

An Idyll of Dandaloo

Banjo Paterson

On Western plains, where shade is not,
'Neath summer skies of cloudless blue,
Where all is dry and all is hot,
There stands the town of Dandaloo—
A township where life's total sum
Is sleep, diversified with rum.
It's grass-grown streets with dust are deep,
'Twere vain endeavour to express
The dreamless silence of its sleep,
Its wide, expansive drunkenness.
The yearly races mostly drew
A lively crowd to Dandaloo.

There came a sportsman from the East,
The eastern land where sportsmen blow,
And brought with him a speedy beast—
A speedy beast as horses go.
He came afar in hope to 'do'
The little town of Dandaloo.

Now this was weak of him, I wot—
Exceeding weak, it seemed to me—
For we in Dandaloo were not
The Jugginses we seemed to be;
In fact, we rather thought we knew
Our book by heart in Dandaloo.

We held a meeting at the bar,
And met the question fair and square—
‘We’ve stumped the country near and far
‘To raise the cash for races here;
‘We’ve got a hundred pounds or two—
‘Not half so bad for Dandaloo.

‘And now, it seems, we have to be
‘Cleaned out by this here Sydney bloke,
‘With his imported horse; and he
‘Will scoop the pool and leave us broke
‘Shall we sit still, and make no fuss
‘While this chap climbs all over us?’

The races came to Dandaloo,
And all the cornstalks from the West,
On ev'ry kind of moke and screw,
Came forth in all their glory drest.
The stranger's horse, as hard as nails,
Look'd fit to run for New South Wales.

He won the race by half a length—
Quite half a length, it seemed to me—
But Dandaloo, with all its strength,
Roared out 'Dead heat!' most fervently;
And, after hesitation meet,
The judge's verdict was 'Dead heat!'

And many men there were could tell
What gave the verdict extra force:
The stewards, and the judge as well—
They all had backed the second horse.
For things like this they sometimes do

In larger towns than Dandaloo.

They ran it off; the stranger won,
Hands down, by near a hundred yards
He smiled to think his troubles done;
But Dandaloo held all the cards.
They went to scale and—cruel fate!—
His jockey turned out under-weight.

Perhaps they'd tampered with the scale!
I cannot tell. I only know
It weighed him out all right. I fail
To paint that Sydney sportsman's woe.
He said the stewards were a crew
Of low-lived thieves in Dandaloo.

He lifted up his voice, irate,
And swore till all the air was blue;
So then we rose to vindicate
The dignity of Dandaloo.
'Look here,' said we, 'you must not poke

Such oaths at us poor country folk.'

We rode him softly on a rail,

We shied at him, in careless glee,

Some large tomatoes, rank and stale,

And eggs of great antiquity—

Their wild, unholy fragrance flew

About the town of Dandaloo.

He left the town at break of day,

He led his race-horse through the streets,

And now he tells the tale, they say,

To every racing man he meets.

And Sydney sportsmen all eschew

The atmosphere of Dandaloo.

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