

Joe's Birthday Present.

(FOR THE BULLETIN.)

LUMPER JOE, of Sydney "Rocks," had got work. Also, it was Joe's birthday. Consequently, there was an early-morning function at his humble home. The whole family and connection had scurried and saved and subscribed to buy Joe a Birthday Present. Never had there been such an event before in that lane. It was an epoch.

The Birthday Present was laid out on a clean antimacassar, in all its polished glory. It was a steel-pointed wood-hook—affection guided into utilitarianism.

Beer was quaffed, Joe made an awkward speech, kissed all the women and children, and went joyously to his work.

Arrived there, he proudly exhibited his present to his mates. "It's alright!" was the almost unanimous verdict.

There was one croaker, though. There always is. "I don't like them points," growled the old "weigher-in." "They're too blunt. I wouldn't care to use that 'ook near the shoot."

Joe upended a heavy bale of locks, and, putting it on the track, started for the shoot, holding the bale by his hook.

It is customary, by a sudden movement of the track, to throw the bale when it is some distance from the shoot, but this was an extra heavy bale, and Joe came close-up.

It was too sudden a tragedy to describe. Joe threw the bale, "them points" refused to be released, and down with the pack went Joe, striking a stage, and rebounding on to the wharf. His neck was broken.

They took the corpse to the house in the lane. After the first paralysis of grief, the widow sought comfort in explanation.

"It was all along of that blasted 'ook," said the "weigher-in," sympathetically!

H. R. W.

"Long may this terrible evil of war be absent from this continent, but remember that no country has taken a high position in the world without having shown what it can do in war."—Governor NORMAN (Q.).

"What hast thou to do with peace?" exclaimed John, when he was driving another kind of State chariot.

The newly-ennobled Premier Dibbs' "life-size portrait"—something under 10ft. high—fit snugly bound in brass, now pervades the N.S.W. Chief Secretary's office and strikes awe into British diplomatists. It chiefly consists of medals, stars, ribbons and gawdags that pit, like snail-pail, the big figure clad in cutaway coat, knee-breeches, and white stockings. A pointed sword hangs on one hip, and one hand fingers a sugar-minstrel's cocked-hat, with a feather in it, that would satisfy "Widow O'Brien."

Thus a correspondent:—

A sinister party, a "list charges the Customs officer and police-sergeant of Crowsa with having farms, whereof 15" "incestuous is in fact. Customs has two acres of garden, and no more, around his house; while police own five acres. Let the real culprits bear the yellow agony—the Govt. of N.S.W. Why, Simpson was dismissed the Customs of Albany for stupidly thinking anti-Cinese laws were made to be used. If official ladies in Crowsa are to be inquired into, let Messrs. Lyue and Kidd answer for interfering with the subordinates of one of their Ministers at Crowsa's rectitude."

Colemans & Sons' Eucalyptic Pills stir one up.

The Retail Brand of Gentleman.

(FOR THE BULLETIN.)

"WOT I says is this," exclaimed my grocer, emphatically, "any gentleman as writes for the papers oughter keep a shop. That's where he gets a grip on human nacher."

A short, stout, good-humoured-looking man and a lean, thin, furtive man here entered the shop. The former cheerily greeted the grocer, who responded deferentially, and having made his purchases, left with a hearty "Good night." I fancied I had met him before, but I couldn't "place" him.

The lean man purchased tobacco apprehensively, and left abruptly.

"Now, there's a contrast!" said the grocer. "Them two is as different as chalk from cheese. One's a perfect gentleman—allus pays up, takes the best, and never wants no tick. He's suthing in the Gwyment—penal department, I fancy."

Then I knew the stout, jolly man. I had met him several times, "in the execution of his duty," only on those occasions he always wore a false beard. He was—the Public Executioner!

"That other cove," continued the grocer, "ain't no good at all. He writes poetry, never has a bob, and allus wants tick."

"His name!"

"Oh, I knows him well enough. His name's all over my books, cuss him!"

Then he told it. The name of a genius! The name belonging to a star intellect!

Humph! The man who pays cash for his groceries is "allus a perfect gentleman."

RANDOLPH BEDFORD.

Sydney SUNDAY TIMES, just hit for £1000 and costs in a libel-case (by an enterprising plaintiff who had already got £750 and costs for a similar libel from the local E. News), leads off its latest editorial (on "Suicide"):

Without a trace of flippant meaning, we think that this subject is just now a very reasonable one. Who's "we"? Mr. Evans is now understood to be more or less his own editor.

It is painful to find the ARMS printing such stuff as "The Premier in his Office"—a column full of gratitude for Patterson's condescending kindness to journalists. The same Patterson who stuck out his huge underlip at the memory of Marcus Clarke, and snorted, "We want thinkers, not scribblers!" Press adulation of tin-pot political place-holders is always contemptible, and when it comes to J. B. Patterson—Ugh! Let them give a column to "The Premier and the Mercantile Bank."

The brigantine Swordfish, Capt. John Reid, which arrived at Sydney the other day from Penguin (Tas.), reports that, when 10 miles off Wollongong, a large whale, which had followed her, came close under the stern, in fact so close that the crew were rather afraid of it striking the ship. (Which recalls that, years ago, a Sydney vessel (the King Oscar?), bound from a Maori land port, was charged by a whale, which struck her fair amidships and sank her in a few minutes, the crew barely escaping in time. The fate of the Essex, a large American whaler, is well known. Cruising off Pitcairn, she was struck about the forechairs by an immense sperm whale. The whole fore part of her was crushed in, and she soon sank.)

"Out Back."

(FOR THE BULLETIN.)

The old year went, and the new return'd, in the withering weeks of drought. The cheques were spent that the shearer earn'd, and the sheds were all cut-out;

The publican's words were short and few, and the publican's looks were black— And the time had come, as the shearer knew, to carry his swag Out Back.

For time means tucker and tramp you must, where the scrubs and plains are wide

With seldom a track that a man can trust or a mountain-peak to guide;

All day long in the flies and heat—when summer is on the track,

With stunted stomachs and blister'd feet, they carry their swags Out Back.

He tramp'd away from the shanty there, when the days were long and hot,

And never a soul to know or care if he died "on the track" or not.

(Ah, men of town! you have songs of woe to tell of the rights you lack,

But only God and the swagmen know how a poor man fares Out Back.)

He begged his way on the parch'd Paroo and the Warrego tracks once more,

And lived like a dog, as the swagmen do, till the western station's shore;

But men were many and sheds were full—for work in the town was "slack."

The traveller never got hands in wool, tho' he tramp'd for a year Out Back.

In stifling noons when his back was wrung by its load, and the air seem'd dead,

And the water grew warm in the bag that hung to his aching arm like lead,

Or times of flood, when plains were seas and the scrubs were cold and black,

He ploughed in mud to his trembling knees, and paid for his sins, Out Back.

He blamed himself in the year "too late"—in the heaviest hours of life—

'Twas little he dream'd that a shearing-mate had care of his home and wife;

There are times when wrongs from your kindred come, and treacherous tongues attack,

When a man is better away from home and dead to the world Out Back.

And dirty and careless and old he wore, as his lamps of hope grew dim;

He tramp'd for years, till the swag he bore seem'd part of himself to him.

As a bullock drags in the sandy ruts, he followed the dreary track

With never a thought but to reach the huts when the sun went down Out Back.

It chanced one day, when the north-wind blew in his face like a furnace-breath, He left the track for a tank he knew—'twas a short-cut to his death;

For the bed of the tank was hard and dry, and crossed with many a crack, And, oh! it's a terrible thing to die of thirst in the scrub Out Back.

A driver came, but the fringe of law was eastward many a mile,

He never reported the thing he saw—for it was not worth his while—

The tanks are full and the grass is high in the gulga "off the track,"

Where the bleaching bones of a white man lie, by his mouldering swag Out Back.

For time means tucker, and tramp they must where the plains and scrubs are wide,

With seldom a track that a man can trust or a mountain-peak to guide,

All day long in the flies and heat—the men who are on the track—

With stunted stomachs and blister'd feet they must carry their swags Out Back.

HENRY LAWSON.

Applicants for service in the New York police must make declaration that they are opposed to trades-unionism and socialism.

The latest territory added to the British Empire—the Gilbert Islands—is suffering from a severe drought. On some islands there has been no rain for nearly two years, so reports a trading steamer. S.M. HERALD calls it an "unparalleled drought." But the diary of one of old "Bobby" Towns' traders in the Kingsmill Group, from '62 to '72, shows that from '64 to '69 not a drop of rain fell in Arorai, the southernmost of the group. After five years of drought a few showers fell, late in November; then for the following two years none. In '73, Bully Hayes called at the island, and the natives flocked off to him in swarms, beseeching him to give them a passage away. They were then existing by cutting down the perishing coconut trees and eating the pith of the corolla. "Bully" gave them that came off a barrel of cook's slush and about seven biscuits, all of which disappeared in the course of an hour. Nearly every one on the island was suffering from *thina deganians*, a scaly-skin engendered by poverty of diet—and the adults whom Hayes took away in the Leonora had fathoms upon fathoms of *oomee* paralled tightly round their waists. This, in their expressive words, was "to keep our intestines from knocking up against our spines." In two months Bully had these poor wretches as fat as aldermen. That as regards drought in these islands the line of meteorological demarcation is sharply drawn, is shown by the fact of Arorai being not 200 miles northerly from Nanomea—one of the Ellice Group—where during this very drought no appreciable diminution was experienced in the annual rain-fall, which is heavy. The trader on Arorai complained bitterly to Hayes of the lax manner in which Providence had attended to his wants. He could not even get a drinking-coconut for three years and had to take his gin neat.

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