

The Battler's Ballad

In the Great Depression the need to travel outback to try to find work gave rise to the temptation to 'ride a rattler' rather than walk. Words written from his experiences by Jack Wright c.1930s. Collected by Alan Scott. Tune by Mike O'Rourke.

Capo 2

G
A

You are just a lone - ly batt - ler and you're wait - ing for a ratt - ler
You are tired and you are wear - y, lack of sleep makes your eyes blear - y

G
A

And you wish to heav - en you were nev - er born.
And the soles of both your shoes are worn right through.

D7
E7

D7
E7

For you ran to dodge a cop - per and you came an aw - ful crop - per
Your ___ heart is sore and ach - ing and your back is near - ly break - ing

D7
E7

And the skin on both your hands is cut and torn.
And your coat and shirt and pants have had it too.

G
A

C
D

And it's hey, hey ho - bo! You are just a roll - ing stone.

Em
F#m

C
D

C
D

E - ven though you're ston - y broke, if you still can crack a joke

G
A

Em
F#m

D7
E7

You're as good as an - y king up - on his throne.

G
A

Your blood is nearly boiling and your muscles need no oiling
As you duck and dodge the headlight's brilliant glare.
For you've seen the copper's wood heap and you know that it's a good heap
You know the tucker's not the best in there.
Then the engine gives a whistle, you trip up on a thistle
Get tangled up in signal wires and points.
Then you blunder in the gutter and angrily you mutter
'Well, strike me pink, of all the flamin' joints!'
And it's hey, hey hobo! You are just a rolling stone.
Though your pants are wearing thin, if you can still raise a grin
You're as good as any king upon his throne.

Then you see the green light flashing and hear the bumpers crashing
You see the great big engine rushing by.
With your swag all at the ready, your nerves are not so steady
For you know you'll have to take her on the fly.
Then your swag you try to throw in, but the flamin' thing won't go in
Bounces off the truck and hits you, and you fall.
Pick the remnants of your swag up, pick your billy-can and bag up
You say, 'I missed the bastard after all!'
And it's hey, hey hobo! You are just a rolling stone.
Though the sky is looking grey, there will surely come a day
When you'll own a bloody railway of your own.