

The Teams

Words by Henry Lawson (1889) and the setting by harpist Cathie O'Sullivan (1979)

A cloud of dust on the long white road, and the teams go creep_ ing on
Inch by inch with the wear - y load; and by the power of the green - hide goad
The dis - tant goal is won.
With eyes half - shut to the blind - ing dust, and necks to the yokes _ bent low,
The beasts are pull - ing as bull - ocks must; and the shin - ing tyres _ might al - most rust
While the spokes are turn - ing slow.

With face half-hid 'neath a broad-brimmed hat that shades from the heat's white waves
And shouldered whip with its green-hide plait, the driver plods with a gait like that
Of his weary, patient slaves.

He wipes his brow, for the day is hot, and spits to the left with spite;
He shouts at Bally, and flicks at Scot, and raises dust from the back of Spot,
And spits to the dusty right.

He'll sometimes pause as a thing of form in front of a settler's door,
And ask for a drink, and remark, 'It's warm,' or say, 'There's signs of a thunderstorm,'
But he seldom utters more.

The rains are heavy on roads like these; and, fronting his lonely home,
For days together the settler sees the waggons bogged to the axletrees,
Or ploughing the sodden loam.

And then when the roads are at their worst, the bushman's children hear
The cruel blows of the whips reversed while bullocks pull as their hearts would burst,
And bellow with pain and fear.

And thus with glimpses of home and rest are the long, long journeys done;
And thus 'tis a thankless life at the best is distance fought in the mighty West,
And the lonely battles won.