OVERLAND

NUMBER TEN, SPRING 1957 TWO SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE

Henry Lawson Anniversary

Henry Lawson in his Twenties. *Linocut by Ron Edwards*

Born 17 June 1867

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TV TRICKERY

ACTORS and actresses marched down Collins Street, Melbourne, one afternoon early in September.

Carrying banners, they marched to the rooms of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, where they presented their protest against the action of the Government in lifting currency restrictions on the importation of TV films.

Twelve months ago holders of import licences for TV films were restricted to $30,000 worth annually; now that generous ceiling has been lifted —but, of course, there are still rigorous laws against the importing of good literature or educational textbooks from the dollar area.

The decision by the Government is in direct contradiction to its previously-declared policy of encouraging Australian talent. It also highlights the cynical avoidance by the companies controlling TV of their own undertakings.

Mr. Ernest Turnbull, for instance, Managing Director of Hoyts Films, said on September 2 that more and more films will be made in Australia, "but, of course, the limited equipment available here must limit production."

Strange then to learn that throughout Australia technical services, studios, actors and technicians are available but are not being used. In Sydney alone the Pagewood, Artransa and former Cinesound Studios are working at a tiny fraction of their potential.

TV spokesmen speak of the large percentage of "Australian content" in their shows. They do not say that this is confined in general to programs where they can get the participants to take part for a packet of cereals or a bag of sweets; where decent Australian trade union rates are due to be paid to participants the percentage of Australian shows is invisible!

> "I often wonder whether New Zealand has gotten television. I notice that some United States film agencies have made a deal to ship hundreds of old films to Australia to feed into its new TV system. We and the Aussies have been pretty good friends, and I hope this won't do anything to change the relationship!"
>
> —Lt. Col. Vincent Allred, former Judge Advocate to the U.S. Army in New Zealand in World War II., in a letter to Mr. Julius Hogben, Chairman of the Auckland Festival Society. Quoted in the Auckland Star, 5 July 1957.

Of course it is cheaper to use syndicated foreign stuff: the newspaper proprietors found that out long ago. But it isn't necessary. The TV companies are doing far better than they forecast when with long faces they estimated heavy losses on their first two years of operations.

The basic point is this: unless they are coerced by legislation, the TV stations will never adequately support Australian talent when they can get canned names from overseas, cheap. And the more the TV audiences and revenues grow, the less likely the TV companies will be to enter on a policy of running relatively unknown Australian talent.

Overland supports the demand of Actors' Equity for at least 55 per cent. of all TV time for Australian material. We hope at an early date to run a comprehensive article on the whole racket to help bust open the well-maintained conspiracy of silence on these issues for, of course, most of the daily newspapers are up to their ears in TV companies themselves.

WHERE WE STAND

WITH this issue the price of Overland rises to 2/6. Even so, Overland probably remains the cheapest literary magazine in the world, equating price with the number of words printed in each issue.

And this despite the fact that Overland is the only non-subsidised literary magazine in Australia.

There are many factors in favor of a price rise. Firstly, it is ridiculous to sell for less than the cost of printing (let alone other editorial expenses), which is what we have been doing.

We cannot expect to escape the consequences of inflation; and despite the services of a tolerant and capable printer our printing costs have steadily risen.

We have noted that nearly all subscribers send at least ten shillings for their renewals; and, viewed logically, one shilling extra is not very much to ask those who like Overland to pay every quarter.

From the business point of view, it will enable a more generous discount to retailers, which will encourage them to sell more copies.

The increased subscription of ten shillings a year will be post free; up to now subscribers have been paying 3d. an issue for postage charges.

We reckoned that our supporters would prefer a price rise to a cut in size.

Nevertheless the solution to the problems of the little magazines, once a satisfactory minimum price level has been established, does not lie in continued increases in price—as others have found to their cost.

We hope this will be the last Overland price rise; we hope that a continually expanding circulation, which we have, will offset further inflationary pressures.

And, of course, if we receive the Commonwealth Literary Fund grant for which we have applied (and for which we have met all possible conditions) we will consider reducing the price as well as increasing the size of Overland.

Our main worry is that the casual buyer may be daunted at the prospect of forking out half a dollar for the magazine.

And it is the casual buyer among the great body of plain Australians we want, through Overland, to become addicts of Australian literature.

We can only ask our many wonderful friends who write us so many heartening letters to make sure that **they** introduce the magazine to an ever-widening circle of readers.

Lloyd Davies

THE PANIC

Illustration by Clem Millward

I WAS in court all day on the Friday it happened and so heard nothing of the rumors that began to circulate through the city. Of course I read the headlines in the evening paper: "H-PLANE CRASH NEAR PERTH," and the sketchy, padded story of the four-engined R.A.F. jet "believed to be participating in the current tests" which had crashed early in the morning in bushland north of the city.

It spoke of the "heavy security cordon" and for that obvious reason told us little else.

I remember on Saturday being mildly surprised that the story only got about four inches on page three of the morning paper. By then it was simply a "forced landing near Perth" and the "security cordon" had become a "blanket".

My wife brought some vague gossip back from the village with the week-end shopping which we both dismissed with laughter. ("As if it would be carrying a hydrogen bomb. They'll be saying it's gone off next.")

Then after lunch our neighbor Dawson, who holds a fairly responsible civil service job, came in. He'd heard the rumors too, had tried an Air Force brass-hat he knew and had got a very cagey reception.

Still sceptical, I tried to telephone some people in high places—the Commissioner of Police, one or two magistrates, the local Member. But the line was worse than on a Friday peak hour. Everyone was engaged. The repetitive wail of the "engaged" signal gave me my first feeling of real fear.

I cursed the slowness with which the dial spun. Impatiently I forced it back with my finger, always to hear the same maddening mechanical whine.

Finally I got through to a fellow solicitor. What he had to say really shook me.

His eldest boy was doing National Service training with the R.A.A.F. at Pearce Airfield. All week-end leave had suddenly been stopped on Friday afternoon. Most of the lads, however, had skipped camp at nightfall, and came home to warn their parents.

It appears that one of the senior officers had addressed them grimly about "the real thing, chaps" and "dying at our posts." Also the issuing of large quantities of brown "anti-radiation" paper to the permanent personnel and their families had not gone unnoticed.

My wife began to talk of leaving immediately for her aunt's farm in the south-west.

I said we'd be perfect fools just to pack up and leave everything on the strength of a mere rumor. She became almost hysterical, kept repeating: "If you want our children to be blown to pieces, I don't."

"The legal profession had little to complain of."

It was then that we realised that our two boys had already left for the football and there was nothing we could do until they got home.

Eventually she agreed to stand by the wireless while Dawson and I made a canvass of our immediate neighbors for further information.

Our search for information quickly developed into a council of action. As everyone added his own bit of rumor the picture became more and more alarming. A group of us were standing in the street outside our house when we heard aircraft approaching.

Two formations of jets, followed by a number of conventional aircraft, came towards us from the north, swung east and headed inland.

"Well they're clearing out anyway'," cried Dawson as we stood staring after them.

Their sound was still vibrating when my wife came running out to say the Prime Minister would be making an announcement at 5 p.m.

There came a pathetic high pitched wail from down the street.

"D-a-a-a-d! Mu-u-u-m!" Tearful and frightened, our two boys were running towards us.

Apparently the football had been spontaneously abandoned at three-quarter time. The wildest of stories had spread quickly through the crowd. The children had been scared stiff. I gather also they had had a pretty bad time getting home through the crush.

Most of the neighbors had gathered in our living room by 4.30. We made plans for a possible evacuation. Those who had cars arranged to make room for those who hadn't.

To provide emergency funds, several volunteers with current accounts agreed to cash cheques at the local hotel and divide the proceeds on temporary loan.

The atmosphere was quite electric by the time the announcer introduced the Prime Minister with his special message for the people of Western Australia.

He began by telling us that there was no need for panic and that he wished it was possible for him to be with us to share our anxiety and to calm our fears. He went on to describe how a British "Valiant" aircraft engaged in the current tests had developed engine trouble while en route to the test area carrying a hydrogen bomb.

". . .it appears that the commander on the spot, faced with the sudden responsibility of the safety of valuable lives and equipment, made a snap decision to order the aircraft to land at the nearest suitable airfield, namely your very fine field at Pearce. As part of that decision he saw fit not to order the jettisoning of its extremely valuable bomb load.

"Unfortunately the pilot overshot the airfield on landing, made a very gallant attempt to gain height and take the aircraft out to sea. This he was not able to do and it is with deep regret I must announce that his aircraft crashed in timbered country just north of your city. Regrettably this gallant officer and several of his crew lost their lives.

"I come now to the question you must all be asking, what danger is there from explosion of the bomb which this aircraft was carrying? I say with confidence: Very little. Almost none at all.

"Your government has obtained the highest of expert advice on the matter. The bomb is of course fitted with safeguards, and, it having not exploded on impact, it is reasonable to assume that it is practically harmless.

"It has not yet been possible to make a proper examination of the device as it appears that it became buried in the earth on impact and some care must be exercised in removing it. You may be wondering why the airfield at Pearce was evacuated. This also was the decision of the commander on the spot. It was perhaps an over-prudent decision but not one, I am sure, that you as taxpayers will condemn."

The Prime Minister went on to assure us that he would keep in constant communication with the experts and we would be informed immediately of any change in the situation.

When he had finished we were all quite relieved and an excited conversation broke out.

"Well, I suppose a man can go out and get full on this lot," called out one of our volunteers, waving a bundle of the somewhat grimy notes which he had collected for us at the hotel. A slight flush on his cheeks indicated that the seriousness of the occasion had not prevented him from refreshing himself while he had carried out the business.

We decided it would be as well to allocate the money in any event and I was commissioned to draw up the necessary I.O.U's. We were all still a little perturbed at the note of qualification in the Prime Minister's speech, some more than others, in accordance with political partisanship.

Our misgivings quickened with the Sunday paper next morning. Its headlines, in extremely large type, called on the Prime Minister and Authority in general to "GIVE US THE FACTS". It continued, in the fashion of Sunday papers, with a series of veiled assertions and rhetorical questions, to suggest that we had not been told the whole truth; that grave danger lurked on the city's northern outskirts; and that, behind the scenes, preparations were being made for an evacuation.

At about noon I drove to the highway to fill my tank and a drum I kept for emergencies.

I was surprised at the large number of cars loaded with camping gear I saw heading south. One would have thought it was an Easter holiday. More disquietening was the fact that several of the service stations were closed.

When I got home my wife informed me there had been a news-flash to the effect that the State Premier would make a special announcement at 1.30. None of us felt much in the mood for our Sunday dinner especially as the flash was repeated every five minutes.

Dawson came in while we were washing up to say that he was leaving for the country straight away with his passengers. He'd heard from someone in his Department that there was going to be an immediate evacuation and they were getting out "before the rush".

We decided to wait to hear the announcement at 1.30. It is true we were almost frantic with indecision but we kept telling ourselves that the government would not keep us waiting if there were any immediate danger.

The Premier, like the Prime Minister, began his message by assuring us that there was no need for panic. He explained that he had been in constant communication with the Prime Minister and with the experts on the spot, who included men expressly flown from the United Kingdom.

A thorough examination had been made prior to commencing the work of removal. The majority of the experts agreed that it was impossible to say whether or not the removal could be carried out with complete safety. There was, in short, a risk of detonation once removal work was commenced.

Should detonation occur, it would result in the almost complete destruction of most of the metropolitan area and dangerous contamination of the surrounding districts.

In order to safeguard as far as possible the lives of the population, it was necessary to order the complete evacuation of the city and surroundings for a radius of at least 50 miles while the removal work proceeded.

He appreciated the great inconvenience and disruption that would be caused, particularly to commerce and industry, but considered the safety of some four hundred thousand people should be put first. An evacuation period of forty-eight hours would be allowed to elapse before the bomb removal operations were commenced.

The Premier appealed to private motorists to co-operate with the police and with each other. People in the country-side were urged to give all possible assistance in feeding and billeting the evacuted townspeople. In the event of detonation the path of the radio-active cloud would be closely plotted and every effort made to warn people in its path.

The Premier again counselled us to keep calm, then handed over to an announcer who began to read detailed lists of preparations and general advice: railway arrangements; hospital evacuation plans; clothing to be worn; the care of domestic animals in transit; country centres available for the collection of public monies; precautions for electrical appliances; arrangements for lost children; warnings to mariners; advice to expectant mothers; the closing of hotels, the Law Courts and Government offices until further notice. He was still reading them when we left.

The first hour of our journey is still to me an incredible confusion of sensations and images. Our

small car was cruelly overloaded. My wife, nursing the baby, sat in the front with me. The two boys somehow fitted in the rear seat amid suitcases and all kinds of household belongings, which tended to overflow into the front, cramping me and hindering my driving.

A great stream of south-bound traffic took up all four lanes of the highway. So dense was the volume that we waited a good ten minutes before we could get into it.

I drove mechanically, braking, gear-changing, hand-signalling with the rest of the roaring, smoking stream. I kept recalling the newsreel shots I had seen of nuclear explosions, picturing the great white flash, the enormous frightening upward roll of smoke which never to me seemed even remotely to resemble a mushroom. I tried to visualise it sweeping across all these miles and miles of houses and gardens, I pictured it searing up my roses, our house, my books.

I considered the problem of my insurance, realised rather glumly that my policy would not cover an act of the defence forces. I began working out a Statement of Claim in an action against the Commonwealth, trying to remember the cases on the subject. My attention was distracted from these interesting thoughts by the need to negotiate the narrow streets of Fremantle and the scores of beckoning, waving policemen who struggled to sort out the hundreds of impatient motorists.

Once out of the town our pace quickened a little and we began to feel some relief.

This feeling of relief seemed general. Other drivers began to show more co-operation and courtesy. To cars pulled up at the roadside we would hear cries of: "You all right, mate?"

Often we passed groups giving assistance to break-downs (and with every type of ancient vehicle that could move on the road these were frequent). Some cheery person would always stand as a self-appointed pointsman directing the traffic.

The spirit became quite infectious. It was not long before our children began yelling out: "You all right, mate?" to everything we passed.

It was natural then that I should stop when a man stood on the side of the road and waved me down.

"Sorry to trouble you, mate. You got a Morris hand book?" He patted the bonnet of our car significantly.

Fortunately I had one in the glove box and fished it out.

"What's the trouble?" I asked, hoping to sound an authority on the subject.

"It's just the petrol pump, some silly little thing wrong with it. I thought I could fix it if I got hold of a hand book."

I remembered being stuck with the same thing some months before and recalled how easily the R.A.C. man had fixed it.

"Let's see," I said, getting out and walking back to his vehicle, a small Morris utility. The utility bore the words "A. E. Jeffries, Earth Moving and Bull-dozing." A woman nursing a toddler sat in the front seat and smiled at me as I approached. Two larger children grinned at me over the top of the canopy.

I asked him to switch on the ignition, then fiddled with the terminals of the petrol pump. A sudden clicking sound signified that I had cleared the trouble. I nodded gravely, he started up and the engine ran sweetly.

"She's OK now," I pronounced expertly.

He switched off and came round to me pouring out thanks; I explained briefly what I'd done.

I delayed returning to my car. I felt an overwhelming desire to talk to him.

"What a panic, eh?" I indicated the passing stream of cars with my thumb.

"I'll say it's a panic. Me, I'll probably get pinched when it's all over."

"Oh?" I queried, with a wakening of professional interest. "How's that?"

"I run a small bulldozer business, see. Saturday the Atomic Safety Committee or whatever they call themselves rang me up.

Crossroads

The wind is high tonight, my dear,
The stars are hidden by the dust;
Across the waste the ghost fires gleam,
And far beyond the hidden hills
A mutant woman sings her sad, sweet song
Of other days.

Sometimes like plucking fingers from an ancient grave,
Sometimes like rushing waters of a swift, cold stream,
Always with lost and lonely cry,
The seeking, searching wind blows o'er the plain.

It blows on piles of crumbling stone,
Whines in the dry deserted den,
Whispers by window and fallen stair,
Finding nowhere men.

RACE MATHEWS

★

Hiroshima—Calder Hall

Clawing at the core of the Earth,
Moving thundering rock faces
Upward in a whirling, solid column
To its hood, the lethal atom
Splintered the bearded peaks
And reddened the sterile soil.

A solemn girandole! A bone-ash limb!
And the busy life of man, animal,
Fan-leafed gingko and insect died
And civilisation tottered
Beneath this colossal homicide.

Now a monument pierces the Cumberland sky
With shiny, white spires—
A monument of throbbing cooler-fans,
That pours forth power
To feed the cable towers and the greedy,
Steel faced machines of the cities.

Calder Hall is Hiroshima's antipode,
Fertile progeny of science,
The promised savior, who alone may sate
The coal-hunger of the land. Here at last
Is a challenge to the disciples of fear and hate.

RODNEY HALL

"Mr. Jeffries, they say, we want to commandeer your bulldozer, they say. What for? I ask. In the event of the bomb prematurely detonating, they say, one of our major problems will be the mass disposal of bodies. Every available piece of earth-moving equipment will be required for this purpose.

"Help yourselves, I say. I won't be here. But Mr. Jeffries, they say, we expect you to make yourself available to drive the equipment.

"You can drive it your blanky selves, I say. I've got a wife and kids to think of. Anyway it's your blanky bomb, you can keep it. I'm getting out."

Actually Mr. Jeffries' speech was somewhat more lurid than I care to report. I was able to re-assure him that he committed no offence by refusing to make himself available in the doubtful possibility of the bomb "detonating" and his being left a survivor. I could have added that he was much more likely to strike trouble for his seditious utterences but deemed it wiser not to do so .

We reached the farm late that night. We got a surprisingly hospitable reception from my wife's aunt, in view of the fact that we were the third family group which had billeted itself upon her.

The following week passed pleasantly enough. There was no point in worrying about the office, the whole of competitive society having ground to a halt.

The farm was well able to cope with our appetites, being comparatively self supporting. We menfolk from the city were able to repay our hospitality to a large extent by willing, if inexpert, labor. At night we would gather around the radio to listen for progress reports on "the Removal" as the experts, aided by Service volunteers, inched shovelful by shovelful closer to the bomb.

By the time the whole affair finally fizzled out, and the bomb had been carted well out to sea and dumped, we all felt very much the better for our week's involuntary holiday.

The journey home was like some vast mobile picnic. Car horns tooted, engines whistled, train passengers leaned out of windows waving and shouting at the motorists. Country hotels and service stations had never done such trade.

Not everyone had pleasant homecomings of course. Electrical faults and neglected appliances had caused many fires, exposure and bad food caused quite a deal of illness. Trade, commerce and industry lost millions in turnover.

The legal profession had little to complain of. Apart from the astronomical claims which could be sheeted directly home to the Commonwealth Government, there was a myriad of all kinds of other actions. There were insurance claims of every kind; fire, accident, water, running down; claims against the State Electricity Commission; against owners of straying stock; breaches of contract; claims for rent; there was a fascinating variety of prosecutions: traffic, assault, larceny, R.S.P.C.A., child welfare. Matrimonial proceedings were most prolific and many fine arguments turned on the question of desertion.

No proceedings were taken against my bulldozer friend, Mr. Jeffries. I would most certainly have offered my services without fee had this happened, little as I relish criminal work as a general rule.

Bellerophon

There is one fellow that comes to the paperbark pool
Nightly on noiseless hooves. Observers claim him
A black entire, white blazed, with a notable cool
Look in his wild light eyes. No-one can tame him.

The blue-string riders with oral festoons of diplomas,
The murderers, needing their meat to be curbed and snaffled,
Are out of their depth with him, as with something of Homer's;
It's in his nature, it seems, to leave them baffled.

But I shall ride him. I know when the paperbark flowers
In tentative yellow, with once in a way a red one;
And the winter moon, when new, has remarkable powers
Over horses and horsemen—as you'll know if you've bred one.

So at midnight I shall be down at the water-hole
At the pit-mirk brink where the city-bred foot refuses,
With a paperbark sapling cut for a roping pole,
And a prayer in the dark to the youngest three of the Muses.

Horses and water and trees, and the moon beside,
And the dust of the day subdued that blinds and estranges!
I shall be on his back with a spring for a long night's ride,
Tho' he smash my skull on the butts of the Blackall Ranges.

J. S. MANIFOLD

The Law Society next week will discuss a proposal submitted by one of our more radical practitioners:

"That the Commonwealth Government bear responsibility and pay compensation in full for all damage, direct or indirect, arising from or incidental to the evacuation."

I think that part will be supported unanimously but I have some doubts about the second part:

"That the Government cease to participate in any further such tests and allocate the money so saved to the payment of such compensation as above."

The question which troubles me is whether or not private citizens should interfere in matters which concern the Safety of the Realm.

THE ONLY FAIR DINKUM RAFFLE . . .

by Frank Hardy

"DID I ever tell you about the only fair dinkum raffle ever run in Australia"?

"No, I don't think you did. Have another drink and tell me about it."

"Don't mind if I do. It happened during the depression years. Things was crook with me at the time and I was no Roberson Crusoe, I can tell yer. Funny thing about a depression. The silver-tails always say the unemployed don't want work; then comes a war and there's no more unemployed. Now where do them unemployed get to? Get killed in the war, I s'pose."

"You could be right, but get on with your story."

"Yes, I must tell you about the only fair dinkum raffle ever run in Australia. You never want to buy a raffle ticket. It's a bad habit to get into, like payin' your income tax and backin' race horses; once yer start, yer can't stop. I've run a few raffles in my time and I know what I'm talkin' about."

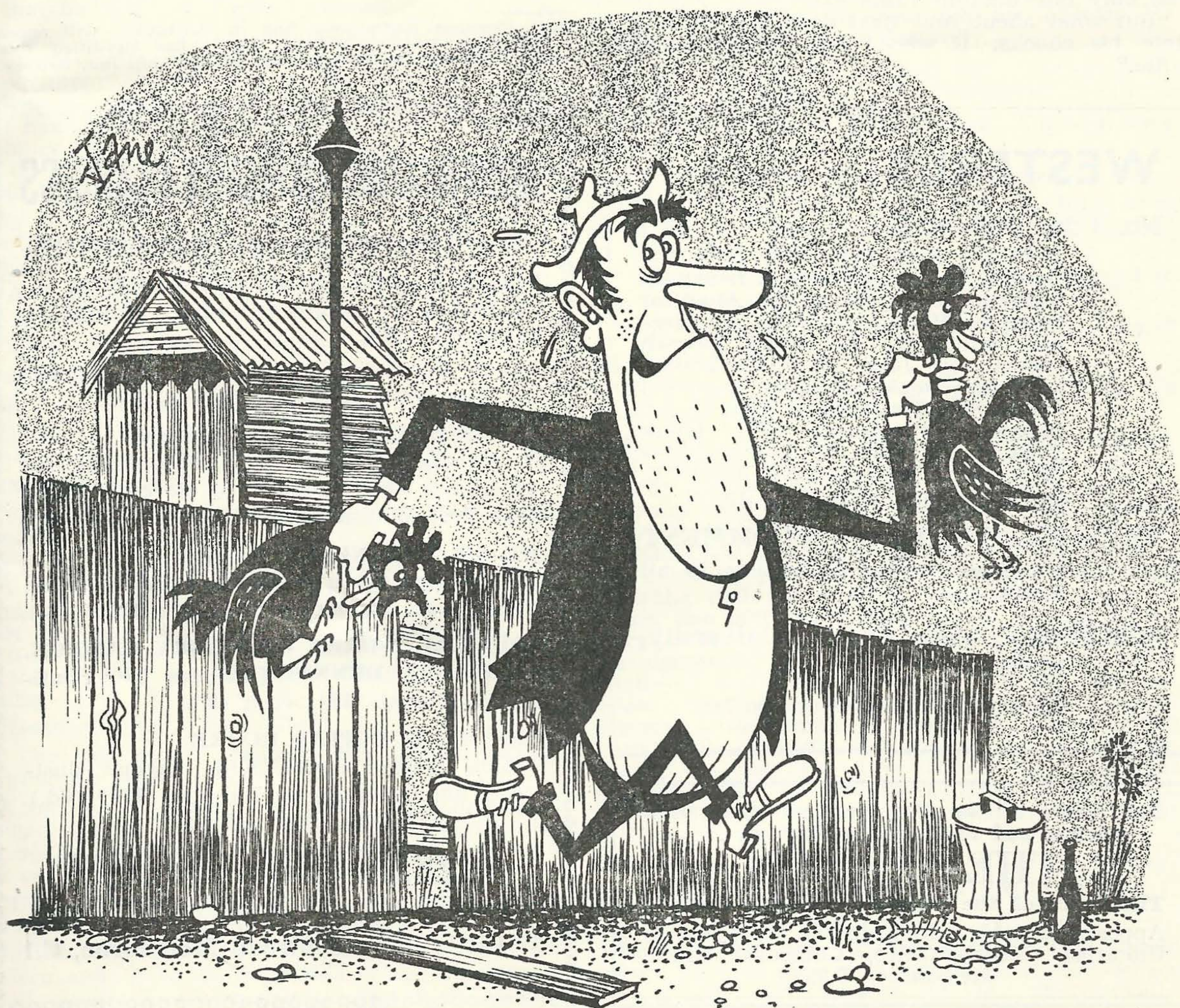
"You'd better tell me about that raffle. What was it again?"

"The only fair dinkum raffle ever run in Australia. I run it meself, so I ought to know . . ."

"How did it come to happen."

"Well, it's during the depression like I said and there was a bloke next door to me who kept chooks. Out at a place called Dee Why, it was. I usta keep looking over the fence at them fowls, chickens and peckin' away, and I usta say to meself 'Them chooks is eatin' their heads orf in there while human beings is starvin'. It isn't right. Them chooks orta be raffled.' I said it to my missus: 'Them chooks orta be raffled.' A funny thing about my missus, she ran away with an insurance agent eventually . . ."

"Sorry to hear it. Have another drink."



"I'll force one down just to be sociable. Don't matter about my missus. The insurance agent had to take out an accident policy himself when he found out about her temper. Anyway, I keep thinkin' them chooks orta be raffled. So, one night I dived over the fence and grabs two big black chooks. Orphingtons, they were. You wouldn't credit the noise a chook can make when it knows it's goin' to be raffled! Fit to wake their owner up. At last, I got hold of 'em and put 'em in a bag under the bed."

"And what has stealing two chooks got to do with a fair dinkum raffle?"

"Comin' to that—not a bad drop of beer this—well, next day was Saturday and I went down to the Dee Why pub. Rough old place then, not like these days—the best pub in Sydney now. And I've got these two chooks in a spud bag with their heads stickin' out holes. Thruppence a ticket—thruppence was a lot of dough in those days. Well I sold a book of tickets and, just to show it was a fair run raffle, I asked the publican to draw it . . ."

"But how could the raffle be fair dinkum . . ."

"My father wouldn't have won you for a bet. Yer keep interrupting and ruinin' the story."

"Sorry. Have another drink."

"Well, anyway, a fella named Smith won the two chooks. A little fella with sandy hair and a white-handled pocket knife. So I give him the two chooks, bag and all. Think he'd won Tatt's. The only fair dinkum raffle ever run . . ."

"But what about your next door neighbor. You stole his chooks. It wasn't such a fair dinkum raffle."

"Comin' to that. I had a guilty conscience about stealin' them chooks; so I followed this fella Smith home. It was gettin' dark. He goes in and tells his missus about the chooks then puts 'em in the woodshed, me hanging round the front gate watching and listening in the night. Went home and had me tea; fried bread and tomatoes. The only fair dinkum raffle ever run in Australia."

"But what about the bloke you stole the two chooks from?"

"Well, yer see, it was this way. I was worried about him so that same night I went back to this here Smith bloke's place and pinched the two chooks out of the shed."

"And gave them back to the original owner?"

"That's for sure. The only fair dinkum raffle . . ."

"Just a minute. That fella Smith who won the raffle. He paid for his ticket—threepence."

"That's right. Well, I thought of that. So after I returned the chooks to their owner I went back to Smith's place and pushed a thruppeny bit under his front door. It was like I told yer—the only fair dinkum raffle ever run in Australia."

"You win. I must admit you tell a good story."

"Ah, they're really my father's stories. That reminds me, did I ever tell yer about the crookest raffle ever run in Australia?"

"I've got to go now. You can tell me tomorrow."

"Won't be here tomorrow. I'll be rafflin' a couple of chickens in a pub out at Redfern."

"The Crookest Raffle ever Run in Australia" will appear in the next Overland. Frank Hardy has sub-titled these stories: "As told by Billy Borker in the Ship Inn, Sydney."

WESTERLY

No. 3 for 1957 contains—

A Flower from Peking by Dymphna Cusack. **The Importance of Language Study** by M. B. Benn. **The Atom for Peace or War**—Declaration by German scientists. **To Henry Lawson** (poem) by John Wheeler. **Jewish Literature in Australia** by Raymond Apple. **The Twain Shall Meet** by Dr. Babhani Battacharya. **The Batak Toba of Indonesia** by Edwin Hutabarat. **Stories** by Deirdre Rogan, E. Lewis-Henry, Desmond O'Grady.

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I DON'T BLAME YOU, ERNIE

by Flexmore Hudson

At eight o'clock on Tuesday morning Michael Raleigh packed his books into his old leather case and set off down the track to the red road that led to his school. He was a thin young man with curly black hair and the pallor of a student at exam. time. His forehead was already lined, his expression habitually thoughtful.

From the dairy steps Mrs. Stone screeched:

"Two miles. Yer can't miss it. Gordon'll bring yer lunch with yer things."

And she added something that was blotted out by the barking of the dogs.

The dewy weeds in the fallows were glistening; in the blue sky a few white clouds were sailing like yachts under spinnakers. He breathed deeply and walked springily, glancing from side to side so that he would not miss anything.

It was exciting to be twenty-one and to have a job at last. He thought of the two years of "unemployment" spent as a franked student at the University, two years of humiliation and worry that had burned a gastric ulcer in him. Good-bye athletics for ever. He winced at the memory of his doctor's warning. Still, he thought, he was well again even if he had to stick to a diet.

As he picked a few flowers for the Stones to identify, he laughed at the memory of his introduction to some of the local flora.

"And what's that bright green on the slope by the windmill?"

"That? Tha's jes' stinkweed."

"And that brownish plant?"

"Er, s——weed."

"That's a mistletoe isn't it—that creeper with the red berries? Is that what you call it?"

"No, snottygobble."

"Fine names! What would Wordsworth do with those?"

A burly man, with the complexion of boiled pork, led a team of eight horses past him. Michael admired their well-groomed coats, the spirited little jostlings and prancings they gave, and the frost-smoke of their breaths which reminded him of the dragons in the stories he would soon be telling.

"Good-morning," he smiled.

" 'Ow yer goin'?" grunted the farmer, hardly turning his head.

A picture of Stone's obdurately suspicious dogs flashed across Michael's mind. Momentarily depressed, he wondered how he would get on with the country people.

"Hell, I hope they take a shine to me," he thought. "I haven't struck any of those 'great-hearted men of the open spaces' yet."

Here and there, on each side of the road grew small gumtrees—perhaps forty feet high, rather ragged and bare. "As if they've been out of work," grinned Michael. He stood under one and looked up at the sky, wondering at the purple glow that edged the red branches. A lazy wind flicked light off the leaves. Wondering why such little things should move him so deeply, he turned the corner and caught his first glimpse of his school. It was a drab, unpainted shed of corrugated iron that stood on a rise a few hundred yards from the road. Once, in the days before the young folk took to motoring to the big township for their dances, it had been the local hall. Next door, only twenty feet away, stood a squat stone church. A three-wire fence encircled the rubbly limestone yard. The gate had once been the foot of an iron bedstead.

As he approached, two little boys drove up in a jinker and waved shyly. Half-a-dozen children standing hushed at the door did not answer his "hallo", but gaped apprehensively.

"Cheer up, I won't eat you alive," he laughed, and lifted up a solemn little youngster.

"What's your name, Tom Thumb? I'm your new teacher."

The child looked silently into his eyes.

"Ernie, Ernie Toll," cried the six little ones about him and then fell silent, as though startled by their own voices.

" 'Ere's a note from Mum," a girl whispered to him. "It's about 'im wettin' ees pants."

"Oh!—er thanks. You're Ernie's sister, are you?"

"Yeah. Sally."

"So it's your first day, is it, Ernie? Well, it's mine, too. Let's have a look inside."

He flung the door open. Twelve ink-stained, dual wooden desks, a blackboard and easel, a ricketty table and chair for the teacher, a store cupboard and a library cupboard with broken glass-panels. On the walls a monochrome print of Captain Cook standing in the bows of the Endeavour, evidently just caught in the act of discovering Australia and not looking too pleased about it either; two pictures of King George V. and Queen Mary—actually autographed—in the one big frame, the signatures in a handwriting that would fetch a ten-year-old a clip on the ear. On the window-ledges some pickle bottles, in two of which stood withered antirrhinums. A blackboard affixed to the front wall—covered with pastel drawings done during the last few days before the Christmas vacation. Over everything a layer of red dust. The smell, he thought, could not have been staler in Tutankhamen's tomb.

He wished he had cleaned the room on the previous day instead of preparing his program.

"Who'll help me tidy up?"

The response was willing enough. One would sweep, another wipe the desks and window-ledges with a damp cloth, one would clean the inkwells,

one put some gum twigs in the pickle bottles, another put out the little blackboards for Grade One.

He joined in the children's chatter while he moved about the room, examining the things in the teacher's drawer, killing silver-fish and dipping into the books which he found under the desks, and the grubby records and charts in the store-cupboard.

The Punishment Book gave him a good laugh, one page in particular. It read:

Name	Offence	Amount	Remarks
1933—Sept. 11—			
Alan Stone	Dirty talk.	3	Has a dirty mind.
Oct. 4—			
Tom Harding	Repeated disregard of instructions.	6	
Oct. 6—			
J. Reid	Throwing open knife and cutting boy's leg.	2	Needs to restrain his temper.
Oct. 8—			
Bill Redden	Administering pills and wax chocolates to Tonks.	3	I suspect Tonks is subnormal.
Oct. 10—			
Bob Stone	Misbehavior:—stealing Jill Russell's cake for lunch, telling lie and trampling on Jill's garden during dinner hour.	2	Appears to have very destructive impulses.

And then, in one of the folios, he came across an extraordinary correspondence consisting of copies of letters sent by a parent to the Department, together with the Department's letters to the teacher. Mrs. Harding had picked up a "dirty note" in the schoolyard and in reporting it to the Director of Education had blamed the poor teacher for the low moral "tone" of the school. The teacher, judging by the number of replies to her letters, seemed to have encountered great difficulty in persuading her superiors that she had not been preparing her charges for a life of sin. At last Michael found the heinous note—and laughed so loud that all the children stopped to stare at him.

The scribblings and scratchings on the desk-tops told many stories: A long desk immediately in front of the teacher's table bore at least six drawings of a steatopygous giantess brandishing a cane, a pair of crossed hearts marked L.S. and J.R., and the inscription "Leon Stones loves Jim Russell", a stallion endowed with prodigious attributes of fertility, numberless figures and mis-spelt words and, here and there, whole sentences that breathed the fearful silence of examinations: "How do you spell lemmun?" "lemun". Is quoth a verb?" "How many rudes in a pole?" "Don't know. What's the answer to number 4?" and "Whoes got the ball?"

Gordon and Gertie Stone drove up in a high buggy and led away the horse to the back of the yard.

"Gee, Gordon's got 'is bes' pants on," exclaimed a youngster by the door.

" 'E thinks 'e's growed up jis 'cos 'e's' got longuns," said another enviously.

In sauntered Gordie, a boy of fourteen, with mossy teeth and a sullen expression. "Brought yer things in the buggy," he drawled.

"Thanks, Gordon. Bring them in, please."

"They're 'eavy," came the surly reply.

"Nonsense! bring them in at once. You help him, sonny."

"Mum said I was ter let yer carry 'em yerself."

Quick-temperedly, Raleigh strode towards the boy, resolved to deal firmly with this first display of rebelliousness.

"**I'm** in charge of you at school. Now hurry up and do what you're told, double-quick!"

Gordon quailed before the resonant voice and determined manner, and fetched the maps and case. Thanking him—perhaps a little excessively—Michael set about hanging the bright maps and charts and his few colored prints. They liked best Elioth Gruner's "Morning Light".

"Gee, ain't it pretty!" cried a small, spectacled girl, Cecily.

"I wisht it was mine," another cried.

A harsh voice broke in: "I suppose you're the teacher?"

Michael turned round. A stooped man about forty years old stood at the door. He had a good-natured grin.

"Yes, how do you do?"

The two men shook hands.

"Pleased ter meetcher. I'm Jim Russell," he said, drawing on a curved pipe with a huge bowl. "Got a kid coming along, young Kevin. Be a bit late in the mornings, has to help with the milkin', his mum's crook. Thought you'd better know. An' he's needed at home of nights, so if he mucks about, don't keep 'im in, put the stick around his arse, will yer? But he ain't a bad kid." He hissed through his pipe in a confidential whisper which carried the length of the yard: " 'E never 'it it orf with the lady chalkies, particularly Miss Bates. I'm one of them that wanted a man teacher. Most of 'em still want a lady, but while ole Clem Stone is Chairman of the School Committee, reckon we'll always put in for a man. You're the first we've ever had here."

"Strange," said Michael, "that the Department should send only women."

"Oh, ole Harding—he was Chairman then—he used to write down every year askin' 'em to send a girl. Reckoned the parents didn't want to board a man. Most of 'em are after wives for their boys. They're real narked now."

They began to walk towards the gate. Michael waved the children inside.

"Well, I hope they'll not be antagonistic to me now I'm here."

"Huh! They're just achin' to get their claws into yer, some of 'em—specially old Ma Harding. She's got four kids 'ere. That was the Old Man went past with the horses. And the Tolls, they're always 'avin' a spar with someone, always writin' to the Inspector, they are. They had Miss Smith, she was here four years ago, shifted, and they pretty near drove Miss Bates off her rocker. She went an' married Ted Plunkett. Are yer comin' to the tin-kettlin' tomorrow night?"

Puzzled, Michael answered that he knew nothing about it.

"You come along, the Stones are sure to be goin'."

"Thanks. Look, I'd better get them in, it's ten o'clock."

"Well, see yer later. Better get goin' 'fore ole Gobbleguts breaks his bridle."

"Good-bye."

What on earth was a tin-kettling, Michael wondered. He resolved to look it up. His spirits con-

siderably damped, he blew the whistle for the assembly. He heard the morning observations, and asked the questions he could remember being taught to ask.

"In what direction is the wind blowing? Point South, North, East, West. What kind of a day is it? What kind of clouds are those? What is the temperature, Grade VII.? Hands up those who have brushed their hair? Hands up those who have cleaned their teeth."

Up and down went the hands like signal-arms, some excitable children wig-wagging them and thrusting them almost into his mouth.

"Right turn! Into school, quick march!

"Sit. Sit still there, Gordon. Now we must find a baby desk for Ernie, and another for—what's your name, girlie?—for Jennifer."

The two little newcomers were installed, and each given a board and some colored chalks.

"Now I'm going to enter all your names on the roll, and put those in the same grade together. Hands up those in Grade One. Only Ernie and Jennifer? Jennifer who?"

"Jennifer Harding."

He wrote down all their names.

He signed the Register and the Time Book and set the class reading library books or drawing with pastels while he sorted out the forms that had to be filled in promptly for the Office.

He scrutinised his fourteen charges. They seemed to be sitting still, but they sounded restless. He could swear he could hear several scratching themselves. Queer! Maisie Redden was already far away in a story book world; most were watching him speculatively and whispering slyly to one another; while little Ernie, his mouth hanging wide open, was simply gaping out the door.

He was their teacher! Something of him would endure in their minds as long as they lived, prompting them either to gentleness or cruelty, to laughter or tears, to courage or fear. He felt a great tenderness for them all and a wholehearted desire to help them. He would try to inspire them with a love for beautiful things, and an ambition to get knowledge. If necessary, he would give up his plan to finish his degree that year and study instead something more helpful to them. Speech therapy, perhaps.

Since Ernie was obviously bored, Michael gave him some plasticene to play with.

Then he turned happily to the forms and proceeded to answer such questions as:—

How much do you pay for board?

Is washing included?

What type of lavatory is provided, pit or pan?

It surprised him that he should have to draw a detailed plan of the school property. Did the Department hope to find that some philanthropic farmer had added a room or two during the vacation?

A squeal and a scuffle made him start. The older children were giggling.

"Who made that row at the back? Come on?"

Giggles again. Scuffling.

Was there a child ventriloquist in the school, some wretched little prodigy such as Amateur Hours celebrated?

"Who made that abominable row?"

"Please sir it's the rabbits," said several voices.

"What rabbits? Take them out then. Where the dickens have you got them—under your desks?"

A scuffle began under his feet, making him start again.

"Good Lord! They're under the floor! Don't tell me they'll be here all the year," he exclaimed in dismay.

"Aw no, sir, Dad'll get 'em out in a coupla weeks," said Kevin reassuringly. "They always get back in the holidays."

"How do you get them out? Poison gas?"

"Aw no, sir, not now. Las' time the men used gas, they ponged the whole school out fer weeks."

"Ponged"! Gordon?" exclaimed Michael in a pained tone.

"Yessir, dicken it didn't!"

"They use ferrets now, sir," explained Rex.

"Well! Rabbits for pupils!" exclaimed Michael.

"Gee, Miss, sir, that's nuthen," grinned Gordon. "A coupla years ago we used ter have a snake in the dunny—lav., sir."

The class tittered.

Michael, suppressing a chuckle, set them to work again and went on with his forms. A little later an agitated whisper from Sally made him look up and bark:

"Good Lord, Ernie! You must not eat the plasticene. Come here, child."

He led the languid little boy to the door, saying:

"Spit it out, or you'll make yourself sick."

Ernie spat, and nearly made the teacher sick.

"Please, Miss—sir, Kevin Russell's chuckin' ink," said a prim little voice at his elbow.

"Hm. What's **your** name?"

"Sarah Harding, Miss, er sir."

"Well, don't tell tales, Sarah. Sit down now."

"But Miss Bates used to give the boys the cane for chuckin' ink."

"Sit down, girlie. Kevin, I'll see you at recess time. Get on with your reading, class."

He watched them for a while longer. They seemed a docile lot—too docile; indeed, most of them seemed scared—Kevin particularly. Recalling in his own childhood, he walked behind Kevin's desk, put his hands on the little fellow's shoulders, bent down, and whispered smilingly:

"No more ink, old chap; you may spoil someone's clothes. Don't be mean."

The look of astonishment followed by the quick, friendly smile made him feel sure that there would be no need to punish the boy. The thought of using the cane was repugnant, though he had resolved to use one if ever his authority were openly defied, for he had heard authentic reports of meek and mild teachers being terrorised by aggressive youngsters. A very short man had been walloped by two overgrown hobble-dehoys of fourteen, and a gentle young lady had been advised to resign after the inspector had found most of her school climbing in the trees at the foot of the school-yard. She had tearfully explained that they ran out of the room and climbed the trees whenever she set a lesson they disliked. No, they would never come down, unless she promised them a story.

A particularly shrill squeal from under the floor was followed by little thumpings and then a scuffle, and squeals from a rabbit with a hoarse voice.

"It's the bucks, sir, fightin' fer a doe. They make that thumpin' with their hind legs."

They all listened to the fight till it died away as the combatants withdrew down a burrow.

In a whisper, Gordon bet Kevin Russell a tray that the one with the squawk like a possum's would win.

Grinning, Michael set them to work again.

Before dismissing them for lunch, he told them he would like to hear them sing. What songs did they know?

"'Shuffle off to Buffalo'!" yelled Sarah Harding.

"Yeah! 'Shuffle off to Buffalo'," half-a-dozen others chorused.

"No. 'Give yerself a pat on the back'." "No. 'Daisy, Daisy'."

"But who on earth taught you such drivel—er—songs?"

"Miss Bates."

Michael was quite shocked.

"Do you know this tune?" And he hummed Brahm's Lullaby.

"No."

"This one?" And he sang a verse of "The Road to the Isles."

"No."

"This one?"

No, they didn't know a dozen other songs he liked. Then some of the older children remembered "Sweet and Low" which had been taught years before by Miss Smith. They recited the words of the first verse till they had recalled them fairly clearly, and he gave them the note from the pitch-pipe. Off they went. He sang loudly to help them for a few bars, and as soon as he softened his voice, they broke down. After a few false starts they succeeded in finishing a verse. Two boys, Bill Harding and Gordon, were tone-deaf and contributed an accompaniment similar to the drones of the bagpipes, several others sang a strange approximation of the tune, while a few—including Maisie Redden—sang sweetly and surely.

"Good. Now let me hear 'God Save the King'."

He remembered a Regulation insisted that it be sung at least once a week in all the schools, to exorcise sedition. Since Miss Bates' attention to the song had been exemplarily loyal—she had started every day's work with it—they bawled it confidently at the top of their voices, the older ones racing a bar ahead. And as if to proclaim their patriotic concern for the land of their forefathers, the rabbits came out of their burrows to contribute a fitful but fervent obligato.

Michael grinned, tickled by the din and by the cartoon-like image that flashed across his mind—he saw all the rabbits standing stiffly to attention, like little Rex, with their bingeys thrust forward. Then the grin faded as he thought of the difficulties ahead of him.

Suddenly there was a commotion in the front seats, followed by giggles and whispers.

"What's the matter, now?"

"Please sir," came a shrill cry of distress from Sally, "Ernie's, please sir, 'e's done it on the floor!"

"Bad luck, Ernie. All right, out you all go. No, I'll clean it up, Sally. You take Ernie outside and run him round in the sun."

As he wiped the floor with an old duster, he smiled and murmured to himself, his mind on the singing:

"I don't blame you, Ernie. I don't blame you at all."

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Letter to Tom Collins

"SUCH IS LIFE" FROM ABROAD

Prague.

DEAR Joseph:

Ten years ago Frank Dalby Davison wrote you a letter (it was published in Meanjin, a journal that would be sympathetic to your tastes). It was mainly about "Rigby's Romance" but said some straight and sensible things about your writing in general. If I now turn picker and stealer in donning the epistolary mantle Davison won't mind. For one thing he knows you and your work well, and the inside story of how they finally got you published intact. Apart from being a layman, albeit enthusiastic, in these matters, I'm not even a fellow-countryman of yours (but not, **pax nobiscum**, one of the Fitz-Hengist tribe either). The forky pennon I wear is woven of kiwi feathers (as fine a stuff, if you'll allow me, as Australian wool). The Riverina I know as a view from the train and the Murray as a muddy disappointment. In short, as a one-time Melbourne city-slicker I can claim to know only your despised "spurious and blue-moulded civilisation of the littoral".

My reason for writing is that the other day I got hold of "Such is Life" again after ten years or so. I've been re-reading it amidst a record heatwave here in the centre of the Old World (they claim they're redressing the balance from local resources, but that's another story). In place and time it's a world fantastically remote from Runnymede and all that. But maybe the heat, the dry burning air and the illusion of an Australian cloudless blue sky, have helped to orientate me a bit to your scene, to the **genius loci**. I find one must understand the scene, the so tangibly-evoked settin~ of your tale, if one's to grasp its essential quality.

And yet, Joseph, I am carried back in one sense when I read you again to an elder day. It's not your use of the picaresque mode of narrative that brings to mind the age of Defoe, Fielding and Smollett. Rather it's the quality of your characters, the timbre of their personality. You know well enough that they went in for heroes in those days: real men and women. Tom Jones, Moll Flanders, Adams, Rory Random and the rest: not just structural centrepieces but alive, in all their pulses. And experienced. Tom Jones ran through a fair range of life and Fielding (Collins obviously knew him well) showed him at it frankly, even Lady Bellaston and all. The self-apologising Thackeray (excuse my bringing in such a gentleman, though he did deal it out to some of the snobs) confessed what was happening in the 19th century: "Since the author of Tom Jones was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN. We must drape him and give him a certain conventional simper". You also saw what was happening (and dealt it out to Kingsley as one of the worst purveyors of the groomed gentleman-hero with his "three-penny braggadocio of caste": a "childish slap in the face of honest manhood"). More than that, you created in Collins, Thompson, Dixon, yes, and Stewart, and the others, "men of Nature", in the Fielding sense, instead of transplated types cut to the pattern of Victorian bourgeois taste. Some of the adventures of Collins, for instance, have the expansiveness, the genial warmth of imagination, the earthy humor of Fielding (I'm not speaking of derivatives, you understand, merely of qualitative analogues). Take the episode of Tom **in puris naturalibus** (your third chapter): the building up to your climax of Tom's "**coup de** clothes-line" (with its delightful yet pointed fooling: "The —— to him who can wear them, thought I . . . But give me the forky pennon . . . and keep your Union Jack") is done with characteristic meandering tempo nonetheless effective in its art. Or you will remember what Collins said to Archie (with his girl alongside him in the buggy) when asked why Archie should come to him: "I'm clothed in tribulation"; or his opening sally to the "fashionably dressed" gentleman who had "flashed a match" so rudely on his Adamic innocence: "I want your ——. I'm getting full up of the admiration of the gods; I want the admiration of my fellowmen . . . Come! off with them!" The humor is simple, direct, broad with the broadness of farce and its universality. Nothing of the intricate suggestiveness nor of the at times prurient tickle of Sterne here (though you of all men were capable of appreciating other sides of him). What you provoke is the hearty laughter, spiced with shrewd wit, of the countryman who has lived close to and wrestled with Nature and poverty. And it's in short supply these days. There's Gwyn Thomas with his Welsh boys (but they're wearing a bit thin) and there was Lucky Jim (another of a Welsh sire, some of whose points you'd approve of). But the average modern chap spends his time either looking back in anger or waiting for Godot. What you gave us amongst other things was a later version of the "comic epic in prose" of the palmy days.

I hope you won't think I'm trying to slip you away amidst the 18th century classics just because you recall for me the large geniality and zest for life of Henry Fielding. You gave us new and distinctive things (that others more qualified than I have analysed), in particular, a clear-eyed "offensively Australian" consciousness, a tough-grained yet deeply-felt humanism, and an invincible conviction that the coming New Order of socialism was destined to fulfil the moral purpose of Man. Something else struck home to me as I went once more along the track with Collins and his men. How different they are in outlook, in

"Such is Life" by Tom Collins (Joseph Furphy), new edition, Angus & Robertson, 25/-.

social consciousness from those ragged-trousered philanthropists, the painters and decorators of Robert Tressell's story written only a few years after yours (his real name as Noonan so you can trust him, Joseph. And he was all for the Cause). Except for one or two like Frank Owen, these painter chaps are bred in the servile tradition of would-be petit-bourgeois genteel conformity, uneducated, unwilling to learn the facts of life (rather get their opinions from the daily press). So that, goaded to explosion point, Owen the socialist tells himself: "They were the real oppressors—the men who spoke of themselves as **'the likes of us'**, who, having lived in poverty and degradation all their lives considered that what had been good enough for them was good enough for the children . . ." Your Mosey, by the way, also uses the same expression, asking Willoughby (anent his "grace and refinement" of the gentleman): "But what the (adj. sheol) good does that do the **likes o' us** (fellows)?" Apart from linguistic emphasis (and Tressell's chaps could be emphatic and colorful in utterance), even Mosey here suggests in his attitude another world of social relationships. Your Collins, Thompson and company knew where they stood with "the boss": they recognised in the squatter (Sam Buckley and other types) and the Urban Fat their natural enemies, used squatters' land for pasture as a natural right, and, some at least, looked forward confidently to a socialist order in which the workingman would have done once and for all with a situation in which he "metaphorically makes a Raleigh-cloak of himself, to afford free and pleasant passage for the noblest work of God, namely, the Business Man".

At one level, then, through your deep respect for the "isocratic principle" (springing from the way of life of Collins and the rest) you re-affirmed the natural dignity of man. But, with the thunder of the 'nineties in your ears and "Looking Backward" well-thumbed by your side, you found the essential basis of human dignity in man's power of aligning himself in thought and action with the moral motive-force of history: that ethical principle which you saw expressed in the Sermon on the Mount (but which, and here Robert Tressell was with you all the way, you found dogmatised and rendered inert by institutional religion). So that, as you put it, "whilst this best of all possible worlds remains under the worst of all possible managements", the movement of history is plain for men to see (and, seeing, like Tom Collins, they add a cubit to their stature): "The world's brightesth intellects are answering one by one to the roll-call of the New Order, and falling into line on the side championed by every prophet, from Moses to the 'agitator' that died o' Wednesday". Moses . . . and the prophets. Yes, that poem . . . (not that you need an epitaph):

> Grass is across the waggon-tracks,
> and plough strikes bone beneath the grass,
> and vineyards cover all the slopes
> where the dead teams were used to pass.
>
> O vine, grow close upon that bone
> and hold it with your rooted hand.
> The prophet Moses feeds the grape,
> and fruitful is the Promised Land.

So long, Joe!

—Ian Milner.

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Our Writers: V

F. BERT VICKERS

I had my first impression of F. Bert Vickers at meetings of the W.A. Fellowship of Writers —as a man who was able to launch and press sound policies with energy, and, at the same time, with great good nature and tact.

Apart from that he did not impress me. He had none of the conventional hallmarks of brilliance or character.

I later saw him at closer quarters when I heard him talk on his first novel, "The Mirage", which deals with half-castes. Both Donald Stuart and myself had read most of what is available on Aboriginals, and moreover had not long returned from a sojourn with natives in the Pilbara, and although Vickers spoke with simplicity and verve, we listened to his **ideas** with a good deal of impatience. Stuart—a man who combines a magnificent knowledge of natives with a fiery nature—was grinding his teeth and made some remark that rather surprised Vickers, who nevertheless did not lose his great urbanity.

And when "The Mirage" came out, I did not get on well with it; but as I saw Vickers again and again in the Fellowship handling situations with integrity and humor, I decided that his grasp on life was a good deal sounder than his knowledge of half-castes.

One night we had an unsatisfactory address from an Australian publisher. My question remained unanswered and I sat down for fear of being rude. Vickers did not sit down nor was he rude, though the publisher was rude to him. He said what he had to say with firmness and charm. I found myself looking at a more adult man than myself.

But I did not get any nearer to solving the contradiction in my mind until I read an advance copy of "First Place To The Stranger"—Vicker's second novel—now on sale throughout Australia.

I found it simple, telling, entirely without pretension.

I immediately crossed the city to congratulate Vickers and tell him I regarded it as one of the very best books ever turned out in W.A.

He said: "Thank you very much." I said, "A lot better than 'The Mirage'." He replied, "I personally think 'The Mirage' is the better book."

We left it at that.

What is nationality? An Aboriginal boy once said to me: "When a language dies—a nation dies!" He was talking, of course, about his immediate experience. The remnant of his people—his nation as he called it—was all but gone.

Are the people we see walking in Collins Street or Martin Place Australians? Is the Dutch girl handed a flower and a naturalisation certificate by the local mayor an Australian—and the Australian-born who wish to rewrite "Waltzing Matilda"?

Let us change the question. To what extent is each of us an Australian? The biologist Lysenko says that when you transplant a particular variety into new conditions, it either dies or in its effort to live, takes a heap of adjustment and changes itself in some small way.

Bert Vickers is an Englishman who came to this country in 1925 to escape unemployment. He was a fitter and turner—already a tradesman, although still quite malleable. He plunged into the life of the country at a level that is as real as any.

—Des Connolly

I can introduce you to Australians who have never dirtied their hands or scratched their heads, whose spiritual home is London, Singapore, or New York—for the things they love most are found there. And home is where the heart is.

Vickers on the other hand is English-born—by appearance he could be nothing other than an Englishman, or perhaps a German—but England denied him his birthright and he is in fact now an Australian.

He worked in the wheat belt, became rouseabout, musterer, shearer's cook, wool classer, humped his swag. One can work a capstan lathe or sell mercery over the counter without suffering, but one cannot do those things.

When your back is breaking you have the very best cause to penetrate the inner processes of things and also to get to know your fellow man. Vicker's moments of greatest effort were had with the migratory seasonal workers of W.A. He had never given anyone as much. He had never received as much in return from anyone. He broke through into the kernel of men who grapple with the facts of life, into that basic strata of mates who keep Australia's soul and will make its future. He became, for all intents and purposes, an Australian of the hardiest variety.

Bert Vickers is a tall, spare man of indifferent age and such simple tastes as a book, a pipe, a dog and a fishing line. He will look no older ten years from now, and his expression is young.

It has taken him ten years to become a writer, but long before he started he was preparing the ground so that he could continue his growth in the later part of his life.

In 1937 he bought several acres of land a few miles out of Perth. That can be a stepping stone to independance in a society that makes writing a perilous livelihood.

In 1940 he joined the A.I.F. He was three years in the Middle East in a Railway Construction and

later, a Workshop Unit. Then a 25-pounder barrel fell on him and he found himself in hospital, and here, for a joke, he took up a course in free-lance journalism. His teacher was some bloke or other called Alan Marshall.

"Write 300 words," wrote Marshall.

"You can write—now write me a short story."

Vickers happened to trip over a natural and merely described what happened. "Good! Write me another," said Marshall.

Vickers—not one to refuse rank or abuse it—became a staff sergeant in Army Education—but sooner or later he wrote about ten stories and placed them.

On discharge he started a poultry farm and wrote two novels—one of which won a £300 Sydney Morning Herald prize in 1946 but was rejected by 40 publishers. That was the original draft of "First Place To The Stranger".

Then more recently the Australasian Book Society took "The Mirage" and Judah Waten's visit to W.A. led to Vickers re-reading his other novel. He saw immediately where it lacked. "I had tried to make too much of it, so I rewrote it," says Vickers. The result was accepted by Constables.

In ten years of living, writing and reflecting he had added a new superstructure to his basic strengths. Publication of two novels fired his ambition stronger than ever. He wrote a novel—"Though Poppies Grow"—in five weeks and received a commendation for it from the 1956 S.M.H. competition judges. Then he wrote another, "Turn Again Whittington", a satire on the pommy who makes good here, marries an Australian girl, and continues to regard himself as a pommy—until he returns to England. Both novels are now being read by his publisher.

Bert Vickers is no longer in the poultry business. The State Housing Commission resumed most of his land but left him an acre on top of a hill in Bayswater.

On top of hill, sitting in the shade of his row of magnificent pines, Bert is independent.

Funny thing—I have a picture of him in my mind, dressed in a Field Marshal's uniform, and it frightens me a little. Bert is a sort of king of an immediate area of sandy scrub and bottlebrush, fibro and corrugated iron houses and chicken coops that has to date been unfavored by the estate agents.

But beyond, to the west, the eye commands Perth to the Indian Ocean. and to the east rises the Darling Range beyond which begin the rolling vasts of this mighty land.

The man who has nothing impressive about his appearance has a modest smile, and conversation reveals a warm and commanding mind that operates not in any formal manner, but according to the deeper laws that a good tradesman discovers—according to what will work out in practice, the fibro and the chicken coops.

So to use that same hackneyed word, Vickers is a king of his own mind, now setting out on the greatest of his many adventures—to inform the heart and stimulate new minds to achieve that harmony he has created for himself and those who know him.

I heard him address 600 people at a writers' night in the Art Gallery some time ago. He could not get the words out fast enough, one laugh after the other, one anecdote tripping over the next—all prefixed by that terrible lie all artists reserve as their privilege: "And every word I'm saying is Gospel truth, ladies and gentlemen."

—Max Brown

★ *COMMENT*

Geoffrey Serle (V.) writes:

In Overland No. 9 Janet Howard made out a very interesting case in describing the function of the mechanics' institutes in the nineteenth century, and especially in pointing to the close link between pioneers of trades unionism and the movement for adult education and "self-improvement". But much as I would like to believe her praise of the "mechanics", to my mind most of it is wishful thinking.

It is true that the mechanics' institutes had a limited success, especially in country towns and particularly in the gold towns. (The best example I know is the amazing library still almost intact in a room at the back of the Beechworth M.I.) It is certainly true that they were of great help to outback workers of whom many read widely; quite clearly many of the shearers of the nineties made up something like an intellectual elite of the working class, the custom of the "swap-book" was certainly widespread. But there is precious little evidence that in general—and especially in the cities—the movement touched more than a tiny element of the working class. Nevertheless their importance lies in the fact that they did at least provide the opportunity for those, like Lawson and Furphy, with the spirit to widen their horizons.

To use the mechanics' institute movement and the eight hours' movement as the bases for an urban working class tradition makes a rather weak case. As Janet Howard says, for many years only a few trades gained the eight-hour day; the success of the unions of the 1850's has generally been vastly exaggerated; indeed the vast majority of workers did not win the eight hours till the twentieth century. It would probably be better to concentrate on the battle to form unions in the seventies and eighties and, in the city of Melbourne, on the popular democratic movement of the late fifties and sixties.

Where I disagree most with Janet Howard is in her general exaggeration of working class consciousness. It is a good thing to dig for roots and to clarify traditions, but the tendency of left wing historians to glorify the convicts and glamorise the working class in the nineteenth century has gone too far. Why not recognise that larrikins, grog, racial rioting and plenty of willing scab labor are part of the story? The Australian Labor movement and working class were world-leaders despite these things—their achievements are all the greater because of them—and the worthy traditions are strong enough to outweigh the unworthy without undue distortion.

Dr. A. G. Serle is Acting Editor of Meanjin.

A. M. Anderson (Q.) writes:

It is true that during the early '90's there was a marked increase in the desire for knowledge by working men; but I question whether the num-

ber of the subscribers included ten per cent. of the workers. At Howard, a coal mining town 18 miles from Maryborough, a School of Arts was opened in 1894 and for a number of years was well patronised by the people of the township, but I am satisfied that two-thirds of the miners never read a library book.

In 1897 and 1898 I lived at Golden Gate, the largest Croydon goldfield, where some 200 miners were working; but I never saw any of them reading a book. In Croydon, the centre of numerous small fields, there was not even a bookshop and the only books I saw there for sale were Cassells Classics in a chemist's shop.

In 1915 I was in Winton on a railway construction job. There was a library in the town and although there were 200 navvies there not one bothered to join the library. I spent some two years in St. George, a township of about one thousand, including shearers and bush workers. A library there had to close down for want of patronage; not a single shearer took a book from the library in my time. I could name quite a number of other places where my experience was the same.

E. V. Stevens (Q.) writes:

I was associated with several of those bush libraries, Terrick, East Darr and others in 1901. Their establishment was strongly supported by station managers as a counter to gambling which tended to reduce efficiency at shearing. Men cannot gamble all night and work hard next day though many, myself included, thought they could. The idea of shearing-shed libraries was said to have originated from a New Zealand shearer. A collection was taken up among the men numbering, at a big shed, perhaps 80 or 90. The collection was subsidised by the Government, pound for pound, while the station built a room, galvanised iron of course, for library, debating and recreational use. An interesting feature, at East Darr anyhow, was that chess was more played than any other recreational game. Wood for the building was unprocurable, the freight by waggon from the nearer railhead, Charleville, was considerable —as was construction cost. We estimated at least £200 for the East Darr library.

A selection committee was appointed and no books except those with a theological bias were barred. The inclusion of Maria Monk, the escaped nun, was decided upon after lengthy discussion. Bryce's "Constitutional History of England", which provided subject matter for debate on the coming referendum on Federation, was well read. No Deadwood Dick literature was included.

After shearing the library was to be stored at the Head Station and be available to any bushman. As I left on a long droving trip its ultimate fate was unknown to me, but I fancy the 1904 strike was the final cause of its disruption.

I was very interested in Morrison's story "The Ticket". In July 1892 an exactly similar situation was mine at Milo, some 140 miles west of Charleville. At that time I was 15 years of age and small for that. Despite a verbal agreement that the pre-strike (1891) conditions would be maintained, i.e. 30/- a week for shed hands, they tried to foist £1 and permanent employment on me. I refused, and backed by our rep. successfully fought off Pegler the manager, his two sons, the classer, the boss of the board and the storekeeper. I got my 30/- and was told to be off the run in a day, and that a summons would await me in Adavale for breach of agreement. But these were only shock tactics, nothing happened.

E. J. Holloway (V.) writes:

I read Janet Howard's article with great interest and pleasure, and I agree not only from study but from personal experience with her appreciation of the part played by the chain of mechanics' institutes which began to spring up some hundred years ago.

In their early years they were purely craftsmen's technical study circles but in Australia they quickly developed into more general and democratic institutions; and, like all other agencies which drew together ever-growing numbers of workers, they soon developed beyond their original aim. In fact, we began to regard them as the workers' universities.

One of the most fundamental results of this meeting together to read, study and challenge each other in mental debate was the gradual killing of that individualistic isolation which was the greatest difficulty of the reformers. The growing understanding of the meaning of the Bundle of Sticks, the need for organisation, the killing of that inferiority complex and the growing faith in the ability and integrity of their own class leaders eventually turned the mechanics' institutes into regular meeting halls where for small fees local union and political branches held their meetings, often open to the public.

The next step in the workers' education was made by the Workers' Education Association which formed classes among workers both in the city and the country towns; however, it too failed to satisfy the hunger for greater and more scientific knowledge of how to satisfy the physical, educational and cultural needs of all our people.

The next step was the establishment of our own Labor College and later during the early days of the war the legislation passed by the Curtin Government which made our universities so democratic that every lad or lass who has reached the necessary standards can enter them.

Finally, let me say that I agree with Janet Howard that those what would now be called old-fashioned and reactionary institutions, the mechanics' institutes, did in their day and generation play an important part in the upward growth of our working class education and were the first training ground for many great men and women.

The Rt. Hon. E. J. Holloway is former Minister for Health, Social Services, and Labor and National Service.

Jim Gale (N.Z.) writes:

Did you know that at Emerald (Vic.) the following sign used to hang outside the Institute?

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

FREE LIBRARY

Annual Subscription 10/-.

Gully Wind

After the day of heat the cool air
empties itself down in great gusts
from the timbered hills, sweeps over the plains
like a down-diving eagle, and leaps
on sweaty families seated on beaches
to eat a sandy and belated evening meal
beside the blue billiard-table of the sea.

And above our heads
here in the foothills
a green surf of darkening leaves
roars in the treetops.

IAN MUDIE

★

Murtherin' Island

(This incident took place in the Riverina
a little over a century ago.)

Morning lays bare the dark, cremated limbs
Interred in ash and lapped by river scum
Fetid with slaughter. There the turtle swims
And magpies chorus to an earth crouched numb.

Mutely the stockmen, guns across their knees,
Brood on the carnage of the day before;
The haunting cries of Aborigines
Reached them night-long, when they should call
no more.

The squatter moves his fretful horse across
The golden light up to the 'Bidgee's breast,
Sees babe and gin seared to the blackened moss . . .
Lean, twisted corpses monstrously at rest.

At rest, forever, from the rum-soaked men,
And dogs, and hoofbeats thundering like drums,
Who drove them to the crumbling mud, and then
Out from the shelter of the river gums.

Onto the tiny island. Numb with dread
They huddled speechless, saw the cruel flame
Hurdled from the white man's boat leap to a red
Monster of savagery with Death for name.

The squatter smiled, lounging with guns at ready
To shoot the frenzied blacks who sought the cool
Arms of the river . . . and his hands were steady.
Blood of the slain spread in a widening pool

From shore to shore, staining the reeds downstream
Where shattered bodies tangled in the logs.
The drowning struggled . . . an accursing scream
Rang from the burning island . . . and the dogs

Bayed in excitement. Quietly the moon rose
Over the smouldering debris. The men turned
Back to the homestead, while the river froze
Unto herself, and all the charred and burned

Fragments of life grew cold.
The curlew sings

A mournful requiem to a murdered race;
Its cry hangs with the muffled whisperings
Of leaves and ripples at that ghostly place,
While the lone possum and the night-owl keep
Watch for the miracle that lets the squatter sleep.

JILL HELLYER

AUSTRALIAN DISCS

One of the more pleasant things that has happened in our society over the last few years is the growth of interest in our folk lore, both song and story.

We have many groups of folk singers springing up and collectors of folk songs who continue to unearth new songs, but what we have lacked in Australia has been a company which would put these songs on record; a record company which would take the risk of small sales and do the pioneer work of putting out this sort of record for a market not pre-conditioned by the hit parades.

Now there is such a recording company. Its name is Wattle Records and it puts out folk songs, mainly but not exclusively Australian.

It is a small company, not backed by great capital resources. It has not the money to conduct spectacular advertising campaigns and it has no "great names" among its recording artists. Consequently not many people have heard of Wattle Records nor seen its distinctive yellow label.

This is a pity because the label deserves to be known and the records bought by people who like a good honest song, by those who would know more of our own traditions and by those who are sick of hearing nothing but American pop songs.

So far there is only one L.P. issued; a seven inch of the Sydney Bushwhackers singing five Australian songs: "The Hut that's Upside Down", "Australia's on the Wallaby", "Click go the Shears", "Black Velvet Band" and "The Drover's Dream".

This is a record worth having. They are good songs. The Bushwhackers achieved wide fame as the first group to popularise Australian songs and also for their rough and ready style of singing. On record they tend to be too monotonous to be first rate, but this is a small criticism and the songs are varied enough in theme to compensate for the deficiencies in style.

On standard 79 there are five records of the Bushwhackers: "Nine Miles from Gundagai"/ "The Old Bullock Dray", "Bullockies Ball"/"The Drover's Dream", "Travelling down the Castlereagh"/"Australia's on the Wallaby", "Botany Bay" /"Click go the Shears", "Black Velvet Band"/ "The Hut that's Upside Down"; and soon to be issued on 78 are two records of Australian songs sung by A. L. Lloyd. Of these, "The Limejuice Tub" and "Euabalong Ball" are particularly good.

The rest of the Wattle Records so far released are not of Australian songs. They are two fine Irish rebel songs on a 78, "Kelly the Boy from Killane" and "Tri-Color Ribbon" sung by an Irishman, Paddy Galvin; they may shock you if all you know of Irish songs is "Danny Boy" sung by a syrupy Irish tenor. Two more Irish folk songs, "Green Bushes" and the beautiful "If I were a Blackbird", are sung by a Sydney girl, Beth Schurr.

Then there is a 78 of two American folk songs, one a magnificent thing called "The Cat Came Back" (which the children will sing all round the house once you buy the record and play it to them) and the other "The Knot in the Devil's Tail", a cowboy song. Both are sung delightfully by John Greenway.

To complete the list are two better known children's songs, "The Old Woman who swallowed a Fly" and "The Old Woman and the Little Piggy". Both are a success with children. They are sung, rather too quickly, by Barbara Lysiak and are a very welcome alternative to the usual children's records which are mainly of the Hopalong Cassidy or "I Tort I Taw a Puddy Tat" variety.

—A. Turner

SWAG

A recent visit to "474", the Bridge Road, Richmond (Vic.) home of John Kinmont Moir, O.B.E., showed signs of upheaval brought about by the despatch of 107 boxes of his priceless collection of Australiana to the Melbourne Public Library, destined for the Latrobe Library when built.

J. K. Moir

Only that section of his library most useful to the students and research workers who consult J.K. frequently is being retained by him, and that in turn is deeded to the people.

Not since David Mitchell founded the Mitchell Library has such a munificent gesture in the cause of Australian literature been made; and no-one who knows J. K. Moir will forget that it is not only a unique collection that is being donated, but the assiduous and loving life work of a remarkable man.

One point remains to be made: when will the authorities respond in like measure to J.K's. gift and add bricks and mortar to that lonely foundation stone in Latrobe Street that is all that at present exists of the "Latrobe Library"?

★

William Dobell's portrait of Dame Mary Gilmore, which was commissioned by the Australasian Book Society some time ago, was presented to Dame Mary on September 20 at the Sydney National Art Gallery by the Governor, Sir John Northcott.

Among those present was Mr. B. J. Waterhouse, President of the Gallery Trustees, and the artist himself.

Mr. Dobell has said that he feels that the portrait is amongst his best work. Dame Mary is delighted with it. "It is a great work of art", she is reported as saying.

The portrait will be exhibited in Sydney and in other Australian centres.

Dame Mary's 92nd birthday in August was celebrated in Sydney at a reception given by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Jensen. All Sydney literary groups were represented and many of Dame Mary's old friends were present.

The most useful thing that anyone who wishes Overland well could do would be to let the Editor know that they are prepared to take a few copies of each issue, sent to them on invoice, for sale to their friends.

★

Would readers please note that, conforming to the growing practice, Overland does not send receipts for small amounts received, unless these are requested.

★

At ten shillings, a Christmas present of a year's subscription to Overland is one of the most thoughtful gifts anyone could receive. Send us the money and the name and address of the favored person, and we'll do the rest at the right time.

★

WEST OF THE RABBIT-PROOF

Perth: Last "Rabbit-proof" mentioned dancer Terri Charlesworth "working on a small piece, 'The Brolga', to take to Moscow." Not so small. With it, Terri won the Ulanova international laureate at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre . . . choreography by Kira Bousloff, music by James Penberthy, it is Australia's first at the Bolshoi.

★

The spring program of Adult Education Board lectures includes, for the first time, a course, "Westraliana . . . Meet With Your Writers" (and composers). On one night Dr. E. G. Saint, Professor of Medicine in the newly-founded Medical School of W.A., will talk about his Australian reading. Another night will be devoted to the short story, when Gavin Casey, Peter Cowan and myself will together present a picture of the writer at work. Composers represented will be James Penberthy, Rudolf Werther and Paul Spittel.

★

Ludwig Glauert, who has been at Perth Museum longer than most can remember, has retired. It's to be hoped that the new Director, imported from England, will have in his charge a museum that carries the name of Glauert in at least one section. Or are such honors for politicians only?

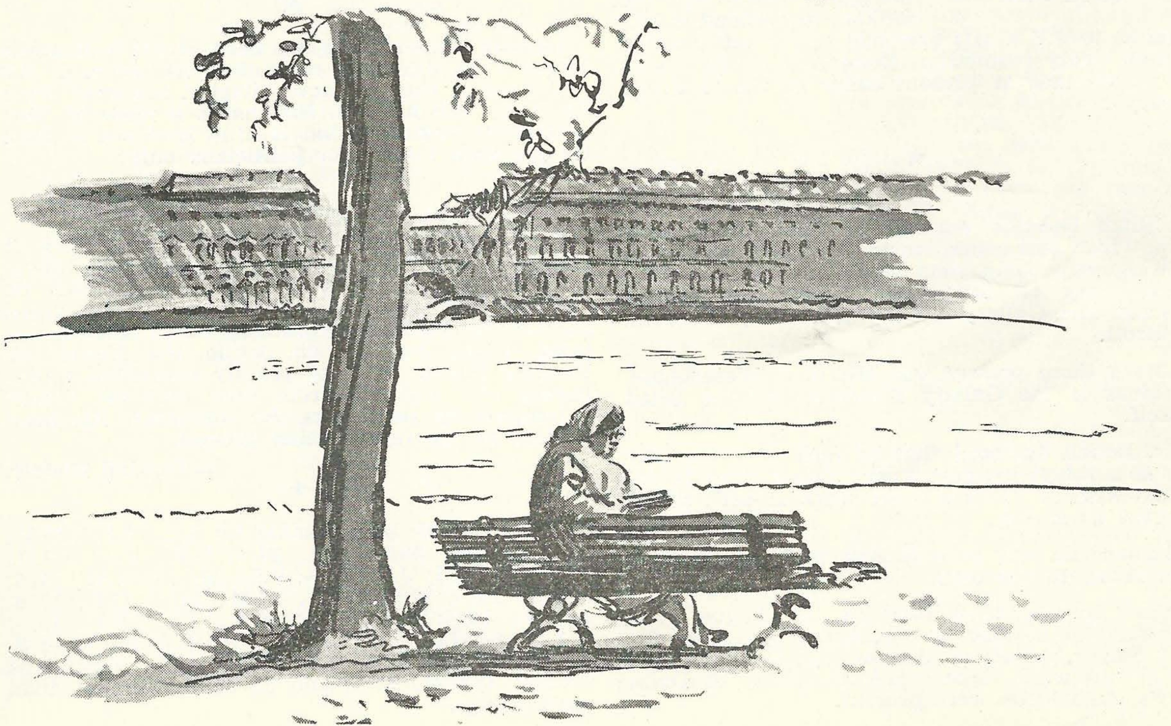
★

Our State Library has a New Look since it changed from "Perth Public". There are many improvements, but there's too much emphasis on "Technology", "Business Management" and allied subjects for business executives, union officials and other rising young men, while the Newspaper Reading Room, with its readily accessible newspapers and journals from near and far (much patronised by pensioners, for instance), has been mislaid in the rejuvenation process.

—Lyndall Hadow.

★

DONATIONS: Many thanks to: R.C., £2; L.M.V., 33/-; E.M.N., 33/-; F.O., 26/-; D.R., £1; F.P.O., £1; B.M., £1; J.C., 16/-; P.F., 16/-; E.M.M., 14/6; A.E.B., 14/-; W.W., 14/-; M.M., 14/-; G.E., 13/6; A.C.W., 13/-; M.G., 13/-; H.W., 13/-; E.P., 13/-; A.J., 13/-; J.L., 13/-; P.O'C., 13/-; J. H., 13/-; S. McC., 13/-; K.J.S., 13/-; W.E., 13/-; Scottsville Branch, Q.M.E., 13/-; and 53 donors at less than ten shillings.



RUSSIAN SCENES

From Noel Counihan's Soviet Sketch Book

This page: Nikolai Bezontsev, 83-year-old Leningrad sculptor (right).

Opposite page: The Bronze Horseman, Leningrad; In an old Georgian church; The Neva and the Winter Palace, Leningrad.

Billy Fitz Henry

THE sudden and vastly premature death of W. E. (Billy) Fitz Henry last February has had a saddening effect on a wide circle of Australian writers. Born in Sydney in 1903, Billy grew up in the tough world of the Redfern back streets. Educated at Sydney Boys' High School, he joined the staff of the Lone Hand in 1917, when that lively paper was under the editorship of Bertram Stevens. He soon transferred to the Sydney Bulletin where he remained general factotum and unofficial public relations man for over four decades.

Billy took an intense and affectionate interest in Australian writers at large, whether they wrote for the Bulletin or not, but the Bulletin from its inception was his special field of study. He became a living encyclopaedia of facts and anecdotes about the poets, paragraphists and yarn-spinners who had written for its pages.

I had known Billy Fitz Henry for over twelve years, but it was only in the last twelve months of his life that I got to understand him at all well, that I became aware of his humanity, his love of Australia and his amazingly detailed knowledge of our literary story. His article on "The Lawson Country" (Bulletin, 2nd September 1953) and the text of his talk to the Fellowship of Australian Writers 1956 Pilgrimage to the Lawson Statue in Sydney Domain are typical of Bill's work at its best.

Billy Fitz Henry's published writings do not appear to be very extensive. So much of his time was spent in studying the past, in helping old mates who had fallen on hard times, and in fostering youthful talent. It is certain, however, that much invaluable material will be discovered among his papers and, of course, in his nearly completed history of the Bulletin. Billy received a Commonwealth literary fellowship to write this book, and he was working on it with tremendous enthusiasm at the time of his death. I predict a big future for the history because Billy was so obviously the only man who could really have done full justice to the subject.

We need our genuine creative authors, great and small, but it is often the rare Fitz Henries of this world who contribute as much as anyone, in their own self-effacing, "backroom" way, to the preservation of great traditions.

—Muir Holburn

★

Dorothy Cottrell

Dorothy Cottrell, who recently died in the U.S.A., had a big success with her first novel, "Singing Gold", when it was published in 1929 when she was 22. She was stricken with infantile paralysis at the age of 5, but lived a vigorous and busy life, in recent years mainly in Florida and the West Indies. Like "Singing Gold" her second book, "Earth Battle", was based on pastoral life in Queensland. Dorothy Cottrell wrote a note on Dame Mary Gilmore in Overland No. 4.

The Rental

I lived within a little house
With broken pane and creaking door;
When down the chimney came the wind,
The ash was blown across the floor.

And it was life itself, not I,
Which fixed the rent that I must pay,
For I had but a tenancy
Renewed at will from day to day.

Out by the gate there ran a street
Where tired people came and went.
I set a rose beside my door,
And in that setting paid my rent.

MARY GILMORE

J. K. McDougall

J. K. McDougall, who died recently at the age of 93, lived at Portland (Vic.). Speaking of his life at the Fellowship of Australian Writers in Melbourne in July, Vance Palmer called him "a great, a heroic figure", and stated that "he really lived in the vital interests of his day". Judah Waten said that McDougall was a Labor poet who held his convictions for something like 70 years. During the First World War he was the victim of a mob incident when he was tarred and feathered for his anti-Conscriptionist views. For many years J. K. McDougall was the principle poet for the Melbourne "Labor Call".

★

Bertha Lawson

Mrs. Bertha Lawson, widow of Henry Lawson, died on July 19 at Roseville, N.S.W. She was 81, and had been ill for some time. Bertha Lawson wrote "My Henry Lawson", and remained interested in Australian literary affairs until her death.

★

J. P. Quaine

J. P. Quaine, of Prahran (Vic.), who died in August, was perhaps the last of the Melbourne antiquarian booksellers, a man to whom a book was more than a piece of merchandise. Born in Bendigo 74 years ago, earlier in life he was associated with the radical movement. At one time he had what was largely assumed to be the best collection of "bloods" in the world.

HENRY LAWSON AND NEW ZEALAND

Colin Roderick

"Maoriland and Steelman, cynic, spieler,
stiff-lipped battle-through,
(Kept a wife and child in comfort, but of course
they never knew—
Thought he was an honest bagman). Well, old man,
you needn't hug—
Sentimental? You of all men! — Steelman!
Oh, I was a mug!

WHEN Lawson wrote those lines for the Bulletin of September 1904, eleven years had passed since his first visit to New Zealand. Much has been said and written about that first visit, some of it fanciful, some of it hazily recollected after a lapse of forty years. Unquesionably the dominant personality emerging from it is the man on whom he modelled Steelman. He figures under that name in six of Lawson's memorable stories and he crops up in others.

We have Bertha Lawson's word for it that Lawson transposed New Zealand incidents into an Australian setting, as in "Joe Wilson and His Mates" and in the same way he used the figure of Steelman under other names. In "Stiffner and Jim" there is a remorseless word-painting of the original of Steelman:

> This Stiffner was a hard customer. He'd been a spieler, fighting man, bush parson, temperance preacher, and a policeman, and a commercial traveller, and everything else that was damnable: **he'd been a journalist, and an editor; he'd been a lawyer too.**

These last three qualifications are, as far as I can see, fictitious: they are afterthoughts thrown in from Lawson's quick mind, merely to make it clear to J. F. Archibald, A. G. Stephens, Banjo Paterson and to all journalists, editors and lawyers thereafter, that Steelman really was "damnable". He then returns to fact:

> He was an ugly brute to look at, and uglier to have a row with—about six-foot-six, wide in proportion, and stronger than Donald Dinnie.

That was Lawson's first use of Steelman as a character, and in the same story he depicts himself as Bill, "mostly a quiet young chap, from Sydney, except when he got drunk."

He coined the name "Steelman" for the story so called; it appeared in the Bulletin on 19th January 1895, some twelve months after he had known the original.

Once he had the man fixed as a character, Lawson stuck to him. He rang the changes on him in half-a-dozen ways. He was a thorough-going bludger, as in "Steelman". Or he was a "hard case, big and good-looking, and good-natured in his way"; or a man of "gentle remonstrance" in a big bluff paternal way: he talked to Smith, his mate, "as some old bushmen do to their dogs."

To meet Steelman at his best and to realise his value to Lawson most readily, read "An Oversight of Steelman's". Lawson begins:

> Steelman and Smith—professional wanderers —were making back for Wellington, down through the wide and rather dreary-looking Hutt Valley. They were broke. They carried their few remaining belongings in two skimpy amateurish-looking swags. Steelman had four-

Dr. Colin Roderick first presented this article as a talk to the Fellowship of Australian Writers (Sydney).

Illustrated by Ron Edwards

> pence left. They were very tired and very thirsty—at least, Steelman was, and he answered for both . . .

You know how the writer goes on to tell of Smith's failure to wheedle a drink from the landlady at the nearby pub, and how Steelman "didn't say much", but listened to Smith's apologetic tale "with an air of gentle sadness, as a stern father might listen to the voluntary confession of a wayward child."

Years after, in 1916, the theatrical manager Beaumont Smith was presenting a dramatisation of "While the Billy Boils" at the Theatre Royal, Sydney. He wrote to Lawson, then at Leeton, for some details of the characters to help him present them to the life. Lawson wrote back, and his letter is in the old Sunday Times of October 1916:

> Steelman was a New Zealander, and a "commercial traveller" out of Wellington. I can't give his real name. It was he who told me about Steelman—who was himself. Smith was, by the way, my conception of the weaker side of my own nature. As a matter of fact, in the first Steelman stories ("While the Billy Boils") you can take it that I was Smith, but innocent ("Steelman! Oh. I **was** a mug").

Lawson's letter went on, clearly showing the original of his character:

> Steelman had a wife and children in Wellington, who had no idea but what he was an honest, struggling bagman. They were kept comfortably enough.

Nearly eighteen years earlier, in an article on the Red Page of 14th January 1899 entitled "Pursuing Literature in Australia", Lawson had written with closer recollection of Steelman. Describing events towards the end of 1893, he wrote:

> I went with a mate to a sawmill in the Hutt Valley, for a boss who had contracted to supply the mill with logs. We two bullocked in a rough, wet gully for a fortnight—felling trees, making a track for the bullocks, and jacking logs to it over stumps and boulders. But we were soft and inexperienced; and at the end of a fortnight the boss said we weren't bushmen—which, strange to say, hurt me more than any adverse criticism of my literary work could have done at the time. The boss had no cash; and my mate was only restrained from violence by the fact that he was a big man and the boss a little one. He gave us each an order for our wages on the owner of the sawmill in Wellington, and, as we had no money for railway fares, we tramped it-- without tucker or tobacco.

Five years earlier still, with that experience mint-fresh in his mind, he wrote "An Oversight of Steelman's", and I will remind you of Steelman's instructions to Smith on the best way to get the beer from the publican without paying for it.

"Tell him," Steelman says, "you got a job last week on a sawmill at Silverstream, and the boss sacked you and couldn't pay you a penny." And Steelman goes on to mention the boss's name, and adds, for the benefit of New Zealand readers—and the boss, no doubt—"Don't forget the name, whatever you do."

It was clearly an experience that bit deep into Lawson's mind.

If you want the clue to Lawson's sardonic reference to Steelman as "sentimental" and himself as "a mug", you will find it most easily in "A Gentleman Sharper and Steelman Sharper".

But besides Steelman there was another mate, one kinder, gentler, more like Lawson himself. We know him as Mitchell. Of him Lawson wrote to Beaumont Smith in 1916:

> Mitchell was just Mitchell . . . There were many other Mitchells—both before and since. In fact, there is one living here now. Neither Mitchell or Steelman drank or swore in real life.

That indicates Lawson's manner of writing around his model.

In passing, I think the "Mitchell" he spoke of as "living here now", that is, at Leeton, was Jim Grahame.

The "Mitchell" of '93 in Maoriland was Tom Louisson. If we go back to 1899 we meet him in Lawson's reminiscences of '93, after he had got back to Wellington with Steelman. He wrote (in 1899): "I house-painted a bit; then got in with a ganging linesman on a telegraph line in South Island."

There are several references that link Tom Louisson with this New Zealand "Mitchell". He was the Mitchell of "Mitchell On Women", who learnt something of the sex when he "was staying in a boarding-house in Dunedin."

Lawson's experiences on the telegraph-laying line at this time are touched in "The Romance of the Swag". He writes:

> I've carried a shovel, crowbar, heavy "rammer", a dozen insulators on an average (strung round my shoulders with raw flax)—to say nothing of soldering kit, tucker-bag, billy and climbing spurs—all day on a telegraph line in New Zealand, and in places where a man had to manage his load with one hand and help himself climb with the other; and I've helped hump and drag telegraph lines up cliffs and sidlings where the horses couldn't go.

No wonder that in 1899 he should write of this period:

> In four or five months I was too healthy to read or write, or bother about it, or anything, or to hate anybody except the cook when "duff" didn't eventuate at reasonable intervals.

It would appear from Lawson's own recollections five years later, of which what I have just quoted is part, that he worked with the gang until the winter of 1894. He says: "It was hard graft at first, through rough country, in the depth of winter, and camping out all the time—humping poles sometimes where the trace horses couldn't go."

The physical fatigue that prohibited writing is clear from the fact that between 24th March 1894 and 11th August 1894 nothing appeared from Lawson's pen in either the Bulletin or the Worker. In the first edition of "In the Days When the World Was Wide" Lawson stated that the title poem "was written in Maoriland", most probably before he had left Wellington to join the telegraph line party.

At that time he had behind him the experiences that inspired one of the brightest of his creations, the poem "For'ard". It is clear that he conceived the poem on the run down from the Three Kings, off North Cape, to Auckland.

To that first voyage across belongs the poem that Lawson has said was George Robertson's favorite, "The Vagabond", with its deep autobiographical significance, for example, in the wistful hint of the writer's first lost love.

On the date of his first arrival in New Zealand we have four pieces of evidence. The first is from "The Ghost of Many Christmases", in which he writes, again with biographical significance:

> Christmas going to New Zealand . . . by the s.s. Tasmania. We had plum duff, but it was too "soggy" for us to eat. We dropped it overboard, lest it should swamp the boat—and it sank to the ooze. The Tasmania was saved on that occasion, but she foundered next year outside Gisborne. Perhaps the cook had made more duff. There was a letter from a sweetheart of mine when she went down; but that's got nothing to do with it, though it made some difference in my life.

The second is in his identification of the vessel on which he wrote "For'ard" as the Tasmania: this is in a manuscript footnote in the Mitchell Library copy of the limited edition (1896) of "In the Days When the World Was Wide."

The third is in Lawson's article, "Pursuing Literature in Australia", in which he writes:

> Towards the end of '93 I landed in Wellington with a pound in my pocket—just in time to see the women vote for the first time. Got a little painting to do now and then, and a guinea (5/- "out of the editor's pocket" I understood) from the N.Z. Mail for a 1½ col. rhyme called "For'ard". And I wrote some steerage-sketches at the rate of 5/- a col.

Of those steerage-sketches, which are prose paraphrases of "For'ard", easily the best is "Coming Across". What Lawson wrote of the passengers of '93 on the Tasmania captures vividly the misery and the heart-ache of conditions at home that drove so many young Australians across the Tasman in search of work and in so doing accelerated the race for social security in New Zealand.

The fourth piece of evidence is found in the Sydney Morning Herald of 1893, which shows that the s.s. Tasmania, 2,252 tons, left Sydney for Auckland at 4 p.m. on 20th December of that year. She had some 120 passengers in the saloon and 135 in the steerage (including Henry)—a significant point in interpreting the poem, "For'ard".

When Lawson landed in Wellington, short of cash, he had no friends and made his camp in the sewerage pipes lying in the park. In her article "Memories", in "Henry Lawson, by His Mates" (1931), Bertha Lawson writes that Lawson told her soon after meeting her—in 1895 just after his return—that he had "slept out in a park in New Zealand, and had been without food for a couple of days until some wonderfully kind people had found him and taken him home."

Lawson's benefactor was Tom Mills, of the New Zealand Times. In an article in Aussie, 15th November 1922, Mills writes of the fortnight Lawson batched with him, and of the poet's contributions to the New Zealand Mail.

Lawson says that his next experience was a "three-months' unemployed perish", after which he went on the timber-cutting job with Steelman.

I have not yet ascertained definitely whether it was during those three months that he visited

Pahiatua, as described, rather freely, I think, by Anthony Cashion in "Henry Lawson, by His Mates".

The time could be fixed by ascertaining the date on which the brewery at the nearby town of Mangatainoka was opened.

Lawson's illuminating report of that event—"The Mangatainoka Brewery was opened one day this year; it was a gigantic success and ended in oblivion"—might well indicate the reason for the brevity of his employment on the Pahiatua Herald.

By the autumn of 1894 he was back in Wellington, and the story "A Gentleman Sharper and Steelman Sharper" marks the end of his tramping with Steelman.

Edward Tregear, Secretary to the New Zealand Labor Department, appears to have got Lawson his telegraph-line job, and in the sketch "Across the Straits", first published in the Worker on 12th January 1895 under a longer title, Lawson tells how he crossed from Wellington to Picton, at the head of Queen Charlotte Sound.

Lawson fell in love with Queen Charlotte Sound: "A long crooked arm of the sea between big, rugged, black-looking hills". In the first poem he composed on his second visit, in 1897, it recurred to his mind as he wrote:

"Steelman was big and good-looking, and good-natured in his way; he was a spieler, pure and simple, but did things in humorous style. Smith was small and weedy, of the sneak variety . . ." ("Steelman's Pupil").

> "I dream in peace of a home for me
> by a glorious southern sound,
> As the sunset fades from a moonlit sea
> and the Three Kings show us round."

In passing, I would say that the omission of that stanza from the version of "The Three Kings" in the current edition of Lawson's poems is to be deplored. It is only one of the many instances of well-meant but misguided interference that make the task of a definitive scholarly Lawson imperative. I hope, with the help of knowledgable Lawsonians, to see something done about restoring Lawson's verse to him in a definitive edition that will bring out the full implication of every significant line.

I have always felt that Lawson's life in New Zealand was a seed-time for his talent. Many of the things he felt about Australia might never have been expressed if he had not sojourned in New Zealand. Or if they had been expressed, the language and the vehicle would have differed from those he did use. For example, he could never have written one of the last pieces from this first period, the sketch, "His Country—After All", which is surely one of the simplest and most moving pictures in any literature of the spiritual bond between a man and his native land. It could even be that the reflections that gave rise to that sketch brought him back home. Time and place adhere to suggest it as a mirror of his feelings.

In his article, "Pursuing Literature", he puts it this way:

> There came a letter from the Worker people to say that a Daily Worker had been successfully floated, and there was a place for me on it. I said, "Get behind me, literature!" But she didn't, so I threw up my billet, and caught a steamer that touched the coast to deliver poles. I arrived in Sydney three days after the Daily Worker went bung.

That reminiscence fixes the date of Lawson's return from this first trip.

The Daily Worker began on 2nd July 1894 in order to help Labor candidates in the impending election. It ceased publication within the month: according to a Supplement to the Worker of 2nd September 1905, its publication was continued for three weeks. It lost £2,000 on the venture.

The file of the Daily Worker for those few weeks has been lost or destroyed. The issue of the Worker (weekly) for 28th July was bound in with it, so that it is reasonable to infer that it ceased publication on 28th July 1894.

Collating that with Lawson's reminiscence, we gather that he arrived in Sydney on 31st July 1894. Anyone knowing the ship on which he returned could check that date against the shipping lists of July and August, 1894.

Lawson continued his reminiscence of the next few weeks:

> After a deal of shuffling humbug I was put on the Worker as "provincial editor", but at the end of a month I received a notice, alleged to come from the trustees, to the effect that, on account of the financial position of the Workers' Union, they were regretfully obliged to dispense with my services.

But that by no means ended Lawson's connection with the Worker.

From 11th August 1894 to 12th January 1895, almost every issue of the Worker contained a story or sketch by him. His mind was full of Maoriland, and beginning 11th August, he wrote eighteen stories and sketches for the Worker in the five months following his return. Some of these have not yet been reprinted.

Later, in 1895, he wrote three more sketches for the Worker, but his work was by then appearing mainly in the Bulletin.

His first Steelman story, "Steelman", appeared there on 19th January 1895, and his second, "Steelman's Pupil", on 15th December 1895.

Lawson's experience had been enriched by that first visit of eight months. It widened his human sympathies. It touched a spring and released a host of recollections. From it he derived not only the Steelman stories, the steerage sketches and half-a-dozen of his best poems, but also ideas that found expression in the 1894 Worker stories and in others like "The Ghostly Door" and "For Auld Lang Syne".

ON 15th April 1896 Lawson married Bertha Marie Louise Bredt at Weldon's Matrimonial Agency, 57 Phillip Street, Sydney.

His immediate need was a job. Soon after his marriage he took his wife to Western Australia. They returned in November 1896, and Lawson resumed his convivial ways.

As much to remove him from the Bohemianism of Fred Broomfield and Victor Daley and "6 x 8", Bertha persuaded him to go to the New Zealand that had won his heart in 1894.

Lawson's 1899 version of this decision runs: "I was obliged to seek the means of earning bread and butter from the Government of a province (M.L.) in whose people's interest I had never written a line."

They sailed on 31st March 1897 in the steamer Anglian, a cargo vessel that carried timber, brandy, foodstuffs and miscellaneous cargo in the hold, 29 passengers in the saloon and 26 in the steerage, including Henry and Bertha.

This voyage yielded one of Lawson's finest poems, "The Three Kings".

The visit lasted almost a year.

Lawson and his wife landed with 12/7 between them.

Bertha took J. F. Archibald's letter of introduction to "King Dick" Seddon, who passed her on to Joseph Ward, Minister for Education.

Times were hard in New Zealand as well as at home, and Bertha counted herself lucky to get for Henry an appointment as teacher of the school in a little Ngaitahu Maori village at Mangamaunu, on the storm-lashed cliff-bound coast of Marlborough province. There were about 50 Maoris in the village—there are only 80 now—but it was a wild and beautiful if lonely spot, with the rugged snow-clad Kaikouras behind and the boundless Pacific in front.

There Bertha looked after day-to-day affairs at the school while Lawson settled down to write.

His love for New Zealand grew deeper—just how much deeper may be gauged from the sketch published in the Bulletin twelve months later, on 28th January 1899, entitled "Dust Thou Art". In this piece Mitchell—here Lawson himself—is introduced in a hot arid spot in western New South Wales, looking "across the breathless plain at the moon, which was the only thing that **looked** cool out there." And "Mitchell" says:

> When I die, I'd like to die in a cold place —where there's a glimpse of distant snow on the ranges across the tussock and blackfern hills—where the mountain rivers run all summer—down yonder—in—in Maoriland.

No native New Zealander could have expressed his longing for home more naturally: the ability to create in himself a new heart is an essential characteristic of the poet, and Lawson possessed it in full measure.

During his stay at Mangamaunu Lawson wrote some of his finest verse. In September '97 he wrote "Ports of the Open Sea", with its vivid picture of that gale-torn coast. Besides poems inspired by his environment at Mangamaunu, there were others expressing emotion recollected in tranquillity. There he wrote that intimate message to his old mate, Jack (John le Gay) Brereton, "Written Afterwards", with its lovable picture of Lawson in his new role:

"I have changed since the first day I kissed her,
Which is due—Heaven bless her! to her;
I'm respected and trusted—I'm 'Mister',
Addressed by the children as 'Sir'."

There, too, in September 1897, he wrote "The Lights of Cobb and Co".

But his major work at this time was in prose, and one of the most intimate sketches of this period is "A Daughter of Maoriland", first published in 1897 in the Christmas number of the Antipodean, No. 3, edited by A. B. Paterson and George Essex Evans. It begins, as you recall:

> The new native-school teacher, who was "green", "soft", and poetical, and had a literary ambition, called her "August", and fondly hoped to build a romance on her character.

This opening sentence reminds us of Tom Mills' remark: "Henry wrote me that he was inspired to write the book of his life. He would immortalise the South Island Maori in this **magnum opus**."

But of that big work all that finally came was two chapters, so written as to be publishable separately as two sketches. One of them was "A Daughter of Maoriland".

Of all the poems Lawson wrote, "The Writer's Dream" and "My Last Review" stand out as biographically significant. Other poems record his reactions to outside stimuli just as vividly, but there are none that reveal so clearly as these what he thought of himself.

"My Last Review" is known to everyone; but "The Writer's Dream", a better poem in every way, is omitted from the "Poetical Works" now available. It gives an important insight into his days at Mangamaunu, and it contains the lines that should have been carved on his monument.

"I was born to write of the things that are!
and the strength was given to me;
I was born to strike at the things that mar
the world as the world should be!
By the dumb heart-hunger and dreams of youth,
by the hungry tracks I've trod—
I'll fight as a man for the sake of truth,
nor pose as a martyred god.
By the heart of 'Bill' and the heart of 'Jim',
and the men that their hearts deem 'white',
By the handgrips fierce, and the hard eyes dim
with forbidden tears!—I'll write!"

Week-end Shopping

Out of the houses—by buses and cars and over-
worked feet—
Down to the shops, the insatiable street,
Pours the populace:
Clutching their notes, be they mental or otherwise,
Clutching their kids who decline to go motherwise—
Down to the crowds and the crush and the chat-
ter they
Go for supplies every Friday and Saturday.

Out of the purses and pockets and bags pour money
and bills,
Into the cashboxes, drawers and tills
Of the shopkeepers—
Back to the purses of strangers, eternally
Turning the cycle of commerce diurnally;
Coins pulled from crummy, tobacco-lined pockets
Move on as change wrapped in lingerie dockets.

Out in their cottons and nylons and silks and rags
from appeals,
Court shoes and sandals and broken-down heels
Unrepairable—
Brides with the perfume of orange still lingering,
Hesitantly all their purchases fingering;
Drabs with old prams full of babies and messages,
Pausing to gossip of pre-natal presages.

Satchels and baskets and bulging string-bags—
their abdomens full—
Shopping jeeps rattling to push and to pull
Over guttersides:
There in a jumble of budget-priced pondering,
Urgency's haste and amnesia's wandering
Everyone shoves, while the juice of humanity
Flavors the tang of suburban mundanity.

JOAN KATHERINE SEPPINGS

The Wall of Glass

Three patient faces on the Bench
Survey the prisoner at the bar
Pleading respite from his term.
They could be on a far-off star,
Each in his separate bell of glass.

The mistress hears with folded hands
The version of the maid she's caught.
From words she knows but cannot grasp
Attempts to build goodwill on nought,
Distorted through a wall of glass.

The battling swaggie mourns his luck
At every house along the track,
Despite a flood of words is lost
To formulate his fortune's lack,
Crumpled in his bell of glass.

All men, when called to give account,
Strive to convey what has occurred.
How can their hearers understand
Who have not lived each hackneyed word,
Divided by a wall of glass.

And what device shall we employ
When our turn comes to struggle there
And see our urgent words bounce back
From the uncomprehending stare,
The cold, the clear impervious glass.

ROBERT CLARK

Who doubts but that Lawson's vision **is** right? He sang of universal brotherhood, and, in our own time, when goodwill between the nations is being sacrificed in the insane scramble to be top dog, today, the message of Henry Lawson, conceived in Australia and formulated in New Zealand, is the right message for the world.

It remains now to speak briefly of Lawson's return to Australia. He and Bertha had begun their life at Mangamaunu hopefully. She worked hard and faced their little world bravely. But tensions developed, and I think the description of the quarrel between Joe and Mary in "Water Them Geraniums!" is a fair account of the state of mind they were both in as 1897 drew to a close. Bertha was at this time advanced in pregnancy, and it was agreed that they should go to Wellington for the child's birth.

They were there in February 1898, and on the 10th February their son was born. There Lawson handed over to Bland Holt the manuscript of a play that proved stillborn.

Within a month they were on their way to Sydney, and on the 20th March 1898 this paragraph appeared on the Red Page:

> Henry Lawson is back from his Maoriland trip and busy recollecting his emotions in tranquillity.

The "tranquillity" of that Wordsworthian echo was metaphorical enough, but that he was recollecting his emotions is certainly true. He went on to write other stories and verse linking the two countries, and it is clear that one well-known poem had been written early on the voyage across. This poem always appeals to me as the mirror of a home-coming Sydneysider's emotions as his ship ploughs the Pacific towards the Heads. The poem is "Sydneyside", published in the Bulletin on 4th June 1898.

In it he recalls his thoughts of Sydney in the solitude of Mangamaunu:

"Oh, there never dawned a morning, in the long and lonely days,
But I thought I saw the ferries streaming out across the bays—
And as fresh and fair in fancy did the picture rise again
As the sunrise flushed the city from Woollahra to Balmain."

Anyone who thinks that Henry Lawson is dated makes a colossal blunder. To me he was the prophet of what I call **social humanism**, a philosophical attitude that has since then characterised Australian literature, an attitude that may well be systematised before long into a distinctive Australian moral philosophy. He looked **through** his men and women to their souls, and doing so, he found the great moral truths that make a writer's work immortal. Because of that his work is not of an age but for all time.

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Hilton Barton

LAWSON'S EDITORS

HENRY Lawson's editors may be broadly grouped in two categories: (1) The literary lapidaries of the early phase—master craftsmen who cut and polished his often roughly quarried jewels, and (2) The emasculating revisionists of his declining years and the posthumous period who moved to the attack when his resistance was either weakening or made impossible through death.

In the first category stand Archibald, Broomfield and other notables of the Golden Nineties of Australian literature—the period that saw the fruition of a national culture and outlook. These are the men who helped to make Lawson and all that Lawson represented; and in so doing earned their own niche in the national annals, reflecting something of the glory of a great achievement.

Those of the second category (properly subeditors in more than one sense of the term) shelter behind a veil of anonymity, and there would be no point in dragging their pallidity to the light of day.

A friendly critic once commented that Henry Lawson owes much to his editors. This is true of the early school, but it may be aptly commented that the later revisionists owe far too much to Henry Lawson without even a suggestion of the debt being repaid.

Henry Lawson was most generous to his editors. He gave them a rich fund to work upon, and in the case of verse would often submit alternate rhyming words in the margin for selection in accordance with the editorial favor. Whether in prose or verse the story itself came before considerations of form and construction. Lawson was essentially a storyteller and songster; a successor to the wayside storyteller of old, but speaking through the printed word. He made no pretension to superfinity of style—was not a literary formalist. Many of his most intriguing efforts would probably be rejected by anthologists of this age when there is a marked tendency to place polish and form before the fascination of the story.

The original text of many of Lawson's more famous themes might be likened to a pile of gold-bearing ore with the lustrous metal gleaming amongst the dross. When the creative urge was upon him he wrote what he thought, allowing uninhibited play to his inspiration, without pausing to think what to write. The story or poem took its own form in the process, frequently wandering into intriguing side-anecdotes and reminiscences. The effusion was often ragged and crude judged by accepted standards, and called for legitimate sub-editing on the grounds of space as well as artistry. Much of this was supplied by Lawson himself in the process of re-writing. A fair example is an hilarious screed written at the request of Anthony Flanagan, sometime licensee of the long-disappeared Victoria Hotel, Mudgee, N.S.W. A dithyrambic extract runs:

"The same old nooks and corners where the
jim-jams used to dwell,
And the flam-dods dance no longer up at
Flanagan's Hotel."

Originally published in a local paper under the the name of "Flanagan's Hotel", this was subsequently pruned for "The Bulletin" and republished as "Callaghan's Hotel"; even the name being changed without deference to subsequent bibliographers.

Lawson once commented to a friend that the impulse to write was overwhelming, but often a long and tedious road lay between the inspiration and the product; and his sensitiveness to excessive or meddlesome sub-editing was well-known. From the point where he felt incapable of further immolation of his brain-child, the editors took over the task, often in the face of his sullen opposition. The general effect could not be other than beneficial with such a voluminous writer, but many were the rough little gems of Lawsonian humanism thus thrown into oblivion.

An instructive illustration of this cutting and polishing is to be found in the poem "Eurunderee", first published in the Brisbane "Boomerang" of 22nd August 1891. The original version was a long and ragged admixture of reminiscence and description, withal ringing in the rich Lawsonian tone. Editorial condensation and polishing (probably with Lawson's personal collaboration) left the poem a gem of descriptive writing—a superb word picture.

The original fourth stanza read:

"I was there in late years, but there's many a
change
Where the Cudgegong River flows down through
the range;
For the wild bush gives way to a garden that fills,
And the lowlands encircled by Mudgee's blue hills;
And my old home was gone, but the oaks seemed
to speak
Of the hazy old days on Eurunderee Creek."

The third and fourth lines, extremely vague in their meaning, have been replaced by something more definite, if no more poetical:

"For the curse of the town with the railroad had
come,
And the goldfields were dead, and the girl and
the chum."

Four stanzas of a reminiscent character have been entirely eliminated, but are worthy of preservation on account of their strong personal interest; one is a memory of his first boyish romance (more of an idealistic child dream) with Miss Mary Buchholtz; another deals with John Tierney, Lawson's revered mentor of the Old Bark School, and Fred Spencer, the poet's boyhood crony, is apparently the chum remembered in a third. Technically weak, with a measure of homespun sentimentalism, these stanzas yet ring with Lawsonian heart-throb and present an appeal equal to the best of his more furbished efforts.

"The Sliprails and the Spur", Lawson's tenderest love song, is another jewel carved from the rough. The following expunged stanza contains a pathetic reference to Mary Buchholtz (actually not dead at that time, but grievously afflicted), and a vignette of the Fredericksburg Homestead nestling beneath the ridge beyond Eurunderee Creek:

"A great white gate where the slip-rails were,
A brick house 'neath the mountain brow;
A mad girl buried by the spur,
So long ago, forgotten now."

The late Jack O'Brien (brought up in the Lawson house at Eurunderee and a versatile fund of Lawson lore) was fond of quoting this stanza, and once commented to the writer: "We're not reading Lawson today".

Lawson, whose schooling was limited to a few years, was no exception to the general law covering all forms of craftsmanship. Writing, and particularly versification, is a craft to be studied and mastered. Inborn genius itself is insufficient. The youthful writer requires practice, broadened experience and a measure of communion with proficient mentors if he would reach the heights of artistry. Lawson gained this the hard way and burdened with the restriction of partial deafness. Even into his mature years his spelling was something to evoke the sighs of the pedantic. An extract from his incomplete autobiography gives a few examples:

> "When I was about six I fell in love with an elderly married lady who kept a lolly-shop next door to Aunt Phoebe's. Her husband was away and she seemed lonly. She was forty or fifty and had moles and moustarsh".

Orthography of this type was responsible for the plaint of a compositor on the Bulletin that "Henry Lawson was demoralising him . . ."

The later editions of Lawson's prose do not manifest the severity of attack as does his verse, whatever may have been done with his original ms. before publication. Nevertheless one is reminded of the anecdote of a fellow meeting an irate Lawson in the streets of Sydney striking savagely with a pencil at revisions appearing in a freshly published collection of short stories.

In the posthumous editions of Lawson's verse the devotee finds his chief grounds for protest at the wholesale revision and in some instances absolute butchery of text. This was first evidenced in the Platypus Series, published in 1924 (about two years after his death) and perpetuated in the later collected edition. There are few of one hundred and seventy odd poems that have escaped the literary pruning knives of the revisionists ("Ruth" alone has well over eighty alterations, including elimination of whole stanzas); and it is certain that the living Lawson would not have suffered this large-scale revision without strenuous protest, whatever may have been forced upon him out of economic expediency. When we remember Lawson's hostility to over-officious sub-editing of his work while he lived, the publication of these mass revisions within two years of his death gives the impression that those responsible waited until his protests were stilled before making the final onslaught.

According to a private communication to the writer many years ago, "the best brains of the Sydney University collaborated in the Platypus Series and this is the final revision". In other words, the editing of the verse of the rugged democrat Lawson was entrusted to academicians of the same ideological outlook and finical conceptions of artistry as those to whom he had addressed the vehement outburst of "The Uncultured Rhymer to His Cultured Critics" back in the 'Nineties:

> "You were quick to pick on a faulty line
> That I strove to put my soul in;
> Your eyes were keen for a dash of mine
> In the place of a semi-colon . . ."

The problem of space in producing a popular edition may be claimed as justification for the drastic revisions in the Platypus Series, and it will not be denied that in many instances the rhythm has been improved, but many of the alterations are not only futile but damaging. The revisionists went beyond the scope of legitimate sub-editing, allowed their class outlooks to carry them into the field of ideological emasculation, and in amateurish attempts at embellishment brought about grave corruptions of Lawson's native artistry.

"Reedy River", one of the most lyrical of Lawson's efforts read in the old text (last four lines):

> "And my bright days are olden,
> For the twisted branches wave,
> And the wattle blossoms golden
> On the hill by Mary's grave."

In "Winnowed Verse" of the Platypus Series, pettifogging alterations have ruined both rhyme and rhythm; leaving the stanza a piece of mere pedantic formalism:

> "The glad bright days have vanished,
> For sombre branches wave
> Their wattle blossom golden
> Above my Mary's grave."

"Faces in the Street", old text, opening lines read:

> "They lie, the men who tell us in a loud decisive tone,
> That want is here a stranger, and that misery's unknown."

In "Winnowed Verse" appears a shallow platitude—a typical cliche:

> "They lie, the men who tell us for reasons of their own,
> That want is here a stranger and that misery's unknown."

It is said that this alteration was made with Lawson's permission and at the request of the late George Robertson, of Angus and Robertson, for some queer reason of his own; apparently the contention that vehement liars would naturally speak in a "loud, decisive tone", leaving no need for emphasis. The door is left open to a stray suspicion that the vigorous, accusing phrase of the Poet of the People grated on the sensitive ears of the benign old middle-class bookseller.

The older version of that superb indictment of class differentiation, "Second Class Wait Here", read in the last lines of stanza five:

Henry Lawson

These barren ridges where
Crows fly and celebrate
Seem to corroborate
His vision and his care.

One elongated man,
An evening shadow, comes
Down through the leaning gums
Conforming to some plan.

Guided by love, we find
Simplicity a myth:
The great heart coupled with
A clear and polished mind.

CHRIS WALLACE-CRABBE

"And I waited there and suffered, waited there
for many a year,
Slaved beneath a phatom signboard, telling our
class to wait here."

In "Popular Verses" of the Platypus Series, any suggestion of seditious intent has been judiciously removed:

"And I waited there and suffered, waited there
for many a day,
Slaved beneath a phantom signboard telling all
my hopes to stay."

Much more genteel, we will admit, than vulgar Marxist suggestions of class struggle. Similarly, in "Winnowed Verse" of this series, "Sweeney" has become more sartorial and respectable—the stanza containing the allusion to the immodest condition of his pants has been eliminated.

"Mount Bukaroo" ("Popular Verses") has suffered some denudation—the last stanza of the old text is missing in the new. "Eurunderee" also varies from the version published in the collection "When the World Was Wide" where the third stanza read:

"For I noticed it oft, in the days that are lost,
As I trod on the siding where lingered the frost."

"Popular Verses" finds the bush-born bard more nonchalent and debonair, apparently emulating the graces of the college campus, whence also came the minor improvement to his alliteration:

"For it came to me oft, in the days that are lost,
As I strolled on the siding where lingered the
frost."

"The Ballad of the Drover" did not escape the attentions of the academic stylists. The first portion of the fifth stanza of the old text read:

"The thunder from above him
Goes rolling o'er the plain,
And down on thirsty pastures
In torrents falls the rain."

Words appropriate to any drover or sunburnt bushman, yet in "Winnowed Verse" the robust Lawsonian style is toned down to a prime piece of sugary effeminacy:

"The thunder, pealing o'er him,
Goes rumbling down the plain;
And sweet on thirsty pastures
Beats down the plashing rain."

"Plashing", mark you—not "splashing". It is doubtful if this etymological obscurity was ever included in Lawson's otherwise extensive vocabulary.

The worst example of corruption of native artistry is to be found in the ballad "Andy's Gone with Cattle". The first verse of the old familiar text read:

"Our Andy's gone to battle now
'Gainst Drought, the Red Marauder;
Our Andy's gone with cattle now
Across the Queensland border."

Hearken unto this revised abortion ("Winnowed Verse"):

"Our Andy's gone with cattle now—
Our hearts are out of order—
With Drought he's gone to battle now
Across the Queensland border."

This piece of unwarranted meddling is technically destructive and poetically debasing; the elimination of the line "'Gainst Drought, the Red Marauder" robbing the stanza of its distinguishing gem of poetry. The substituted line "Our hearts are out of order" might have come from a child's pathetic efforts and reaches a depth of bathos indistinguishable from common doggerel. Such mischievousness can only be explained as a piece of literary vandalism, allied to the psychopathic impulse of the moron to leave his mark on objects of art.

Scarely less deplorable is the treatment of Lawson's alliteration in "The Ports of the Open Sea". A vigorous masculine finale in the old text read:

"And the boulder beaches roaring
The Hymn of the Open Sea."

The revised line appearing in later editions, "The beaches of boulder roaring", is weak, effiminate and amateurish, revealing a pedantic inability to appreciate the simple fact that a poet's temperamental timbre is, and should remain, reflected in his work.

Such are the pathetic effects when scholastic poseurs lacking the flame of genius and a poet's inborn sense of artistry are allowed a free hand in tinkering with the work of a master. It is also fair comment that such people reach the height of presumption in attempting to improve upon the work of the editorial giants of the Golden 'Nineties—men of the calibre of Archibald and Broomfield, endowed with a subtle appreciation of both poetry and poets—who themselves brought editing to the highest pitch of craftsmanship.

Of the simplicity of Lawson's technique—his "artless art"—one might quote his "literary Dad", the late Fred Broomfield: "Lawson had too much to say to be experimenting with complex verse-forms."

Tell the tale, sing the song—the story is the prime essential, the form is but the tailored cloak. This epitomises Lawson's attitude to writing in general; the simple determined method of a master of narrative and a man urge-driven to creative expression. Seldom in Lawson do we find the intricate pearls of construction—perfect in metre, in rhythm and subtle delicacy of form—that distinguishes the verse of Kendall; and never are there evident the abstract poeticism and pseudo-clever verbiage that are applauded as the essence of poetry in some quarters. Simple verse-form as it came to hand, in flowing quantity and ringing with the great heart of his own class—this summarises the art of Lawson.

IN FUTURE ISSUES

Vance Palmer: Barbara Baynton.

Janet Howard: Louisa Albury, Lawson's Mother.

John Manifold: Lawson's Verse: A Friendly Critic.

Rivkah Mathews: Henry Lawson: Some Illusions for the Losing.

R. D. Fitzgerald: Henry Kendall (review).

Ian Turner: The Novels of Leonard Mann.

Max Harris: Bias Australian?

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BOOKS

First Place to a Stranger

I'm not sure that the Editor showed the best of judgment in inviting me to review F. B. Vickers' "First Place to the Stranger" (Constable, 18/9). Proper critical detachment doesn't come easily when you find a man opening a story very much as you would open your own.

On the first page the narrator, Owen Jukes, introduces himself as 18 years old, unemployed in a depressed area of England in 1925, and receiving advice from an old miner, similarly but more hopelessly placed: "Orstralia—it's where thee ought to go, lad. They want young uns like thee."

It brings so much back to me. Myself at 19, in another depressed area of England. Employed, but in a 30/- a week job without keep and without prospects. And listening to just such words from my own old-timers, old-timers in what is probably the world's greatest community of skilled shipbuilders.

The sense of unpretenious authenticity in Vickers' new book never left me. It hasn't a "big" theme, as the theme of his first novel "The Mirage" was big. It isn't as moving, it doesn't delve as deeply, it makes no plea for any cause as worthwhile as racial toleration, as did "The Mirage". And no character in it is likely to stay with you quite as disturbingly as Nona, the Aboriginal girl of that story.

But "First Place to the Stranger" seems to me a complete success within the modest limits set by Vickers himself. It is simply the story of how a 19 years old Englishman, with a completely urban background, came out here in 1925 and—well, became an Australian. Worthwhile enough, surely, and excellently told. It is written in a relaxed, almost racy style, and with a fidelity to the commonplace, an avoidance of high drama, that inevitably suggests autobiography. You may even feel as I do, that a little more contrivance, a bit of high-lighting here and there, would have made for a better book. With his gifts, and the material at his disposal here, Vickers could have done it.

In the patient and tenacious love of Owen Jukes for Nancy, the girl of the Bush, Vickers seems to see more story than there actually is. The real story lies not so much in this relationship as in the relationship between Owen and the middle-aged father and mother he brings out from England. In particular, this is one of the best studies in father-and-son that I know of, handled throughout with real insight and commendable honesty. When it is all over it isn't Owen or Nancy you will go back to, it is Jukes senior, the stubborn, conservative, suspicious, rather selfish English craftsman who loses a good job because he won't even try to accommodate himself to the near-enough's-good-enough methods of an Australian factory. As Owen says: "Whoever got that first plough my father assembled got a good machine, one he could take to pieces and put together again with a spanner."

One of the virtues of Vickers' writing is that he never toils with pick and shovel to "capture the Australian background". In this, as in his earlier novel, he is much too concerned with his story. As a consequence the scene always comes through. You never have any doubt from first to last about where you are. Telling little sentences, taken in the full stride of narrative, give all that is necessary of heat and dust and distance and loneliness and struggle. He writes of the Bush, not as a gaping city-head or fly-by-night tourist, but as a man who, without ever losing his sensitivity, accepts it simply as the place out of which he wrests his daily bread. And when, on the last page, you find him with the woman of his choice, contemplating his bit of land with "a few white hens scratching in the sand", you feel that a rather deserving bloke has got all he wanted out of life. Which is a very good way in which to end a book.

—John Morrison

★

Bunyip's Not Always a Joke

"I am surprised, Mr. Gallagher," said Mr. Shean, "to meet you in these pages."

"In these scientific days," said Mr. Gallagher, "surprise comes only rarely. You should be gratified."

"Do I conclude," said Mr. Shean, "that your presence here implies that we have ended our collaboration with our friend and mentor, Mr. Douglas Stewart, of the Bulletin?"

"Relations," said Mr. Gallagher, "are Temporarily Strained."

"If I may be so bold, Mr. Gallagher," said Mr. Shean, "how come?"

"You and I, Mr. Shean, have been, in these inflationary years, and with the encouragement of young Mr. Stewart, the earthly agents of the Divine Deflatus. Where the book reviewer has sought to puff, we have sucked; where the publisher has blurbed, we have disabused; where some newly discovered literary gem has required cutting down to size, we have wielded the scythe unmercifully. We have cauterised the cults, and scourged the coteries."

"Indeed," said Mr. Shean.

"And without our Mr. Stewart, we could not have done it," said Mr. Gallagher. "But now I fear that Mr. Stewart himself is sickening with a cult."

"One would have expected him to have developed an immunity," said Mr. Shean.

"If you recall the needle parades we suffered in the Army," said Mr. Gallagher, "you will remember that many who were awarded a smallpox vaccination subsequently contracted a mild form of a similar disease. Mr. Stewart is in similar case."

"You refer, I presume," said Mr. Shean, "to Brian James?"

"To no other," said Mr. Gallagher.

"I must confess," said Mr. Shean, "that our Mr. Stewart's praise of Mr. James' 'Cookabundy Bridge' did seem somewhat over-ripe. I myself could not feel that even one of Mr. James' stories would have done credit to de Maupassant."

"You may notice, Mr. Shean," said Mr. Gallagher, "that Mr. Norman Lindsay, introducing Mr. James' 'The Bunyip at Barney's Elbow' (Angus & Robertson, 16/-) found not one, but two stories which might have been written by de Maupassant —and neither of them the one selected by Mr. Stewart."

"With the two stories by de Maupassant that Mr. Lindsay thought could have been written by Mr. James, that makes five interchangeable tales," said Mr. Shean.

"Almost enough for an anthology," said Mr. Gallagher.

"A Penguin Classic," said Mr. Shean.

"You will note also, Mr. Shean," said Mr. Gallagher, "that, leaving aside local comparisons, we

learn from Mr. Stewart and Mr. Lindsay that Henry Fielding would have liked a scene from Mr. James' story, 'Hawkins' Pigs'; that this same glance at a large number of recently deceased pigs is Homeric—and consciously so at that; that, like Joseph Conrad, Mr. James started writing late in life; and that, while we may not be sure that Mr. James will rank with Rabelais, Cervantes, Fielding and Dickens, we can hazard a guess that he will."

"Those are strong words, Mr. Gallagher."

"Those are fighting words, Mr. Shean."

"You and I, Mr. Gallagher," said Mr. Shean, "may fairly be described as temperate men?"

"I think so," said Mr. Gallagher.

"Then perhaps we may dismiss this gaggle of superlatives and agree with Mr. Stewart and Mr. Lindsay that their friend, Mr. James, has a talent that secures for him an honorable place in the Lawson-Furphy succession?"

"I think not," said Mr. Gallagher.

"It's a funny thing . . ." said Mr. Shean.

"That's just the point," said Mr. Gallagher. "It's not."

"What's not?" said Mr. Shean.

"Mr. James' collection of stories," said Mr. Gallagher. "He likes pigs."

"So, presumably," said Mr. Shean, "do the officials and members of the Pig Breeders' Association."

"But Mr. James likes pigs at least as much as—if not more than—he likes people," said Mr. Gallagher. "I draw your attention to a pertinent comment of Mr. Stewart's: 'To think as a pig thinks, without false sentiment, is no mean achievement. It is . . . a guarantee that when the author approaches human beings he will portray them with an equal realism. As, of course, Brian James does. Small boys and grandfathers. spinsters and housewives, successeful men and failures, hard men and easy-going men, religious men and scoundrels, he treats them all with the same amused respect as he pays to Billy Rosen's bull'."

"I take it, Mr. Gallagher," said Mr. Shean, "that your point is that men and women are, in general, worthy of more respect than Mr. Rosen's bull?"

"Precisely," said Mr. Gallagher. "Or Mr. Hawkins' pigs."

"And that it follows that Mr. James' writing is not in the spirit of the revered Mr. Lawson?"

"Absolutely, Mr. Shean," said Mr. Gallagher.

"Then how could Mr. Stewart—who is a perceptive critic—fall into such error?" said Mr. Shean. "A misunderstanding perhaps?"

"Two of them," said Mr. Gallagher. "First, as to the general quality of Australian humor, and second, as to the particular quality of Mr. Lawson's humor—which is much the same thing."

"As I remember," said Mr. Shean, "Mr. Lindsay describes Mr. James' stories as possessing a satanism qualified by laughter—a refusal to maunder sentimentally over the normal disasters inflicted on the human carcass."

"Perhaps I am a lesser mortal," said Mr. Gallagher, "but I rarely refuse myself a short maunder over my own disasters."

"And Mr. Stewart sees in Mr. James an uproarious ruthlessness—a divine inhumanity," said Mr. Shean.

"That is so," said Gallagher, "and it becomes a simple question of direction. The great humorists laugh **with** their people—or at least create sufficient sympathy for their characters to make the laughter an all-round joke. But Mr. James has the soul of a practical joker. He likes pulling chairs from under people—and if they fracture a coccyx, so much the merrier."

"I had an uncle," said Mr. Shean, "who bought exploding cigars from joke merchants."

"And to make the point clear," said Mr. Gallagher, "if you would care to compare Mr. James' 'Bungally' with Mr. Lawson's 'Settling on the Land'—two stories with not dissimilar themes—you will see that Mr. Lawson could never have been a believer in the Special Carnation Water-Squirt Buttonhole."

"My other uncle was a doctor," said Mr. Shean.

"Then he would undoubtedly have recognised," said Mr. Gallagher, "a disease which is happily rare in our country—the Infectious Cult of the Misanthrope."

"My greatgrandfather was a missionary in Mombassa," said Mr. Shean. "Shall we throw Mr. James to the lions?"

"To the bunyips," said Mr. Gallagher.

—Ian Turner

•

Moleskin Midas

I have heard Tom Ronan's "Moleskin Midas" (Cassell, 19/9) variously described as "the outback "Power Without Glory" and as a book "devoid of one decent human character".

These are not contradictory statements, I suppose, except of course for the fact that "Power Without Glory" **did** have decent human characters. But then so I think has "Moleskin Midas". The trouble for some may be that Ronan is not only a man able to tell a racy and well-written story, but a writer who doesn't believe in the cops and robbers school of fiction. His characters are none of them wholly bad or wholly good. But they are all believeable.

The book covers the rise of Tony Yates from cattle duffer's offsider to one of the richest men in Western Queensland over a period ranging from the 1880's to the 1920's. Murder, poisoning, treachery, cheating, theft and cruelty, all come easy to Tony Yates of "Yates' Place". There must be in many a squatting story plenty of the ingredients of the story of Tony Yates; indeed Ronan's story has plenty of verisimilitude, and he must know the background both as a bushman and a historian.

Yet even in Tony Yates, the most repulsive of the many colorful characters in the book, there reposes the essence of a human being; and part of the fascination of this very fascinating book is to see how the author draws his picture of almost unrelieved human villainy with such skill that a genuinely three dimensional portrait emerges.

This frontier novel fills in an important part of the Australian picture with a satirical, even acidulous pen; but though the characters often come out of the stockyard, they never come out of the stockpot. There is, incidently, more than a little to remind one of "Capricornia" in "Moleskin Midas"; and I am not, of course, implying plagiarism, but rather a way of looking at a scene and a situation and of pinning them down on paper. Like "Capricornia", and unlike most Australian novels, "Moleskin Midas" has movement, interest and life on every page.

—S.M.S.

★

Rum and Coca Cola

Ralph de Boissiere's new novel "Rum and Coca Cola" (Australasian Book Society 19/6) gives a convincing and emotionally moving representation of life.

As in his first novel, "Crown Jewel", this book is set in his homeland, the vivid, teeming island of Trinidad.

This time the turmoil in the life of a colonial people has a more rapid tempo, for the book is set during World War II., and American armed

forces are establishing bases with a seeming open-handedness which brings strife and tragedy.

We feel the warm glow of recognition as we meet "Crown Jewel" characters with whom we lived because of the full and picturesque depiction they were given then, but are saddened as some of them are almost jostled aside from our attention by the zest and pressure from new characters and figures little known in the first novel.

De Boissiere's powers are best shown in the development of Charles, the shoemaker, who in extremity goes to live under a benefactor's house and who is afraid to join a trade union, but who, convincingly, becomes a fearless, militant agitator.

Perhaps the only serious disadvantage of the writer's attachment to the larger novel form is seen in some weaknesses of early exposition of new characters—a manner of exposition which probably follows cutting rather than condensation. Generally, too, the novel's texture is less rich than in "Crown Jewel".

Ralph de Boissiere remains the rare writer who can handle such material convincingly and whose success springs from a deep perception of his people and their life.

—J.C.

★

"Philosophy" in Verse

It is hard to write about Robert Chapman and Jonathan Bennett's "Anthology of New Zealand Verse" (Oxford, 34/9) without comparing it with Judith Wright's equally recent "Book of Australian Verse", reviewed by Laurence Collinson in a recent Overland.

Both collections reflect frankly their editors' opinion that there was little worthwhile poetry produced in the Antipodes in the nineteenth century. Only about a tenth of the space in each book is given to work published before the first World War.

This is probably just, though less so for Australia than for New Zealand; and the earlier works chosen by Judith Wright are neither as good nor as representative as they might have been. But then, with the exception of her selections from some established poets neither are her choices for the later period. Rosemary Dobson is unhappily represented by only four poems. A. D. Hope scores only two poems, and David Martin is not represented at all.

From a reading of these two books one would conclude that New Zealand poetry is, and has always been, considerably better than Australian. I believe the truth is rather that New Zealand has been much more fortunate in its latest editors.

Their taste is much more catholic. They have included many serious poems, but very few which set out in a vein of "high seriousness" to end by walking self-consciously upon stilts. And they have included too some light but straightforward verse like D. H. Rogers' highly successful ballad, "Homeward Bound", with its glorious refain:

"For the girls have got the tow-rope, an' they're
hauling in the slack!"

And some straight satire like Alistair Campbell's:

"O catch Miss Daisy Pinks
Undressing behind her hair;
She slides open like a drawer
Oiled miraculously by a stare . . ."

This could have been matched in the Australian volume by some of Clive Turnbull's early verse, but Judith Wright has found little space for satirists and less for balladists.

The trouble is that their room has to often been taken by poems of highly serious intention but flatulent and embarrassing performance, like D. H. Deniehy's verses "To His Wife" or Brian Vrepont's ineptly named "Bomber" with its bogusly inspired ecstasies of roses, lilies, blue-cool cornflowers and hand-cupped breasts.

Judith Wright's judgment seems to have been warped by a predilection for "philosophy" in verse. "When I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my gun," the late Hermann Goering is reported to have said. When I hear the word "philosophy" used in connection with a poet's work, my bowels sag with apprehension. It is time someone protested, however bluntly.

For a generation leading Australian critics have been quick to sneer at left wing verse because the political motivation of its writers is only too often more apparent than the poetry in which they seek to clothe it. This is fair enough—as far as it goes. But no-one seems to care, or even notice, when bad poetry issues from a writer's attempts to clothe "philosophy" in verse—provided only that the philosophy is vague, or vapid, or respectable, and above all strictly non-political.

Poetry is something which succeeds in re-creating for the reader an emotion, or experience or thought of the poet's. When the poet, however lofty his motives, consciously labors to point in verse a political or philosophic moral, what is very likely to be re-created in the reader's mind is merely a painful awareness of the writer's earnest desire to be a poet.

Judith Wright's anthology, though better than its predecessors in the paddock, is marred by her apparent pre-occupation with a nebulously Nietzschean "philosophy"—with the not very coruscating notion that there is a "Life Force" which is important, that everything living is connected with the Life Force and with everything else, that dead Caesar's liver may feed the grass which feeds Brown's cows which give milk to the little girl who lives in the house-next-door-that-Jack-built, and so on.

Like political ideas, this notion may furnish the stuff of poetry, as in these lines from the New Zealander A. R. D. Fairburn:

"So that the leaf, the fruit, bowel and gut of swine,
the beggar's scabs, the flesh of emperors,
the lips of Guinivere and the blood of Christ,
dissolved and scattered, have worn a million
shapes.
We are one flesh, one spirit, and all that is
shines fair in the eyes of God."

But neither this nor any other idea, however "philosophical", can justify the inclusion in the Australian book of such verses as the following windy rhetoric from Baylebridge—pseudo-Shakespeare thrice regurgitated:

"Who asks if grass attires this populous earth?
If leaves put forth their flourish upon trees?
If buds on waking sprays have comeliest birth?
And who, that scans, enquires the why of these?"

Or this from Mary Fullerton:

"Unwound the long evolvement,
Mankind was fish again,
Gilled in the fluid prison,
And half absolved from pain . . ."

Or this rhapsodic indigestion from Eve Langley:

"This year, before it ends, holds out time as a
weight to us,
We that are met in the streets as the streets are
met in us,

The New Zealand anthology, by contrast, gives the impression that its editors simply listened for poetry, without troubling themselves unduly about the subjects, theories or intentions of the writers. The book is so full of good things, and so even in quality, that it is difficult and perhaps unfair to single out particular contributors for notice. To this reviewer the verses of James K. Baxter, R. A. K. Mason and A. R. D. Fairburn suggest that they are New Zealand's most considerable poets, with Denis Glover, Alan Curnow and Eileen Duggan well in the running.

Kenrick Smithyman and M. K. Joseph are perhaps the most interesting. One senses behind their work the possibility of great powers which have not yet been disciplined to complete fruition; for example, in Joseph's vignette of a university in vacation time—magnificent yet faintly meretricious.

> "From the empty lecture room
> Where board and lectern idly brood
> Still echoes distantly the boom
> Of the expiring platitude."

The only major mistake in the book seems to me the inclusion of verses by Mary Ursula Bethel, who has two manners—the archly flat and the adjectivally inflated. It is only fair to the editors to add that they have vastly reduced the amount of space occupied by Miss Bethel, relatively to that allotted her in earlier New Zealand anthologies.

Robert Chapman's introduction might serve as a model for aspiring editors of colonial books of verse. He gives the outland reader enough of New Zealand's socio-historical background to explain and illuminate the development of the poetic tradition. Yet he never becomes the cosily provincial nationalist without literary standards on the one hand, nor the fatuously "universal" pure aesthete on the other. No words are wasted before the poetry is allowed to speak for itself.

The valuable concise list of sources at the end of the book has a short preamble:

> We have listed as compactly as possible the periodical or book in which, so far as we have been able to discover, each poem made its first appearance . . . Since New Zealand is without a bibliography of its poetry we have also listed the works of the poets included here.

Only those who have themselves done some burrowing in library stacks will have any idea of the mountain of painstaking labor concealed by these words.

—Russel Ward

★

Coast to Coast

"Coast to Coast" 1955-1956 (Angus & Robertson, 17/6) very pertinently poses the question of "Whither, Australian short-story writers?" It is interesting to view this selection of stories by H. Drake-Brockman with one of the earlier editions, say, "Coast to Coast, 1945". The index of both books lists such names as Brian James, Myra Morris and E. O. Schlunke, and such skilled story-telling veterans as Vance Palmer, Alan Marshall, Gavin Casey and John Morrison must offer secure ground to any selector.

But, where are the newcomers? What of the new aspects of life in Australia today compared with even one decade ago? Post-war Australia offers wider if more turbulent themes, but few stories in this new "Coast to Coast" reflect this fact. This is an age of rocket ranges and television, Antarctic exploration and atomic power, while floods and bushfires, housing crises and immigration trouble us on an unprecedented scale.

So it becomes a little unbelievable that the best short stories of the last two years seldom stretch the traditional boundaries of bush yarns or small town pub episodes. Out of the twenty three stories selected by Miss Drake-Brockman, eleven have bush settings, four comment on the "color question", and only one touches on suburban living. However there are a few refreshing exceptions.

"Make Like You" by F. B. Vickers is a vigorous sketch on the making of a "New Australian". Nancy Cato and Thelma Forshaw illustrate, in completely different styles, the same theme.

E. Dithmack's "The Idle Rich" and Peter Cowan's "The Red-Backed Spiders" make significant comment on those who struggle to make a living "on the land".

Not all of the stories are completely without humor, but the only two fair-dinkum laughs in the whole book are "The New Australian Dog" by Gavin Casey and "Alfred" by E. O. Schlunke.

However, perhaps most of these weaknesses could be forgiven if from the book there emerged some of those really fine characterisations which our literary tradition has taught us to expect. Admittedly quite a few of the stories are woven around children, sensitively drawn, but in the whole selection only two characters really emerge in those "larger than life" proportions so necessary to stir us to applause.

The first is the heroic old seamen, Karl Petersen, hero of one of the most exciting yarns in the book, "The Promise", a sea story by R. S. Porteous. "This is the pilot's story", Mr. Porteous says in his opening sentence, "and it is best that he tell it in his own words, for in his quiet, unemotional way he painted a picture so vivid that we shuddered at the realism of it. He made us realise the modern comfort and security of our seafaring lives, but somehow he made us proud that we belonged to the same profession as he did." To the non-seafaring reader, this story of courage and perseverence just makes us feel proud.

—J. Clarke

★

Responsible Government

Most Australians know little about the history of their own land beyond the sketchiest of outlines. This applies particularly to the period during which Australia changed from a British gaol settlement to a group of self-governing colonies.

R. D. Walshe's pamphlet "Australia's Fight for Independent Parliamentary Democracy" (Current Book Distributors, 3/6) throws new light on this period, and shows how, since responsible government could not be achieved without the help of many sections of the community, its achievement was in more ways than one a step towards achievement of parliamentary democracy. The chief merit of the pamphlet, however, is that it is an attempt to bring before ordinary Australians historical traditions beyond those associated with, say, the more colorful aspects of transportation or Eureka. And as such, the pamphlet deserves nothing but praise.

In one of the most interesting parts of the pamphlet, Mr. Walshe discusses the class relationships in New South Wales during the anti-imperial struggle of the 1840's, stressing the changing role of the squatters. When the squatters renounced their leadership of this struggle after 1847, the middle class assumed the lead. But this class lacked sufficient strength and the squatters were able to resume their lead after 1850 and to secure respon-

sible government from Great Britain through an undemocratic constitution despite widespread public opposition.

Mr. Walshe sees the chief significance of Eureka in the fact that it aroused a degree of public energy which enabled middle class leaders to harness this opposition into an organised movement to introduce democratic provisions into the constitution. Hence Mr. Walshe argues, not that Eureka caused responsible or democratic government, but that it served as a catalyst that transformed an ineffectual public resentment into a real force. This analysis of the relation of Eureka to the political history of the 1850's is an original and stimulating hypothesis deserving of more consideration from historians than it has received to date. It is certainly one which provides a good framework for further research.

—Miriam Rechter.

★

Books and Book Collecting

Somerset Maugham in one of his stories draws an unforgettable portrait of the book-worm so fanatic that he would rather read a department store catalog, or a railway timetable, than nothing at all. "Who of this band does not know the restlessness that attacks him when he has been severed from reading too long, the apprehension and irritability, and the sign of relief which the sight of a printed page extracts from him?"

A rat-bag? Perhaps. A drug-addict? Certainly. But from the point of view of a small section of mankind a victim of a very understandable and amiable vice.

You would have to feel about books much as does Maugham's character to appreciate fully two beautifully-produced books recently published by Angus & Robertson's. They are that veteran literateur George Mackaness' "The Art of Book-Collecting in Australia" (63/-) and the same author's "The Books of the Bulletin" (42/-), the latter produced in collaboration with the Sydney collector and bibliographer, Walter Stone.

While as fascinating as a Raymond Chandler detective story, "The Art of Book-Collecting in Australia" is an extremely painful book for anyone iealously aspiring to build up his own collection of Australiana. Mackaness tells, for instance, of the gentleman who visited him in his study at Sydney University with a small packet. Opening it, he produced two mint-condition copies of Carboni Raffaello's "The Eureka Stockade", 1855 edition, explained that they had been printed by his father and handed down to him, and sold them to Dr. Mackaness for 7/6 each. One of these copies subsequently fetched £40. There are many such stories.

Dr. Mackaness goes far further in his book, however, than telling us of some of his more spectacular successes. In his sections on the important books of exploration, by land and by sea, he tells us a great deal about the uncovering of Australia and, indeed, his bibliographical advice on the key publications in this field is not, to my knowledge, available elsewhere.

It is interesting that two most fruitful and important fields of collecting are largely neglected by the big collectors, and Dr. Mackaness would seem to be no exception. His section on the collecting of Australian fiction is disappointingly scanty; and there is no reference at all to the vast potentialities of collecting in the field of the Australian labor movement. Those who take their country and its background seriously, but have no desire, say, to pay £50 for Bligh's "Narrative of the Mutiny on the Bounty", can nevertheless build themselves up an important and attractive collection of important material for very little money. In fifty or a hundred years time, moreover, a collection of, for instance, election material, union leaflets and the like, the cost of collecting which is negligible, will not only be worth money but will be a great boon to research workers. Very little of this ephemeral material, which is the stuff of history itself, is preserved.

Dr. Mackaness' book covers a vast field and it is not possible to detail it all. But it does contain, for instance, most valuable details on the Canadian patriots who were exiled to Australia after the Canadian uprisings of 1837-38. If you cannot afford it, it should certainly be in your local library.

It would be unfair to cavil unduly at a work of this stature, but the proofreader has overlooked some important mistakes in the dates given in various places.

"The Books of the Bulletin" is another kettle of fish. The essence of it is a detailed list of all the books—from the sublime to the ridiculous—the Sydney Bulletin has published between 1888 and 1952. The chief interest here lies in the period 1888-1904, when the Bulletin published a whole series of books which constitute a very remarkable achievement—books by Price Warung, A. G. Stephens, Will Ogilvie, E. J. Brady, Steele Rudd, Joseph Furphy and others. It is here in particular that the normal interested reader would have wished for more than the abbreviated annotations to the individual entries.

It is irritating, too, to find that the important series of books published in the thirties by the Endeavour Press—a Bulletin offshoot—are not included in the bibliography.

All this is more than made up for, however, by two really fine essays. Bill Fitz Henry, Bulletin historian and staff writer, who unfortunately died recently, writes a 36 page account—the best I have read—of the Bulletin writers of the Golden Days, full of intimate personal touches which throw light on the period; and the indefatigable Norman Lindsay writes a brief but colorful piece in the same strain.

Editions of both books are limited to 500 copies.

—S.M.S.

★

Town and City

"Town and City" by David Rowbotham (Angus & Robertson, 13/6) is a collection of short stories and sketches. They are grouped under three headings: "Town" (country town), "City" and "Tales".

I was rather disappointed with this book, although some of the stories were good. The best, perhaps, was "Salvage". The "Fiver's Inn" set deserve special notice. These are charming little sketches of country life, that culminate in "Jim Crow". This is an account of how Pastor Glennie's horse, Jim Crow, went on strike, whilst travelling between two towns of the "parish". Having had a lot of trouble with the horse, ending in a two mile chase, the pastor says:

> "You're stubborn, you gallop like a frog, and you've ruined my collar! . . . See what you've done, you pestering sinner! We're both now socially inadequate. We both reek and we're due at four. It's a colonial impossibility to make it with you. Gerrup!"

Sometimes Mr. Rowbotham's style is crisp and vital, but, as often is verbose to such a degree that his meaning is effectively concealed from the reader. For example, "the alive, bright focal point of some blacked-out crazy labyrinth of sluggish

lanes and alleys turning and squirming and crossing and recrossing one another . . ." means exactly what?

"Town and City" includes a wide variety of characters from many different social levels and with divers dispositions and standards of morality. Few of these people, however, really live, or have any fight in them. The author has taken incidents and episodes from life without giving the impression that the people involved were living before he chose to use them in his story, though they may correspond with types we have met and, indeed, still meet everyday. Nevertheless he makes a fairly genuine attempt to portray the loneliness of many Australians, who, busy in their own lives, deny its existence. Mr. Rowbotham, although long winded and given to romanticism, puts his uncomfortable point over.

I had the feeling all the way through that these stories were worked out according to a book of rules formulated in another country (probably England, or Russia) in a different age. This means that no stress is laid upon the social problems of this country, or of the world in its present state, or upon the country in relationship to the world.

The author is constantly reporting occurrences and not turning a critical eye upon them. The stories are reflections, rather than illuminations.

Probably the most purposeful sketch in "Town and City" is "Salvage", which is about a little half-caste girl and the Salvation Army, but, although it presents a problem—a social tragedy—it makes no real attempt to recognise the fact, let alone fighting for a solution, or inciting the reader to do so.

All the way through, the social structure of Australia is merely an easel on which he stands his canvasses.

However this is a book for all tastes and there are some wonderful moments in it: human, stark and amusing. "Town and City" is valuable as it is the first collection of short stories (a prose-form particularly at home in Australia) to be published by a Queensland author for a long time.

—Win Callaghan and Rodney Hall.

★

The Other Meaning

During the last year or so there have come into prominence a number of young Australian poets whose work has many aspects in common. I hesitate to use the word "school" because I doubt if the poets concerned are particularly aware of their similarities, or would care to belong to a "school" anyway.

The group has no "leader". Some of its members have had more work published than others, and are consequently better known. The poems of Ray Mathew, Vivian Smith and Ron Simpson predominate by reason of their continued publication in the Bulletin, a paper which, however distasteful in other respects, publishes more and better poetry every week than most of the literary magazines combined every quarter, and is particularly responsive to the work of younger poets.

The group appears to have originated spontaneously as a reaction to both the metaphysical-cum-surrealist school centred in Angry Penguins and its offshoots, and the "classical" school whose leading proponents were McAuley and Stewart, but which is now exemplified in the magnificent work of A. D. Hope. While reacting to each of these schools, the group has, however, adopted much that is good from them. It has thrown out the obscurity and formlessness of much of the work of the metaphysical school and retained the exact and startling imagery of its best practitioners; it has got rid of the pomposity, flatness, and dogmatism of the "classical" school and retained its traditional music. If there has been any one poet who has influenced this school it would seem to be Judith Wright; even so, the traces are vague, for Miss Wright has few obvious mannerisms of style, and the influence she has lies more in the direction of her approach to poetry: her need for form, her search for the convincing image, and her sad humane philosophy.

The primary attributes of this group may be summed up thus:

(a) Lyricism. I might in fact call these poets the "Lyrical School", for the bulk of their work is made up of sweet and brief songs of the type in which English poetry excels.

(b) Formal quality. The majority of these poems have definite patterns of metre and rhyme. There is no striving after "new" or exotic forms. What originality of form there is is the result of the poet's personality shaping the traditional forms.

(c) Clarity. Very few poems are obscure, either unconsciously or by choice. These poets are seeking an audience. There is an attempt to use a simple but meaningful language in contrast to the deliberate, tortured, and often careless obscurity of many poems written during the past couple of decades.

(d) Effective imagery. The language may be clear and simple but the imagery is never commonplace. It has a significance for readers beyond the poet's immediate circle. It is almost always striking and appropriate.

(e) The subject matter is contemporary and humanist. These are personal poems, poems of empathy, explaining the poet's emotional reaction to his environment, his involvement, often passionate, with the men, women, children, creatures, and landscape of his everyday life.

Of this school of lyricists, probably the most lyrical is Vivian Smith, whose first book, "The Other Meaning", was recently published by Lyre-Bird Writers (6/-). Mr. Smith fulfils more than adequately the conditions outlined above, but it is in the evasive (for the poet) regions of imagery that he is most outstanding. It is the unexpected, exact, and breathtaking image that distinguishes a poet from a versifier, and Mr. Smith is a poet indeed. His poems, among them that extraordinary and lovely poem, "Myth", abound in marvellous images.

Vivian Smith, though young, does not merely "show promise", but possesses an exceptional talent well into its heyday.

—Laurence Collinson

Songs of a Rover

"The Wattle and the Rowan" by John White (privately published, Melbourne, 7/6) is an attractively got-up volume which introduces a new poet to Australian readers. Cyril Goode in his introduction says "The reading of this book has done me good" and I myself read it through at a sitting —perhaps the best compliment I can pay to it.

John White was born in Canada and spent his early years on the Isle of Skye in the Hebrides. Like all of us he has a nostalgic yearning for the scenes of his youth, and the spell that the Western Isles casts on those who have lived there is present in these poems: "Birds in a rowan tree, Sea-gulls that wheel and cry all day, Boats asail on the sea."

The author has been a great rover, and spent a number of years as a sailor. His sea ballads are amongst the best in the book, and several of the poems deal poignantly with the battlefields of France.

The many occupations John White has followed add variety to his work, which is distinguished by a good ear. His poems are fluent and suitable for musical setting; in some cases the author's wife, Claire White, has indeed made effective songs from these poems.

—Edward Harrington.

★

Working Bullocks

A warm welcome is extended to the re-appearance of Katharine Susannah Prichard's "Working Bullocks" (Angus and Robertson, 16/-). With the same author's "Coonardoo", also recently reprinted, they amount to two of the best novels in Australian literature.

These novels are pioneers in more than one way, for they were among the first realistic novels written in this country and they presented new and important themes and characters.

"Coonardoo", of course, was the first time an Australian writer depicted the Aboriginals with understanding and sympathy. Katharine Prichard's picture of Aboriginal women in "Coonardoo", and later in her goldfields trilogy, are among the greatest achievements in our literature.

"Working Bullocks" is not only unusual for the sensitive and faithful picture the author gives of the lives of the working people in the remote and sombre karri forests of south-west Australia, but for the appearance of characters who might accurately be described as heroes of our time. It has been pointed out that in Mark Smith, the strike leader in "Working Bullocks", for the first time in an Australian novel an authentically drawn revolutionary worker appears.

"Working Bullocks" was first issued almost thirty years ago but, like "Coonardoo", has lost none of its freshness, poignancy and beauty.

—Judah Waten.

★

Other Notices

"Songs from Lawson" (Bush Music Club, 4/-) is a suberbly produced booklet of Lawson poems, set to music by various hands, and issued to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Lawson's birth on 17th June 1867. The booklet contains twelve songs and some memorable illustrations by Clem Millward. The same high standard is to be seen in "Singabout" Vol. 1 No. 4, also issued by the Bush Music Club, which contains eight songs, local and overseas, and a wealth of interesting material on folk song. A feature of "Singabout" is that it manages to eschew both the "folksy" and the "folk-loristic" approach to folk-songs, and has no pretensions about it. An annual sub. to "Singabout" is 7/6, and should be sent to Bush Music Club, 57 Crown St., Woolloomooloo, N.S.W.

★

"Hillendiana" by Donald Friend (Ure Smith, 35/-). This is a delightful collection of "facts and a considerable amount of fiction" (as the title page tells us) about the old N.S.W. diggings town of Hillend, written in a chatty, episodic style by Friend and illustrated with sketches, photos and old engravings. A definite item of interest—though unfortunately, in the text, the fact and fiction are not dissentangled and the reader must push through the tangle as best he can.

★

"Makers of the First Hundred Years" by Helen Palmer and Jessie MacLeod (Longmans Green, 15/6). This useful book, which supplements the authors' "The First Hundred Years", contains biographies of thirteen important Australians—George Caley, Ann Hordern, Caroline Chisholm, Alfred Joyce, Hugh Childers, Tom Petrie, Ben Hall, Thomas Mort, Catherine Spence, Ernest Giles, William Lane, Patrick Hannan and Joseph Furphy. Can you place them all? This book, well-written and deepening our understanding of our own country, deserves a place on everyone's shelf, next to Vance Palmer's "National Portraits".

★

"Historical Studies" (Melbourne University, 21/- per annum) for May 1957 contains an interesting article on "Source Material for Australian Studies" by the National Librarian, Harold White. Other contributions cover German settlers in South Australia, the role of the Sydney T.L.C. 1871-91, and the early history of Norfolk Island.

★

"Sydney, The Story of a City" by Marjorie Barnard (Melbourne University Press, 13/6). This attractively-produced, well-illustrated and humanly written story covers all phases of Sydney's growth. Readers of Marjorie Barnard's work will know her capacity for writing succinctly, accurately and with never-failing interest.

OVERLAND

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Edited by S. Murray-Smith.

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