

WE don't get much fun way back where we are and a little goes a long way, so when Dad read in the "Radio Record" that they were going to broadcast some of Albert Russell's genuinely galvanic joy germs, he had us out of bed that Tuesday morning before the early worm had time to do a few turns.

"Them what don't work," he shouted, "gets no joy germs!" meaning that he wouldn't let us listen-in at night! My word, he was in a great humour! When Strawberry backed into him and he sat in the pig's breakfast, he even laughed and patted her on the back, saying she was a "playful old gal!" Thus encouraged, she flicked him in the eye with her tail. Of course, he couldn't laugh at that, but he soon cheered up again. Even when somebody left the main road gate open and half the sheep in the front paddock wandered off, he mustered them back with songs he had learnt in the army. That's the only kind he remembers!

By breakfast we had done a cheerful day's work! Dad had even been handling heavy sacks and prancing around with them like a two year-old! Certainly some of the advance guard of the joy germ brigade must have passed along our way! Halfway through breakfast Dad suddenly thought about his radio batteries. His face fell. Once before when a special programme was being put on, the batteries wouldn't work. He left the table, and when he came back we all knew the worst!

"Boys," he said, "the 'A' battery's nearly conked out! I doubt it'll last the night out!" The rest of the day saw Dad in a mighty bad frame of mind—more especially as he had invited half the countryside for miles around to come along and join in the sing-song! Of course, Mum was busy baking cakes all day. She had a hard day of it, for Sister Sal was giving her a hand and nearly ruining everything, as Frank would be coming—Sal being goofy about him!

To make sure that the night wouldn't be spoiled by howling dogs joining in the choruses, Dad chained them up at the far end of the 60-acre paddock.

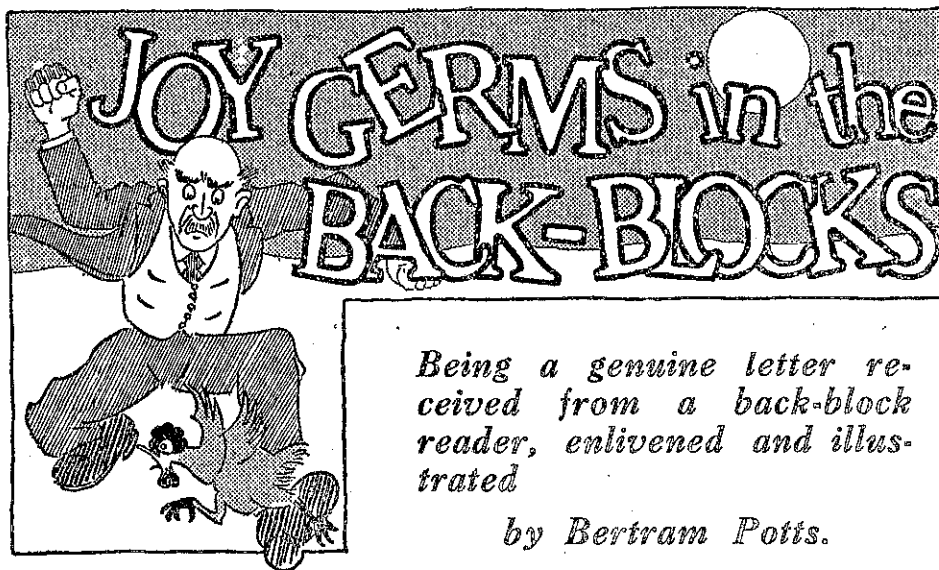
By night time he wasn't in too good a humour, more especially as Mum insisted that he should change into his respectable clothes and wear his white waistcoat, because Old Brown was coming and would be sure to wear his spats, being the only pair in our parts!

Then the visitors started to arrive mighty early, for they didn't want to miss any of the jingling joy germs. Old Charlie was the first. He lives just over the way—about four miles down the valley. He must have milked his cows about dinner-time, so he wouldn't miss anything! By halfpast seven, the house was packed and the rest of the folks were on the veranda. The more they arrived the more despondent Dad got, and it made no difference when we sang to the tune of "John Brown's Baby":—

*"Good old Albert Russell had a tussle with a mussel,
But he muzzled it and guzzled it away!"*

In the end the old joy germ started to prevail, and soon he was smiling. By ten to eight he was singing as heartily as the rest.

Folks got itching to switch the set on, but Dad wouldn't hear of it, not till Mum said to him about five to eight that the clock might be slow! Then he couldn't switch the radio on fast enough, and it



Being a genuine letter received from a back-block reader, enlivened and illustrated

by Bertram Potts.

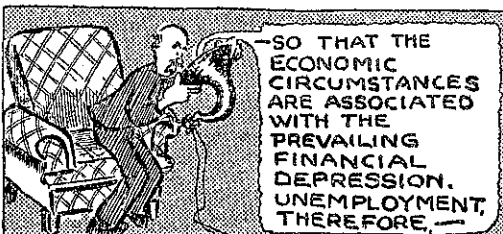
We hurried in, and there was Dad with consternation on his face looking into the loudspeaker. After a lot of unnecessary noise caused by folk shouting "Hush" and "Sh! Sh! Sh!" we heard a mournful voice say something about "the economic circumstances being associated with the prevailing financial depression!" "Albert's off colour," said Dad, "but wait till he warms up! Muriel must 'ave made 'is tea too strong—" "That's cost yer five bob for usin' their Christian names!" somebody shouted. Everybody laughed except Dad, who called "Sh! Sh!" but the same depressing talk went on about folk out of work.

"Can't make Al—Mr. Russell out!" said Dad. "'E won't get much of a collection groanin' about depression—and besides it don't sound like 'im neither!" Mum left the room and announced a minute later that she had rung the Yates's and it was Gordon Coates broadcasting a statement on unemployment. Dad got up and cried in a very loud voice. "But what about me 'A' battery? It might conk out any minute! I'll 'op outside and stop them dogs from yowlin' and 'owlin' fit to wake the dead!" and off he went. I followed him out for a breath of fresh air and discovered him violently broadcasting by the creek, and it's a wonder they didn't hear him in Wellington. After disturbing a hen, which was clucking among the toi-tois, he chased it around for making an "infernal din."

Then he went in. The same speech was going at top. "What's the idea of wastin' the bloomin' battery?" he shouted, and when Mum made a move to switch it off, he added more quietly: "Oh, leave it, 'e might stop any minute and we would miss Albert!" But it was no good, Gordon was wound up, and it was silly of Dad to shout rude remarks into the loudspeaker. Once he said a naughty word and had to apologise! Mum went very sour with him.

"Well, what does Gordon Coates care about the struggling farmer and 'is 'A' battery?" he retorted. "I'm goin' to the dogs again!" He went out and poured his soul on the night air.

It was forty minutes after the community sing started that Gordon paused for a breath and somebody switched over to the community sing, and we heard the joy germ party with good old Frankie tickling the keys! We sung out for Dad and he rushed in very impulsively and nearly knocked over Mum's sick aspidistra.



But the joy germs were at their last gasp, for we could hardly hear anything, and twenty minutes later the 'A' battery conked out for keeps! Dad really should learn to control himself!

But we're all set for the 31st when they broadcast the farewell to Mr. and Mrs. Russell. Dad says: "Tell the editor fellow me 'A' battery's up to full strength and to use 'is influence so as no depression germs will get on the air again."—Yours sincerely, BROTHER JOE.