

ROUTE MARCH

By Sgt. J. GUNDRY

This narrative poem was awarded first prize in its section in the recent Services literary competitions.

Out before Reveille
Crying Hallelujah to the sun,
With the ogres of the darkness
Giving ground to dawn of day :
Cursing if the water isn't hot
To shave the whiskery stubble.
(To skip it doesn't pay
When the Sergeant's on the blitz.)

I was born a freeman with a mind of my own, and along comes a war that snatches me up and carries me in its wake like a piece of boxwood ; tossing, inanimate, ersatz boxwood

Till I forget I ever loved one woman
Lived in one home ;
Worked for a living,
Learned not to roam,
Because a rolling stone
gathers no moss,
and anything you own
you sell at a loss
to eat, to love
the starry sky above

So along comes a war
that snatches me up,
makes me an automat
with parades to attend—
Present, Sir :
Yell it out louder, yes, sir.
—with a country to fight for
while the tarts
 on the streets
 sneer
and the moaning loungers
 leer
 and moan the more
like an underpaid whore
because they've been called
 in the ballot.

But shave it is
and clean your web
and shine the brass
till you wish you were
 dead
 dead
 dead ;

for we are the boys from way down-
under
sons of the Anzacs are we !

The crickets in the blue-gums
behind me
sing,
and the birds in the nests
in the blue-gums
behind me
wing their way freely, freely
as the Chaplain prays
monotonously as a jews-harp
our father which art
And then we turn,
regiment will form column
 of route

us leading
and we march
Up through the campground,
(de-e-e-eep Ri-ver,
I wanna cross ol' jordan)
straight through the gate
past the guard
 turned out
and onto the highway
our way—my way
if I and my mates have paid
 our rates ;

with the automobiles
swishing by
using gas,
while my soul sings
in thankfulness
 for liberty