

# A BOOK FOR KIDS



A Book for Kids  
C. J. Dennis

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*by*

C. J. DENNIS



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A very charming gentleman, as old as old  
could be,

Stared a while, and glared a while, and  
then he said to me:

“Read your books, and heed your books,  
and put your books away,  
For you will surely need your books upon  
a later day.”

And then he wheezed and then he sneezed,  
and gave me such a look.

And he said, “Mark—  
ME—boy! Be care-  
ful of your book.”



A very charming gentleman, indeed,  
he seemed to be.

He heaved a sigh and wiped his eye,  
and then he said to me:

“Take your books and make your  
books companions—never toys;  
For they who so forsake their books  
grow into gawky boys.”

I don't know who he was. Do you? he  
snuffled at the end;

And he said, “Mark—ME—boy! Your  
book should be your friend.”





## DEDICATION

To all good children over four  
And under four-and-eighty  
Be you not over-prone to pore  
On matters grave and weighty.  
Mayhap you'll find within this book  
Some touch of Youth's rare clowning,  
If you will condescend to look  
And not descend to frowning.

The mind of one small boy may hold  
Odd fancies and inviting,  
To guide a hand unsure and old  
That moves, these days, to writing.  
For hair once bright, in days of yore,  
Grows grey (or somewhat slaty),  
And now, alas, he's over four,  
Though under four-and-eighty.



## THE BAKER

I'd like to be a baker, and come when morning breaks,  
Calling out, "Beeay-ko!" (that's the sound he makes)—  
Riding in a rattle-cart that jogs and jolts and shakes,  
Selling all the sweetest things a baker ever bakes;  
Currant-buns and brandy-snaps, pastry all in flakes;  
But I wouldn't be a baker if...  
I couldn't eat the cakes.  
Would you?

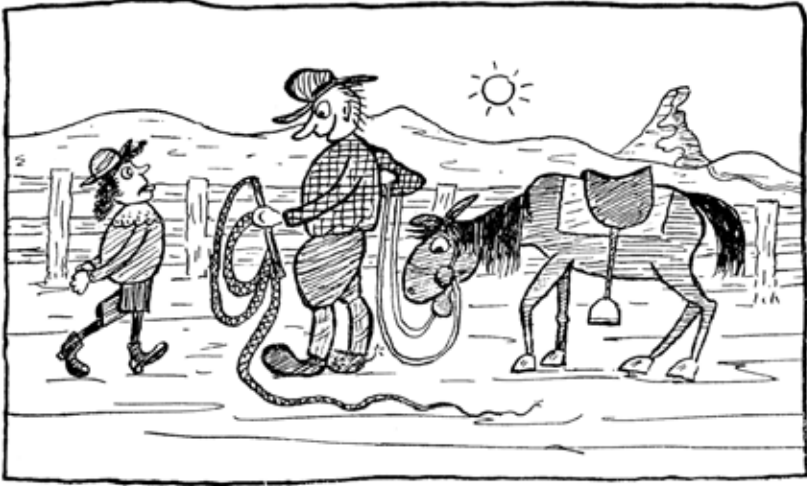
## THE DAWN DANCE

What do you think I saw to-day when I arose at dawn?  
Blue Wrens and Yellow-tails dancing on the lawn!  
Bobbing here, and bowing there, gossiping away,  
And how I wished that you were there to see the merry  
play!

But you were snug abed, my boy, blankets to your chin,  
Nor dreamed of dancing birds without or sunbeams  
dancing in.

Grey Thrush, he piped the tune for them. I peeped out  
through the glass  
Between the window curtains, and I saw them on the  
grass—

Merry little fairy folk, dancing up and down,  
Blue bonnet, yellow skirt, cloaks of grey and brown,  
Underneath the wattle-tree, silver in the dawn,  
Blue Wrens and Yellow-tails dancing on the lawn.



## CUPPACUMALONGA

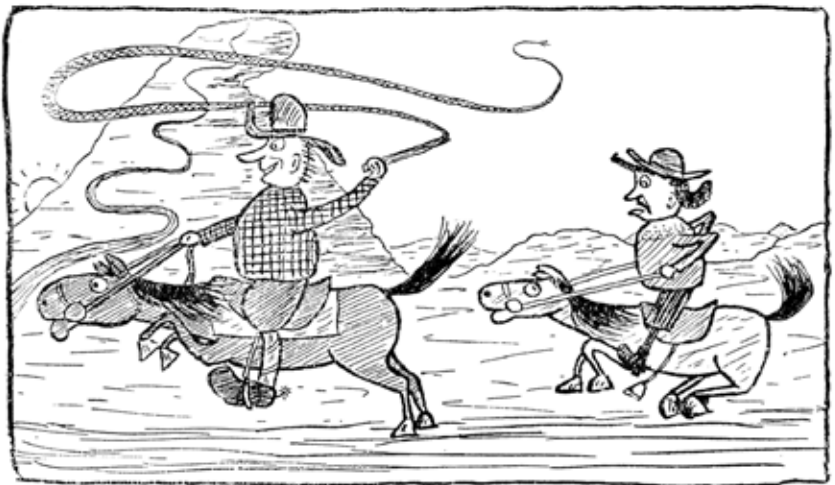
'Rover, rover, cattle-drover, where go you to-day?'  
I go to Cuppacumalonga, fifty miles away;  
Over plains where Summer rains have sung a song of glee,  
Over hills where laughing rills go seeking for the sea,  
I go to Cuppacumalonga, to my brother Bill.  
Then come along, ah, come along!  
Ah, come to Cuppacumalonga!  
Come to Cuppacumalonga Hill!

'Rover, rover, cattle-drover, how do you get there?'  
For twenty miles I amble on upon my pony mare,  
The walk awhile and talk awhile to country men I know,  
Then up to ride a mile beside a team that travels slow,  
And last to Cuppacumalonga, riding with a will.  
Then come along, ah, come along!  
Ah, come to Cuppacumalonga!  
Come to Cuppacumalonga Hill!

'Rover, rover, cattle-drover, what do you do then?'  
I camp beneath a kurrajong with three good cattle-men;  
Then off away at break of day, with strong hands on  
the reins,  
To laugh and sing while mustering the cattle on the  
plains—

For up to Cuppacumalonga life is jolly still.  
Then come along, ah, come along!  
Ah, come to Cuppacumalonga!  
Come to Cuppacumalonga Hill!

'Rover, rover, cattle-drover, how may I go too?'  
I'll saddle up my creamy colt and he shall carry you—  
My creamy colt who will not bolt, who does not shy  
nor kick—  
We'll pack the load and take the road and travel very quick.  
And if the day brings work or play we'll meet it with a will.  
So Hi for Cuppacumalonga!  
Come Along, ah, come along!  
Ah, come to Cuppacumalonga Hill!



## THE SWAGMAN

Oh, he was old and he was spare;  
His bushy whiskers and his hair  
Were all fussed up and very grey  
He said he'd come a long, long way  
And had a long, long way to go.  
Each boot was broken at the toe,  
And he'd a swag upon his back.  
His billy-can, as black as black,  
Was just the thing for making tea  
At picnics, so it seemed to me.

'Twas hard to earn a bite of bread,  
He told me. Then he shook his head,  
And all the little corks that hung  
Around his hat-brim danced and swung  
And bobbed about his face; and when  
I laughed he made them dance again.  
He said they were for keeping flies—  
"The pesky varmints"—from his eyes.  
He called me "Codger"... "Now you see  
The best days of your life," said he.  
"But days will come to bend your back,  
And, when they come, keep off the track.  
Keep off, young codger, if you can."  
He seemed a funny sort of man.

He told me that he wanted work,  
But jobs were scarce this side of Bourke,  
And he supposed he'd have to go  
Another fifty mile or so.  
"Nigh all my life the track I've walked,"

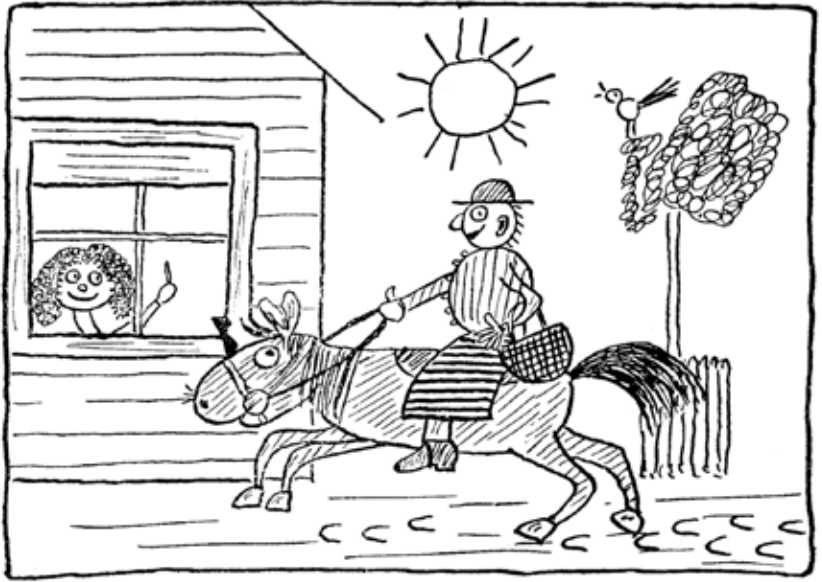
He said. I liked the way he talked.  
And oh, the places he had seen!  
I don't know where he had not been—  
On every road, in every town,  
All through the country, up and down.  
“Young codger, shun the track,” he said.  
And put his hand upon my head.  
I noticed, then, that his old eyes  
Were very blue and very wise.  
“Ay, once I was a little lad,”  
He said, and seemed to grow quite sad.

I sometimes think: When I'm a man,  
I'll get a good black billy-can  
And hang some corks around my hat,  
And lead a jolly life like that.

## THE ANT EXPLORER

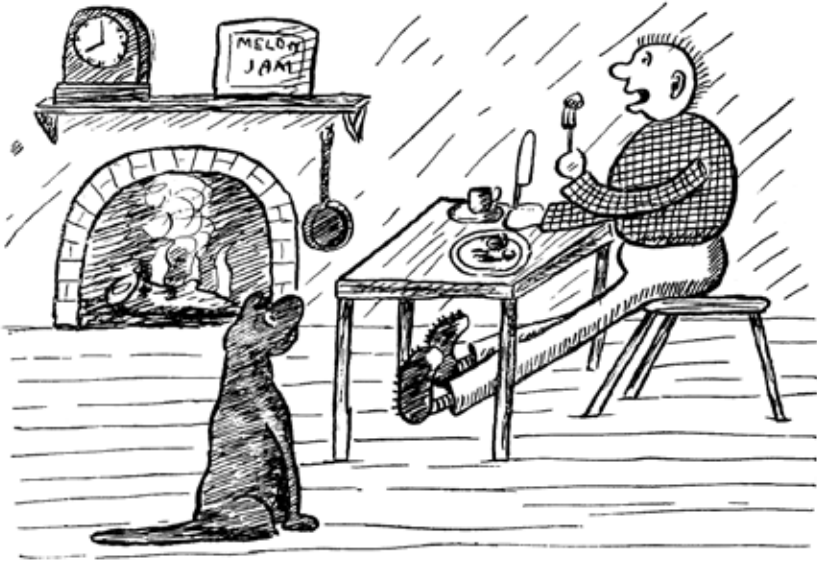
Once a little sugar ant made up his mind to roam—  
To fare away far away, far away from home.  
He had eaten all his breakfast, and he had his ma's  
consent  
To see what he should chance to see and here's the way  
he went—  
Up and down a fern frond, round and round a stone,  
Down a gloomy gully where he loathed to be alone,  
Up a mighty mountain range, seven inches high,  
Through the fearful forest grass that nearly hid the sky,  
Out along a bracken bridge, bending in the moss,  
Till he reached a dreadful desert that was feet and feet  
across.

'Twas a dry, deserted desert, and a trackless land to tread,  
He wished that he was home again and tucked-up tight in bed.  
His little legs were wobbly, his strength was nearly spent,  
And so he turned around again and here's the way he went—  
Back away from desert lands feet and feet across,  
Back along the bracken bridge bending in the moss,  
Through the fearful forest grass shutting out the sky,  
Up a mighty mountain range seven inches high,  
Down a gloomy gully, where he loathed to be alone,  
Up and down a fern frond and round and round a stone.  
A dreary ant, a weary ant, resolved no more to roam,  
He staggered up the garden path and popped back home.



## RIDING SONG

Flippity-flop! Flippity-flop!  
Here comes the butcher to bring us a chop  
    Cantering, cantering down the wide street  
    On his little bay mare with the funny white feet;  
Cantering, cantering out to the farm,  
Stripes on his apron and basket on arm.  
    Run to the window and tell him to stop—  
    Flippity-flop! Flippity-flop!



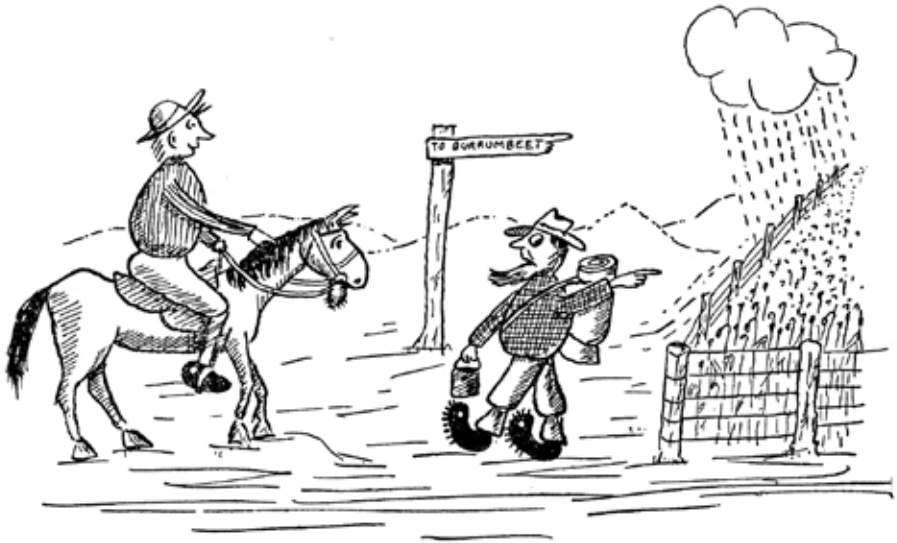
## THE FUNNY HATTER

Harry was a funny man, Harry was a hatter;  
He ate his lunch at breakfast time and said it didn't matter.  
He made a pot of melon jam and put it on a shelf,  
For he was fond of sugar things and living by himself.  
He built a fire of bracken and a blue-gum log,  
And he sat all night beside it with his big—black—dog.



## THE POSTMAN

I'd like to be a postman, and walk along the street,  
Calling out, "Good Morning, Sir," to gentlemen I meet,  
Ringing every door-bell all along my beat,  
In my cap and uniform so very nice and neat.  
Perhaps I'd have a parasol in case of rain or heat;  
But I wouldn't be a postman if...  
The walking hurt my feet.  
Would you?



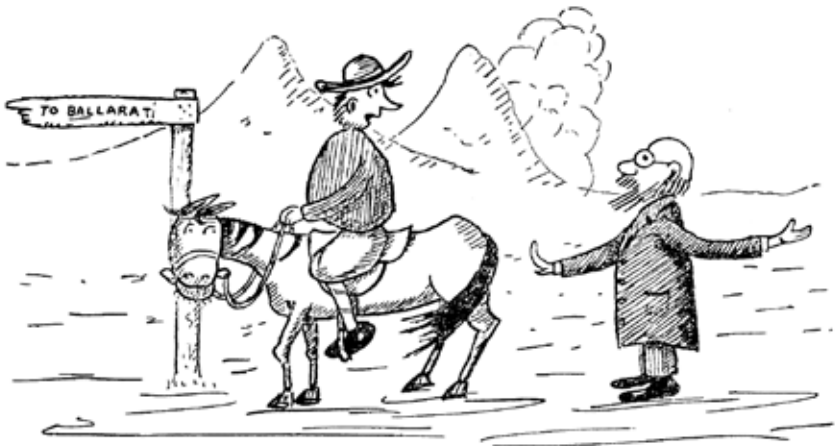
## THE TRAVELLER

As I rode in to Burrumbeet,  
I met a man with funny feet;  
And, when I paused to ask him why  
His feet were strange, he rolled his eye  
And said the rain would spoil the wheat;  
So I rode on to Burrumbeet.

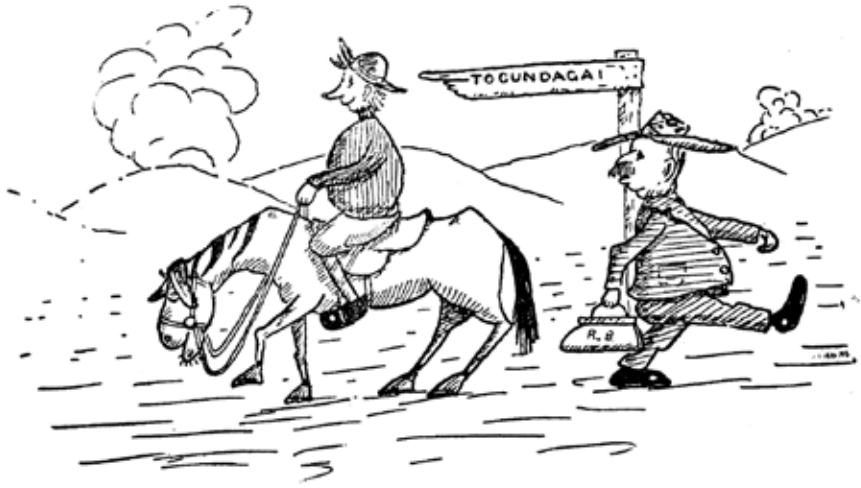
As I rode in to Beetaloo,  
I met a man whose nose was blue;  
And when I asked him how he got  
A nose like that, he answered, "What  
Do bullocks mean when they say 'Moo?'"  
So I rode on to Beetaloo.



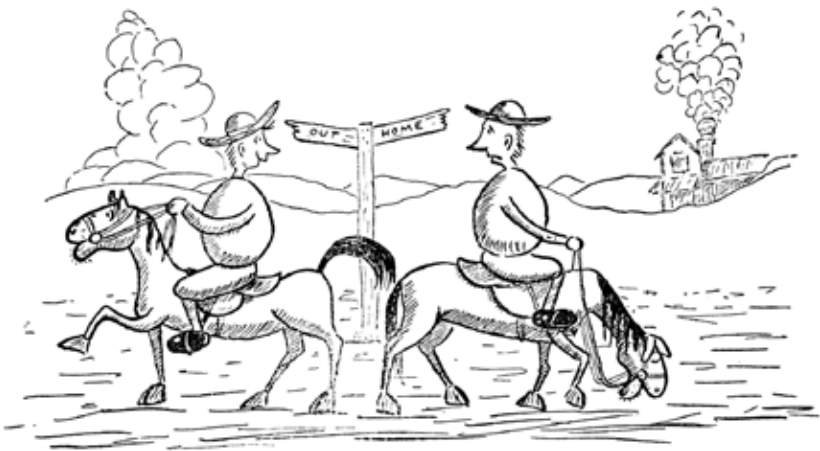
As I rode in to Ballarat,  
I met a man who wore no hat;  
And, when I said he might take cold,  
He cried, "The hills are quite as old  
As yonder plains, but not so flat."  
So I rode on to Ballarat.



As I rode in to Gundagai,  
I met a man and passed him by  
Without a nod, without a word.  
He turned, and said he'd never heard  
Or seen a man so wise as I.  
But I rode on to Gundagai.



As I rode homeward, full of doubt,  
I met a stranger riding out:  
A foolish man he seemed to me;  
But, "Nay, I am yourself," said he,  
"Just as you were when you rode out."  
So I rode homeward, free of doubt.



## OUR STREET

In our street, the main street  
Running thro' the town,  
You see a lot of busy folk  
Going up and down:

Bag men and basket men,  
Men with loads of hay,  
Buying things and selling things  
And carting things away.

The butcher is a funny man,  
He calls me Dandy Dick;  
The baker is a cross man,  
I think he's often sick;

The fruiterer's a nice man,  
He gives me apples, too;  
The grocer says, "Good morning, boy,  
What can I do for you?"

Of all the men in our street  
I like the cobbler best,  
Tapping, tapping at his last  
Without a minute's rest;

Talking all the time he taps,  
Driving in the nails,  
Smiling with his old grey eyes—  
(Hush)... telling fairy tales.



THE LITTLE RED HOUSE

## THE LITTLE RED HOUSE

### CHAPTER ONE

Very few grown-up people understand houses. Only children understand them properly, and, if I understand them just a little, it is because I knew Sym. Sym and his wife, Emily Ann, lived in the Little Red House. It was built on a rather big mountain, and there were no other houses near it. At one time, long ago, the mountain had been covered all over with a great forest; but men had cut the trees down, all but one big Blue-gum, which grew near the Little Red House. The Blue-gum and the Little Red House were great friends, and often had long talks together. The Blue-gum was a very old tree—over a hundred years old—and he was proud of it, and often used to tell of the time, long ago, when blackfellows hunted ‘possums in his branches. That was before the white men came to the mountain, and before there were any houses near it.

Once upon a time I put a verse about the mountain and the Little

Red House into a book of rhymes which I wrote for grown ups. I don't think they thought much about it. Very likely they said, "Oh, it's just a house on a hill," and then forgot it, because they were too busy about other things.

This is the rhyme:

A great mother mountain, and kindly is she,  
Who nurses young rivers and sends them to sea.  
And, nestled high up on her sheltering lap,  
Is a little red house, with a little straw cap  
That bears a blue feather of smoke, curling high,  
And a bunch of red roses cocked over one eye.

I have tried here to draw the Little Red House for you as well as I can; and it isn't my fault if it happens to look just a little like somebody's face. I can't help it, can I? if the stones of the doorstep look something like teeth, or if the climbing roses make the windows look like a funny pair of spectacles. And if Emily Ann will hang bib fluffy bobs on the window blinds for tassels, and if they swing about in the breeze like moving eyes, well, I am not to blame, am I? It just happens. The only thing I am sorry for is that I couldn't get the big Blue-gum into the picture. Of course, I could have drawn it quite easily, but it was too big.

Sym and Emily Ann were fond of the Little Red House, and you may be sure the Little Red House was fond of them—he was their home. The only thing that bothered him was that they were sometimes away from home, and then he was miserable, like all empty houses.

Now, Sym was a tinker—a travelling tinker. He would do a little gardening and farming at home for a while, and then go off about the country for a few days, mending people's pots and pans and kettles. Usually Sym left Emily Ann at home to keep the Little Red House company, but now and then Emily Ann went with Sym for a trip, and then the Little Red House was very sad indeed.