

DIGGER SMITH by C.J. Dennis

VII. A DIGGER'S TALE

"My oath!" the Duchess sez. "You'd not ixpect
Sich things as that. Yeh don't mean kangaroos?
Go hon!" she sez, or words to that effect --
(It's 'ard to imitate the speech they use)
I tells 'er, 'Straight; I drives 'em four-in-'and
'Ome in my land.'

"You 'ear a lot," sez little Digger Smith,
"About 'ow English swells is so stand-off.
Don't yeh believe it; it's a silly myth.
I've been reel cobbers with the British toff
While I'm on leaf; for Blighty likes our crowd,
An' done us proud.

"Us Aussies was the goods in London town
When I was there. If they jist twigged your 'at
The Dooks would ask yeh could yeh keep one down,
An' Earls would 'ang out 'Welcome' on the mat,
An' sling yeh invites to their stately 'alls
For fancy balls.

"This Duchess -- I ain't quite sure uv 'er rank;
She might 'ave been a Peeress. I dunno.
I meets 'er 'usband first. 'E owns a bank,
I 'eard, an' 'arf a dozen mints or so.
A dinkum toff. 'E sez, 'Come 'ome with me
An' 'ave some tea.'

"That's 'ow I met this Duchess Wot's-'er-name --
Or Countess -- never mind 'er moniker;
I ain't no 'and at this 'ere title game --
An' right away, I was reel pals with 'er.
'Now, tell me all about yer 'ome,' sez she,
An' smiles at me.

"That knocks me out. I know it ain't no good
Paintin' word-picters uv the things I done
Out 'ome 'ere, barrackin' for Collin'wood,
Or puntin' on the flat at Flemin'ton.
I know this Baroness uv Wot-yeh-call
Wants somethin' tall.

"I thinks reel 'ard; an' then I lets it go.
I tell 'er, out at Richmond, on me Run --
A little place uv ten square mile or so --
I'm breedin' boomerangs; which is reel fun,
When I ain't troubled by the wild Jonops
That eats me crops.

"I talks about the wondrous Boshter Bird
That builds 'er nest up in the Cobber Tree,
An' 'atches out 'er young on May the third,
Stric' to the minute, jist at 'arf past three.
'Er eyes get big. She sez, 'Can it be true?'
'Er eyes was blue.

"An' then I speaks uv sport, an' tells 'er 'ow
In 'untin' our wild Wowsers we imploy
Large packs uv Barrackers, an' 'ow their row
Wakes echoes in the forests uv Fitzroy,
Where lurks the deadly Shicker Snake 'oo's breath
Is certain death.

"I'm goin' on to talk of kangaroos,
An' 'ow I used to drive 'em four-in-'and.
'Wot?' sez the Marchioness. 'Them things in zoos
That 'ops about? I've seen then in the Strand
In double 'arness; but I ain't seen four.
Tell me some more.'

I baulks a bit at that; an' she sez, '"Well,
There ain't no cause at all for you to feel
Modest about the things you 'ave to tell;
An' wot you says wonderfully reel.
Your talk" - an' 'ere I seen 'er eyelids flick --
"Makes me 'omesick".

"I reckerlect," she sez -- "Now let me see --
In Gippsland, long ago, when I was young,
I 'ad a little pet Corroboree,"
(I sits up in me chair like I was stung.)
'On it's 'ind legs,' she sez, 'it used to stand.
Fed from me 'and."

"Uv cours, I threw me alley in right there.
This Princess was a dinkum Aussie girl.
I can't do nothin' else but sit an' stare,
Thinkin' so rapid that me 'air roots curl.
But 'er? She sez, "I ain't 'eard talk so good
Since my childhood.

"'I wish," sez she, "I could be back again
Beneath the wattle an' that great blue sky.
It's like a breath uv 'ome to meet you men.
You've done reel well," she sez. "Don't you be shy.
When yer in Blighty once again," sez she,
"Come an' see me."

"I don't see 'er no more; 'cos I stopped one.
But, 'fore I sails, I gits a billy doo
Which sez, "Give my love to the dear ole Sun,
An' take an exile's blessin' 'ome with you.
An' if you 'ave some boomerangs to spare,
Save me a pair.

"'I'd like to see 'em play about," she wrote,
"Out on me lawn, an' stroke their pretty fur.
God bless yeh, boy." An' then she ends 'er note,
"Yer dinkum cobber," an' 'er moniker.
A sport? You bet! She's marri'd to an Earl --
An Aussie girl."