from the Opposition.) "An' I say that I once knew a minister who owned some land—it was near a place his brother had"—(merriment)—"an' the two of them dealt in horses, an' so as the minister wouldn't be takin' an' usin' the wrong horses, the brother went an' cut all the tails off his mob." (Loud laughter.) "But what do you think that minister did?" (Dad paused amidst more laughter, mingled with appeals for "Order!") "He went and cut the tails off *his* lot." (Great hilarity, and useless appeals for "Order!" from the Speaker.) "It's *true!*" Dad yelled with emphasis, then sat down and leaned back contentedly on the cushions. (Renewed merriment.)

"Order! Order!" from the Speaker, who showed signs of exhaustion.

"And he's sittin' in this House at this moment!" Dad shouted again. (More hilarity, and cries of "Name!") But Dad didn't give any name. He merely glared across the Chamber at an ex-Minister of the Crown, who first went white, then green and red, and became the object of more laughter.

"Order!" the Speaker shouted. "Order!" And, standing up, fixed Dad firmly with his eyes and said:

"If the honourable member for Eton continues to violate the rules of this House, it will be my duty to take such steps as will maintain order and uphold the honour and dignity of the Chamber." (Loud cheers from the Government, during which Mr. Speaker sat back, and with great confidence and fearlessness removed his spectacles, and slowly and carefully wiped them with a large silk handkerchief.)

All eyes were directed to Dad. But Dad was imperturbable. He made no reply.

"This Act does not say, Sir," resumed the Minister, "that every thirty persons who come along with a code of rules in their hands 'shall' be recognised as a group; but if the Minister of the day is satisfied it is all right, then he 'may' recognise them as such. Each group will bear a name. One may be 'The

Golden Grain,' another 'The Big Yield'——"

"Or 'The Gooseberry' or 'The Angora Goat,'" yelled a sarcastic Labour member. (Laughter.)

"Even that would be preferable to 'The equal distribution' or 'The Kelly Gang,'" came from an old Tory.

"Order!" the Speaker yelled to him. "Order!"

"Good God, man!" Dad broke out, glaring at the Minister for Lands, "can't you think of something better to do than standing there talking such d—— nonsense?"

"Order!" the Speaker shouted. "Order! The honourable member for Eton is trying the patience of this House!" (Cheers.)

"I hope the honourable gentleman will try to control himself," the Minister for Lands said, turning to Dad. "No doubt he comes into this House pregnant with knowledge of the most practical kind concerning life on the land, but it is hoped he will be gracious enough to restrain himself till he has an opportunity of expressing his views in a becoming way." (More Government cheers.)

Then the Minister continued his argument.

"As I said before, there will be no roadways left open to litigation. (Hear, hear.) And I can only hope, Sir, that the good sense of the co-operators when they go on the land will be such that they will make a rough survey of it, and endeavour, as far as may be possible, to provide for the time when a division will take place. Possibly they may have surveyors among them who will see to a fair division of——"

"Well, I never did hear such rubbish from a sensible man!" Dad cried.

"Order!" the Speaker said.

"I never heard such nonsense from a lunatic!" Dad said further. (Loud laughter.)

"Then it's very evident you have never heard yourself speaking!" the Minister sneered.

"Make their own division!" Dad yelled, ignoring the sneer. "You know a lot about selectors!" ("Order!" and laughter.)

"You have a lot of sense!" ("Order! Order!")

"Why don't you put in the bill that the——"

"Order!" the Speaker cried. "Will the honourable

member——”

“Selector is to do the same as the German and the Irishman——” (Yells of laughter from the Labour party, and “Order, order!” from the Speaker.)

“Who——”

“Order! The honourable member for Eton——”

“Wanted to divide” (shouts of “Chair! Chair!” and laughter) “a paddock.”

With perspiration running off him, Mr. Speaker several times called “Order!” in a most peremptory manner.

“Well,” Dad drawled—this time rising to his feet.

“Order!” the Speaker shouted at him. “The honourable member cannot——”

“They took hold of some raw steak with their teeth——” (Wildest of merriment and “Order, gentlemen, Order!”)

“And pulled fer——”

“I ask the hon——”

“Th’ pick of th’——”

“Order! ORDER!” (Terrific laughter.)

“Paddick,” (Increased laughter, and cries of “Name him! Name him!”)

The Speaker took Dad in hand again, and cautioned him for the last time. Then the Minister for Lands was permitted to finish his speech in peace.



7. Kid-Gloved Selectors

When "order" had been restored by the Speaker, the Minister for Lands said that the bill had cost him a lot of labour, and thought and trusted it would become law, and that it would be the beginning of the country's happiness and salvation.

A lawyer on the Opposition side of the House rose at the same moment that Dad jumped to his feet. The Speaker caught the former's eye, and Dad sank back into the cushion.

The legal one cleared his throat, and said he had no fault to find with the bill except as regards the clauses which excluded settlers from having recourse to litigation in order to decide their disputes.

"That," he declared, with great emotion, "is depriving them of the rights and privileges enjoyed by the humblest subject of our glorious Empire. 'Tis a harsh, a sad, a sorrowful condition to impose upon any body of poor people; and I earnestly hope that when the bill gets into committee, Sir, this House will, in the interests of the people, see its way to amend it in the direction I have indicated." Then he sat down.

Dad rose again, and the Speaker caught the eye of the member for Mundic. "Mr. Doolan," he murmured; and Dad looked round and said:

"Well, I'm——!" (Laughter.)

"Order!" the Speaker cried, and Mr. Doolan proceeded. He stood with thumbs hooked to the armholes of his vest, and talked fluently and rapidly, and bowed and grimaced at intervals.

"It isn't a bad bill," he said, "and it isn't a *good* one; but, seeing the sort of Government it emanates from, the wonder to me is that there's any good or any intelligence in it of *any* kind." ("Oh! Oh!" from the Premier.) "It is a pleasant surprise, anyway. I never expected to find anything useful in it whatever. I would never expect to find anything useful in a measure introduced by the present unprincipled party that's in



Dad Sank Back Into the Cushion

power." (Dissent) "Only a fool or a madman could be capable of such wild expectations." (Laughter from the Labour party.) "To search an Act of theirs for anything beneficial to the people would be conclusive evidence of insanity. I would as soon think of hacking down the biggest and toughest ironbark tree that ever grew in the bush with half a shear-blade to get honey from the hollow of a limb that I knew contained nothing but flies and a dead 'possum." (Shrieks of laughter from the Labour party.) "But having received more wisdom than could reasonably be expected from a lot of political sundowners, I do not intend, therefore, to offer the bill much serious opposition. It would only be a waste of intelligence if I did. The clause prohibiting lawyers, though, from entering these communities and making money out of the settlers before they make any for themselves, deserves the approbation of every right-minded person in the country——"

"They haven't mine, anyway!" snapped a sorrowing legal member.

"I said every *right-minded* person." (Roars of Labour laughter.) "It is wise, in the first place, to prohibit their entering, because it will deprive the settlers of a reasonable excuse for murdering the whole pilfering profession; and, in the second place, it will save the wives and children of the settlers the humiliation of seeing their breadwinners hanged by the neck on an old wooden beam for a paltry and trivial offence, for having done the country a good turn, in fact." (More laughter.) "For this, if for no other reason, Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to offer any opposition to this contemptible bit of a bill." ("Hear, hear," and more laughter.)

Dad rose once more, and this time the Speaker bowed to him and murmured, "The member for Eton." Dad groaned, expanded his chest, extended his nostrils, and for several seconds glared in silence at the Minister for Lands. The Minister for Lands seemed to be Dad's "man." Members flocked in from the library, from the refreshment room, from every nook and corner, every rendezvous of the luxurious institution, to hear his maiden speech. Occupants of the galleries brightened up, and grinned and leaned over the balustrading, and kept the policemen occupied.

"Sir!" Dad shouted, in a voice that might have been heard across the river, "this bill is *trash*. It's *humbug!*" (Laughter.) "It's waste of *time* talkin' of it." (More laughter.)

"Well, you're not likely to waste any *sense* on it," from the Minister for Lands. (Applause.)

"No!" Dad yelled back at him. "Nor you didn't waste any sense on it, neither. The man who could think of such a thing as it has nothing in his head but —— nonsense——"

Commoion, laughter, and "Order, order!" from the Speaker.

"What do it all mean? Where is the use of makin' a lot of shabby, little camping grounds for a few broken-down swells—for a few fellows who want to go out farming with gloves on their hands and belltoppers on their heads, like this man's here" (pointing to O'Reilly). (Laughter.) "Findin' land and money and machinery and all the rest of it for men who've never even *seen* a selection—fer men who don't know a jug of milk from a jew lizard!" (Laughter.) "Fer men who don't want to take their wives with them, for fear they might hurt their hands or wet their feet or get sunburnt! (Cheers.) And they're to have rules made fer them, and a secretary to look after the camp, same as if it were a football club. My God! what sort of Ministers are ye at all?" (Loud laughter.)

"Order! Order!" the Speaker cried, and fresh laughter came from the Opposition.

"It isn't some good you want to do the country!" Dad shouted warmly. "It's harm—it's *mischief*——"

"Order!" the Speaker broke out again. "The honourable member must not——"

"Call it what you like," Dad rattled on. "It's bad—villainous!"

"Order! Order! The honourable member must not use language in debate which is——"

"Then why don't they do something that's honest—that's sensible. Why can they not help the people who are on the land *now*—people who've been there all their lives, workin' their hearts and souls and very eyes out among stones, and sand-hills, and bog-holes, and dry cricks, and the devil on'y knows what. (Great laughter.) Let them show they're in earnest by helpin' those poor deservin' people, and stop foolin' about with

gentlemen friends of theirs—these men who are only thinkin' they *might* go on to a selection if everything is made nice enough for them. (Applause from the Opposition.) Just fancy givin' them rations to go on with! God bless my soul, ain't there enough sundowners in the country already? (Loud hilarity.) And fancy puttin' good new ploughs in the hands of men with gloves on—men who don't know a swingletree from a piece of sugar-cane—to go scratching about their camps with! (Continued merriment.) Did I get flash machinery and money and a secretary to run after me with his inkpot, when I went into the bush forty years ago? (Hear, hear.) No! I had to take my wife and youngsters with me. They weren't left in town to be kept by the Government. (Cheers.) They put up with an old humpy with wide cracks in it, and took their chance against wind and wet and bad water, and no water, and snakes, and heaven knows what." (Laughter and cheers, and "Order!" from the Speaker.) "But they didn't mind—they didn't sulk and whimper and howl for the town. (More cheers.) They *worked*—worked night an' day, worked in the house, and in the yard, and in the paddicks, and on the drays, and beside the stacks. They weren't afraid of gettin' sunburnt. They had *courage*. They had hearts! (A burst of applause.) And many a time they went without a bit o' meat." (More applause.)

"Weren't there any 'possums or dingoes where you were?" squeaked the member for Coal Falls, from a distant corner of the Chamber. (Laughter.)

"There *was* dingoes," Dad said, jumping round, "but there was no donkeys. (Loud laughter.) I didn't meet any till I come here. (Renewed laughter.) And that was how my family, Sir, faced the land," Dad went on, "and hundreds of families are doing the same this very day. And if the Gover'ment have any honesty ("Order!"), if it have any shame (dissent), it have no intelligence (laughter from the Opposition), it will tear this bill up and burn it. ("Nonsense!" from the Premier.) For it's not wanted. It's no good. It's the work of a luna——"

"Order! Order!" the Speaker called. "The honourable member is violating——"

"Only a mad Minister would——"

"Order! Order! Order! The hon——"

"Would come here and say that a country that's already

loaded to the ground with taxes and paupers and rogues of politicians——”

“Order! Order!”

“A country that’s been a drag and a dead horse to the poor, hard-working man for God knows how long, should pay two pounds a week for keepin’ men’s wives in town to do nothin’! Why th’ devil——”

“Order! Order! Order!”

“Do he not let them have a trap and servants and a governess as well” (“Hear, hear,” and laughter), “and supply the men at the camps with merry-go-rounds and swings, so as they won’t get lonely and fret for their women?” (Roars of laughter from the gallery, during which the Speaker adjusted his glasses and cast dark, threatening looks at the occupants.)

A member seated at the table handed Dad a glass of water. Dad swilled it, and waving the empty glass about, fairly yelled:

“Do any sensible man think these men will stay on a selection when they get there?”

“Certainly, why not?” said the Minister in charge of the bill.

“Of course, *you* do,” Dad snorted. “*You* do, but you were never a sensible man!” (Rounds of laughter, in the midst of which an occupant of the Strangers’ Gallery was thrown down the stairs.) “You are an *unsensible* man!” (More laughter, and “Order, order!” from the Speaker.) “You are an in——an un——” (Language failed Dad, and the Chamber rang with more mirth.)

“You’re *no* man!” he jerked out. (Increased merriment.)

“Order!” interrupted the Speaker. “I must ask the honourable member not to indulge in personalities, but to confine himself to the bill be——”

“Well, where’s the sense,” Dad rolled on, “of leaving their wives in town? If they can’t go on the selection, and wash and starch and stitch and help to burn off like other women, what good will they be?” (Laughter.) “What good will it do the country? Do you call that settling people on the land? Taking people who don’t want to go by the scruff of the neck, and puttin’ them on a hundred and sixty acres, and givin’ them a secretary to polish their boots, while young fellows who take up places themselves are charged sixteen and twenty pounds

for surveyin', same as you did Mulrooney!" (Loud laughter.)
"Is that the way to settle them on the land? *Pshaw!*" (Laughter.)
"*Rubbish!*" And Dad sat down.



7. Behind the Scenes

Dad had now been three months in the "House," and was beginning to find his way about, and to understand the ways of the Institution. Dad enjoyed being a member of Parliament, and felt all the weight and importance of the position. He spent a lot of time about the building, looked upon it as a sort of home—a refuge—and every morning visited the library and hobnobbed and yarned with members, read the newspapers, and answered his correspondence. Dad's correspondence took a lot of answering, too; it required a deal of tact and skill and local knowledge to answer it properly. The correspondence gave Dad more trouble than his election, and came harder on him than sinking post holes or putting out a bush fire. Nearly every man in the Eton electorate was in communication with Dad—especially those who had opposed him at the poll. Some sent him points and information for his speeches; some required the railway freight for carrying produce to the markets reduced at once; some wished him to secure a level crossing near the siding; some wanted a grain shed; some more a Government dam; one end of the electorate desired him to obtain the grant of ten acres of land for a sports ground; the other end of it had no place to bury their dead, and instructed him to find out "how they were to go about getting a cemetery?" One wanted him to "find out quietly" if a certain piece of land owned by a neighbouring squatter for over twenty years wasn't "a reserve," and if it "couldn't be got some way." Another "had heard" that someone in Brisbane had a lot of "second-hand galvanised iron for sale," and asked him to find out all about it and let him know; another had sent a crate of fowls to a poultry dealer "over a week ago, and hadn't received no money for them," and wished Dad to "go and see the cove about it at once and get the money." Scores of them were "waiting anxious" to know if he had done anything "about gettin' Willie (or Tommy or Johnny or someone) on the Railway," while others had



Dad Enjoyed Being a Member of Parliament

sons yearning to be made policemen. And regularly each week the P.S. to mother's letter ran, "Sandy says for me to tell you he hasn't heard anything yet about being made rabbit inspector."

Dad was in the refreshment bar. The members for Mopoke Meadow and Fillempagen and the Government Whip were there, too. The Government Whip shook hands with Dad, and complimented him on the speech he made on the Land Settlement Bill. "For a maiden speech," he said, "I can assure you it was one of the best I have ever heard delivered in the House." Dad took a liking to that Whip then, and assured him there was a lot more he could have said. "But I'm not used to talkin' on me feet," Dad said. "If I'd been sittin' down as we're talkin' now, I'd have given it to them!"

"You did very well," the Whip went on; "and though I supported the bill myself, I candidly admit the force of everything you said." Then he asked Dad what he'd have to drink. Dad would have whisky. The Whip took some whisky, too; then broke new ground. He spoke of a motion which had been moved by the Leader of the Opposition to defeat the Dry Creek-Currajong Railway Bill, the voting on which was to take place in a night or two. "Why these fellows," he said, referring to the opponents of the bill, "are against the line passes my comprehension. The short and long of it is they're so ignorant that they don't know what they're talking about! Not one of them has ever been over the country the line's to go through; and I can assure you, Mr. Rudd" (laying his hand affectionately on Dad's knee) "that right from Dry Creek, where it's proposed to start this line, to Currajong—and I've been over every inch of it dozens of times, myself—is to be found some of the finest land that ever you set eyes on. There is not a foot of it bad, and the amount of country it must open up would simply mean that the whole width of those great, expansive rolling downs would, in a few years, be teeming with prosperous settlers of the right class, and this country would go ahead. And with your intelligence, and with all your practical experience, I needn't tell you how desirable that is to a young country."

Dad agreed with every word the Whip said.

"But all these fellows," the Whip continued, "are talking through their necks. For the life of them they can't see that this country is simply languishing for the want of intelligent farmers, and that before a farmer can do any good for himself on the land he must have a railway to carry his stuff to the market. *You know that?*"

Dad did.

Then the amiable Whip retailed and detailed more of the proposed railway's virtues and its glorious prospects, and the good intentions with which it would be paved. But he didn't tell Dad it was a job railway—that its construction would benefit a big syndicate only, or that it wouldn't bring a single farmer within a hundred miles of it, or any settlement worth talking about for the next hundred years. Neither did he tell Dad that some of those who were the most earnest advocates of the bill were members of the syndicate. He left that for a member of the Opposition to do later on.

"Well, I suppose, then," the Whip said, bringing matters to a head, "we can reckon on your vote?"

"Well," Dad answered, "I dare say—yes—perhaps—no doubt, no doubt."

Then it was Dad's turn to break new ground. He did it suddenly.

"How do you get a man on rabbit inspectin'?" he said.

The Whip smiled. "How? By saying the word. By simply putting him on yourself."

Dad stared.

"Why, what is it? Who's the man you want to put on?"

Dad unbosomed himself, and told the Whip all about Sandy. Just then the Minister for Lands entered the refreshment bar.

"You know Mr. Rudd, Mr. Carter?" the Whip said, drawing that gentleman's attention to Dad.

"Well, after the spirited speech he made against me the other night," the Minister said, with a broad smile, and shaking hands enthusiastically with Dad, "I ought to."

Then Dad shook.

"Though we may be bitter opponents inside the Chamber, Mr. Rudd," the Minister added, "there's no reason why we



"Different Fellow to What I Thought He Was"

shouldn't meet on friendly terms outside."

Dad felt like a criminal. The Minister's good nature and affability softened his heart.

"Mr. Rudd," the Whip put in, with a knowing look at the Minister, "I understand, has a little matter he wants fixed up which comes under your department."

The Minister pricked his ears.

"I'll be very pleased," he said, looking at Dad. And once more Dad went into details regarding Sandy's aspirations.

"By Jove, then!" the Minister exclaimed, "you have just spoken in time. There's a vacancy of that description at this very moment, if I'm not mistaken."

Then, after reflecting:

"I'll tell you what" (placing his hand on Dad's broad shoulder). "Come round to my office—say about two o'clock tomorrow, and we'll talk it over."

Dad said he would, and the Minister returned to the Chamber.

"That was easy enough," the Whip said, with a triumphant wink at Dad.

"Different fellow to what I thought he was," Dad murmured.

"Oh, a good fellow—splendid chap—real white man, Carter," the Whip said; then added confidentially, "You can always get any little thing like that fixed up if you keep in with Ministers. And it's worth your while—take it from me!"

The members for Mopoke Meadow and Fillemupagen strolled into the Chamber, and in a while were followed by Dad.



8. Under the Influence

The member for Quondong—a tall, thin, pale, stately, old man, flying a piece of blue ribbon in his coat, rose and moved:

"That owing to the spread of drunkenness and debauchery throughout the country, it is the opinion of this House that it is desirable that no spirituous liquors be sold at the refreshment-room bar or in any part of this House."

"My object in moving this resolution," he said, "is that this country may lead Australia—may lead England—may lead the *world*, in fact—in virtue and sobriety."

"Leadsh y' gransh (hic) musher!" hiccoughed the member for Fillemupagen. (Laughter.)

"Order!" the Speaker said.

"That the cause of Temperance, Sir, should advance and triumph in this country is the one great wish—er—er—the one great wish that's nearest and dearest to my heart." ("Hear, hear.") "With this end in view I have fought the Demon Drink both on the platform and in the Press, Sir, for the——"

"Dish ye ever fi' him insh cellarsh?" asked the member for Fillemupagen.

Loud laughter, in which "Fillemupagen" himself joined heartily.

"Order!" roared the Speaker. "Order, gentlemen, order!"

"——for the greatest part of my life. I hold in my hand here," the temperance one went on, "statistics which show that the consumption of intoxicating liquors per head of population, men, women, and children, for last year amounted to the dreadful sum of £8 per head——"

"Thash includsh grog drunksh ash merishun," interrupted the member for Fillemupagen. (More loud laughter, and "Order, order!" from the Speaker.)

"What I desire this House to do in regard to this bar, Mr. Speaker, is to wipe it out—to wipe it out in the interests of

sobriety, in the interests of morality, in the interests of wise and sensible legislation——”

“What do you mean?” angrily from the Premier.

“I will tell the honourable gentleman what I mean. I mean that while a refreshment bar is attached to this House it will stand as a bad example to the rest of the country; it will stand for evil; it will stand as a temptation to members to frequent it and waste time that should be spent in considering and studying measures that are brought in by the Government for the benefit of the country.”

“You are talking nonsense!” from the Premier.

“Hear, hear!” from Government supporters.

“He is most insulting!” the Chesterfield of the Assembly called out “Devilish unfaiah!”

“Mr. Speaker,” the man of temperance hammered on, “I venture to say there is a great deal more of this country’s business transacted in that bar” (pointing his finger dramatically at the bar door) “than there is in this Chamber!”

Loud cries of “No, no!” and “Shame!”

“I say ‘Yes,’ Mr. Speaker!”

“That is a direct insult to honourable members,” the Premier shouted.

“I have no desire to insult honourable members, but I make bold to say that when members—I do not say every member of this House—far from it—but a good percentage of them—indulge in spirituous liquors during the sitting hours of this House—their intellects must, to a very great extent, be blunted and clouded.” (Indignant shouts of “Rubbish!” and “Brightened, you mean!”)

“And foolish and ridiculous legislation must be the result.” (“Bah!” from a member of the Ministry.) “I earnestly hope on behalf of the great body of temperance people of this colony that the House will aid me all it can in this matter; and should this motion be carried without going to a division, it will be one of the proudest moments of my life.” (“Pshaw!” from the Premier, and laughter.) “One of the principal planks, Mr. Speaker, in the platform of the Labour party, of which they boast so much, is reform, and we hear it said every day that the members of that party are also pledged to temperance. That

being so, I trust, then, that those gentlemen will show their sincerity in the principles they advocate by supporting this motion, and assisting to abolish strong drink from the precincts of this House."

There was a heavy silence.

Then the Premier rose.

"Mr. Speaker," he commenced, "this motion is a farce—a stupid shriek" (great cheering), "and the honourable member in moving it went out of his way to insult this House." (More cheers.) "I have been a member of this House, Sir, much longer than the honourable gentleman, and I say emphatically that never yet have I seen a member under the influence of liquor." (Cries of "Hear, hear!" from the Government, mingled with smothered laughter from the galleries.) "I do not say that some members of this House do not take a glass of whisky when they require it—I take one myself sometimes" ("Qui' rish!" from the member for Fillempagen, and laughter from the Labour benches), "but to say they could not take an intelligent part in the work of this House is nothing but a base slander and a deliberate insult." (Wild shouts of approval.) "This is not the first nor the fifth occasion that we have heard this cold-water speech of the honourable gentleman's" ("Hear, hear") "and it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that he would have served a more laudable object had he remained in his electorate, and lectured teetotalism in the highways and byways and back yards of that locality." (Vociferous applause from Ministerialists.) "I know of no other part of the colony—and I'm familiar with the whole of it, Mr. Speaker—where his dreary, cold-tea dissertation would be appreciated." (Laughter.) "It is certainly not relished by sober, sensible men, and is, therefore, resented in this Chamber." (More cheers from Ministerialists, and "Mosh 'suredly!" from the member for Fillempagen.) "I think it a piece of gross impertinence on the honourable gentleman's part to preach temperance to this House." ("Hear, hearsh!" from the member for Fillempagen.) "If I want a glass of grog, Mr. Speaker, I will always *have* it." (Cheers.) "And I will not consult the honourable member's feelings on the matter, either." (Great cheers.) "Neither will I, when he requires his cup of cold tea, expect him to consult mine." (Loud laughter.)

"I regard this motion as a miserable and contemptible slur upon this House" (Yells of applause), "and I feel sure it will meet with the fate it so well deserves."

Amidst more cheers the Premier sat down, puffing hard and mopping his flushed face with a handkerchief.

Others rose in quick succession, and condemned the motion. The mover replied; then the member for Fillempagen pulled himself together and faced the chair.

"Mish' Spikker" (laughter), "on thish bill" (cries of "No, motion!") "I'm mush 'blished—on this *motion* I'm wish Premier——"

"I would be sorry to have you with me unless as a convert," interjected the temperance member.

"Jusho—ash convert—ash blue (hic) ribbonsber" (loud laughter). "There's no harmsh at allsh, Mish' Spikker, in blue (hic) ribbonsb—no harmsh at all" (laughter). "Ansh if a mansh likesh wearsh it—wellsch I shay, *leshim*." (Great hilarity.) "Bush, I alsho zhay—I alsho zhay—i'll be sorish daysh forsh country, Miss' Spikker, whensh bar thish 'Oush closed up, ansh blue (hic) ribbonsh mee'ings held in thish Cham-er." (Loud Labour laughter, and "Order, order," from the Speaker.) "Ash mem'er this 'Oush for fifeensh year I deniesh shta'ment thash mem'ers eversh inca'blesh." (Loud laughter.) "I'sh never sheen shingle (hic) onesh s-s-s-shim'lated." (Screams of hilarity.) "Mosh shober lot mem-ers—mosh shober 'Shembly insh *worlsh*." (Roars of merriment.) "Doesh hon'ble mem'er wish thish 'Oush join temransh league?" (Prolonged merriment.) "Shupposh did? Woush it makesh a' differensh? I shay mosh 'suredly *nosh*." (Yells of Labour laughter, and cries of "Order, gentlemen, order!" from the Speaker.) "Doeshin' temransh people drinksh?" ("Shame!" from the mover of the motion, and laughter from the Opposition.) "Coursh you shay *shamesh*, bush 'ey *do*. I *knowsh*!"

"That is false!" from the man of temperance.

"Ish *truesh*—Bible *truesh*!"

"A wicked slander!"

"Order!" the Speaker said. "The honourable mem——"

"Yoursh shlanered this 'Oush, y'selfsh!"

"Order, order!"

"Thish motion, Mis' Spikker, ish sim'ly col' warrer cry, an' mush be 'poshed." (Loud laughter.)

Then the House divided, and amidst merriment the motion was lost by 41 to 2, the member for Fillempagen voting for the motion, in error, along with the blue ribboner.

9. The Rabbit Inspector

Next day. An air of prosperity pervaded the Lands Department. Several large estates had been re-purchased by the Government at boom-or-burst prices, and every draftsman on the premises had his head buried in a map or a plan or something; electric bells were ringing; messengers rushed up and down the narrow, dingy corridors of the decayed, old rookery, while clerks, with high collars and nicely-parted hair, and laden with bundles of papers bandaged with red tape, hurried from the door of one room to another.

A pale, poorly-dressed, careworn, anxious-looking woman, of middle age, with an infant in her arms and two toddlers clinging to her skirts, entered the building and asked a messenger if Mr. Brewer was engaged. Mr. Brewer was her husband. The messenger said "he'd see," and hurried to the other end of the building. In a while the husband, a thoughtful, capable, ill-paid servant, came into the corridor.

"Have you heard yet?" the wife asked, a half-hopeful, half-anxious expression mounting her face. The man glanced cautiously up and down the corridor, then over his shoulder, to satisfy himself no one was listening, then lowered his voice and said:

"I've just been in with the Under-Secretary——"

"Yes, yes!" the wife broke in eagerly, expectantly.

"And he's recommended me for the billet——"

"Oh, I'm so glad, Tom. Do you think——"

"Sh!" the husband whispered, glancing round again. "Mussn't speak so loud."

"I am glad, though. How much will it be—a forty pounds rise?"

"Forty-five."

"Forty-five? £135 a year."

"Of course, I haven't got it yet," the husband added, with just a suspicion of uncertainty in his voice.



A Pale, Poorly-Dressed Woman

"But you *will*, though, Tom, when the Under-Secretary has recommended it?"

"I think so, but you mustn't speak about it yet awhile."

The wife assured him she wouldn't, and, with hopes of promotion and prosperity in her heart, turned cheerfully away with the mites and left the building.

At two o'clock Dad was at the Lands Office. He told a messenger that he was a member of Parliament, and was hurriedly shown into the Minister's room. The Minister rose and shook him by the hand and said:

"Sit down till I finish signing some papers."

Dad dropped heavily into a costly chair lined with leather, and stared up at a row of life-sized pictures hanging on the wall—photographs of ex-Ministers encased in expensive frames, paid out for out of public money.

"Well, now, let me see," the Minister mused, putting down his pen, "you were saying something about a clerkship?"

"A *rabbit inspector*," Dad said, correcting him.

"Ah, yes, yes there is such a vacancy, I remember now."

Then, after reflecting:

"Is this man you speak of a trustworthy fellow?"

"*He's me son-in-law*," Dad said sternly, "*Sandy*. You know he married Kate."

The Minister didn't ask for further information. He nodded and grinned, and told Dad it would "be all right."

They talked for a while about land, and selectors, and wheat, and things the Minister didn't know anything about. Then the Minister assured Dad again that "it would be all right," and Dad fervently shook hands with him and came out.

When Dad had gone the Minister rang for the Under-Secretary, and discussed the vacancy with him. The Under-Secretary mentioned the name of Mr. Brewer.

"Brewer?" the Minister said. "Is he someone in the Department?"

"For twenty-two years," the Under-Secretary answered "He's only receiving £90 a year, and he's an excellent officer, and I would like to see him get the position. This is his

application."

He placed the document before the Minister.

It ran:

"I have the honour to most respectfully apply for the position of rabbit inspector for the district of Mingoolooloo, rendered vacant by the death of Mr. James Smith. I would ask to be permitted to state that I have now been in the service for twenty-two years, and for the last ten years have not received an increase of salary; and would further ask for special consideration on the ground that I have a wife and family of eight children to support, and regret to admit that I find it a hard struggle indeed to provide them with even the bare necessities of life out of the small salary of £90 per annum. Trusting the Honourable the Minister will be pleased to favourably consider my claim to promotion,

"I have the honour to be, &c.,

"THOMAS BREWER."

"Is he a good man, this?" the Minister asked, looking up at the Under-Secretary.

"A splendid officer, Mr. Carter. A really good all-round man."

The Minister reflected.

"H'm," he said, "H'm."

Then after a silence:

"Well, I'm afraid we can't give it to him this time, but we'll put him down for five pounds on the Estimates, next year."

Then he minuted the papers: "Sandy Taylor to be appointed at a salary of £180."

"Mr. Brewer, the Under-Secretary would like to see you," said a messenger.

Poor Brewer! He fouled the copying-press, and fell over the tall stool in his excitement and eagerness to obey the summons and learn of his promotion. He felt he had "got the billet," and his heart palpitated and his eyes shone as he entered the Under-Secretary's room. The latter looked up.

"Well, Brewer," he said, with a ring of genuine sorrow in his voice, "I did all I could for you, but——" He seemed to think it wasn't necessary to say more.

Poor Brewer! His hopes and his heart and every internal part of him dropped. He turned pale. He stared stupidly. He felt ill.

"I'm sorry," the Under-Secretary said, "very sorry, but—" And Brewer, broken-hearted, turned and went back to his £90 a year. And he didn't utter one word of reproach or profanity; he didn't even curse any of the scheming, unprincipled politicians who pretend to run the country in an honest way.

The House was in Committee. The Lands Office Estimates were under discussion, and numerous awkward and ugly questions were being asked the Minister. One inquisitive member of the Opposition wished to know how it was that an influential justice of the peace in the Minister's own electorate became the proprietor of a Government reserve. Another, who had discovered some thing suspicious in connection with sales of land, desired to be informed why the Department had paid away several thousand pounds of borrowed money to a certain gentleman as commission for merely "introducing a purchaser" who was already in negotiation with the Department over the property in question. For several hours the Minister defended himself and his Department by indulging in recriminations and piling abuse and banter upon the heads of those whose duty it was to ask for the information. Finally he sat down with a triumphant smile on his face. But his opponents hadn't finished with him, not by a long way. The member for Cross Roads rose, flashing a bunch of loose papers in his hand, and in deep, sonorous tones said:

"Mr. Chairman, I have a matter of importance to bring before this Committee—a matter which, I feel sure, when all the facts are fully stated, will make the Honourable the Minister for Lands tremble in his official shoes, if it doesn't actually cause him to hang his head in shame——"

"That is only your impertinent opinion," interrupted the Minister.

"And I think it will also be the opinion of every member of this Committee before I have finished," retorted the member for Cross Roads.

Then, after an impressive pause:

"On the honourable gentleman's estimate it will be seen, Mr. Chairman, that a rabbit inspector is provided for at an increased salary of £180." (Here Dad turned suddenly in his seat and gaped wonderingly at the member for Cross Roads.) "The honourable member for Eton, I see, is already keenly interested. Now, Mr. Chairman, this rabbit inspector's name, I am told, is Taylor; and he happens to be the son-in-law of a member of this House." (Cries of "Name!") "Well, then, it's the member for Eton." (Cries of "Oh, oh!" and laughter.) "And, if my information is correct, the appointment was given to this gentleman upon a promise by the member I have named to support the Dry Creek-Currajong Railway Bill, which was introduced to this Chamber by the Honourable the Minister for Lands——"

"An infamous falsehood!" shouted the Minister, which was followed by uproar, and "Order, order!" from the chair.

"I said I might—or perhaps I would!" Dad roared. (Sensation and yells of "Oh! Ah! We're getting at the truth now!" from Labour members.)

"Yes; we're getting at the truth now," the member for Cross Roads continued, "and for this half-promise, then—this perhaps-I-might sort of promise, Mr. Chairman—the honourable gentleman appointed the son-in-law of the member for Eton, who is not in the service, over the head of an unfortunate servant who had been in his Department for no less than twenty-two years—whose salary was only £90, and who had a family of eight children and a sick wife to support on this miserable pittance; and, worse than all, made the appointment in direct antagonism to the entreaties and supplications of his Under-Secretary; and despite the fact that this son-in-law, in his written application for the post, which I now hold in my hand" (waving the document) "admitted he had never seen a rabbit in his life." (Disorder.) "If this, Mr. Chairman, is not a clear case of bribery and corruption, as well as Ministerial heartlessness, then there never was one" (renewed disorder), "and I leave the Minister to clear himself of this dirty business as he may think fit." (General confusion, mingled with cheers and cries of "Shame!")

The Minister bounced to his feet.

"Mr. Chairman," he yelled, "this is not the first time nor the fifth that the honourable member for Cross Roads has attempted to bring a charge of corruption against me and blacken my good name, and each time he has sought to do it in a most vile and dastardly manner. I deny the charge *in toto*, and challenge him to bring evidence to prove the truth of his statements." (Ministerial cheers.) "The appointment of this rabbit inspector was made strictly upon its merits. I went carefully into the matter, and I have no hesitation in saying before this Committee that the man selected was the best fitted for the post." (More Ministerial cheers.) "And I claim the right, Mr. Chairman, to administer the affairs of the Department over which I have the honour to preside according to my lights and learning and without consulting the honourable member, and without the least fear of what he might think or have to say." (Tremendous Ministerial cheers.) "And I say further that no promise, or hint of a promise, to vote for the bill mentioned was ever made by the member for Eton to me, nor did any conversation ever take place between us in regard to it. The whole thing is a wicked fabrication, and I do not know what the honourable member for Eton alluded to when he interjected that he promised 'he might or that perhaps he would.'"

"It wasn't to you I said it; it was to this man over here!" Dad blurted out, pointing with his thick middle finger to the Government Whip. (Fresh sensation, and more cries of "Oh! Oh!")

"Who? Me?" the Whip retorted, feigning surprise. "It's a deliberate lie!"

"Order, order!" from the chair. "The honourable member must withdraw."

The Whip withdrew his words, and smiled at Dad. Then Dad stood up, and amidst much confusion made a clean breast of what transpired in the refreshment room, but reminded them that he did not vote for the bill.

"And, Sir!" he roared with much force and dramatic effect, "I say here that I *did* ask the Minister for a billet for my son-in-law, Sandy, and I thought I had a right to, but I didn't know till now that I was doing a poor man with a family and a sick wife out of his rights; and if what that member says is true"

(pointing to the member for Cross Roads), "then I can tell him that in twenty-four hours that billet will not be held by my son-in-law." (Loud cheers.) "I never did a man harm in my life, Sir, and I'm not going to commence now." (Great applause, during which the Minister for Lands left the Chamber.)

And Dad was as good as his word. In three days Sandy had resigned, and a fortnight later the appointment of Thomas Brewer as a rabbit inspector appeared in the "Government Gazette."

10. The Land Betterment Bill

Dad had now been a member of Parliament for several years, and had gained a reputation for fearless, violent debating, and for hard, practical common-sense.

The continuous Government, which had ruled the country interminably—a Government which had been impeached and impaled in Parliament and on platform—howled and hooted down by its opponents as a band of political bushrangers and enemies to the country and every one in it—had fallen, defeated by the ambition of some of its followers—followers who all along the line had supported and applauded its actions, whether good, bad, or indifferent. For the prospect of position and power they promptly deserted and joined the Opposition. Even its Speaker cleared out of the chair one night by the back way, and was missing in the morning. In a casual sort of way he became Premier of the new combination, which called itself the "Coalition Government"—the Government of "Reform and Progress"—then it sat down and formulated a policy. When the document was finished it looked well. They hoisted it high above Parliament House; brandished it over the heads of the electors; said it would right all the wrongs that had been done by the old Party; declared its mission was to relieve the people of the weight of further taxation; to bring about high wages and cheap food and clothing and lots of work for the poor man; to release civil servants from their load of retrenchment; to build a network of light railways throughout the land—in fact, to GO STRAIGHT, and be a good, righteous honest Government, and God knows what! And in this grand garb—with this glorious Policy in its two hands—it went forth to the country.

"Our manifesto," said the new Premier, "is the same as our opponents', but with this difference—we mean it; *they don't.*" And in its excitement the country believed him, and sent his party into power with a large majority, a lot of shouting, and

several big, noisy banquets. Then once more the country threw up its hat, and hurrayed before finally sobering itself, and settling down to wait for the new prophets to perform their miracles—for the promised prosperity to set in, for the millennium to come up over the horizon. And while it held its breath and waited, the new Parliament got together and met much in the same way that the old one used to meet. It was a great and glorious occasion. The band played. People crowded into the House and thronged the galleries. The Chamber presented a new and strange appearance. The Government side of it was crammed. Had any more been returned by the people to support that Premier, they would have had to sit outside and support him on the steps. Numerically, that Government was formidable. The dozen or so remaining of the old defeated party were in possession of the Opposition benches, and none of them seemed to enjoy their promotion. Some of them looked sorry, some sad, some bored, some bitter, some battered; altogether they looked like the sole survivors of a great wreck.

The proceedings opened with prayer and adjourned in wrath. For several weeks they opened and adjourned in like manner. Then one evening a piece of policy—the part that they had left behind in the drawers when they went to the country—was unfolded, and business commenced.

The Treasurer, a sturdy, pompous, Cromwellian sort of politician with a Scotch accent, rose and began his second reading speech on "A Land Betterment Bill." He explained all the beauties and perfections of that bill; said he had a lot of faith in it; that it was to be the salvation of the country, and was confident that members would find the principle embodied in it simple and easily understood. "Whoso maketh a thing," he said, "whoso createth a value, to him that thing or value belongs." (Loud cheers from the Government benches.) "Let me illustrate my meaning," he went on. "Suppose John Smith buys 100 acres of land at £1 per acre; and suppose further that he improves and clears that land, or spends money or labour on it equal to £4 per acre, then everyone must recognise that John Smith has a property right in that land to the extent of £500." Everyone did; they got up and cheered the prophet. "But," he continued confidently, "further suppose

that a railway is built into the district where that land is, and the value of John Smith's holding is increased thereby in value from £5 to £8 per acre, then it must be clear to everyone that if John Smith has a property right in the £5 per acre which he created, the community which added another £3 per acre to the value of the land has a property right in that increased value——"

" 'Tis a *lie*; 'twould be a robbery!" Dad shouted.

Dissent.

"Order!" the Speaker cried. "The honourable member must not impute——"

The rest of the rebuke was lost in a loud "Hear, hear!" that came from the Government.

"So long as John Smith can fairly claim," the Treasurer went on, "that his land is only worth £500, then this bill does not propose to ask one penny from him, but when John Smith himself admits that the community has added a value to his land, then this bill will ask of that value from John Smith——"

"My God!" Dad exclaimed, throwing his head back and opening wide his mouth. (Loud, derisive laughter from the Government, and "Order!" from the Speaker.)

"I submit that the equity and moderation of such a proposal," the Minister resumed, fanning the air with pages of his written speech, "cannot be disputed" (hear, hear), "and, as Mill pointed out, the claims of the community——"

"Who th' devil is Mill?" Dad shouted, leaning forward in his seat. (Great laughter.)

"Order, order!"

"Windmill!" responded the member for Pine Tree in a loud voice from a distant part of the Chamber.

More laughter, and again "Order!" from the Speaker.

"Yes, the Treasurer is the mill," the member for Targo rasped out from the Opposition side, "and the honourable gentleman representing Pine Tree supplies the wind." (Loud laughter from members generally—from all except the member for Pine Tree.)

"Order!" the Speaker demanded angrily. "I must ask honourable members to allow the Treasurer to proceed with his speech without interruption." (The merriment ceased.)

"The claims of the community in this respect," the Treasurer went on, "would long ago have been recognised but for the ascendancy of landlords; and the judgment of Mill——"

"What th' devil have he to do with it?" Dad roared, jumping to his feet.

"Order! Order!" from the Speaker. "Chair! Chair!" from different parts of the Chamber, and "Sit down, you ox!" from the representative of Pine Tree. Dad shook his first in the direction of the latter and yelled:

"Not fer the askin' of an ass wud I sit down!" (Renewed merriment and laughter in the Strangers' Gallery.)

The Speaker lifted his eyes, and stared threateningly at the strangers—and the police began to get active. Then he turned his attention to Dad.

"The honourable member for Eton," he snapped, fanning like an infuriated commandant, "must resume his seat, and I warn him not to continue interrupting the House."

"How can any honest man sit down while——"

"Order! Will the honourable member resume his seat?"

A member seated near Dad induced him to obey the chair.

"It's meant for nothing but robbery!" Dad blurted out, as he dropped heavily on the cushion.

"Order!" the Speaker fired back, and once more the coast was cleared for the Treasurer.

"The judgment of Mill," he rolled on, "is not only in accord with human nature, but is also in strict accord with historical fact——"

"Well, if Mill's statement has your-re approval," came from the member for Targo, "wha-at more is required? Let us pass the bill, and get on with the business." (Laughter, and "Order!")

"'Twill *never* pass!" Dad hollered, struggling violently with the members for Cow Yard and Cattle Creek, who had some difficulty in keeping him from taking the floor again. "*Never*, while there's a bit o' breath in me body!"

"Order!"

"Yoush wrong," the member for Fillempagen hiccupped at Dad. "*Will* pash—same ash ships pash in (hic) nightsh." (Boisterous hilarity, and loud appeals for "Order!" from the

Speaker.)

"I have no objection," the Treasurer retorted angrily, "to honourable gentlemen interrupting me by making interjections reelevant to the matter before the Hoose, but I objaikt, Sair, to people centerrupting like drunk men in the back yaird o' a bush shanty." (Commotion.)

"Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order!" squealed the member of blue ribbon fame. "I take exception, Sir——"

"Mis'er Spikker," the member for Fillemupagen broke in, "I ri'h (hic) poin' order." (Great merriment.) "If'sh hon'ble gen'el'em saysh *I'm* drunksh, he'sh *liar*." (Disorder, and cries of "Shame!" and "Withdraw!" intermingled with laughter, loudly echoed back from the galleries.)

"Order! The honourable member must withdraw such remarks!" the Speaker demanded with fearful firmness.

The member for Fillemupagen sat down silent and sullen-looking.

"I ask the honourable member to withdraw his words."

"All righsh," the offending one murmured, "I wishdraw" (hear, hear), "but it'sh a *lie*." (Laughter.)

"Order!"

Once more the Treasurer got under way, and explained the meaning of "unimproved value" and "betterment." "No person," he said, "is to be charged for betterment until that person admits the betterment. The owner's valuation will be taken, and the Treasurer cannot alter that valuation; and there will be no litigation about it. But" (here Dad shifted in his seat and leaned forward to catch all he said) "*the Treasurer may advise the Crown to resume the land at the owner's valuation, with 10 per cent, added for compensation——*"

"*Aha!*" Dad snorted, "*Aha!*" (Laughter from Government supporters, and "Order!" from Mr. Speaker.)

Then the Treasurer quoted Mill again, and read chunks of wisdom from Pepys' Diary, and concluded by saying that he himself was fully persuaded that, if the bill became law, it would be "a great gude—it would be an unmixed blaisin' an' the lasin' joy and salvation o' th' country." (Loud and enthusiastic cheers from the Government.)

The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Targo

rose in turn and pelted the bill; then Dad caught the Speaker's eye.

"Sir," Dad commenced in a loud, aggressive voice. (Laughter and guffaws from the Government end of the House.) Dad paused and glared at the scoffers till they were silent, then proceeded: "I was sent into this House by honest, sensible farmers and selectors—men an' their wives who have been struggling all th' days of their life on the land—an' I was sent to look after their interests an' ter tell *any* Government that tries to make bad laws for them—that tries ter bring in mischievous legislation—just what I think of them." (Hear, hear!) "An' I tell this Gover'ment that this bill" (Dad raised his clenched fist above his head), "that this bill is nothing but broad daylight robbery!" (Down came Dad's fist like a sledge-hammer.)

"Nonsense!" from the Treasurer.

" 'Tis not nonsense!" Dad yelled back. "This bill is *nonsense*; and all the rot you have been telling this House about it is nonsense! With your prattle about things what someone called Mill have to say! What's the good o' *that*?" (Opposition laughter.) "What have he to do with people's land?" (Loud laughter, and "You don't understand it," from the Treasurer.) "I do understand it!" Dad shouted. "Do you think I don't understand when a man tries to put his hand into my pocket, that he wants to help himself to something he never put there?" (Opposition cheers.)

"He wouldn't find anything there, only pumpkin, if he did," interjected the member for Sandy Gallop.

"He'd find more there than he'd find in yours!" Dad snorted. "I'm not like ye—I didn't come here fer a *livin'*." (Cheers and laughter from the Opposition.) "I won my independence workin' and battlin' on the land." (Hear, hear.) "I went on the land, Mr. Speaker, when I hadn't enough to buy a billy-can with—when there was no railway, and when there wasn't another settler within ten mile o' me" (applause), "an I would ask the Minister that brings this bill here to tax selectors with if he knows anything about land? If he knows what selecting in this country meant to the pioneers of it, and what it means to this day?" (Opposition cheers, and cries of "Rot!" from the other side.) "I stand here and tell him he knows *nothing* of it. He comes here a new chum with his head stuffed

full of fine ideas about some fool——”

Dad was pulled up by the Speaker. “Order!” he cried. “The honourable member must not indulge in terms which are unparliamentary, and must withdraw them!” (Loud “Hear, hear,” from Ministers.)

“Well, then,” Dad roared on, “with ideas about some fellow he calls ‘Mill’ ” (laughter), “and wants to take half of the increased value of a poor man’s bit of land to put in his Treasury to pay debts and things with that every loafer and sun-downer in th’ country have had a hand in incurrin’.” (Cheers from the Opposition.) “He talks in a fine way about a selection increasing in value till it’s worth £500. What is that to a poor man after his twenty years’ battle with it—after his years of scrub-cutting and fighting fires, and livin’ on dry bread, and harrowin’ his grain in perhaps with a bramble before he sees his deeds—after payin’ interest at ten per cent. and twelve per cent. for fifteen year—after sinking wells all over it, and never gettin’ any water?” (Loud cheering from the opponents of the bill.) “I tell the gentleman, Mr. Speaker, that he don’t know what he talks about. With this bill he is like a lunatic runnin’ about with a loaded gun in his hand” (roars of laughter), “and the sooner the gun is taken off of him and smashed across a fence, the better it will be for the people of this country.” (Renewed laughter.) “He talks about the value that a railway gives to a man’s land, and wants to pocket some of it on that account. I never in all my natural days heerd of such an impudent reason bein’ given for stealing a man’s property. Sir, a cattle-duffer has more decency and honour than that! A railway!” Dad fairly yelled. “Confound it! Doesn’t the selector help to build the railway?” (Hear, hear.) “Doesn’t he pay freight and fares to that railway for carrying his produce and himself and his family, when they can afford to go anywhere? Surely to God that should be enough?” (Cheers.) “If it *isn’t*,” and he suited the word to the action, “then tear your d—— railways up.” (Cheers from the Opposition.)

“Order!” the Speaker cried again. “I warn the honourable member not to continue using terms which are unparliamentary.”

(“Hear, hear! Hear, hear!” from the Treasury benches.)

"I say, *tear them up!*" Dad went on, "and go back to the bullock-drays and the coach. They'll carry produce and passengers nearly as quick as your trains, and are doing it in parts of the country now, and they're not asking the people for any increased value of their bit of land for doing it, either!" (Loud cheering.) "Mr. Speaker, this bill is *robbery!*" (Government dissent.) "'Tis *thievery!*" (Great disorder.) "And the Government know it!" ("No, no!" and more disorder.) "You *do!*" (and Dad lifted his voice a note higher), "and *shame* on you; *shame* on you for trying to sell the electors that sent you here to make honest laws fer them!" (Opposition cheers and Government dissent.) "You told them that there would be no more taxation, and 'tis nothin' but taxin' and taxin' them you're doin'. The very first thing you do is to break your pledge—to *lie!*" (Uproar, and "Order, order!" from the Speaker.) "Then you put a charge on the poor man's few dairy cows" (Hear, hear), "and you want him to pay for carrying a gun about, and another of you would bleed more money from him fer keepin' his own stallion!" (Cries of "No!" and "Yes, yes!") "'Tis scandalous; 'tis *villainy!*" (Great uproar, and Dad was again called to order.) "To the devil with the railways and their increased value——"

"Order! Order!" cried the Speaker. "The honourable member must address the house in more respectful language."

"Let them build their railways into some part of the bush where's there's no one," Dad howled, "and see how much it will increase the value of the land!"

The Treasurer: "So it would when the people settle there."

"Well, then, charge an increased price for it, and the people will know what the bargain is they are making. But until they *do* go and settle there, your railway wouldn't be worth tuppence—'twould rust!" (Hear, hear.) Dad paused for breath, then continued: "But this bill is a shameful piece of work." (Dissent.) "'Tis full of tricks and traps to grind selectors down and take their land away from them!" (Cries of "No, no!" and "Nonsense!" and cheers from the Opposition.) "It *is!* All the Treasurer's fine talk about letting a man make his own valuation is *lies!*" Great disorder and cheers, in the midst of which the Speaker's rebukes and appeals for order were drowned.)

"'Tis *false* magernanimity!" (Dissent, intermingled with laughter.) "'Tis a trick to get a man to value his property for more than 'tis worth, and, if he undervalue it, you take it off him at that price!" (Hear, hear.) "And how many farmers are there in the country, let me ask you, who would think of selling their places even for a *hundred* pounds more than they are worth? What good would it do them? It wudn't be enough to keep them; and do you think they want to begin an' cut holes in the bush again, and to fight drought, and floods, and fires, and mean, *bad* Governments?" (Cheers from the Opposition.) "And this is the kind of law-making we get from a Ministry that prattles about settling people on the land, an' trots round the country patting farmers on the back and gorgen' on their banquet." (Cheers.) "'Tis trachery——"

"Order!"

"'Tis highway robbery——"

"Order, order!"

"'Tis d—roguery——" (Uproar.)

"Order, order!" the Speaker cried. "The honourable member must not make such statements."

The Premier rose angrily, and asked that the member for Eton be called on to withdraw the words "d—— roguery," and the Speaker called on Dad to withdraw them.

"What I've said is th' plain *truth!*" Dad shouted, throwing his arms and head about.

Loud cries of "Shame!" and "Withdraw" from the Government benches.

"NEVER!" Dad howled.

The Speaker: "I ask the honourable member for Eton to withdraw the words the Premier complains of, which are most unparliamentary." (Commotion.)

"I'll *not!*" Dad shouted. "I defy you or anybody to make me withdraw what I know is the truth." (Great confusion, during which the Speaker "named" Dad to the House.)

The Premier jumped to his feet.

"Mr. Speaker," he said, "I regret that the honourable member for Eton should again be the cause of another disgraceful scene in this Chamber, and when that member not only violates the rules and propriety of this House, but openly hurls defiance

at your executive authority, Sir, I am compelled, however painful the duty may be, to move that the honourable member be suspended for the term of one week." (Disorder, and cries of "Gag!" and yells and howls of approval.)

The motion was carried, and the Speaker said: "It is the pleasure of this House that the member for Eton be suspended for one week" (more confusion), "and I ask the honourable member to withdraw from its precincts." (Great uproar.)

"Never!" Dad shouted furiously. "Never!"

Then the Sergeant-at-Arms and officers of the House approached him, and Dad prepared for violence. But the Leader of the Opposition spoke persuasively to him, and he strode out quietly. At the bar of the House he turned, and shouted out "*Robbers!*"

11. An Interview with Dad on Socialism

A newspaper man, with glasses and long hair and a tragic brow, called on Dad at his hotel one evening, and said he would like to have a few words with him.

Dad glared at him.

"You've been a successful man on the land?" the scribe commenced, seating himself confidently opposite Dad, and producing his note-book.

"Middlin'," was Dad's answer.

"At all events, you have made money, acquired property, and all that; done better than most?"

"May be . . . perhaps."

"Have you any opinions on socialism, Mr. Rudd?"

"I have—*plenty*," Dad said aggressively.

"Well, do you believe in socialism?"

"No!" And Dad gave his head a violent shake.

"Why?"

"Because I don't want to become a *savage*, that is why."

The newspaper man smiled, as if he pitied Dad, and said:

"Doesn't it ever occur to you that there would be more happiness in the country if there was a system under which every person born in it would be sure of getting what he required, instead of being compelled to struggle for existence in the midst of poverty and distress and disappointment?"

"No!" (with great violence) "I do not! God bless my soul, man, if you had such a system you might as well be dead. You would wipe out all the happiness that ever was in the country. What on earth use or pleasure would a man's feelings be to him? 'Tis the thought, the hope, of getting on that puts go into a man—if he is a man; if he isn't it doesn't matter—and encourages him to work and use his head and do his level best. And 'tis the wish that is in his heart to succeed and make money, and own property, that takes the dullness and the pain and the sting out of his hard toil; 'tis the hope we have, man,



"Have You any Opinions on Socialism, Mr. Rudd?"

that we will overcome, and get to the top, that makes the way easier and interesting for him; and as he finds himself getting on, his happiness gets greater. It isn't the man who have not a penny or a stick of property that is badly off—he is not the one to be pitied—'tis the poor devil who have never a wish—who have not the determination to get out of his own way and wade into things, and gain for himself a bit of property."

"Then you don't believe that the equal distribution of property—that is, wealth—would bring universal happiness?"

"No!" (wildly). "I do not believe such nonsense. 'Twould bring universal unhappiness and misery. 'Twould do away with rivalry, man. There wouldn't be any industry worth speaking about, because there could be no encouragement for a man to produce any more than he required. We would be on a level with the wild blacks. There would be no inducement for one man to outdo or win the race from another. There would be no reward for the plodding, industrious man—he would be no better off than the fellow who sat in the shade of the fence all day talking about the colour of his cattle pup, or the cove who put in his time shooting at jam-tins on a post—with someone else's gun and ammunition. And the end of it all would be that there wouldn't be a particle of property anywhere—'twould disappear altogether, and we would get back to where we started. We would be a homeless lot of savages without a rag to our backs, and holding children's and old women's ideas about the history of the piles of bricks that would be left to mark the ruins of Parliament House and the 'Courier' Building, and we would be tomahawking one another from behind, and thieving and stealing one another's bit of kangaroo and 'possum out of the ashes! 'Tis the pain that a man feels from the want of a thing that puts courage—that puts devil into him, and gets him out of bed to strike out for himself, and when he gets out and gets hustled, he thinks, and uses his head and his hands, and sets his teeth, and gathers money. Equal distribution of people's property, man, could pan out in nothing but the equal division of the poverty and misery of a country!"

There was a pause.

"But under socialism the law would give to every person so much property, and compel everyone to work?" the

interviewer said.

"The law!" Dad growled. "What have the law to do with a man's property? You talk nonsense! The law is only a servant—the policeman that protects a man's property for him. It never had, and could never have, the giving of property to anyone. The law was born in the same cradle as property, and when property disappears the law will be as dead as the man they hanged in the gaol last year."

"But doesn't the law, now, provide work for people?"

"Well, you are a simple man," Dad answered irritably. "That is what the law *don't* do, and never did do. It could never say to a farmer, 'Work on that selection there, and I'll give you 3s. 6d. a bushel for your corn.' But it could say, and does say to him every day: 'Grow corn, and I will see that it is yours, Anderson, and that you get paid for it when you sell it.' Can you not see the difference, man?"

"That's right enough," the newspaper man said reflectively.

"Of course, it is right enough," Dad went on forcibly, "because 'tis *sense*, and the wish or the yearning, or whatever you like to call it, to be industrious and useful to himself came from the man's own heart, and if you strangle that wish in him he will do nothing, he will produce nothing, and will be idle and as useless as a wooden man; and there will be no wealth, there will be no property of any kind, unless it is a yamstick or a stone tomahawk or something."

"Now, look here, Mr. Rudd, do you think that God or Nature ever intended that poverty and starvation should exist in the midst of luxury? Is it a just law that allows such a state of things?"

"Good heavens, man, don't I tell you that the law have nothing whatever in the wide, wide world to do with making people either poor or rich? The law doesn't keep a man poor; it helps to make him rich. To be poor as a rat or a piece of paling is the first, the real, the natural state of us all—the same as it is for the howling bush at the back of my place to be covered with trees and scrub and dead timber. And the man who is contented to mope and crawl about, and look on and drag himself lazily along from sunrise to sunset, from one day to another, is the most natural man in the world—he is the

savage. And it's back to his d—— level that you, with your equal distribution of people's property, want to drag everybody!"

"But if, as you maintain, poverty is the primitive state of everyone, how is a poor man to raise or better himself under the present system?"

"In the same way that he would if he was in an uncivilised country—by work; *by the sweat of his brow*. But not bein' in an uncivilised country, but in one where there's stacks of money and property around him, he starts with this advantage of having a chance of success, and is filled with the hope of succeeding, and he knows if he *do* succæed he will enjoy what he gets. The law makes him sure of that, and that's what the law is for; and I tell you, as we live now, there is so much raised, so much produced, that fortune is possible to any poor man; and it doesn't matter how poor he is, the very fact that he *is* a worker puts him among the candidates for success. And the hope of reaching the goal gives him pleasure. If it didn't, no one would try; every man-jack of us would sit down on our haunches and play mumbleth-peg or throw stones at some-one's dog till our stomachs pinched us and compelled us to look around and hunt for a wallaby or something for the dinner."

"But a man born in poverty has a long way to go before he reaches the land of plenty."

"Of course he have; but it depends upon the road he takes and the way he takes it; and don't you know that every poor man who starts out along that road is in a tearing divil's own hurry. He is restless and eager to enjoy things speedily—and, if he can, to enjoy them without putting in any work. And isn't it this eagerness of the poor man which is dreadful—don't I know it? And doesn't it make everyone of them who haven't anything feel inclined to get up in arms against them who have something?"

Dad paused for breath.

"Having been poor yourself," the newspaper man asked, "do you think it just that one man should be in possession of thousands and thousands of pounds—money that he himself never did a day's work to earn, that became his by inheritance

—while other poor wretches not twenty yards from him are starving?"

"Why should it not be just, man?" Dad shouted. "Isn't it a satisfaction and a pleasure to a poor man to know that if he succeed he will be in a position to leave some property to those to whom we have most affection, and who have affection for him? Isn't it a triumph for him to feel that by his own labour and intelligence he was able to save them from going through the struggle he went through himself? It's one of the rewards he gets for all his labour and industry, man; and it's one of the values he puts on his property."

"Don't you think that all men are equal, and should be paid the same wage for their work?"

"What are you talking about?" roared Dad. "All men paid the same wage for their work? Do you think I could get a man to build my wheat stacks every year for the same wage I pay the scarecrow of a fellow who pokes about the slop buckets and feeds my pigs? And do you think, Andy Purcell, who shears two hundred of my sheep a day, would be content with the same money I give Tom Brown for tomahawking fifty or sixty of them in two days for me? Why, sir, you have no more brains than a bandicoot. I would never get my shearing done at all; it would drag along like a donkey race, and I would see d— little of my wool, neither; 'twould be all in the paddocks. Before the shed would be cut out at the rate they would shear, the sheep there would be nothing but a mob of barebellies and rosellas. To the devil with you, man! Get out of here. Be off with your d—socialism, and do something!"

The interviewer left.

OTHER STORIES

Necessity Knows No Law

They hadn't tasted meat for ten days. Prince was on three legs, and they couldn't catch even a kangaroo rat. The wife was saying, between the howls of a cantankerous youngster, that Logan (a neighbour who occasionally slaughtered someone else's bullocks and sold to his friends, without license) was to kill next day; but as the last quarter hadn't been paid for, she expected they would refuse them any more. The old selector sat for a long time looking at the fire. He was solemn and silent, and played with a piece of stick, until he had mechanically traced the word "M-e-a-t" in the ashes.

An idea seized him. Pitching the ironbark pen into the fire, he rose and stepped outside, knocking his head as he went against a fleshless leg of a kangaroo which dangled 'neath the verandah.

"Bobby!"

"W-what?"

"Come along with me!"

Bobby was the eldest boy, about fifteen. He stuttered fearfully, and had never put his feet inside shoe leather. The skin he walked on was as tough and as thick as that on the neck of a seventeen-year-old bull.

They walked away from the house. The night was dark, and Bobby trotted behind, wondering.

"Do you feel meat-hungry, Bobby?"

"M-m-meat-'ungry? W-what k-k-k-kind—beef or k-k-kangaroo meat?"

"Beef, mutton—anything?"

"H-h-haven't t-tasted m-m-mutton since Kr-Kr-Krismus."

"Could you find the sheep camp in the long paddock tonight, Bobby?"

"S-s-see now, Dad, g-g-goin' t-t-t' c-c-catch a sheep?" And the stuttering lad led the way over logs, gullies, and wire fences.

They stumbled along till Bobby said, "L-look out, D-Dad—a g-g-gully there."

But he hung on to "gully" so long that Dad, who was near-sighted, tumbled into it.

"Dammit, boy, couldn't you tell me? Now I've lost my hat and the bag."

"B-b-but you woo-woo-wouldn't w-wait. W-we're close on n-n-now, D-Dad. You s-s-stay h-here, an' I'll s-s-sneak on them. If I k-k-catch one, I'll w-w-whistle l-l-like k-k-curlew."

The sheep were camped on a ridge, and Bobby crept up with the stealth of a black, and, pouncing like a starved dingo on the resting fold, grabbed the nearest one.

A whistle, as like the cry of the curlew as could be, followed, and several times repeated ere the old selector groped his way to where Bobby and a big wether were kicking and wrestling in the dust.

"H-have yer th'— H-h-h-have yer th' n-n-nife, Dad?"

The parent brandished the carving-knife.

"L-look out, d-d-d-don't s-s-stick it in m-m-my p-p-p-paunch!"

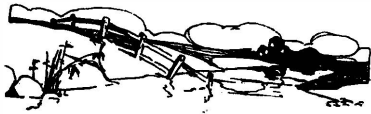
The wether ceased to kick.

"Can we carry him between us, Bobby?"

"N-n-not if yer d-d-don't t-t-take out his g-g-g-guts."

Fried chops were served up for breakfast, and the selector's wife didn't ask where the mutton came from nor how it was got. She didn't upbraid the man and try to make out that stolen mutton hadn't the same taste as any other.

She was ruled by necessity, and necessity knows no law.



The Selection Where I was Reared

The selection where I was reared was a queer place twenty-five years ago; it was a queer place twenty-five months ago. A selection in Queensland twenty-five years ago was a weird, wild institution, hidden away in the bowels of the great, sleepy bush. It consisted for the most part of one hundred and sixty acres, with some scrub and stones and a slab humpy, and a small stockyard, where the fowls, when they were at home, used to roost. There were no fences on selections twenty-five years ago; they weren't required then. There was nothing except grass to put them round, and people in those days were rarely ever jealous of their grass. They all had lots of grass—that was all they did have lots of, save freedom and wild honey and good exercise, twenty-five years ago. The selection where I was reared was a beautiful place. It was a picture—a grand work of art. It was one of the eyes of the country—so father used to tell us; and I suppose that was why he picked it out. A quiet, secluded spot it was, with a great wall of mountains banked up all round it, and I remember how it used to attract strangers. Even travellers who had lost their way used to visit it. They would call on us and stay for hours—stay till father could find time to show them a track by which they could climb out again without falling down a precipice and breaking their necks.

"We were lucky to get this place," father used to say when sometimes he would be sitting down reflecting in the shade after felling a tree for honey, "and so near the river, too." Ah, yes, we were near the river; it was only seven miles away, and from the top of the mountains, whenever you had energy and wind enough to climb them, you could see it bending silently along in the dim distance.

"I don't like that tree there," father said one Christmas day, viewing a big ironbark that grew close beside the humpy. "It

doesn't improve the place at all, and I believe it attracts the rain."

Mother didn't like the tree, either. It had always been a worry and an eyesore to her. She said she was afraid it might get blown down some day, and perhaps fall on the house and hurt us.

"Let me see," father said, walking round the ironbark, axe in hand, and in a scientific sort of way looking along the trunk to see which way it was leaning. "It'll go that way," he concluded, and pointed towards the stockyard. Then he spat on his hands, and, swinging the axe vigorously, commenced to chop it down. Father was a fine axeman twenty-five years ago. He made the chips fly round him in showers for about an hour, and when he had chopped half-way through the trunk, mother called him to dinner. Mother was always calling us to dinner twenty-five years ago!

"We'll leave it for a bit," father grunted, wiping the perspiration from his face with the sleeve of his shirt; then he came inside and took the head of the table.

We had two scrub turkeys and a wonga pigeon for dinner that Christmas. (The Christmas before we had only one and a damper.) In the middle of the meal the wind sprang up. The wind was always springing up in the middle of something or other twenty-five years ago.

"That's a grand breeze," father said, looking through the window. Father was fond of a good breeze twenty-five years ago.

"Beautiful!" mother answered. "Beautiful!"

The breeze increased until it was blowing hard; and just when father was standing up to carve more turkey for himself, we heard a loud creak outside and a "swishing" sound through the air.

"The tree!" father gasped, looking at us. Then all at once the roof of the humpy came down with a great crash on top of us, and flattened us all out on the floor. And everything became dark. Ah, yes, we got a good many surprises one way and another twenty-five years ago. Mother and I, after a lot of excitement and struggling, worked our way out from under the heap of debris, and when we shook ourselves free and

looked round, what a wreck the humpy was! There was no humpy at all then on the selection where I was reared, twenty-five years ago!

There was nothing but a pile of green leaves and broken limbs. We couldn't see anything of father, either, or even get any sort of answer from him when we called. And how mother went on! Ah, it was terrible to hear her crying and calling on the Almighty for help! But after a while we thought of the axe, and set to work to cut our way to father and get him out. And it was a long way to him, too. But he wasn't dead when we reached him—he was alive.

He rolled about and groaned heavily when we dragged him to the light. And when we turned him over he had the turkey still with him. It took a lot to separate father from a turkey twenty-five years ago. It was clinging to his chest like a mustard poultice, and some of the bones were sticking in him.

Ah, it was a miserable dinner we had that Christmas at the selection where I was reared, twenty-five years ago!

It was three months before father could do a hand's turn again, and it was hard work we had curing him. Mother cured everything, except bacon, with goanna oil at the selection where I was reared, twenty-five years ago.

And father had scarcely recovered when he went down to the river to cook for some pear-cutters, and met with another accident. It was nothing but accidents at the selection where I was reared, twenty-five years ago. Twelve men father was cooking for—twelve big, hungry men—and one evening he took a couple of buckets, and went to a hole beneath the bridge that spanned the river to get water for the tea. A thousand head of Tyson's cattle, bound for New South Wales, were approaching the bridge, and father stood to watch them cross it. Father was fond of standing and looking at cattle, twenty-five years ago. Cattle was his ambition then. He always longed to own a mob of cattle like Tyson's. A drover rode in front to show the cattle the way; some more rode on each side, crooning "Werp, werp!" and "Whoa there!" (That's how they used to drive all the cattle twenty-five years ago), while others at the tail end held back to allow the brutes time to cross without crushing on the bridge.

A wild-eyed, hollow-sided bullock, with spear horns, caught sight of father's beard—father had a fine red beard, twenty-five years ago. It covered all his chest, and reached right to his belt. And he wore his belt a long way down, twenty-five years ago. And with a snort the bullock shied off, and started off, and started the mob ringing. The men on the wings became anxious, and shouted, "Whoa there!" and swung their whips and called to father to "get out of the d—— road!" But it was a Government road, and father wouldn't get out of it. He remained rigid, and every now and again a fresh beast would take fright at him, and more rushing and ringing would set in. The drover in the lead cantered back, and shook his stockwhip threateningly over father's head, and called him a hairy lunatic. Father never could suffer being called a lunatic twenty-five years ago, and bellowed bad language at the drover, and put his fingers to his nose. The drover reached down from his horse and pulled a fistful of father's beard out, then wheeled round and galloped after the startled cattle. Father never could stand his whiskers being pulled twenty-five years ago, and became furious, and ran after the drover for about fifty yards; then stopped and swore and shook his fist. Father wasn't a man to be meddled with lightly twenty-five years ago; and while he was swearing his eye rested on a spare horse fastened by a halter to the drover's camp which was pitched on the river bank. Father rushed over and mounted that horse bare-back, and pursued the drover. Father was not an accomplished horseman twenty-five years ago. He wasn't an accomplished horseman two years ago. He didn't get much riding to do at the selection where I was reared; but he would do anything when his blood was up; and his blood was up now.

And the men had just steadied the mob when father sailed round the wing, and charged at the drover who had assaulted him. But father had not calculated everything correctly. He had left the drover out of the account. The drover saw him coming, and met him with the stockwhip, which he brought down heavily on father's head and shoulders, till pieces flew out of father's beard and the cracks echoed among the pear and along the river banks. And drovers knew how to use a whip, too, twenty-five years ago! The whip descended on the

horse, and the animal, with more presence of mind than father, turned and bolted. The drover followed. He pursued father through the cattle and over fallen timber and prickly-pear, flogging the horse on the rump all the time. The brute switched its tail and wriggled in its stride, and strained every muscle to escape. But it couldn't escape. The drover was better mounted than father, and forced him to take everything in front of him in steeplechase fashion, and father, with only the halter-rein to steer a course with, had to cling like an orang-outang to keep on the back of his mount. And they raced right into the pearcutters' camp, and dashed between the tents, and the dog that was there broke loose and chased father, too. Dogs would do anything twenty-five years ago.

Father charged at the staring pear-cutters, and all of them threw down their hoes and separated to let him through. But father didn't go through. His horse rose high in the air to clear some more pear, and they separated. Ah! it was a terrible fall that father got! And that drover went away laughing. Drovers had no feelings at the selection where I was reared, twenty-five years ago.

The pear-cutters brought father home next day on a sheet of bark, and for months we rubbed his back again with goanna oil. Ah, it was a touch-and-go with father that time; but he got over it. He is not the man now, though, that he was on the selection where I was reared, twenty-five years ago.

Our Neighbour

Davy McDonald's a Scotchman. He lives about three hundred yards from our place in a humpy by himself at Hungeroo. Everyone calls him Mac. He aluz looks dusty, and never washes his clothes, not once—he thinks it spoils clothes to wash them, and sez it only wears them out. Every New Year's Day he comes out in a new flannel and white moleskins, and when he takes them off they stand up straight as he does himself. His selection joins ours, but there's no dividin' fence up yet. He wants us to do our half first, but he ain't got any stock, and we don't want to be in a hurry, cuz our cows wouldn't have so much grass then. His cultivation paddock's fenced in, though. We ain't got any cleared yet, and our cattle are aluz puttin' their heads through the wires tryin' to get at his wheat, but their necks ain't long enough to reach it. The calves reach it, though. They get in under the wires, and Mac puts his dog on them instead of puttin' them out; and o' course they beller and run mad-blind all over the wheat; then he stands outside our sliprails, swearin' and runnin' down our religion and forefathers, and threatens, because he knows a J.P., to have us all summoned if we don't do somethin' with them.

We've got yokes on the calves now—some o' them real forks o' trees—but it don't make no difference to their appetites for wheat. One o' them got caught in the wires the other day, and smashed all the fence down, and Mac didn't know about it till he saw all the cattle (about eighty head) in his wheat.

He was breakin' up some new ground at the time, and cleared away to get his gun without tellin' the horses to "waay." He aimed a shot at Snailey, and it looked bad for her, but the gun wasn't loaded, and on'y clicked. Then Mac chucked it at Silkie's heifer and sang out, "Bally! Here, boy, here!" to his dog. But Bally was chained up, and could do nothin' on'y howl and bark and jump in the air. Mac turned round then, and swore over at our house, and shook his fist. The cultivation

paddock wasn't near big enough for him to swear his best in. So he came out in the lane. The cattle didn't want to go out at all, and he couldn't find anything in the wheat to throw at them. That made him swear more. While he'd be chasin' one and cryin' with temper, the others would stand and gorge themselves. He got them goin' though, at last, and had them nearly at the slip rails, when he looked round and saw the horses walkin' right through the wheat, too, with the plough rollin' about be'ind them. He ran to meet them, singin' out fearful to "waay." They were quiet horses enough, but weren't used to him appearin' like a apperishin, when they knew he ought t' been be'ind; so o' course they took to and bolted like brumbies; but when they reached the wire fence they stopped—at least one of them did; the other two went over the fence.

It was just near our house, too, where they fell over, and they got inside and watched him get them out. He managed it after a while, and then returned to the cattle; but he didn't swear once at them. He was knocked up, or else he didn't know any more.

He put the cows in the yard, and left them there all night with nothin' to eat. Next day he came to our place again and said Dad was a cattle-stealer and a rogue, and that we could have a trip to town for our crawlers. Of course, Dad wasn't at home.

Mac ain't any good in the saddle, and he's worse at drivin' cattle, especially knowin' ones like ours. So when he started them for town they didn't want to go, and first one and then another dodged him round logs and trees, till they got right into our paddock again; then he gave up the idea of impoundin' them.

He never spoke to any of us for a long time after that, and wouldn't p'raps at all, on'y he wanted to borrow some flour, and had to. And now he always sez that if he was our father he would skin us boys alive; that's because we were throwin' a few stones at his humpy one day and killed a fowl.

We don't know why it is, but he never likes to see us ridin' the calves.

One evenin', Sam—he's the biggest of us—was startin' to break in Tiney's calf, Bully. He got on, but on'y meant to sit

there a bit at first, without lettin' him move, while we held Bully with a rope. We gave Bully a poke in the ribs, and he bellered and rushed under the middle rail of the stockyard—it was the on'y one up—and knocked Sam clean off, and then got away with the new leg-rope round his neck which Mac had lent us. Well, Mac was goin' by just then to water his horses at the dam, and stood and laughed, and said he wished Bully had broken Sam's neck. O' course Sam got in a scot and threw a stone at Mac, and hit him on the back, knockin' a cloud of dust out of his flannel shirt, and makin' him go round and round sayin', "Oh, you—you deevil!"

We were glad Mac got it, cuz Sam would 'av' hammered me and Jack for lettin' Bully chuck him. Mac told about it, though, and said hangin's too good for Sam, and he's sure we'll all come to no good some day.

He's got a new man workin for him now; he's aluz getting a new man, because when they work for three or four months and ask him for some wages he swears at them as if they had no business ter ask, and then they go to town and fetch him out a bit o' paper. He never gives them any money, tho' he lets them take a horse. He had twenty horses one time; he's on'y four now, and when they're done we don't expect he'll get any more new chums.

He got Jim—he's another of us, and the best rider among our lot—to break in some horses one time, and said he'd give a pound a head for them; but when they were quietened and Jim wanted his money, Mac said if he didn't clear off his ground he'd summons him.

I was over at his humpy yesterday to borrow a sharpenin' stone, and he got in a rage and wouldn't give it to me, because I didn't care about goin' inside and gettin' it for meself. No, he couldn't induce me in! I was in once, and all the time I was there I was liftin' up one foot and then another, and scratchin' me leg with it, and as if I was standin' on something hot. When he saw me dancin' about, he ran at me quite savage and said: "Didn't yer never 'ave a flea in yer hown 'ouse?"

Guess we've often had, but nothing like this.

Once when Jim wanted to go to town there was no horse, and he was wondering what to do, when Mac came along and

offered to lend him one (this was before they fell out about the breakin' in). Jim was quite pleased, and said we'd all been too hard on old Mac, and that he was a real good-hearted cove. When he'd nearly reached town, tho', on Mac's horse, some chap, whom he met on the road, wanted to know where he got the horse from, and said it was one he'd lost. O' course Jim said it belonged to Mac of Hungeroo, and then the cove said to him: "Well, Mac of Hungeroo, or any other Mac, if you'll take my advice, young fellow, you'll get off and hand him over to me." So Jim did, and tramped home—fifteen miles—with the saddle on his head. He never liked Mac after that.

Sandy's Loss

Sandy got five tons of hay from the cut of lucerne. He sold it all to the storekeeper, and received in return a bag of sugar and a few little things for Jimmy, some dress material for Kate, a shirt and trousers for himself, and a sovereign. The balance went to square Sandy's account with the storekeeper.

After tea, Kate tore open the brown paper parcel and admired the dress material, and tried Jimmy's new hat on him, and Sandy put on the new shirt and trousers to see if they were a good fit.

"Just the thing," he said.

"You can wear them to-morrow," Kate said, admiring the clothes, "and I'll wash the others for you in the morning."

Sandy was delighted. He took the sovereign from the pocket of his discarded pants and tossed it about affectionately.

"Wish we'd a couple o' thousand o' them," he said.

"So we might have some day," Kate answered, "if things go on all right." And she quoted the Wilsons of Appletree. "They were worse off than we are, and look at them now," she said.

Kate was a hopeful woman.

Then they sat at the table and reckoned up the wealth the selection would yield by the end of the season; and, while the wind blew outside, and the 'possums squawked, and the night birds whooped in the trees, they plotted and planned things for the future.

Next morning Sandy was grubbing at the bottom of the paddock. A man chained by the leg to a log came along, carrying the log under his arm. Sandy stared at him, and thought of gaol and the police.

"Got an axe?" the stranger asked. Sandy nodded, and the stranger lifted the implement, and, resting his leg on the log, smashed the steel band from his ankle.



He Squirted Water into Sandy's Eye

"*You c'n have these,*" he said, tossing the end of the chain to Sandy. Sandy stared. The stranger stared at Sandy, too.

"*Those clothes o' yours would look well on me,*" he said. "*Sling them off, mate, and you can have mine.*" And he proceeded to undress in the open.

Sandy asked him if he was mad. The stranger pointed a revolver at Sandy's head and said: "*Take them off, and be quick about it!*"

Sandy hurriedly divested himself of his new shirt and trousers. The man reached for them and threw his old rags to Sandy. Sandy suddenly remembered the sovereign in the trousers pocket, and asked the stranger to return it. The stranger took it out, spat on it, and put it back again. Then he lifted Sandy's billy-can and began to drink. Sandy, acting on an inspiration, snatched up the revolver.

"*Off with my clothes!*" he shouted, shoving the barrel close against the bottom of the billy. "*Off with them, y' cur, or I'll blow your brains out!*"

Sandy meant it, too. But the stranger continued to drink.

"*Before I count three,*" Sandy said. "*One—two—th——*"

The stranger lowered the billy from his head, squirted water into Sandy's eye, and turned and went calmly away.

Tears were on Sandy's cheeks when he told Kate about it.

"*By heavens!*" he said, "*I've a good mind t' foller that cove!*" But Kate easily restrained him.



How I Wrote *On Our Selection*

"What turned your thoughts to literature? What are your methods of work? Had you any trouble in finding a publisher? What have been your adventures with the critics? Which of your characters do you like best? Does literature pay?" inquires the Editor; and one reflects.

Gordon's poems, and the stories and verses on the bush from the pens of *Bulletin* writers of fourteen years ago, must, in a large measure, be blamed for my intruding in literature. 'Twas no fault of mine—nor of any of my people. My father would gladly have made me a ploughman. He was not proud. My mother, had circumstances been favourable, would cheerfully have turned me out a clergyman. Mother was ambitious. I am glad, for my own sake, circumstances were not favourable. If there's one thing in this happy-go-lucky merry-go-round of a world of ours which would be more disagreeable to me than another, it would be kicking myself along on a poor horse. Give me something exciting—a German waggon or a switch-back railway—*anything* rather than the dejected moke.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE BUSH

Reared in the bush, the life and incidents revealed in the work of these writers had a fascination for me. Intimate with much of it—had *lived* some of it—I understood it all. It called up memories of the past, and made me miserable in the city. Contracting "Australian book" fever in a dangerous form, I bought or borrowed all scraps of literature that came in my way containing anything of station or selection life, travellers, stockmen, sundowners, or shearers, and devoured them in bed at the boarding-house. They delighted me. Eschewing selfishness, I ventured to share my happiness with those about me; I read poems and things about "sick stockmen," and "jolly country girls," and "mulga and lignum," and "grinner skulls," and "wild dogs" to my friend and room-mate, B——, a keen law-student and an enthusiast in Irish oratory, and lost his

respect. In the lean but kindly boarding-house-keeper, though, I found much sympathy; I read some pieces to her. She enjoyed them. One passage I poured into her drew tears, when I expected merriment. She wiped her eyes with her apron, and broke into lamentations about the landlord, and rent, and discontent amongst the boarders, and annoyed me.

I didn't seek her sympathy any more.

I continued reading Australian literature till I felt I must write something or burst. I didn't burst; I wrote a sketch and sent it, unsigned, to a Brisbane newspaper. Next day purchased a copy of the publication, and with a fluttering heart retired to a back lane. Flung the rag away disappointedly, and bought another next day; bought one every day for a long fortnight, and was working up bitter malevolence towards the editor, when—joy! my contribution appeared, and saved him—and me from a watery grave.

Hurried to the "diggings" with it. A fellow-lodger, a tailor, greeted me at the door with an infernal draught-board. I ignored him, and bounced up the stairs, six at a time, and burst in upon my learned friend, who, in the words of Robert Emmet, was holding forth to a jury, or a judge or someone in the bedroom.

I APPEAR IN PRINT

"That's *mine!*" I gasped, shoving the print into his uplifted hand.

He ceased declaiming to the wall and washstand, and, in a calm mood, seated himself on the bed and commenced to read me. I wiped myself dry, and fought for composure. There was an ugly twitch lurking about his lips, all through the piece, which I didn't like.

He dropped the paper upon the floor and complimented me.

"You showed some brains anyway," he sniggered, "when you didn't *sign* it."

I picked the paper from the floor and moved to the verandah to look over it again. An oldish boarder—a bachelor of the stern, frigid type—was there, engrossed in a copy of the same publication. I sat in a chair and stole glances at him, to see if the old iceberg would read *me*. He passed me over several times, then yawned, and grunted "Eh-hoh!" I felt *his*

opinion would be worth something. I called out my reserve resources. Feigning reading awhile, I chuckled as one enjoying himself.

"See this?" I said, pointing out my sketch to him. He glanced sharply at the title, then back to his own rag, and made a great noise tossing it about till he found the place. He seemed anxious not to miss anything good. He bent his head and read. The blood danced in my veins.

"Umph!" he grunted, throwing the print away, "awful rubbish they do print sometimes!"

Still, I wasn't cured of the malady. For years I contributed, casually, to various local weeklies, and it didn't cost me anything—nor them either.

My screed at this stage, I fancy, showed signs of improvement. A "poem" about "going on the land" brought from B—some advice; he asked nothing for it, either. He was subject, a little, to absent-mindedness. He said, "If you want to become a writer, send something to the *Bulletin*; if they print it—well, there's some hope for you."

I ATTRACT NOTICE

I sent "something" to the *Bulletin*; then studied its "answers to correspondents" closely for weeks, and subjected my emotions to a lot more wear and tear. I was hopeful. Somehow I felt sure my screed would attract notice. It did. It attracted the Editor. "A.H.D., Brisbane," he said, "An opium-sodden dream, without beginning, middle, or end." Not exactly what I had expected, but I didn't swoon! I sat heavily on the bed, and began to think. I thought B—— was a fool. I also thought it prudent to cut that "answer" out, and chew it up before he came in. Then I kicked the *Bulletin* under the bed, and resolved to forget it. And I believe I would have forgotten it if the next day had been other but Sunday. The Sabbath isn't always the day of rest it's made out to be! I was lounging on the balcony with several brother-boarders; we were stealing glances at girls tripping by to church service, and telling lies. A long hulking mercantile clerk—who, thank God, was not in my confidence, and didn't know my initials, stalked from his room with *his* copy of the *Bulletin* under his arm, and joined us.

"The 'answers to correspondents' in this paper," he said, planting his big feet on the railing, "are the best things in it."

Suspicion crept all over me. I felt lost. I was sure my sins had found me out. But he was innocent.

"Listen here," and he began to read those wretched "answers" in a loud, cheerful key.

The others listened intently. They enjoyed him. He came to mine. I knew he would. It got a great reception. I fancied the mirth seemed louder, and a lot heartier. He read mine again. I chuckled a little myself the second reading. 'Twas a sickly effort, though—the worst I ever made (and *I've* heard J. L. Toole). But before he reached the end of the column I was as good as any of them. I *led* them.

"Wonder what some of those fellows think," the mercantile clerk drawled, philosophically, "when they read those answers?" and his eye roamed from one to the other. But it didn't catch mine. A plucky, perky, cocky, little chap instantly rose up and scoffed at him.

"Fakes," he snapped, "*fakes!* Y' don't think they're *genuine*, do y'?"

I was glad he didn't ask *me*.

Two years later, under my present pen-name, I took another chance with the *Bulletin* and survived. Joy! a cheque came along. Great jubilating! B—— and I went and had two drinks apiece. I felt I could write for a kingdom now. Some verses followed, and the Editor replied, "Good; kept for illustration by 'Hop.'" More wild rejoicing, and we filled 'em up again. Inspired with confidence, I beat out a heavy packet of "poetry" and directed it at the Editor. It was deadly. He dodged it, and warned me to be careful.

AN UNTOUCHED FIELD

Matters rested for perhaps six months. Meanwhile I pondered well an idea that came to me. I thought I saw a big field open—a field, so far I was aware, hitherto untouched by Australian writers—a field all my own. Reared on a selection, I knew well what a mortgage meant. Knew how those on the land had to toil, how they had to fight against fire and flood, how they faced adversity and misfortune, and how, when seasons smiled, they rejoiced and shared each other's society

and successes. Why, then, shouldn't I tell these things—tell them with sincerity, with sympathy, and—who knows?—prompt legislative action in the interests of the struggling selector? Such was my "idea," anyway. I know now it was wrong to dream such philanthropy; but I was young. I was sentimental. Since then my mind has been expanded—have travelled extensively—been all round the country, two hundred miles or more, in company with a band of police of various colours, and swags and billycans, and an unmitigated, unwashed scoundrel, with handcuffs on, for whom I assisted to establish an alibi; and I've been down to Sydney; and I've been in and out of the Queensland Civil Service, and now run a magazine, and much prefer it. Travel is a great teacher.

B—— meantime having drifted north, I confided with a solicitor's clerk, a person of my own prejudices and sympathies, and an ardent reader of things Australian. He shook his head.

"A big field," he admitted, "and one that hasn't been touched much, but" (he paused there) "it would require skilful handling."

I hadn't reckoned on any "skilful handling," and that phase of the project was disheartening. But Vanity sustained me. I began and wrote a sketch, that which now forms the first chapter of *On Our Selection*. Showed it to a brother Civil servant. He said it was "rot." I had confidence in *him*, but not sufficient to decide upon destroying the MS. just then. I locked it carefully in a drawer at the office, and left it for months. At regular periods my brother servant reminded me of it. He would insert his head through the door, and, with a grin, inquire what I had done with those "lovely coruscations of wit"? I took it out one day, to give the solicitor's clerk a treat. He read it, and shook his head thoughtfully, and said nothing. Confinement, I was convinced, had not improved it. In a reckless moment I dragged it to the light again, packed it, and mailed it to the editor of the *Bulletin*. An hour later I reproached myself. Was sure it would get me into trouble. To my surprise, though, it was promptly printed and paid for. Dilatation and delight! Tried some more. *Our First Harvest* and a *Splendid Year for Corn* followed, and cheques for these were sent back instead of

check. The barrier was broken. I saw the "big field" ahead, and sat and wrote for it in grim earnest. Then came words of encouragement and advice from the keen, kindly Editor:

"Dear Mr. Davis"—he wrote in his own hand—"Herewith cheque for 'Fourteen Years Ago'—which we'll keep awhile, for a special occasion. Those selection sketches of yours should be very interesting when collected and published one day.—Yours very truly, J. F. Archibald."

And later:

"'Lady Comes to Shingle Hut' printed this (coming) week. It is a fine yarn; by such things is your name made. Take my advice, and don't consciously write below your standard."

May his days be long in the land!

Any trouble finding a publisher? None. He *couldn't lose me*.

THE TRUTH OF OUR SELECTION

Allowing for embroidery, the incidents related in *On Our Selection* are for the most part true. Any of the characters, with the exception of "Dad," perhaps may be met with in many places. The only one of the group strictly drawn from life is "Cranky Jack," who is still to be found on a farm on the Darling Downs, where he continues to entertain those around him with his eccentricities. But "Dad" I drew from several sources. He's a triangle, or a "trinity": he is three in one.

Does literature pay? Not so well as wool, or beer, or town properties, or old clothes, perhaps. Still, it *pays*. And to prospective Australian authors I say: Let your first book be equal to *Robbery Under Arms*, or *While the Billy Boils*, or *The Man from Snowy River*; your second not worse, and your third a lot better; use your brains on the publishers, and I see no reason why your incomes should not average £600 per annum. Should England *call*, by all means pack up and clear; but, until she *does*, play in your own back-yards—write *in Australia, on Australia, for Australia*.

A Bush Tragedy

When Watson sacked me at Clune's Crossing, I left the cattle and was making back through the Carnarvon Ranges to Chinchilla. I covered about eighty miles that day, and was camped on the edge of a scrubby gully near a large water-hole. 'Twas just dusk. My two horses were grazing close by. The fire sent up a column of thin smoke, and I was sitting on my haunches staring into it, half reproaching myself for having quarrelled with Watson, and wondering how the wife would take it, when I felt a slight touch on the shoulder. I started to my feet and found a woman standing before me.

"You seem surprised to see me," she said.

"You gave me a bit of a start," I answered, fighting for composure. "I didn't expect to find a man within a hundred miles of here, to say nothing about a woman."

"We live just up there," she continued, pointing through the timber, "not a quarter of a mile away. I saw your fire smoking from the house, and thought I would come and ask you up for supper—come along." And she turned and beckoned me away.

Endeavouring to utter some kind of thanks, I followed.

We soon reached the house. It was an ordinary bush hut, comprised of two rooms and a skillion. An irregular paling fence surrounded it, and at the back of the building was an old shed, a wood-heap, and a solitary peach tree. A pall hung over the place, and I noticed there was not a dog of any kind about. The woman shoved open the door and walked inside, removed her hat, and set about readying the table.

"Sit over here," she said, placing a box at the head of the table for me, and I sat down to a good meal.

While I ate, the woman hummed, and engaged herself tidying the room and replenishing the fire.

I finished, and was reaching for my hat, when she turned and said,

"What I wanted you here for more than anything else, was to tell you that my husband died at three o'clock to-day and _____"

"*Died!*" I said, clutching my hat and staring hard at her.

"Yes, poor old Jim," she went on. "He's in on the bed; and I would like you to stay in the house while I run across and tell his old mate about it. He lives over in the scrub."

"Mad!" I said to myself; and, as an excuse to leave the place, I offered to run the errand and break the news to the man in the scrub, if she would direct me to the place.

"No," she answered, fastening the strings of her hat, "I would rather go myself. But step in and see poor old Jim before I start."

I couldn't account for the feeling that came over me, but I placed my hand in my shirt, where I carried a revolver, and followed her into the bedroom. There on the bed was a dead man covered to the chin with a white sheet. I thought it ghastly.

"Just about three he went off," the woman said, gazing into the face of the corpse.

I had seen enough, and returned to the front room.

"Well, if you'll remain till I come back, I'll be obliged," the woman said. Then she opened the door, closed it quietly behind her, and hurried into the night.

Intending to leave the gruesome place as soon as she would be well away, I sat by the fire and reflected. Outside the wind moaned, and night birds whooped at intervals; inside, an old-fashioned clock, standing on the mantelpiece above my head, ticked, ticked, ticked. All else was silence.

"Strange!" I muttered, and rose to go, when the door of the death chamber opened, and the dead man, with the white sheet hanging loosely about him, walked out. I staggered back, and my head struck the clock. It toppled over and fell to the floor with a crash. The same moment my hand sought the revolver again.

"By God!" I said, pointing the weapon at the corpse or the living man, or whatever he was, "I'll drop you if you don't tell me what all this means!" And, keeping him covered, I sidled for the door.

"Wait awhile," he said calmly. "Don't be afraid. And take a pull at this." He drew a bottle from the folds of the sheet. "Your nerves have got a bit of a shock." And he grinned and showed his teeth. I lowered the revolver an inch or two.

"I'm not dead," he went on. "My wife believes I died to-day, though, and God, wasn't she pleased!"

He sat down and commenced to explain.

"She's not been faithful," he whispered hoarsely, "and the fellow she's gone to fetch here to-night is the cause of it. I'm going back to that bed again, and don't you leave this room till they come. If you *do*, there's a bullet in there waiting for you. Now take a pull."

The bottle he proffered contained rum, and I put it to my head and drank.

The corpse returned to the bed and drew the sheet over itself.

I had just lifted the fallen clock from the floor and replaced it on the mantelpiece, when I heard a footstep outside. The door opened, and the woman, followed by a tall young fellow, entered. Scarcely noticing my presence, they passed into the bedroom. I glanced through the door, and saw them, side by side, peering at the form on the bed. After a while I heard the woman say, "If the old dog gets his dues his soul will never go to heaven." The door then closed. A few moments more, and I heard the man gasp as if surprised. Then a gun went off. The woman screamed. The door flew open, and she rushed out. The "corpse" followed.

"Stop her!" he said calmly.

I felt dazed. The woman screamed again, and stood, pale and panting, beneath the clock. The husband raised the gun, took aim—God! such a report! I put my hands to my head. I reeled. I daren't look round.

The husband went out and returned with a piece of tarpaulin.

"Give me a hand to put them in this," he said.

I obeyed, and together we carried the burden out and placed it on the wood-heap. The next moment there was a blaze that threw a light for forty yards around.

"Never mention this to a soul," the man said to me. "You promise?"

I promised.

"Here's five pounds to help you along. Now leave."

Five weeks later I had a job of mustering fat cattle at — Station, and, the work being finished, was continuing my journey to Chinchilla. I was jogging leisurely along the road, watching the sinking sun, when a mounted policeman overtook me.

"I've been looking for you," he said.

I thought of that awful business. My brain whirled, but I strived to appear composed. Before I could make any answer he covered me with his revolver.

"Hands up!" he cried.

I complied.

"Now then," he said, fixing his eyes upon me, "what about that murder at Flannigan's?"

"A murder?" I answered, and a terrible lump rose in my throat.

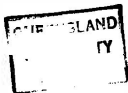
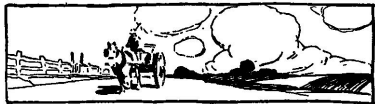
"Out with it!" he demanded firmly, "or out you go. While I count three. One—two—three!"

I couldn't speak.

He lowered the revolver.

"You'll do," he said, "and thank your stars you didn't squeak."

Then he snatched the disguise from his face, and I stared at Flannigan.



"We want a man," Fahey added, "who'll go to Brisbane an' put the sufferances of the farmers plainly an'—an'—well before Parliament—a man who'll talk t' thim, an' talk straightforredly t' thim, an'—an'—tell thim what's right an'—an' what ought t' be done. An' there's no one can do it better'n yeou."

Dad stared at the floor in silence. He seemed impressed with Fahey's argument.

So began Dad's career in Politics, and although he doesn't know much about Parliamentary protocol, he is determined to have his say; his spectacular entry into the House, his subsequent brushes with the long-suffering Speaker, and portraits of the Member for Fillemupagen, the Minister for Lands, the Premier and the Treasurer, and the "Chesterfield", make this one of the wittiest criticisms of its kind. The book was written not long after Rudd had been retrenched from the Public Service, and he worked off a personal grudge by making many of his characters clearly recognizable among the State politicians of the day—small wonder that there were moves to have him called before the bar of the house and disciplined.

Steele Rudd's works are now part of the Australian image, and his chief heroes, Dad and Dave, part of the Australian myth. They have, unhappily, been out of print for a long time, and a whole generation has grown up without knowing characters who were a household word to their parents and grandparents. People who have never read Steele Rudd can now appreciate a unique part of the Australian heritage; and those who do know his characters will doubtless be glad to renew old acquaintances and memories.