

Understanding *The Moods of Ginger Mick*

In *STUDIES* 1/2010 we include some extracts from *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, a series of poems published in 1916 and that provided a narrative of the experiences of a fictional soldier at Gallipoli.

It was written by a popular poet, C.J. Dennis. By exploring the ideas in it about the war, the soldiers and identity we can understand popular attitudes and values.

The key characters are Ginger Mick, a rabbit seller ('rabbito') larrikin and street rough from Spadger's Lane, a Melbourne slum; and Bill, the 'Sentimental Bloke', Mick's friend who has been 'tamed' by the love of a good woman, Doreen.

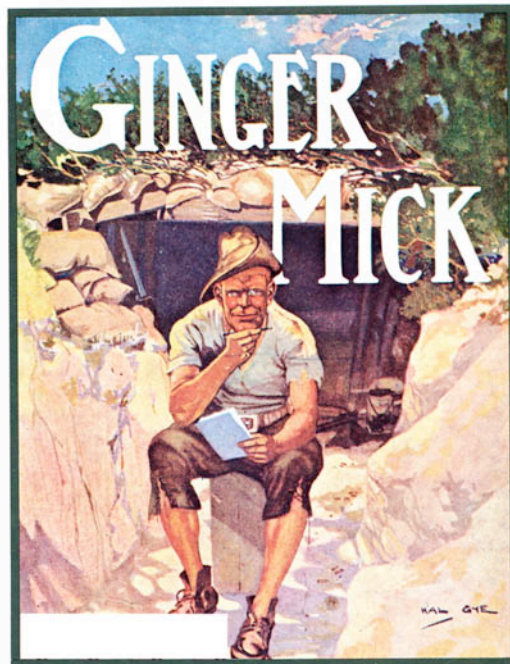
The Moods of Ginger Mick recounts the story of Mick from his decision to enlist, through to his experiences at Gallipoli.

The introduction was written on Anzac Day 1916, and the book was published later in the year — to huge sales.

We included some extracts from some of the poems in the unit.

Some of the language may be intimidating for students, although if read out loud the sense of it becomes clearer.

However, we have provided this 'translation' of the poems if they are needed to help students.



By **C. J. DENNIS** Author of "THE SENTIMENTAL BLOKE", "ROSE OF SPADGERS", "DIGGER SMITH", "DOREEN", "THE GLUGS OF GOSH", etc.

Introduction

<p><i>A rorty boy, a naughty boy, wiv rude ixpressions thick In 'is casual conversation, an' the wicked sort o' face That gives the sudden shudders to the lor- abidin' race.</i></p> <p><i>I knoo 'im fer what 'e wus — a big, soft- 'earted boy . . . I intrajuce me cobber 'ere, and don't make no ixcuse . . . I only know, inside o' me, I intrajuce a man.</i></p>	<p><i>A rorty* boy, a naughty boy, with rude expressions thick In his casual conversation, and the wicked sort of face That gives the sudden shudders to the law- abiding race.</i></p> <p><i>I knew him for what he was — a big, soft- hearted boy . . . I introduce my cobber* here, and don't make any excuse . . . I only know, inside of me, I introduce a man.</i></p> <p>rorty = a rort, an illegal scheme for making money cobber = friend, mate</p>
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War

<p><i>Jist then a motor car goes glidin' by Wiv two fat toffs be'ind two fat cigars. Mick twigs 'em from the corner uv 'is eye. 'I 'ope', 'e sez, "the "Uns don't git my cars. Me di'mons, too, don't let me sleep a wink . . '</i></p> <p><i>Ar, 'Struth! I'd fight fer that sort — I don't think."</i></p>	<p><i>Just then a motor car goes gliding by With two fat toffs* behind two fat cigars. Mick twigs* them from the corner of his eye. 'I hope", he says, "the Huns* don't get my cars. My diamonds, too, don't let me sleep a wink . '</i></p> <p><i>Ar, 'Struth! I'd fight for that sort — I don't think."</i></p> <p>toffs = wealthy people twigs = sees, notices Huns = Germans</p>
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Call of Stouch*

'E wus a man uv vierlence, wus Mick,
Coarse wiv 'is speech an' in 'is manner low,
Slick wiv 'is 'ands, an' 'andy wiv a brick
When bricks wus needful to defeat a foe.
An' now 'e's gone an' mizzled to the war,
An' some blokes 'as the nerve to arst "Wot
for?"

Wot for? Gawstruth! 'E was no patriot
That sits an' brays advice in days uv strife:
'E never flapped no flags nor sich like rot;
'E never sung "Gawsave" in all 'is life.
'E wus dispised be them that make sich noise:
But now - O strike !-'e's "one uv our brave
boys

Why did 'e go? 'E 'ad a decent job,
'Is tart an' 'im they could 'a made it right.
Why does a wild bull fight to guard the mob?
Why does a bloomin' bull-ant look fer fight?
Why does a rooster scrap an' flap an' crow?
'E went becos 'e dam well 'ad to go.

He was a man of violence, was Mick,
Coarse with his speech and in his manner low,
Slick with his hands, and handy with a brick
When bricks were needful to defeat a foe.
And now he's gone and mizzled* to the war,
And some blokes has the nerve to ask "What
for?"

What for? God's Truth! He was no patriot
That sits and brays advice in days of strife:
He never flapped no flags nor suchlike rot;
He never sung "God Save"* in all his life.
He was despised by them that make such noise:
But now - O strike! He's "one of our brave boys

Why did he go? He had a decent job,
His tart* and him they could have made it right.
Why does a wild bull fight to guard the mob?
Why does a blooming bull-ant look for fight?
Why does a rooster scrap and flap and crow?
He went because he damned well had to go.

stouch = fighting, war
mizzled = agreed to, joined in
God Save = God Save the King (national
anthem)
tart = girlfriend

The Push*

Becos the bugles East an' West sooled on
the dawgs o' war,
A bloke called Ginger Mick 'as found 'is game
—

Found 'is game an' found 'is brothers, 'oo
wus strangers in 'is sight,
Till they shed their silly clobber an' put on the
duds fer fight.

Yes, they've shed their silly clobber an' the
other stuff they wore
Fer to 'ide the man beneath it in the past;
An' each man is the clean, straight man 'is
Maker meant 'im for,
An' each man knows 'is brother man at last.
Shy strangers, till a bugle blast preached 'oly
brother'ood;
But mateship they 'ave found at last; an' they
'ave found it good.

So the lumper, an' the lawyer, an' the chap
'oo shifted sand,
They are cobbers wiv the cove 'oo drove a
quill;
The knut 'oo swung a cane upon the Block, 'e
takes the 'and
Uv the coot 'oo swung a pick on Broken 'Ill;
An' Privit Clord Augustus drills wiv Privit
Snarky Jim —
They are both Australian soljers, w'ich is
good enough fer 'im.

"'Struth! I've 'ung around me native land fer
close on thirty year,
An' I never knoo wot men me cobbers were:
Never knoo that toffs wus white men till I met
'em over 'ère-
Blokcs an' covcs I sort o' snouted over there.
Yes, I loafed aroun' me country; an' I never
knoo 'er then;
But the reel, nibuck Australia's 'ere, among
the fightin' men.

"We've slung the swank fer good an' all; it
don't fit in our plan;
To skite uv birth an' boodle is a crime.
A man wiv us, why, 'c's a man becos 'e is a
man,
An' a reel red-'ot Australian ev'ry time.
Fer dawg an' side an' snobbery is down an'
out fer keeps.
It's grit an' reel good fellership that gits yeh
friends in 'eaps.

Because the bugles East and West sooled*
on the dogs of war,
A bloke called Ginger Mick has found his
game —

Found his game and found his brothers, who
were strangers in his sight,
Till they shed their silly clobber* and put on
the duds* for fight.

Yes, they've shed their silly clobber and the
other stuff they wore
For to hide the man beneath it in the past;
And each man is the clean, straight man his
Maker meant him for,
And each man knows his brother man at last.
Shy strangers, till a bugle blast preached holy
brotherhood;
But mateship they have found at last; and
they have found it good.

So the lumper*, and the lawyer, and the chap
who shifted sand,
They are cobbers with the cove* who drove a
quill*;
The nut* who swung a cane* upon the
Block*, he takes the hand
Of the coot* who swung a pick on Broken
Hill;
And Private Claude Augustus drills with
Private Snarky Jim* —
They are both Australian soldiers, which is
good enough for him.

"'Struth! I've hung around my native land for
close on thirty year,
And I never knew what men my cobbers
were:
Never knew that toffs were white men* till I
met them over here-
Blokcs and covcs I sort of snouted* over
there.
Yes, I loafed around my country; and I never
knew her then;
But the real, ribuck* Australia's here, among
the fighting men.

"We've slung the swank* for good and all; it
doesn't fit in our plan;
To skite* of birth and boodle* is a crime.
A man with us, why, he's a man because he
is a man,
And a real red-hot Australian every time.
For dog* and side* and snobbery are down
and out for keeps.
It's grit and reel good fellowship that gets you
friends in heaps.

push = gang

	<p>sooled = encouraged clobber = clothing duds = clothing lumper = a manual worker cove = person drove a quill = was a clerk nut = hard man swung a cane = cut or harvested Block = a block of land, a small farm coot = person Private Claude Augustus and Private Snarky Jim = contrasting an upper class name with a working class one white men = a term of approval for being a genuine man snouted = ignored ribuck = genuine slung the swank = given up acting as though you were better than others skite = boast boodle = wealth dog and side = boastful and pretentious behaviour</p>
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The Game

<p><i>I ipects a note frum Ginger, fer the time wus gettin' ripe, An' I gits one thick wiv merry 'owls uv glee, Fer they've gone an' made 'im corperil - hey've given 'im a stripe, An' yeh'd think, to see 'is note, it wus V.C. Fer 'e chortles like a nipper wiv a bran' noo Noer's Ark Since Forchin she 'as smiled on 'im, an' life's no more a nark.</i></p> <p><i>"Ho! the sky along the 'ill-tops, it is smudged viv cannon smoke, An' the shells along the front is comin' fast, But the 'eads 'ave 'ad the savvy fer to reckernise a bloke, An' permotion's gettin' common-sense at last. An' they picked me fer me manners, w'ich was snouted over 'ome, But I've learned to be a soljer since I crossed the ragin' foam.</i></p> <p><i>"They 'ave picked me 'cos they trust me; an' it's got me where I live, An' it's put me on me metal, square an' all. I wusn't in the runnin' once when blokes 'ad trust to give, But over 'ere I answers to the call. So some shrewd 'ead 'e marked me well, an' when the time wus ripe, 'E took a chance on Ginger Mick, an' I 'ave snared me stripe.</i></p>	<p><i>I expect a note from Ginger, for the time was getting ripe, And I get one thick with merry howls of glee, For they've gone and made him corporal* - they've given him a stripe*, And you'd think, to see his note, it was V.C.* For he chortles like a nipper* with a brand new Noah's Ark* Since Fortune she has smiled on him, and life's no more a nark*.</i></p> <p><i>"Ho! the sky along the hill-tops, it is smudged with cannon smoke, And the shells along the front are coming fast, But the heads* have had the savvy* for to recognise a bloke, And promotion's getting common-sense at last. And they picked me for my manners, which was snouted* over home, But I've learned to be a soldier since I crossed the raging foam*.</i></p> <p><i>"They have picked me because they trust me; and it's got me where I live, And it's put me on my mettle*, square and all. I wasn't in the running once when blokes had trust to give, But over here I answer to the call. So some shrewd head he marked me well, and when the time was ripe, He took a chance on Ginger Mick, and I have snared* me stripe.</i></p> <p>corporal = a rank above private, a promotion stripe = a chevron (V) the way rank is denoted, a corporal has two stripes or chevrons on his sleeve, a lance-corporal one VC = Victoria Cross, the highest award for bravery nipper = child Noah's Ark = a toy boat and animals nark = a disappointment heads = the bosses, the leaders savvy = intelligence or knowledge snouted = ignored or played down put me on my mettle = made me conscious of doing my best snared = gained</p>
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A Gallant Gentleman

*A month ago the world grew grey fer me;
A month ago the light went out fer Rose.
To 'er they broke it gentle as might be;
But fer 'is pal 'twas one uv them swift blows
That stops the 'eart-beat; fer to me it came
Jist. "Killed in Action", an' beneath, 'is name. .*

*An' when I'm feelin' blue, an' mopin' 'ere
About the pal I've lorst; Doreen, my wife,
She come an' takes my 'and, an' tells me,
"Dear,
There'd be more cause to mourn a wasted
life.
'E proved 'imself a man; an' 'e's at rest."*

*An' so, I tries to think sich things is best.
A gallant gentleman. Well, let it go.
They sez they've put them words above 'is
'ead,
Out there where lonely graves stretch in a
row;
But Mick 'e'll never mind it now 'e's dead.
An' where 'e's gone, when they weigh praise
an' blame,
P'raps gentlemen an' men is much the same.*

*A month ago the world grew grey for me;
A month ago the light went out for Rose.
To her they broke it gentle as might be;
But for his pal it was one of those swift blows
That stops the heart-beat; for to me it came
Just. "Killed in Action", and beneath, his
name. . . .*

*And when I'm feeling blue, and moping here
About the pal I've lost; Doreen, my wife,
She come and takes my hand, and tells me,
"Dear,
There'd be more cause to mourn a wasted
life.
He proved himself a man; and he's at rest."*

*And so, I try to think such things are best.
A gallant gentleman. Well, let it go.
They say they've put those words above his
head,
Out there where lonely graves stretch in a
row;
But Mick he'll never mind it now he's dead.
And where he's gone, when they weigh
praise and blame,
Perhaps gentlemen and men are much the
same.*