

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Battler's Ballad

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(J.Wright/M.O'Rourke)

You are just a lonely battler and you're waiting for a rattler
You wish to heaven you were never born
For you ran to dodge a copper and you came an awful cropper
The skin on both your hands is cut and torn

You are tired and you're weary, lack of sleep makes your eyes bleary
The soles of both your shoes are worn right through
Your heart is sore and aching and your back is nearly breaking
Your coat and shirt and pants have had it too

Chorus:

And it's hey, hey hobo, you're just a rolling stone
Though you're stony broke, if you still can crack a joke
You're as good as any king upon his throne

Your blood is nearly boiling and your muscles need no oiling
As you duck and dodge the headlight's brilliant glare
For you've seen the copper's wood heap and you know that it's a good heap
You know the tucker's not the best in there

Then the engine gives a whistle, you trip up on a thistle
Get tangled up in signal wires and points
Then you blunder in the gutter and angrily you mutter
'Well, strike me pink, of all the flamin' joints!'

First Repeat chorus

And it's hey, hey hobo, you're just a rolling stone
Though your pants are wearing thin, if you can still raise a grin
You're as good as any king upon his throne

Then you see the green light flashing and hear the bumpers crashing
You see the great big engine rushing by
With your swag all at the ready, your nerves are not so steady
For you know you'll have to take her on the fly

Then your swag you try to throw in , but the flamin' thing won't go in
Bounces off the truck and hits you, and you fall
Pick the remnants of your swag up, pick your billy-can and bag up
You say, 'I missed the bastard after all!'

Second Repeat chorus

And it's hey, hey hobo, you're just a rolling stone
Though the sky is looking grey, there will surely come a day
When you'll own a bloody railway of your own.

Words: Jack Wright c.1930s. Collected by Alan Scott. Tune: Mike O'Rourke

Source: As recorded by Mike O'Rourke on 'Flying Pieman' 1980. PS.

This excellent piece from the depression years in Australia came to me via Tony Suttor in Darwin.

PS

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