

The Bludger and the Shearing Gang

He was huge and he was surly
With a temper that was foul.
His face was carelessly arranged
And mostly wore a scowl.

He had a sloping, furrowed brow
And nostrils like a steer's.
A jaw that looked like granite,
And cauliflowers for ears.

He never spoke about his past.
His background no-one knew,
And so he was the sort of bloke
About whom stories grew.

Some said he'd been in prison
For doing in his wife.
Some claimed he'd been a boxer
And that he'd been barred for life.

Bludger Bill is what they called him,
A nickname aptly earned.
But mind, they only said it
When his bulky back was turned.

No one in the shearing gang
Escaped his cadging clutch.
He thought that each and every one
Was worthy of a touch.

But worst of all, if anyone
Left tid-bits lying round,
Then Bludger Bill would snatch them up
And quickly wolf them down.

Any object that he fancied
He took as if of right,
And though the shearers seethed with ire
They all were scared to fight.

He lived off them, a parasite,
A hulking greedy drone,
And, heavy smoker that he was
He never smoked his own.

As Rangi Paul said bitterly
One night to Charlie Scott,
"If God helps those that help themselves
He helps that swine a lot.

We used to be a happy gang
Where each man pulled his weight.
With lots of work and lots of fun
And each man was your mate."

Charlie scratched his head and said,
"The boss knows he's a gun.
That mongrel's fastest of us all,
There's nothing can be done."

But one night after shearing
When they all were lying prone,
Sly Lefty Smith slipped from the hut
On business of his own.

He gathered up some sheep dung,
Each pellet firm and black;
And carefully he placed it
In a little paper sack.

He sprinkled icing sugar in
Until the dung was white,
And then he shook the bag a bit
And screwed the top up tight.

Slipping off his heavy boots
He crept back in his socks,
And totally unnoticed
Placed the bag upon a box.

The Bludger rose and stretched himself
As dinner time drew near,
And then his eyes lit on the bag
And he began to leer.

He seized a handful of the stuff
And crammed it in his maw,
Took several mighty chews -
Then gagged, and headed for the door!

A lengthy interval ensued
Before he reappeared,
And only crafty little Smith

Knew why his shirt was smeared.

"Who was it done that!" bellowed Bill
"I'll tear the swine in half."
They knew that somehow he'd been had
But no-one dared to laugh.



"I swear I'll kill the rotten sod -
I'll catch him if I can."
He glowered around, but little Smith
Looked blank as any man.

And in the days that followed
Bill's bludging ways declined.
He went about as if he had
A problem on his mind.

Their gear was safe; he didn't seem
To want it any more,
And he bought his own tobacco
Which he'd never done before.

It wasn't long before he left;
The shearers wondered why.
"What made the rat-bag go?" they ask
But heaved a heartfelt sigh.

And so they all conjectured
And pondered for a while,
But little Smith said nothing.
He just smiled a knowing smile.